WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 1999

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

PRIVILEGE

Comments by the Member for Hinchinbrook

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (9.31 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. Yesterday in this House the shadow Minister for Energy claimed that the high prices in the national electricity market could cause electricity prices to go up in Queensland. Mr Rowell quoted a power price of $76.82 per megawatt hour for Queensland as at 9 a.m. yesterday. He compared that with prices in New South Wales and Victoria. In fact, the actual price was $34.83 and the actual price at 9.30 a.m. was $23.36.

The shadow Minister has in fact misled the House with his allegations yesterday. This has happened either intentionally to try to deceive members or unintentionally through a total lack of knowledge of the market process. My investigations into this matter indicate that Mr Rowell has based his figures not on actual prices but on forecasts—a fact that he did not see fit to mention. To save the member any further embarrassment, I would be happy to arrange a brief as to how the market works.

PETITION

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petition—

Bundaberg Base Hospital

From **Mr Slack** (963 petitioners) requesting the House to reject any move to close the general practice outpatients facility, a much needed and used public service, and retain an adequate general outpatients service at the Bundaberg Base Hospital.

Petition received.

PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following papers were tabled—

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

Annual Reports for 1998-99—

Tourism Queensland

Queensland Harness Racing Board

Queensland Principal Club

Trustees of the Albion Park Paceway—Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 1999

(b) Treasurer (Mr Hamill)—

Annual Reports for 1998-99—

Government Superannuation Office

Queensland Treasury

QSuper Board of Trustees

(c) Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts (Mr Foley)—

Annual Reports for 1998-99—

Queensland Art Gallery

Queensland Law Society

(d) Minister for Health (Mrs Edmond)—

Department of Health—Annual Report for 1998-99

(e) Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development (Mr McGrady)—

Department of Mines and Energy—Annual Report for 1998-99.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Smithsonian Institution

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to inform the House that the first stage of my Government's memorandum of understanding with the world-famous Smithsonian Institution in Washington is now being implemented. We are now hosting a visit to Queensland of senior Smithsonian representatives so they can see at first-hand some of our scientific, educational and cultural institutions, especially the centres of excellence which might play a part in future scientific and cultural collaboration. They are also seeing at first-hand the biodiversity that we have in our rainforest and reef, which are, of course, of considerable interest to the Smithsonian.

On Friday evening I was delighted to host a reception for the provost of the institution, Dr J. Dennis O'Connor, and a number of his colleagues. On Saturday morning I was pleased to take Dr O'Connor on a helicopter overview of the proposed Roma Street Parkland in particular and also the port of Brisbane, the South Bank precinct, the University of Queensland and the whole City West precinct. The Roma Street Parkland is where we are planning an icon building which will act as a major attraction for both Queenslanders and tourists and, in particular, be interactive for our young school students and young people generally. The Queensland

Government is preparing plans for a reef and rainforest interactive education centre as a central attraction to our Roma Street gardens redevelopment.

The world-renowned institution has asked to be involved in the venture, including the provision of technical advice. We are aiming for a centre which will contain interactive displays to teach visitors about scientific research involving our unique rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef. It will be an exciting, fascinating state-of-the-art interpretive centre which will use cutting-edge interactive technology to present to the public the wonders of our spectacular natural environment. And it will use advanced communication links to interpret the scientific findings from our research.

The itinerary for the Smithsonian representatives included a briefing at the James Cook University in Cairns on research into the reef and rainforest, a see-for-yourself trip on the Skyrail from Cairns to Kuranda, a briefing on Lizard Island by the Director of the Australian Museum Research Unit, Dr Anne Hoggett, and snorkelling on the reef. In Townsville the itinerary included a visit to the Museum of Tropical Queensland, the Reef HQ, the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences and the James Cook University-CRC Reef Research Centre.

The institution is the largest museum and research complex in the world. It has never signed an agreement like this before so this is a tremendous coup for Queensland and an opportunity not only to do the things that I have outlined in this ministerial statement but also to promote tourism to the American market and the world market in an unprecedented way.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Unemployment

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to see yet another Queensland academic believes it is possible for Queensland to lower the unemployment rate to 5%. He has chosen the date of 2002. Professor Allan Layton says the Queensland unemployment rate has been persistently above the Australian figure for most of the last two decades largely because of a significantly higher workforce participation rate.

Professor Layton says that if the participation rate was the same as in the rest of Australia, the very strong jobs growth in Queensland would have resulted in an unemployment figure for the State of 5% by now. Professor Layton says that since the current expansion began in 1992 employment growth has amounted to 15% nationally, with an extraordinary increase of 24.5% in Queensland up to May of this year. He believes that if we reasonably assume a work force growth of 1.5% in Queensland and a labour productivity growth of 2% a year, we would require annual economic growth of 4.5% for three or more years until the end of 2002 to get to 5% unemployment. As we all know, our program was for five years, which is longer. Professor Layton then says that this is not impossible, but he believes that most people would probably agree that it is not highly likely either. Well, for 10 years Queensland's growth rate has averaged 4.7%. And with our record $5.2 billion Capital Works Program and other initiatives we are driving the economy forward.

Professor Layton says in his conclusion that reducing unemployment to 5% is a very worthy community and public policy goal and he does believe it can be achieved—and so do we. We will be doing everything we can to achieve that target. However, he says it will require us as a community to commit to a set of policies which can bring it about. It appears from Professor Layton's argument that he has not taken into effect the employment creation policies of my Government which are specifically designed with that unemployment target in mind. We have committed to a set of policies which we believe can bring it about.

More than 45,500 new jobs were created in Queensland during our first year in Government—a result of the activities of a can-do Government. Our 1999 Budget aims to create another 41,000 new jobs this year. Our Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives are aimed at creating more than 24,000 job placements and training positions in four years. In fact, we lead Australia when it comes to new apprentices and apprenticeships. In fact, every Cabinet submission we consider contains an assessment of its job creation potential.

Professor Layton's final words are that with the right policies and sufficient resolve he thinks it is reasonable to aspire to be in a position where, at the end of the first decade of the next century—and in the absence of a major international recession—we will be able to look back on a decade of unemployment which averaged 5% to 6%. That is exactly what my Government aspires to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Berri Limited

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State

Development and Minister for Trade) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Government continues to assist companies trying to build industries in this State which lead to further employment opportunities. While many of our public efforts have focused on new technology, we are also aware of the fact that Queensland is blessed with great natural advantages, so we are alive to prospects which involve using new technology in concert with our natural resources.

In light of this, I am pleased to be able to tell the House that later today I will officiate at the Queensland launch of Berri Ltd's Gourmet Garden range of products. This Government played an active role in securing this new range of products, which is storming Australian kitchens and which will bring a further 40 full-time equivalent jobs to the State. As importantly, these jobs will be created in an area of high unemployment—the Sunshine Coast hinterland or, more specifically, in the town of Palmwoods.

Berri, through its Sunshine Coast based subsidiary Tropico Fruits, will invest $5m over the next three years to help create new jobs not just at Palmwoods but also through the State as a whole new industry develops. Once again we see smart industries coming to the Smart State.

The Gourmet Garden products are a completely new innovation in delivery of herbs and spices, using revolutionary proprietary technology. The range is made from freshly chopped herbs preserved without the use of heat, thus maintaining the herbs' true colour, flavour, aroma and texture. The initial range of 12 herbs includes basil, garlic, chives, mint, parsley, oregano, rosemary, lemon grass, coriander, chilli, ginger and green onion. The product lasts for 60 days under refrigeration.

There is another very important leg to this deal, that is, the supply of raw materials. Tropico has estimated that it will source 80% of raw materials—fresh herbs and spices—from Queensland. This will have an enormous flow-on benefit to the State as a whole new industry—the production of herbs—is established. It is a new industry and it will benefit all of the State.

The key to the project's success has been finding a natural way to deliver the delicate qualities of fresh tasting herbs and spices. The products are prepared using a tightly regulated schedule of harvesting, chopping, blending and packaging within a minimal amount of time to ensure optimum freshness.

This significant Australian technology has been in development for almost a decade. This Government is pleased to play a part in ensuring that it remains here in Australia. For too long, Australian technology has been harvested by offshore companies. This example by the Berri group is destined to not only stay at home but also offer enormous export opportunities. In short, this is the Smart State meeting our raw materials—our good climate, soils, rainfall and industry. It is a development this Government will not only watch with interest but also feel some pride in as Berri's new products are discovered by the cooks of the world.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Brisbane International Film Festival

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.43 a.m.), by leave: The advent of the Fox movie studios in Sydney last weekend is a timely reminder of the opportunities opening up for Queensland's booming film and television industry. This bright future is outlined in the report just completed on the recent Brisbane International Film Festival, held over 11 days from 29 July to 8 August.

The success of this eighth festival justifies our allocation of $250,000 in the 1999-2000 Budget to pursue the feasibility of a Brisbane film studio at Tennyson to promote local and domestic film and television production. Such a studio will complement the excellent job done by Warner Roadshow's Gold Coast film studios, established during the Goss Labor Government, which successfully launched Queensland into the international film business.

Queensland's job growth in the film industry is now 72%—higher than that of any other State. Combined domestic and international film production in Queensland from 1992 to 1998 was $572m, with an economic impact of $1.63 billion and the creation of 12,012 jobs in our State. Queensland now attracts 30% of the Australian film and television drama market and, on current trends, annual film and TV production will increase to $120m, with a combined economic impact of $344.4m for the State.

Last month I announced a new slate of 10 film and television projects worth $95m to Queensland, including an all-Queensland film, a German mini-series, a new Walt Disney company movie and several telemovies for North American networks, including Paramount's UPN.

Reflecting the growth of Queensland's film and television industry, attendances at the 1999 festival were up approximately 10% on last year, with a total of 25,857 attending official festival events. A new record was set for a single day's attendance, with 4,200 people attending screenings on Friday, 6 August. Despite this growth in audience, which saw total ticket revenue at the festival reach $174,920, it was gratifying that ticket prices were maintained at the same levels as for 1998. The corporate sector, too, flocked to sponsor it, despite the tough market realities experienced in 1999, with a total of $138,000 in cash sponsorship and $475,117 in in-kind support. Such support in a year notable for corporate stringency was particularly gratifying.

The festival's role as a showcase for Queensland's creative and pre and post production capabilities continued to expand with leading film industry figures from the USA, Germany, New Zealand and Hong Kong attending this year. Queensland cinema enjoyed prominence through the festival's opening night event, with a strong commitment to the films of Australia and the Asia-Pacific region in the world cinema component.

The 1999 Chauvel award for outstanding contribution to Australian feature film-making was presented to Bob Ellis by Lord Mayor Jim Soorley at a civic reception at the Brisbane Hilton, recognition of the festival's tourism role for Brisbane as well as Queensland. This recognition by local government and business of the festival's contribution to local tourism and revenues was mirrored by an outstanding media response from the Courier-Mail and a special half-hour program run twice by Channel 7 before the festival.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Break and Enter Offences

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: Over the past few months the Queensland Police Service has been undertaking world-leading research and trials of strategies to combat break and enter offences. Part of this process has been the trial of the Beenleigh break and enter reduction project, which involves police conducting a home security assessment soon after a break and enter crime is reported.

The householder also receives a kit outlining ways to prevent the crime from happening again by securing points of entry, marking property, installing alarm systems and other measures. In addition, neighbours in the immediate vicinity are alerted to the break and enter and advised to take precautions. Police patrols are also increased in areas where burglaries have taken place.

Statistics show that in Queensland a person has a one in 12 chance of being a victim of a residential break and enter crime. However, once they become a victim their chances of becoming a victim again doubles to one in six, which proves the theory that, when it comes to crime, lightning often strikes the same place twice or more.

The Beenleigh project was aimed at providing a comprehensive approach to break and enter offences and preventing repeat offences, not only at the original premises but also at surrounding premises. I am pleased to inform the House that this project will not only be expanded but will be extended to break and enter offences occurring in shops and other commercial premises. Since it is being extended to non-residential premises, it will require a name change to The At Risk Premises project, or TARP. The expansion will take place this month and by February next year TARP should be operating in each of the eight police regions. Priority will be given to those areas which have been identified as having significant break and enter crime levels.

Like the Beenleigh project, TARP will adopt a three-pronged approach to reduce unlawful entry offences involving a value-added police response which aims to prevent repeat victimisation and first-time victimisation through officers conducting security assessments of premises and notifying neighbours of offences; a community partnership approach to prevention by encouraging communities to adopt a range of short and longer-term prevention strategies targeting identified hot spot areas, such as Eagleby within my electorate; and enhanced patrols and other reactive policing methods which target offenders operating within hot spot areas.

TARP is aimed at three principal objectives. It is aimed at: a reduction in the overall incidence of unlawful entry offences against premises; a reduction in the incidence of multiple victimisation; and an enhanced police response to unlawful entry offences. The TARP project is in line with the Beattie Labor Government's election promise of targeting crime hot spots and our overall Crime Prevention Strategy. The expansion has been possible due to a funding allocation of $497,000 over three years.

Like any crime prevention and proactive policing initiative, it will take time before concrete results flow through. However, what it does show is that the Government and the Police Service are serious about attacking crime and the causes of crime. Break and enters, especially home invasions, cause a great deal of distress amongst victims. The TARP project is aimed at minimising this distress and making it tougher for break and enter merchants to continue their cowardly crimes.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Foxleigh Coalmine

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: I am happy to inform the House that, with the assistance of Government, a new open-cut coalmine near Middlemount, west of Mackay, is now under construction. Mining leases for the Foxleigh mine were granted last week and construction is starting immediately. Jobs will be provided for more than 200 Queenslanders during the construction phase of this mine, and it will have a full-time work force of about 100 people when it is fully operational early next year. The company had a very tight time frame on the construction of this mine because it had commitments to supply coal to its markets by March next year. The Government was able to assist by facilitating negotiations on a transport issue, which was a critical sticking point, and also expediting the actual grant of the mining lease.

This development is majority owned by Queensland company CAML Resources Pty Ltd, and it is joined by another long-term industry participant Itochu, participating as ICRA Foxleigh Pty Ltd. The other participant in the joint venture is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation, participating as Bowen Basin Investments Pty Ltd. The notional output from the mine will be two million tonnes of coal a year, and the resource has great potential in growing metallurgical markets for pulverised coal injection, coke blends and high-energy thermal and chemical industries.

The Queensland coal industry continued to expand during the last financial year with record exports of 93.5 million tonnes. This increased production was hard won and against the decreased coal prices that took effect earlier in the year. Our increased production during the year was well served by expanded capacity at several operating mines and the development of a new mine. The Foxleigh development will continue that trend and help to further cement Queensland as a world leader in coal exports.

I consider the commercial involvement of ATSIC in this mining venture as a very progressive step and one that helps to illustrate the good standing of this major industry. The initiative by ATSIC is supported by the company's proposal to establish a TAFE-affiliated training centre at the mine for Aboriginal employees. This will no doubt have substantial long-term benefits for the local Aboriginal people and, indeed, for the area in general.

Projects of this kind not only ensure the prosperity of the region but also help to reaffirm the fact that Queensland's Bowen Basin is a major geological province for the supply of coal to markets right around the world. These developments require considerable planning, financial resources and entrepreneurial skills to bring them on stream in a timely manner and within budget. This fact has never been more true given the current economic climate and other pressures which regularly confront the Australian coal industry. I might add that they also require a can-do Government which is prepared to work with industry to make things happen for the benefits which flow to all Queenslanders.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Motor Vehicle Safety Certificate

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.54 a.m.), by leave: I wish to bring to the attention of the House the launch today of the new motor vehicle safety certificate. This will replace the current certificate of roadworthiness required for the transfer of registration of vehicles. The certificate of roadworthiness will be phased out over the next few months as stocks held by inspection stations are used up. Perhaps one of the greatest advantages of the new system is that it will help to eliminate a large number of unsafe vehicles on our roads. People simply will not be able to sell a registered vehicle to an unsuspecting buyer if it is not safe.

The introduction of the new safety certificate is the culmination of three years of consultation and policy development by officers of Queensland Transport and follows the commencement of the Vehicle Standards and Safety Regulation 1999 on 1 October this year. Until recently, a roadworthy certificate was only required to be produced at the time

of transfer of a vehicle. This allowed a scenario where it was difficult to prove any offence relating to roadworthiness after the purchaser had used the vehicle. In addition, this usually meant that the purchaser incurred the costs of rectifying any defects in the vehicle.

In contrast, the new safety certificate provides a clear statement at the outset that the vehicle is safe to drive and helps the purchaser understand and make an informed decision about purchase. This means that, for the first time in Queensland, people will be able to inspect a registered vehicle in the confidence that the vehicle has undergone a basic safety inspection prior to being offered for sale. This will be achieved primarily by requiring the safety certificate to be displayed conspicuously on any registered vehicle offered for sale. This key change of requiring the certificate to be displayed clearly shifts the emphasis of compliance from prosecution to prevention.

To accommodate the differing needs of members of the public and licensed motor dealers, there will be differing time and/or distance formulae for the validity periods. In the case of a licensed motor dealer, a safety certificate must have been issued in the previous three months or 1,000 kilometres prior to sale, whichever comes first. In the case of private sales, a safety certificate must have been issued in the previous two months or 2,000 kilometres, whichever comes first.

The general public will become aware of these reforms through an extensive public education campaign. Industry has already been made aware of these reforms through more than 20 information nights which have been held throughout Queensland for approved inspection stations and licensed motor dealers. Total attendance at these sessions was in excess of 1,400. In addition, Queensland Transport will direct mail all approved inspection stations and licensed motor dealers.

To allow a reasonable time frame for Queenslanders to get used to the new arrangements, enforcement officers will take an educational role with regard to the new offence of failing to display a safety certificate until 1 April 2000. From that time on, offenders will be liable for an on-the-spot fine of up to $300. Significantly, the legislation covering safety certificates introduces specific provisions to deal with problems associated with "roadside" vehicle sales—a method of sale popular for disposing of suspect and stolen vehicles.

While the Government is not seeking to restrict Queenslanders' opportunities to dispose of their vehicles, these provisions would allow vehicles sold from anywhere other than a licensed dealer's premises or a private residence to be removed if they were either not displaying a safety certificate or were displaying a safety certificate clearly inconsistent with the condition of the vehicle. This would only be after enforcement officers had made "reasonable attempts" to contact the owner of the vehicle, that is, either attending to an address not more than 10 kilometres from where the vehicle is located or contacting the phone number displayed on the vehicle.

In a move which will boost employment in the motor vehicle repair area and improve resource efficiency for Queensland Transport, approved inspection stations will be able to clear some defect notices issued on motor vehicles. Any defects referred to an approved inspection station for clearance will be cleared via a full safety certificate inspection. It is estimated that this initiative will deliver up to $1m worth of safety certificate inspections to the private sector each year, plus any additional mechanical work which needs to be carried out to ensure that the vehicle complies with all of the safety standards.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Psst! Post School Survival Tips Booklet

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (9.59 a.m.), by leave: Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to visit Macgregor State High School to launch a new publication, namely a consumer guide for young people called Psst! Post School Survival Tips. This Government believes that consumer education is essential and that people, young or old, should be fully aware of their consumer rights and know how to seek redress.

We have recently sought to better inform Queensland seniors with the revised Agewise kit and now it is the turn of school leavers. It will not be long until most of this current crop of Year 12 students become adults in the legal sense of the word and will have all the rights that that entails: the right to vote, the right to buy alcohol and, from a consumer point of view, the right to be held legally responsible for contracts that they enter into—be it a contract to buy a new car or an application to rent a property.

A big trap for young people is making the adjustment of going from a fairly limited income to one that appears to be able to satisfy all their consumer demands. Not everyone can make this adjustment, and many people overcommit. Figures from Insolvency and Trustee Service Australia show that 660 Queensland people below the age of 25 years declared themselves bankrupt in the 1997-98 financial year. 356 of these bankruptcies were brought about by unemployment, 72 by the excessive use of credit cards and 124 by financial irresponsibility.

As Minister for Fair Trading, I know about the financial problems into which young people get themselves. We consider school leavers to be one of our priority targets. We recently identified them as the group most in need of information about financial responsibility.

The Post School Survival Tips booklet will help young people navigate issues such as buying a used car, renting accommodation, using credit, shopping on the Internet, buying a computer and knowing their refund rights. This guide will help school leavers navigate through life's events and gain consumer confidence when dealing with traders in the marketplace.

The Office of Fair Trading sees its role as an agency dedicated to reducing the difference between young consumers who know their rights and young consumers who use them effectively. After all, assertive, self-reliant consumers are more likely to shop around for the best deal, demand premium customer service and ultimately obtain the best possible benefits from the consumer marketplace.

Whilst vitally important in ensuring fiscal equality, consumer education is also essential in protecting consumers from unscrupulous characters in our community who prey on young consumers when they can. The booklet is being distributed throughout high schools as we speak and it is intended that all Year 12 students will receive a copy before the end of the school year.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bribie Island State Land Allocation Plan

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: One of the aims of the Queensland Government has been to give communities more long-term security, certainty and better quality of life. To do this, we have taken on some of the tough issues which the previous Government dodged—such issues as the regional forest agreement and vegetation management.

Today, I am pleased to announce more good news as part of the Government's efforts to implement sound environmental planning for the benefit of Queensland communities. Last Friday, the Beattie Labor Government delivered for one of south-east Queensland's most popular and attractive areas—Bribie Island. We have ended years of uncertainty for the local community by completing and launching the Bribie Island State land allocation plan. This plan, which outlines the way in which unallocated State land will be used in future, has been welcomed by all sections of the local Bribie Island community. It has involved consultation with the Caloundra City Council, the Caboolture Shire Council, industry, environment and other specific interest groups and many people in the Bribie/Caboolture communities. It balances conservation and development and creates job opportunities.

It is an historic plan which maximises the potential of existing State land on Bribie Island to create the right mix of conservation, recreation and development opportunities for improved quality of life. It will help Bribie meet the anticipated doubling of its population by 2006, yet build on its reputation as one of the most attractive areas in south-east Queensland.

As part of this plan, the national park estate will be increased by 75% to over 8,400 hectares. This will protect areas with significant cultural and conservation values and have enormous recreational value to the community. At the same time, the Government recognises the importance of the timber industry to the region and has set aside a further 2,700 hectares for forestry on Bribie Island for the plantation of a second pine rotation. This will not only sustain existing jobs but also create new employment opportunities in the Caboolture region over the 25-year life of this plantation. It will contribute to the effective implementation of the RFA in south-east Queensland.

The plan will also allow for the allocation of 160 hectares of residential development on Bribie Island to meet the demand for sustainable future urban growth. Almost 50% of this area is on the eastern side of Bribie Island at Woorim, with a further 30% at Bongaree and the balance located to the north of Banksia Beach and at White Patch. A further 190 hectares has been designated for

community and special purposes such as youth camping facilities, neighbourhood centres and local government infrastructure. The major portion of this land is located to the east of White Patch, with the balance spread between the racecourse reserve at First Avenue and Sunderland Drive at Bellara.

This plan maximises the potential of existing State land on Bribie Island, creating the right mix of recreational and development opportunities for an improved quality of life for all Bribie Island residents and visitors. I congratulate all those who have been involved in developing the plan. I thank the Caboolture Shire Council for its contribution and support in the launch of the plan. I thank the many people in the local community, including the Bribie Island environment group, for their contributions. It is an outstanding example of State and local government, the private sector and local residents—many of whom are committed to maintaining the quality of lifestyle for which Bribie has become famous—working together to plan the future of their community.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Wheat Market Development

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: The State Government is driving new opportunities for Queensland's primary industries. The Government is delivering new science, technology and innovation to enhance our food and fibre production. At the same time, the Government is opening up new markets and strengthening existing trading partnerships for that production.

It gives me great pleasure to announce today that the State Government—through the Department of Primary Industries—is working to open up opportunities for Queensland wheat. The project is targeting the lucrative and largely untapped sponge and dough bread processing markets in North and South East Asia which are currently being serviced by our north American competitors. These markets include Japan, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore with the possibility that, as the pan bread market evolves in China, it could also adopt the sponge and dough process. At this stage, the sponge and dough wheat market in that region requires more than six million tonnes of wheat each year.

DPI is working in partnership with Quality Wheat CRC, BRI Australia and the Grains Research and Development Corporation on this project. Amongst its key aims is to identify key wheat quality characteristics required for bread manufacture by the sponge and dough process in Asia.

Recently, when I was in central Queensland, I launched a new wheat variety called Giles. This variety will open up new opportunities for us in Asia. This variety offers increased yields. Also, the quality of the flour from this variety means that it is very suitable for bread-making and it is also suitable for noodle-making in the Asian market.

In addition, I have announced an extra $250,000 in funding to advance breeding superior varieties and enhance plant disease research. Unfortunately, the grain industry has endured a very difficult winter season this year. This has followed a very disappointing winter harvest last year.

The groundbreaking project to position our wheat in Asia offers significant potential for Queensland. Indeed, as far as our graingrowers are concerned, it could be bigger and better than sliced bread.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Elective Surgery Waiting Lists

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.08 a.m.): I move—

> "That this Parliament condemns the Minister for Health for her callous manipulation of elective surgery waiting list figures that provides shallow self-promotion whilst ignoring the plight and pain of thousands of patients who are waiting for surgery."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Milk Prices

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.09 a.m.): I wish to express the outrage of members on this side of the House that deregulation of the processing and retail sectors of the dairy industry have forced the price of fresh milk well above that of soft drinks. Checks at a local supermarket revealed that Coca-Cola was selling at $1.20 per litre. Yesterday's 8c per litre increase by milk processor Parmalat has taken its recommended retail price to $1.31 per litre, but the absence of any price regulation means that retailers were charging $1.35 per litre and more. The price rise, effective yesterday, follows a previous increase of 6c per litre in April.

Deregulation of the processing and retail sectors of the dairy industry has not delivered benefits to consumers or dairy farmers.

Consumers are now paying higher prices for milk but none of the increase has been passed on to dairy farmers. Milk is one of the most healthy and nutritious foods available—a staple part of people's diets—yet under deregulation it has now been priced over and above the likes of soft drink.

For families on budgets, any increase in the price of groceries is hard to accommodate. Queensland appears to be following the experience of the deregulated Victorian market where the retail milk price is around $1.40 a litre. If the Victorian experience is anything to go by, under deregulation milk prices will continue to increase, widening the gap between milk and other far less nutritious alternatives.

Total deregulation of the dairy industry, including the removal of the regulated farm gate price, will result in farmers receiving less for their product. Farmers have not seen one cent of these two milk price increases, and if the dairy industry is fully deregulated they will receive even less for their product than they do now. The commercial pressures on the industry from the big three retailers and the big processors are massive and it is essential that the Beattie Government act to safeguard Queensland dairy farmers.

Deregulation is the No. 1 furphy in this State and, I believe, in this nation. Under deregulation, farmers get less, consumers pay more and the big processors and retailers get the cream. It is so unfair. The State Government has to indicate soon whether it will help dairy farmers and whether it is going to support the Federal Government's $1.8 billion scheme to soften the blow to dairy farmers.

Time expired.

Australian/Greek Cultural Festival, Townsville

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (10.10 a.m.): I would like to raise a positive matter that relates to the Townsville Greek community. It is worth remembering that Greeks were part of the first post Second World War wave of migrants to this country. All Greek migrants have wanted to belong and play meaningful roles in shaping the social, cultural and economic fabric of their adopted country. Australia's culture is still evolving and is largely being shaped by the six million plus people who have migrated here since World War II.

Greek communities are centred around their church, Orthodoxy, which is part of their cultural heritage. I know that my Greek friends understand that their first responsibility is to Australia. However, they also need to express their Greekness, such as on 25 March, which is the Greek National Day, when Greeks celebrate regaining their nation after more than four centuries of Turkish oppression.

Throughout Australia, Greek festivals abound. They become a celebration of food, music, dance and culture. Our acceptance of these festivals create a sense of belonging and aids community harmony and social cohesion. They are a true celebration of the benefits of cultural diversity.

The Australian/Greek Cultural Festival, held in Townsville on 13 and 14 March this year, was the inaugural festival. It provided a unique opportunity for north Queensland residents from Mackay to Cairns to experience traditional Greek cuisine, music, Hellenic exhibition, dancing and wine tasting. Never before has an attempt been made by a regional Australian community to be included in a metropolitan network. The Townsville Greek community was the first to do so. Townsville now has the opportunity to host more of these festivals, which will eventually rival those held in the major southern cities.

This week, Ministers from the Beattie Government received plaques for their support and endorsement of the Greek cultural festival. The Honourable Matt Foley was able to be present at the festival, but plaques were also given to the Honourable Jim Elder and the Honourable David Hamill in appreciation of their joint support.

This support from the State Government was coupled with another award: over the weekend the Greek community won Organisation of the Year. Well done! Because of the strong cultural links in Townsville, there are many active multicultural groups in the community. The Greek community is to be commended as they continue to offer support to newly arrived migrants and help ease the impact of the major changes that those people must make and which many of us take for granted. I congratulate the Townsville Greek community and I look forward to the next festival with eager anticipation.

Anzac Day Legislation

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.13 a.m.): Today, I rise to express very strong concern about the latest example of arrogance and thuggery on the part of this Government and the very deliberate and

orchestrated threats that have been made to the RSL over legislation currently before the House to which I will not refer in detail. I am particularly concerned about reports in the Cairns Post that the State Government has warned RSL clubs that it will crack down on—

> "Diggers who have a shot of rum with breakfast if the league pursues new Anzac Day legislation."

Mr GIBBS: I rise to a point of order. The article to which the Leader of the Opposition refers in the Cairns Post is not correct.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will hear the point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The Minister, who is threatening the RSL, is now out to silence me.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I will hear the Minister's point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Minister's office said—

> "If they want us to crack down on nightclubs and bars"—

Mr GIBBS: I rise to a point of order.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I intend to hear this point of order.

Mr GIBBS: What in fact was said—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, under what Standing Order is the Minister rising?

Mr GIBBS: Mr Speaker, I am taking a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister is rising on a point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, this is a deliberate attempt to silence me. This is a directive that has been issued by his office—a threat to the RSL.

Mr GIBBS: This is a deliberate attempt by the Leader of the Opposition to postulate and fabricate a scenario that he wants to put to this Parliament.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I am merely quoting the Minister's office.

Mr GIBBS: Mr Speaker, I shall quote—

Mr BORBIDGE: There has been no correction by the Minister.

Mr GIBBS: Mr Speaker, I shall quote—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will also resume his seat. I have not had the opportunity to listen to this point of order. The Leader of the Opposition jumped up and intervened while the point of order was being taken.

Mr BORBIDGE: My time is up. It has worked.

Mr SPEAKER: I am still going to listen to the point of order. That is what I intend to do. I will hear the Minister's point of order.

Mr GIBBS: My point of order is to correct what the Leader of the Opposition said and make known to the House what was in fact said yesterday by the spokesperson from my office. I shall quote what he said. He said—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. That is not a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to listen to the Minister first. How can I rule on a point of order if I cannot listen to it?

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, the Minister's point of order has taken up all of our debating time.

Mr SPEAKER: That is the member's fault, not his. I ask the Minister to state his point of order very quickly.

Mr GIBBS: I shall quote what was in fact said by the spokesperson from my office—

> "The Government cannot justify changing the law on the basis of one isolated incident where there was no evidence that persons allegedly involved had even been in a nightclub.
>
> It would be hypocritical of us to crack down on nightclubs when we turn a blind eye to Diggers drinking rum and milk at 4.30 am in clubs."

And good luck to us. So we should.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you.

Interruption.

PRIVILEGE

Anzac Day Legislation

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.16 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I wish to quote into the parliamentary record the facts—

> "Mr Gibbs's spokesman said if the State RSL was disappointed in the Labor party's intention to vote against the proposal, it could have said so the first time the Bill was proposed.
>
> 'Why did it never make any submission on this Bill the last time?' the spokesman said.

'If they want us to crack down on nightclubs and bars, we will have to look at our policy of turning a blind eye to Diggers drinking rum at 4.30 in the morning with their cornflakes."

Mr SPEAKER: I have got the member's point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: No, it is a matter of privilege. The point is that the Minister has used his office to seek to intimidate the RSL in terms of expressing opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: That is not a matter of privilege.

Mr BORBIDGE: This is legislation before the Parliament.

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

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister asks that it be withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: If the Minister was overseas at the World Cup in Cardiff and was not aware of what his office was saying, I will withdraw whatever he finds offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: Good. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

PRIVILEGE

Anzac Day Legislation

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.17 a.m.): I rise on another matter of privilege. My further matter of privilege is that there is no doubt whatsoever that this Government has sought to threaten the Opposition in respect of this legislation.

Mr SPEAKER: No, that is not a matter of privilege.

Mr GIBBS: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I draw to your attention that this matter is listed for debate in the House this evening and, as I understand it, should not be discussed at this time of the morning.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I refer you to a ruling made by you recently in which you substantially widened the opportunity for members to raise issues provided that they do not refer specifically to legislation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Call Centres

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (10.18 a.m.): Phone rage is something that politicians cop from time to time, but workers in call centres endure phone rage as a daily feature of their work. Recently, I hosted a breakfast for workers employed by call centres in Brisbane. This is a rapidly growing industry as airlines, banks and other customer service agencies phase out face-to-face contact and use telephone technology. As I listened to some conditions that call centre workers tolerate, I could not help thinking that this industry, whilst being good in terms of job creation, is at risk of being the sweatshop of the new millennium. I ask members to think about what it would be like to be crowded into a small workplace, dealing with hundreds of phone calls each day, with many callers under pressure and frustrated by long waiting times.

While the Brisbane City Council call centre staff reported good working conditions, other organisations did not pass the grade. Call centres do provide much-needed jobs, particularly if they are located in economically depressed regional centres. Call centre employers, however, must ensure that consumers receive fair and reasonable wait times and they must ensure that call centre workers receive fair and reasonable working conditions. Workers must have access to secure work, not highly insecure casual work.

I commend the Australian Services Union for its efforts in getting workers organised in this emerging industry. Next time that members dial up to book a flight or pay a bill and are left hanging for a while, spare a thought for the workers on the end of the line. They may be just as frustrated with this new form of customer service.

Surgery Waiting Lists

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.20 a.m.): In the International Year of Older Persons, hundreds of elderly Queenslanders who are blind or in pain are unlikely to receive the surgery that they need under the Beattie Government. Currently, officially more than 38,000 people in this State are waiting for surgery, but the real figure is far higher because of the fudged job that is being done by the Minister for stealth, the Minister for ward closures, Wendy Edmond.

The figures published in the Health Minister's elective surgery waiting list report do not reflect the thousands of extra people in the community who are awaiting surgery. While this Health Minister has talked about accountability, she has hidden documents that I have sought on the surgery figures by taking them to Cabinet after I have lodged freedom

of information requests. As one example, I refer to the latest elective surgery figures—

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact that the figures are published on the Internet and are readily available to every member of the public. I ask the member to withdraw that statement. It is totally inaccurate.

Miss SIMPSON: It is not untrue. It is not false. It is a true—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Did the Minister find the statement offensive?

Mrs EDMOND: I ask for that to be withdrawn. The figures are not hidden. They are published on the Internet.

Miss SIMPSON: If she is offended, I withdraw it, but it is not untrue. It is completely true.

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Did the Minister find it offensive?

Mrs EDMOND: It is untrue, it is offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Miss SIMPSON: If she finds it offensive I withdraw, but it is not untrue. As one example, I refer to the latest elective surgery figures—

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Speaker, I seek your indulgence. She has not withdrawn. She has repeated the allegation. It is untrue, it is defamatory and I find it offensive. I ask for it to be withdrawn. The figures are published on the Internet for everybody to see.

Miss SIMPSON: I withdraw again. However, I refer to the latest elective surgery figures which show only a modest number of people waiting for eye surgery at Nambour Hospital. However, in a different lot of figures distributed by the hospital to GPs, which I table, there is a wait of up to 58 weeks for appointments to even see an eye specialist. These people are not even on the surgery list yet. According to these figures, once they have seen a specialist they can wait for up to 82 weeks for surgery.

Time expired.

Australian Tourism Awards

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.22 a.m.): "Simply the best"—no, it is not the Tina Turner song. It is the far-north Queensland tourism industry as described by the Cairns Post last Saturday, and I can only but agree.

This year, Queensland tourism made a comeback in the 1999 Australian Tourism Awards, winning seven of the 28 categories. Significantly, three of those awards were won by companies in the Cairns region. Awards went to Skyrail Rainforest Cableway, which won the award for the major tourist attraction, and the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, which won the award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism. Both of those attractions are based at Smithfield in my electorate. Quicksilver Connections, which is based at Port Douglas, won the award for the major tour and transport operator. It was the second time that each of those winners had received national tourism awards, demonstrating both the quality and consistency of our tourism product. Tjapukai has also been the recipient of training awards, being the largest trainer of Aboriginal people in the State, if not nationally.

Whilst far-north Queensland won in three categories, the depth of our tourism product in the region is confirmed by the fact that an additional four companies were finalists in their particular categories, being State award winners. They were the Rainforest Habitat at Port Douglas for environmental tourism, the Rainforestation at Kuranda in the category of significant regional attraction, Wildscape Safaris for significant tour and transport operators and Novotel Palm Cove Resort for superior accommodation. The last three companies are also based in the Barron River electorate. We simply are the best.

My congratulations go to all four finalists and our three winning companies. I know personally of the hard work, dedication and professionalism that lies behind their achievements. I welcome this recognition of the word-class standard of tourism in our region.

Uniform Electricity Pricing

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.24 a.m.): It is interesting to see one Labor Minister supporting what is on the Internet and another being very wobbly about it. This Labor Government has dumped the policy of uniform electricity prices in the State, exposing Queensland householders to higher power prices. Distribution corporations—not the Government—are now responsible for maintaining uniform tariffs. The distributors have been given a set price up to which Treasury will meet the costs of uniform tariffs. If the price of power for the year is higher than the nominated price, the distribution companies will have to carry that extra cost. The only way that they will be able to carry that cost is to increase the price of electricity. Any

bid to do that uniformly will mean the corporations will be undercut by other retailers. This means an end to tariff equalisation.

This is a massive betrayal of the people of Queensland. Before the actions of the Labor Government, under the direction of the member for Brisbane Central and the member for Mount Isa, uniform power tariffs had bipartisan support in this State. That has been underpinned by regional development. Regional and rural Queenslanders have been abandoned by this Government. They have been dumped. The onus for uniform tariffs has been placed on Energex and Ergon in the hope that the Government will be able to duck responsibility for the price rises.

Queenslanders will not buy it and they certainly will not be in it. They will know who to blame: the member for Brisbane Central, the member for Mount Isa or their nearest sitting Labor Party member. I will be very interested to hear what the member for Mount Isa has to say—

Time expired.

Australian Workplace Agreements

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.26 a.m.): Over recent years in this House we have heard a lot from the likes of the member for Clayfield, Mr Santoro, and in Canberra from his Federal counterpart, Peter Reith, extolling the virtues of Australian and Queensland workplace agreements. Often they talk about the benefits for employers and workers alike. Whilst there might be some short-term cost savings for bosses, the cold hard facts are that workers who enter into AWAs get it in the neck. Let us look at the facts.

The September 1999 issue of the Agreements Database and Monitor, published by the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training at the University of Sydney, notes that of all currently operating Australian workplace agreements as at the end of the June 1999 quarter, 79.7% of union certified agreements provided for wage increases, 58.4% of non-union certified agreements provided for wage increases, but of the Reith Australian workplace agreements only 29.5% guaranteed a wage increase to workers. The message is clear for workers: of those who enter into an AWA, less than one-third will get a wage increase. It is worse for AWAs that are longer than three years, as 78% of workers get no wage increase over the life of the AWA.

I table the relevant pages from the report and seek leave to have a table of these agreements incorporated into Hansard.

Leave granted.

Type of Agreement—% of Current Agreements

Union Certified Agreement (n=1667)—79.7

Non-Union Certified Agreement (n=483)—58.4

AWA (n=241)—29.5

Mr LUCAS: The story is the same when it comes to conditions of employment negotiated in AWA's. The report states that collective non-union agreements and Australian workplace agreements are far more likely than union agreements to contain provisions to reduce the payment for non-standard working hour arrangements. Similarly, Australian workplace agreements, at 42.1%, and non-union collective agreements, at 35.2%, were more likely than union agreements, at 27.8%, to provide a daily span of hours greater than 12. All members will realise the necessity to work long hours from time to time, but repeatedly working more than 12 hours in a day can only lead to serious long-term effects on one's family and health.

The figures do not lie. Workers are better off sticking with the union, which can negotiate for them. They should never, ever trust the member for Clayfield, Mr Santoro, or the Federal Industrial Relations Minister, Mr Reith, who say that QWAs or AWAs will deliver a better outcome for the worker.

State of the Environment Report

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.28 a.m.): The State of the Environment report released yesterday, which commenced under the Borbidge Government, provides a snapshot of Queensland's environment. Tragically, Queensland's ability to respond to that report has been stifled by the Beattie Government's massive cuts to the environmental budget.

In its 1999-2000 State Budget, the Beattie Government has slashed $28.4m from the budgets of the Environmental Protection Agency and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. During the Estimates committee hearings, the Minister conceded that programs like the acid sulfate soil strategy and the Moreton Bay Marine Park management had not been provided with adequate funding. Spending in national parks has been slashed. Rangers are discouraged from working overtime, even in the event of bushfires, as unfortunately we have seen recently. Spending on pest control and weed control

has been slashed. In national parks alone it has been slashed by $120,000, despite the purchase of another 70,000 hectares of land and the planned addition of another 425,000 hectares under the Beattie Government's regional forest deal. A sum of $5.5m was recouped from the EPA by Treasury for what was called "expenditure smoothing".

The State of the Environment report found issues that need attention. That requires the Government to work with industry and the community to address those problems. The Minister should not use the report against rural industries as he tries to do. The Beattie Government must put its money where its mouth is and restore funding to those important environmental programs. No amount of glossy documentation or political speak-ups can make up for the Beattie Government's massive environmental budget cuts. Quite frankly, this Government's effort on the environment is a thorough and utter disgrace.

Time expired.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Royal Brisbane Hospital

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): I ask the Minister for Health: why has she closed two operating theatres and two wards at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, resulting in some 240 fewer operations per month, when the latest waiting lists reveal a doubling in the number of people waiting longer than acceptable for semi-urgent surgery at that hospital?

Mrs EDMOND: It would appear that it is not only the member for Maroochydore who needs some lessons on how to access information on the Internet; the Leader of the Opposition needs some also. The published waiting lists figures for October 1999 show a significant reduction in the number of semi-urgent Category 2 patients waiting longer than clinically desirable for surgery compared with the figures for the same date last year. In October 1999, 946 Category 2 patients—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. My question related to Royal Brisbane.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister will continue.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: No, that is not a point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: With respect, my question related to the Royal Brisbane. The Minister is waffling on about some other figures.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows the Standing Orders. Ministers can reply as they wish.

Mrs EDMOND: Rather than focusing on one hospital, we have a strategy that works across all of the hospitals in Queensland, including the one about which he should be asking a question, the Gold Coast Hospital, which is one of the major success stories. However, I notice he is not interested in it.

Yes, honourable members opposite are right; there is redevelopment going on at the Royal Brisbane Hospital and at Caboolture, Redcliffe and the Sunshine Coast, and that is turning around some of the patient flows. Opposition members have been ranting and raving about a radical new plan being forced through without planning by this Labor Government. Under us, that work is happening, instead of being frozen. I draw the attention of the Leader of the Opposition to the 1997 business cases for the Royal Brisbane Hospital, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Redcliffe and Caboolture Hospital redevelopments, which recognised the need to respond to changes in population and demand for services. I will quote from a document endorsed by my predecessor the member for Toowoomba South. It states—

> "The Master Plan proposed in 1996 for both Redcliffe and Caboolture Hospitals stressed the need to develop complementary district services aimed at reducing the non-tertiary utilisation of inner metropolitan hospitals by the residents of the lower Sunshine Coast."

It went on to state—

> "It is expected that the changes in flows currently going to the metro tertiary hospitals will take time and there will need to be a clear management strategy to ensure the flows happen. Newly built beds at Redcliffe and Caboolture will open gradually and existing beds at RBH will be closed down over time."

Time expired.

Royal Brisbane Hospital

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct another question to the Minister who has presided over 240 fewer operations per month at the Royal Brisbane.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is that the Leader of the Opposition's question?

Mr BORBIDGE: No, I am directing it to her.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will direct it to the Minister for Health.

Mr BORBIDGE: I have not asked it yet.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will refer to the Minister as the "Minister for Health".

Mr BORBIDGE: Yes, the Minister for Health.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Right. Fine.

Mr BORBIDGE: Are you right, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Yes. The Leader of the Opposition will direct his question to the Minister for Health.

Mr BORBIDGE: Righto. Fine.

Mr Elder: A bit touchy this morning, are you?

Mr BORBIDGE: No, I am fine.

Government members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, they are a rowdy lot, are they not?

I ask the Minister for Health: why has she presided over a reduction of 1,066 full-time equivalent positions in the Health Department when there has been an increase of over 5,000 jobs across the Public Service?

Mrs EDMOND: Again, I will give them advice from somebody they dearly love, and that is Alan Jones. I say to them: do what he says, not what he does, and read the fine print. If they have a look at that report, they will see that in the fine print in the general notes it is stated—

> "Employee numbers published by individual agencies may vary from those in this table due to differing dates of data capture and definitional issues relating to employee status."

I was somewhat surprised by those figures and I asked the same question that the Leader of the Opposition asked. That does not reflect what is happening in Queensland Health. Both the 1998 and the 1999 employee numbers printed in the report are very different from those published in the MPS. I understand that is because the Public Service Commissioner's report is a snapshot for one day. It does not look at the collective figures. The report is very misleading. Simply, different things are measured. One measure is a snapshot and does not take into account the complexity of categories. If the Leader of the Opposition looks at the MPS, he will see that there has been a significant increase in the number of people employed in Queensland Health. Off the top of my head, I believe there are 173 extra mental health staff, 25 extra school health nurses, 22 extra emergency doctors and nurses and 18 extra child health nurses. They are there. Anybody can see them. We are putting these people into service delivery areas. Everyone around the State has benefited from those extra staff in service delivery. Quite simply, honourable members opposite are comparing apples with oranges. Again, they should listen to what Alan Jones says, and read the small print.

Queensland Achievements

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to his repeated claims that Queensland is leading Australia in many fields, and I ask: what evidence does he have to support that assertion?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for that very important question. I would have thought that all honourable members would want to see Queensland leading Australia and the world. I thank the honourable member for the question.

I am pleased to be able to tell the House that Queenslanders are once again proving to the rest of the country that we are the top State. Last night, along with the Honourable the Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities, I attended the Sportswoman of the Year awards and announced that Karrie Webb is our top sportswoman for 1999. Her achievements are awe inspiring. Karrie has blitzed the Ladies Professional Golf Association circuit, wining her first major tournament in Canada and claiming five other LPGA titles. That is not bad! She is the leading money winner this year in women's golf, with 19 top 10 finishes from 21 events. Karrie is proof positive that Queensland breeds some of the nation's finest athletes. I am sure every member of this House joins me in congratulating her on her superb effort and her award.

We are not just good on the sports field. We are also leading Australia in literary matters. The inaugural Premier's Literary Awards, announced on 13 October during the Brisbane Writers Festival, amounted to $115,000—the nation's most generous. This year's award winners included two

Queenslanders—Courier-Mail Chief Reporter Tony Koch, who won the advancing public debate category, and Jillian Atkinson, who won the emerging Queensland author category. They have proved that this State has literary talent equal to that anywhere in the world. I know that the Minister for The Arts shares that view.

Queensland also has a reputation as a rocks and crops exporter. The exciting news as we enter the new millennium is that we are also gaining an international reputation as manufacturers and exporters of new industry products. The quality of our exports was evident at the recent Premier of Queensland Awards for Export Achievement held in October, attended by me, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Transport. Brisbane plastics manufacturer EGR Pty Ltd was named the 1999 Queensland exporter of the year and also received the large manufacturer award. I take this opportunity to congratulate all 91 entrants in the 10 categories for boosting our reputation as an exporter. Their collective enterprise, determination and achievements against worldwide competition represent export earnings exceeding $1.3 billion for Queensland. $17 billion of the State's gross domestic product is generated by the export of our goods and services, which in turn generates thousands of jobs for Queenslanders. These are just three areas of endeavour that demonstrate clearly that Queensland is not only leading Australia but is also showing the world that it is the Smart State. Notwithstanding the continuing attempts by the Opposition to undermine Queensland, we will fight for, represent and look after Queensland's interests.

Specialist Access Plan Figures

Miss SIMPSON: I refer the Minister for Health to the fact that some 12 months ago she identified some 35,000 afflicted people who were in desperate need of specialist consultation and she boasted about developing a plan to enable these people to access specialist services, and I ask: how many people have been treated under her specialist access plan, how many people are still waiting to see a specialist and when will the specialist access plan figures be published?

Mrs EDMOND: Again, obviously members opposite do not read what is published on the Internet or this member would be able to work out that an extra 3,500 people got access to elective surgery last year—3,500 more than the previous year.

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. I asked about specialist outpatient access. It is not on the Internet.

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Speaker, she is confusing a range of things, but that is nothing new and I do not hold it against her.

One of the big problems I found when I came into this position was in relation to outpatient department services. Yes, that is something that we are aware of and we are working on it. One of the problems that we found was that a huge number of people do not turn up at outpatient appointments. We also found that none of the hospitals have systems for tracking outpatient delivery and outpatient services. For example, when we asked the Royal Brisbane Hospital about its outpatient clinics, it could not even tell us how many it had, let alone how many people accessed them. That is why when we cut 40 out of the more than 900 per month—and I say "more than 900" because nobody is actually quite sure exactly how many they have—there was a lot of squealing on the other side, but really that is a tiny amount that has already gone out to Redcliffe and Caboolture.

But this is a problem. We are working on trying to get a system for keeping track of outpatient appointments, for culling the ones who have already gone off that list for some reason—they got better and all of the rest of it—because one of the problems we have is that something like 30% do not show. In terms of accessing the hospitals and the systems, I am happy to say that increasing numbers are being seen at our public outpatients; we have improved the efficiency in our emergency departments.

The only problem we really have is the fact that the Federal Government's move on private health, which has not shown any increase in private health cover or people going into private hospitals, has been a $1.7 billion disaster. We are still seeing between a 4% and 6% increase in throughput in our public health system—about three times the population growth rate—which is a major concern not just to me but to Health Ministers around the States. That is why we are arguing with the Commonwealth Government about recognising that in the HOCI, and I am delighted to inform the House that the independent arbiter has also recognised that the States deserve more funding. If the member read the front page of the Australian today, she might have seen that.

I think our position is pretty well defined. We are working very hard for the people of

Queensland and the public health patients who are accessing our hospitals in record numbers.

Millennium Celebrations

Mr PURCELL: I refer the Premier to the fact that just about every country in the world is gearing up to celebrate the new millennium with special events planned for New Year's Eve, and I ask: can he give details of events planned by the Queensland Government?

Mr BEATTIE: The end of one year and the beginning of another is always a time for reflection and celebration. The year that spans the threshold of a new century and a new millennium is a very special one. There is some debate as to whether the start of the new millennium should be officially recognised as 1 January 2001 or 1 January 2000. However, none of us can ignore the fact that the major millennium celebrations will take place around the world on this coming New Year's Eve.

My Government is organising celebrations which will continue through 2000 as the lead-up to our Centenary of Federation. Today at the Queensland Theatre Company rehearsal space, otherwise known as the Shed, I am launching the exciting millennium celebrations program arranged by the Centenary of Federation Queensland Committee. For our program of events, the Centenary of Federation Queensland Committee has chosen the themes of renewal and inclusion. Those themes will focus on our young people, indigenous Australians, our multicultural community and our environment.

The millennium events team and the Centenary of Federation Queensland Secretariat has concentrated on events for under 18s in alcohol and drug free environments. So the close of 1999 will see dance parties linked over the Internet, public arts installations and performances, emerging music and film and, to kick-start the New Year's Eve celebrations here in Brisbane, a spectacular rainbow serpent lantern parade. We will be joining forces with the Brisbane City Council, the Queensland Art Gallery, the Youth Arts Collective and various community arts groups to create an awesome four-day event focusing on youth culture. As I said, that will be launched today, and the Treasurer and I and other Ministers will be there. The rainbow serpent lantern parade will combine the ideas of a lantern parade and Chinese new year dragon. They will focus on indigenous culture and legend. There is something in this program to suit every Queenslander. I invite every member of this House to encourage their constituents to join in these festivities.

Indeed, today a number of people will be participating in the launch via the Internet. In an Internet chat room, there will be a young person from Grade 11, Bonnie Sheehy, a student from Kirwan State High School in Thuringowa. She will be receiving the excellence award this year for being the top student overall in the grade. She has an interest in music and art. She will be participating in the Xit 99 project and may also attend the InterDance in Thuringowa. There will be representatives from Ipswich, Emerald and others who will be participating via the net.

In addition to all of this, of course, we will make certain that there are programs in place to ensure that, with Schoolies Week coming up and other celebrations during New Year's Eve, there will be responsible and appropriate checks and balances in place to ensure that, while people enjoy themselves, they do not do it to excess. I would appeal to all levels of the community to ensure that New Year's Eve is a great time for celebration, but a safe one.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Dr WATSON: I refer the Minister for Health to her latest waiting list figures, which show that the number of patients waiting longer than the ideal time for Category 2 essential surgery has blown out 13% at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, 18% at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital, and 23% at the Prince Charles Hospital, and I ask: can she explain to the 485 patients at these hospitals who have been waiting for up to a year or more for surgery why she has closed down wards and operating theatres and failed to provide appropriate surgery alternatives at other hospitals?

Mrs EDMOND: I am delighted to answer the question. The theatres at the Royal Children's Hospital have been closed down because they are being pulled to pieces. We thought it was actually a good idea not to operate while they are pulling them down and all the rest of it. The surgery from the Royal Children's Hospital is actually being done at the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

Dr Watson: You didn't provide alternatives elsewhere.

Mrs EDMOND: Yes, they are being done at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. So it is all in a good cause. I actually would prefer that we do not operate on patients when the ceiling is being pulled out. It really has detrimental effects.

A Government member interjected.

Mrs EDMOND: There is dust and all the rest of it. In terms of the Royal Brisbane Hospital, they have actually been doing more surgery with less theatres. All it needed was some efficiencies there.

Why is there an increase during winter? If honourable members have a look at every single press release I have put out on elective surgery, they will see that I said elective surgery goes up and down depending on what else is happening in the hospital. During winter months, the waiting time always goes up because of the increase in medical procedures and medical admissions because people get winter ills and chills.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. For the benefit of the Minister, October is not winter.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is a frivolous point of order.

Mrs EDMOND: For the benefit of the member for Surfers Paradise, I point out that the figures that came out in October covered July, August and September, which in the southern hemisphere equals winter. Are we all in agreement on that?

Theme Parks

Mr MICKEL: I ask the Honourable Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Trade: can he outline what moves have been made by successive Queensland Governments to attract major theme parks to Queensland?

Mr ELDER: I started to allude to this subject yesterday when I outlined to the House the Starland project, the Disneyland project—the Fantasyland project—that the Leader of the Opposition was so keen to attract in the dying days of his Government so that he would have one big project to his name. He gave the proponents of that project $1.4m—straight in their pocket and straight out the door. It was a loan of $1.4m that was never repaid. In total, including consultancy fees, that project cost the Government $2m. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition said that Queensland still owned the intellectual property of that project. That is $1.4m worth of intellectual property.

I went and looked for that intellectual property. For the information of the House and those in the galleries, I can say that I found the intellectual property. I hold up the intellectual property that cost Queensland $1.4m. The front page of this document states—

"Once upon a time"—

Mr Gibbs: Once upon a time in the Fantasyland of Rob.

Mr ELDER: It was in the Fantasyland of Rob, down at the bottom of the garden with the pixies—"When you wish upon a star". The second page states—

> "In the minds of a million children and adults, one name triggers a response; an emotion, an irresistible impulse that makes us say ... one of these days 'I'm going there'."

The white-shoe brigade did go straight there: they went straight to the Leader of the Opposition and got $1.4m and put it in their pockets.

This document is 29 pages of intellectual property. That is $40,000 a page. They might be doing well if they had some information on the page that outlines the project. As the Leader of the Opposition was prepared to give them $155m and a range of infrastructure support, I thought, "This has got to be a good plan." So I started to read through the through the executive summary of the document——

A Government member: A cunning plan.

Mr ELDER: It was a really cunning plan. It was a fantasy plan. Then I got to the location plan—blank! It is one of those do it yourself, fill in the blanks projects. The location had a master plan and it too was blank. I thought that there had to be more, so I went to the page titled "The Gate Precinct". At least that page has a border. Queensland paid $40,000 for a border. I kept looking, believing that there had to be more, and I found another development concept that was again blank—another case of fill in the space, do it yourself, go to the door of the Opposition and pick up $1.4m of taxpayers' money, put it in your pocket and end up with intellectual property.

Ambulance Service, Response Times

Mr MALONE: Mr Speaker—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: I would like the Leader of the Opposition to take a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Will the Leader of the Opposition allow his member to ask a question?

Mr MALONE: I ask the Minister for Emergency Services: is she aware that on Saturday morning a 92-year-old Banyo woman was forced to wait more than three hours for

an ambulance after having fallen and broken her arm? Is she also aware that despite the pain and agony of her predicament that lady had to organise alternative transport to hospital? Will the Minister be offering an apology for that disgraceful and yet unexplained delay?

Mrs ROSE: I am happy to have a look at the detail of the case. The member is not referring to Mrs Mason by any chance, is he?

Mr Malone: No.

Mrs ROSE: I am very happy to take the details.

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs ROSE: The member wrote to me about Mrs Mason and we have provided a response.

I am quite happy to take all the details of the case to which the member refers. I would have to look at what time the call was made to the Ambulance Service and what time an ambulance responded. If the member provides me with all the details, I will have a full investigation conducted.

Starland Project

Mr LUCAS: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: can the Minister provide further details of the previous Government's waste on what has become known as Fantasyland?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for the question because—surprise, surprise—disappointingly there is more. Once upon a time, in the bottom of the garden, there were Goofy, Daffy and Pluto. At the time they offered up $155m. So desperate was the Government of the day for a project that it accepted this document as the intellectual property on which to waste $1.4m. Everyone needs to understand that this is worth $1.4m. That document is all that is in the State records regarding the intellectual property of that project.

Mr Mackenroth: That's what it cost, not what it's worth.

Mr ELDER: I am sorry. The member for Chatsworth is certainly right. It is not worth that much; it cost that much.

Let us go further. So desperate was the Leader of the Opposition for Fantasyland, Frontierland, Adventureland—while he was down in the garden with the pixies—that he went even further. Not only did he offer up this document for the loan but he also wrote to the Chairman of Walt Disney Attractions and said—

> "I acknowledge your indication that there is likely to be an initial economic gap in the order of $A300-500 million ..."

Mr Schwarten: Some gap.

Mr ELDER: That is some gap. Honourable members should remember that the Leader of the Opposition is the person who is lecturing us about fiscal management. He went on to say—

> "... should any component of the economic gap prove not to be amenable to management"—

that is, the management of the company that it was getting up—

> "my Government is prepared to ensure the financial completion ..."

In other words, so desperate was the Leader of the Opposition to get a project, he offered up half a billion—

Mr Welford: An open chequebook.

Mr ELDER: He offered an open chequebook to get that project up. He compromised us by coughing up $1.4m for the intellectual property and offering up at least $500m for this project with no—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The Minister knows that those figures were subject to negotiation. That is part of the reason that the new Premier sent Wayne Goss as a special envoy to Los Angeles to follow up discussions following recommendations made by the Treasury Department.

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

Mr ELDER: We walked away. That is the difference. Under the Leader of the Opposition the figures could have gone higher—

Mr Beattie: $4.5 billion.

Mr ELDER: When it went to Hong Kong, it cost $4.5 billion. He would have taken our credit rating and flushed it straight down the tube.

Poker Machines

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr BEANLAND: I refer the Treasurer to the fact that an application has been made for a general liquor licence and poker machine licence in a shopping centre at 185 Belmont Road, Tingalpa, next door to an established child-care centre. I ask: will the Treasurer guarantee that the application for 31 poker machines will be refused?

Mr HAMILL: Mr Speaker, I had difficulty hearing, because the Leader of the Opposition was being really noisy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Would the member like to repeat the question? It would be easier to hear without the noise.

Mr BEANLAND: An application has been made for a general liquor licence and poker machine licence in a shopping centre at 185 Belmont Road, Tingalpa, next door to an established child-care centre. I ask: will the Treasurer guarantee that the application for 31 poker machines will be refused?

Mr HAMILL: I note that in recent weeks the member for Indooroopilly has been taking over the mantle as the Opposition Treasury spokesman in relation to gaming. I think that is—

Mr BEANLAND: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This is about families, which he doesn't give a fig about.

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

Mr HAMILL: I stand by my comment. I thought that the member for Moggill was the Opposition Treasury spokesperson. What this illustrates is that the member for Indooroopilly does not know too much about either liquor licensing or gaming licensing.

Ms Bligh: Or families.

Mr HAMILL: Or families, for that matter. So that I can help the honourable member—he does need a lot of help—I will provide him with just a few facts. Firstly, he asked me to guarantee that a liquor licence would not be granted. I inform the honourable member—

Mr BEANLAND: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I distinctly asked about poker machines.

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

Mr HAMILL: I refer the member to the question he asked. He specifically asked about an application for a liquor licence. I respond by saying that the Treasurer does not grant liquor licences.

Mr BEANLAND: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I said, "Will the Treasurer guarantee that the application for 31 poker machines will be refused?"

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is another frivolous point of order. I warn the member for Indooroopilly now under Standing Order 123A.

Mr HAMILL: I will reiterate the point, because the shadow Minister for Families does not know much about liquor licensing. He knows even less about gaming. If he had consulted with the member for Moggill, the member for Moggill would have been able to inform him that just because an establishment obtains a liquor licence does not mean a licence for a site for gaming automatically follows. It is quite a separate and distinct process, and the member for Moggill can confirm that.

The member for Indooroopilly should be directing any inquiry about a liquor licence to the Liquor Licensing Division. Then, and only if a liquor licence were granted, a site might apply for a licence for gaming machines. Licences for gaming machines, of course, are granted by the Gaming Commission. This is an arrangement which has existed for a long time. Indeed, it existed even when the honourable member for Indooroopilly was the Attorney-General in this place. He did not know much about the law then and he certainly does not know much now.

Gaming Machines

Mr PITT: I refer the Treasurer to the claim made by the member for Moggill in today's Courier-Mail that the Queensland Government was "hooked on poker machine profits". I ask: what is the Government doing to curb the proliferation of machine gaming in the community?

Mr HAMILL: This is a very appropriate follow-up to the misguided question asked by the member for Indooroopilly. I will inform the honourable member for Mulgrave of several things. Firstly, some months ago I established a review into gaming in Queensland. My Parliamentary Secretary and the members for Archerfield and Cairns are working to finalise that report. That report was all about ensuring that a proper balance occurred between gaming and the public interest, to ensure that there were adequate benefits flowing from gaming to the community. We were very concerned about disbenefits and the social impact of gaming. I understand that that report is progressing with a range of recommendations to ensure the public interest is well served.

Secondly, I have made it very clear that I support measures which will enable the wider community to be directly involved in decisions made with respect to gaming sites. That is why in the case raised by the honourable member for Indooroopilly, under arrangements which I strongly support, we would see the local community having a direct say in licensing decisions of new gaming sites and the

numbers of machines that may be placed at those sites.

Thirdly, I have also made it clear that I see my responsibility as the Minister responsible for gaming policy as being not to try to derive additional revenue but rather to ensure that there is a responsible gaming policy in place.

This is what I find is quite extraordinary when I see the claims that have been made by the likes of the member for Indooroopilly, or indeed the member for Moggill, in relation to this matter. We have had all these crocodile tears being shed about increased numbers of gaming machines. Why has there been a significant uplift in the number of gaming machines? I will tell the House why. The architect of that, the white paper of the member for Moggill, allowed for a significant uplift in gaming machines for clubs and hotels. It is particularly in relation to hotels that we have seen such a significant increase.

Dr WATSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr HAMILL: Secondly—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order. And I hope it is a point of order.

Dr WATSON: It is a point of order. The issue of the white paper and the legislation before the Parliament was accepted wholeheartedly by the Opposition—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. Resume your seat.

Dr WATSON:—and by the then shadow Treasurer.

Mr SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Resume your seat.

Dr WATSON: The shadow Treasurer knows—

Mr SPEAKER: Resume your seat! That is not a point of order.

Dr WATSON:—that it is the policy of this Government which has changed things—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You are debating the issue. It is not a point of order.

Mr HAMILL: Secondly, the issue of shopping centres was raised by the member for Indooroopilly. Under the administration of the member for Moggill and the member for Indooroopilly, where were the guidelines in relation to shopping centres and gaming machines? There were none! We have put in place clear guidelines with respect to gaming machines in the areas of shopping centres.

For the trifecta, do honourable members remember the legacy of the member for Moggill in respect of TABCorp, where they were going to try to rush additional machines across the community? The Opposition's position in relation to these matters is totally hypocritical.

Electricity Tariff Equalisation

Mr ROWELL: I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy to his claim that the Government is committed to uniform electricity tariffs, despite placing a limit on the tariff equalisation community service obligation payment to Ergon, and no doubt to Energex, and I ask: what is the benchmark price the Government has set beyond which it will not fund uniform tariffs for Ergon, and for Energex, for 1999-2000?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the shadow Minister for the question. On two occasions in this Parliament I have stated this Government's policy. I will say it again today. This Government is totally committed to a policy of tariff equalisation. When the member for Hinchinbrook or any of his colleagues can come into this Chamber and prove to us that as a direct result of the policy of this Government electricity prices have increased, I will take him seriously. Until such time I will treat those questions with the contempt they deserve.

More importantly, the member and his colleagues are marching up and down this State conducting a campaign of fear. The member knows, I know and the Leader of the Opposition knows that electricity prices in this State have not risen for many a long year. To those people who live in the regions of Queensland, I again give them a firm undertaking.

Yesterday there was obviously a flurry in the Opposition offices because they had discovered a sheet of paper and they thought they had this leaked document. In a flurry of excitement they came down to the Leader of the Opposition, who then went into conference with the shadow Minister. Then suddenly the shadow Minister rose to his feet, a hush descended on this Parliament and the journalists upstairs all picked up their pens, because this was the final blow. This was the blow that was going to destroy the Beattie Government.

What happened? The shadow Minister had a document. This document is produced every single morning. Right up until half past seven it gives the actual spot prices. From half past 7 onwards, the figures are forecasts. He comes into this Chamber and says, "I have this document."

Mr Schwarten: He had a dream!

Mr McGRADY: He had a dream that electricity prices in this State are going to go up. As I said earlier today, the figures the member for Hinchinbrook used are simply a forecast. The problem was that he did not even get the forecast right. He had the wrong figure! All I can suggest to my counterpart is that he moves out of this portfolio and lets somebody else take it over. Let the nasty apprentice take over.

ABC Radio; 4QR

Mr MUSGROVE: I refer the Premier to reports that the ABC plans to change the format of its Brisbane radio station 4QR and ask the Premier: does he support this change?

Mr BEATTIE: The democratic process needs a strong media to disseminate information and encourage debate. The ABC plays a key role in all that. The ABC has a charter to provide a full, unbiased, considered and reliable news service.

The Queensland public suffered a major loss of coverage of the political process when Queensland's special daily edition of the 7.30 Report was withdrawn. I have protested against that in the past. The ABC argues that it still covers State Government affairs on television through Statewide, which is a great program; but this is a weekly program which has to compete with the 6 p.m. commercial television news on Friday night. I know that it is replayed on Saturday, but the viewing times are not good.

On radio, the flagship of current affairs broadcasting has been the 8.30 to 9 a.m. slot Monday to Friday on ABC 612 4QR. This has comprised 30 minutes of agenda-setting news and interviews. It is the equivalent in many ways of a State-based AM or PM program. I understand that the ABC is planning to remove this program and extend the light and frothy breakfast show. In my view, this would be a further blow to the democratic process in Queensland, and I have written today to the ABC expressing my concern. I table that letter for the information of the House. It means that there is one fewer means of informing people about important and far-reaching Government decisions and one fewer means of scrutiny of those decisions for the Opposition. Radio audiences are generally at their highest around breakfast time and then drop off as the morning progresses. So this 8.30 a.m. to 9 a.m. slot assumes an even greater importance in terms of potential audience size.

Both sides of politics need to put pressure on the ABC to reverse this decision, which could see this important current affairs half hour follow the State-based 7.30 Report into history if we do not. I therefore invite the Leader of the Opposition to join with me in sending a letter to the ABC asking it to reconsider its decision and to guarantee the future of the half hour of current affairs between 8.30 a.m.and 9 a.m. each day. I invite him to do so because the Leader of the Opposition has been doing everything he can—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. In response to the Premier—my letter went yesterday, but I would be pleased to sign a joint letter with him, if that is what he wants.

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has been complaining to the ABC for some time about the amount of coverage the Government gets. He has been complaining about this program, but now that it is threatened with being removed he is out there still complaining. He whinges on every occasion—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: He sought to stand over the ABC, as he does with the Courier-Mail—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The remark made by the Premier is untrue and offensive. The only complaint that I have had with ABC management was when they put his mate Ross Fitzgerald on the other day.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will not debate the issue. Does he seek a withdrawal?

Mr BORBIDGE: Yes, I would like it withdrawn.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I make the point that my so-called mate was appointed to the Parole Board by the Borbidge Government, and the Leader of the Opposition appointed him. He was one of his appointments. I have not complained that the ABC has a commentator who was an appointee of the Borbidge Government to the Parole Board.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Retail Milk Prices

Dr PRENZLER: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to the anguish among thousands of struggling families over the most recent rise in the retail price of milk—and I might add that it has increased by 22c per litre since April—and I ask: can the Minister give

this House an assurance that further savage price rises will not be the order of the day post-deregulation? And can the Minister assure the House that he will strive to ensure that at least a portion of any retail price increases will flow back to the dairy farmers rather than supporting increased profits for the processors and supermarkets?

Mr PALASZCZUK: The honourable member has asked a very important question. I will try to detail to the honourable member the processes that were involved before the decision that this House made late last year and in force from 1 January this year. On 1 January 1999, Queensland came into line with all other Australian States in abolishing retail milk price controls. This action was agreed between Government and industry in 1993 and follows implementation of a number of industry adjustment measures and completion of the five-year transition period provided by the Dairy Industry Act 1993.

This Government has no controls over the price increase of 8c a litre announced by the processor Pauls Ltd to take effect on 8 November 1999. Nevertheless, the Government is concerned that deregulation does not appear to be delivering benefits to the community overall. Jurisdiction—

Mr Seeney: Surprise, surprise!

Mr Johnson: Finally, you woke up.

Mr Seeney: Welcome to the real world.

Mr PALASZCZUK: All those members voted for it last year. It was a unanimous vote by this House.

Jurisdiction in this area now lies at the Federal level, and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission oversees the behaviour of firms in the marketplace. It has not yet indicated whether there will be any action taken regarding this latest announcement, which will bring to 14c a litre the increase this year in the price of Pauls milk. I share the community's concerns about the latest developments and look for positive action at the Federal level, particularly following the recent spate of inquiries in this area to deliver some positive outcomes for consumers.

In conclusion, I would like to say this—and I reiterate it for the benefit of all members of this House: at the end of last year this House voted unanimously on the Dairy Industry Amendment Bill, which deregulated the price of milk and took it out of the control of the Government.

Olympic Football Tournament

Mr FENLON: I refer the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing to the Olympic football tournament to be hosted by Queensland at the Gabba between 13 and 23 September next year, and I ask: what level of interest has the Government received from parties seeking to be appointed creative director to stage the spectacular gala ceremony to open the tournament?

Mr GIBBS: The Olympic football tournament, as I have said here before, will be staged at the Gabba between 13 and 23 September next year. Of course, it will be an outstanding event for Queensland. The tournament kicks off two days before the official Olympic opening ceremony in Sydney so, in effect, the international spotlight will shine first on Queensland, because the first participation in the Olympic Games will actually take place in this State.

To celebrate and take advantage of this international exposure, the Government plans to stage a spectacular gala ceremony prior to the first match on 13 September. My department, in conjunction with Arts Queensland, advertised by tender for a creative director to design and stage the gala ceremony. The tender was advertised on 22 September in the Courier-Mail, the Queensland Government Gazette and on the Internet. While the creative concept will ultimately be a matter for the creative director, broad themes for the ceremony may include: Queensland youth; sport; indigenous people; multicultural affairs; and the Olympic movement.

Twenty-eight copies of the brief for tender have been accessed by companies or individuals with an interest in staging the ceremony, and expressions of interest for this tender closed on 29 October. A committee comprising senior representatives of the Departments of the Premier and Cabinet, and Tourism, Sport and Racing, relevant State Government agencies and SOCOG has been established to undertake the selection process and monitor progress of the successful creative director. The selection process is under way, and I am hopeful that we may be able to announce a successful tenderer later this month or in early December.

What I am delighted, of course, to be able to advise the honourable member for Greenslopes is that he can rest assured that the concept that was put up originally by the Leader of the Opposition—"Once upon a time"—will not be included in any shape or form in the opening ceremony.

Guardian Pest and Weed Control

Mr GRICE: My question is to the Minister for Fair Trading. The failure of Guardian Pest and Weed Control's home concrete slab termite infestation treatment has caused it to be fined $4,000 by the BSA. This company's failure has the potential to destroy the timber structure of 300 or more new and near-new homes, as it has done to Mr Robbie Merrit's home. This will require the QBSA to undertake soil tests totalling $600,000-plus, and could escalate to $30m or more in rectification/repair costs, and I ask: what action has the Minister taken to protect the QBSA Home Warranty Insurance Fund from such liability, given that this fund is required to finance the activities of the QBSA and the Queensland Building Tribunal?

Ms SPENCE: Obviously, in common with all Queenslanders, I am concerned about damage occasioned by subterranean termites. I have recently spoken on this issue in the Parliament. In fact, I believe I am the first Minister in this State to have taken on the issue of the subterranean termite. It is obviously something that Queenslanders have lived with—

Mr Gibbs: The termites are equally awaiting the Leader of the Opposition to enter the debate.

Ms SPENCE: That is a very unkind thing to say and I will not repeat it. Termites have caused problems ever since Queenslanders started building homes in this State. The BSA is particularly concerned about educating Queensland consumers. The authority has issued a number of publications which inform consumers of what they can do in order to protect their property against termite infestation.

More importantly, the BSA is working very closely with industry to ensure that pest control people—or supposed pest control people—who go around offering to rid premises of termites are properly trained. The types of chemicals used have changed in recent years. For some time there was some suspicion about whether the new chemicals would be as good as the old ones. I think we have managed to convince the industry that the new chemicals are environmentally friendly and are as good as the old chemicals which we have now abandoned.

Mr Schwarten: Unless you water them down.

Ms SPENCE: Provided you do not water them down. It is important that consumers understand that they need to question pest controllers who come to the door. If the price quoted seems cheap, possibly it is too good to be true. It is an expensive process to have a house property effectively protected against termite infestation.

My department has taken action against a number of pest controllers who were not doing the right thing. We will continue to take such action. Termite infestation is an important issue for Queensland consumers. It is an important issue for the BSA. I thank the honourable member for that question and for bringing this matter to the attention of the Parliament.

Trade Opportunities, China

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Can he advise whether any trade or business opportunities have arisen for Queensland businesses as a result of his trip to China in May of this year?

Mr BREDHAUER: In May of this year I advised Parliament of the trade mission that I led to Sichuan Province in China and the subsequent visit that my director-general led to Zhejiang Province. This trade mission was supported by Australia's Trade and Investment Office in Shanghai, by Austrade and by Queensland's private sector. Five transport-related Queensland private sector firms joined us on the mission and left China with significant business potential.

A Government member interjected.

Mr BREDHAUER: We ate just about everything except pachyderms, I can tell you. Austream, a Brisbane-based Chinese trading house, has won over $6m worth of contracts as a result of this trade mission. These contracts cover the supply of toll equipment and road-building equipment for the Chengdu Leschan Highway.

Queensland Motorways has been invited to participate in Sichuan's $100m smart card toll project to provide high level advice and consultation to assist in the development of project specifications. This project covers 1,000 kilometres of tollways across approximately 17 different operators. Queensland Motorways will provide management and technical advice, whilst Main Roads will provide ITS protocol and standards advice as well as facilitating some technical and hardware supplies from Queensland's private sector.

Barrier Systems Australia manufacture unique polymer, water-filled crash barriers that offer innovative transport and safety solutions. Barrier Systems Australia secured an initial

order for two container-loads of barriers to Sichuan. This is the company's first sale in mainland China after being present there for two years. Barrier Systems Australia has also been requested to return to progress negotiations on investing in a manufacturing facility in Sichuan that would have the potential to supply its barriers across western China. This would be achieved by sourcing raw materials, rotational moulding technology and management expertise from here in Queensland. As a result of these contracts, Barrier Systems Australia is expanding its operation and is now employing additional staff.

During the trade mission, Barrier Systems Australia secured a deal with another firm on the mission to export 40 container loads of barriers to Harding Licensing Systems in New Zealand. Harding Licensing Systems has won the right to implement a pilot site for its smart road studs as a precursor to further business opportunities. The company has also been invited to return to discuss road markers and traffic management systems. VFJ Technology—another Queensland company—has the smart card rights to the Sichuan smart card toll project and has an ongoing role in this project. Representatives from Queensland firms, namely Queensland Motorways, Cardno MBK, Connell Wagner and Pioneer Road Services also went to Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province.

During the trade mission, a joint statement of cooperation was signed. Connell Wagner, a Brisbane-based firm of civil engineers and bridge specialists, has secured phase one of the bridge design check and risk management contracts, in conjunction with senior Main Roads engineers, for a $US350m bridge project in Hangzhou City. Once again, Barrier Systems Australia has been invited to discuss the adoption of water-filled crash barriers to assist in Hangzhou's traffic management.

I believe that the Department of Main Roads has the opportunity to become the premier road agency in the Asia-Pacific region and thus take a leading role in delivering one of this Government's key outcomes—more jobs for Queenslanders.

Time expired.

Termite Infestation

Mr DAVIDSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Fair Trading. I refer the Minister to the QBSA web site news and information sheet entitled "Terminating Termites" which, until 28 October this year, stated—

> "If the contractors or home owner are not considered responsible for the termites gaining entry, then BSA insurance will be activated to help with the repair bill."

Despite this wording being changed on 28 October to "may be activated", when can we expect the BSA to commence the rectification of new homes currently affected by termites?

Ms SPENCE: Mr Speaker, I could hardly hear the member's question, but the BSA—

Mr DAVIDSON: I am happy to ask the question again if the Minister did not hear it. I refer to the QBSA web site news and information sheet entitled "Terminating Termites" which, until 28 October this year, stated—

> "If the contractors or home owner are not considered responsible for the termites gaining entry, then BSA insurance will be activated to help with the repair bill."

I ask: despite this wording being changed on 28 October to "may be activated", when can we expect the BSA to commence the rectification of new homes currently affected by termites?

Ms SPENCE: I do not think there is an issue here. The BSA acknowledges its role in assisting Queensland home owners who have problems with termites. The BSA goes through a number of processes before the insurance scheme is activated.

Firstly, the BSA goes back to the builder to see whether the ground, or whatever, has been properly prepared and whether the special termite walls which go under the house have been properly constructed. If the work has not been done properly in the first instance, the BSA goes to the builder and asks for rectification. The authority takes soil tests and goes through the whole process.

The last step that the BSA takes is to resort to the insurance scheme. However, there is no problem with this. I am not aware of any change of policy in this regard. I am not aware that the BSA is trying to rid itself of any obligation to help consumers in this regard. In fact, as the honourable member would be aware, the insurance scheme in this State is in a very strong position. I am very proud of the efforts undertaken by the managers of the fund.

I understand that 98% of consumers who need to make a claim on the insurance fund

have been successful. I would unequivocally say that Queensland has the best home insurance scheme in Australia. When the coalition was in Government it signed off on privatising the scheme. This Government rejected that plan. History has already shown that this Government was right in rejecting the coalition's model for privatisation. Similar schemes have been privatised in New South Wales and Victoria in the last two years and premiums for people in those States have increased. People have also experienced problems in getting their funds—

Time expired.

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

Before calling the Premier, I acknowledge in the public gallery the teachers, parents and students from Palm Beach State School in the Burleigh electorate.

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (11.29 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That the Parliament of Queensland calls on the ABC to reconsider its decision to withdraw the Carolyn Tucker program from the 8.30 a.m. to 9 a.m. timeslot Monday to Friday on 612 4QR. Parliament considers that the loss of this program would be a further blow to the democratic process in Queensland following the loss of the State-based 7.30 Report on ABC television.
>
> Parliament affirms its belief that a democracy needs a strong media to disseminate information and encourage debate and the ABC is seen as having a charter to provide a full and unbiased news service."

I move that motion, which will be seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, and I would like to also incorporate in Hansard a copy of a letter to the ABC that the Leader of the Opposition and I have both signed. Mr Speaker, I seek your leave to do that so that it is on the record.

Leave granted.

November 10 1999

Lucy Broad
ABC Acting State General Manager
GPO Box 9994
BRISBANE 4001 QLD

Dear Ms Broad,

We wish to express our deep concern at reports that the ABC plans to change the format of programming on 612 4QR.

We understand there are plans to remove the flagship local current affairs program, broadcasting between 8.30 am and 9 am on Monday to Friday, and extend the breakfast show.

The program presented by Carolyn Tucker is an agenda-setter and an important vehicle for providing information on and scrutiny of Government decisions.

The loss of this program would be a further blow to the democratic process in Queensland, following the loss of the State-based 7.30 Report on ABC television.

A democracy needs a strong media to disseminate information and encourage debate, and the ABC is seen as having a charter to provide a full and unbiased news service.

We urge you to re-consider any decision to axe the radio current affairs program in the interests of democracy and informed public debate in Queensland.

Yours sincerely,

(sgd) P Beattie
Hon. Peter Beattie MLA
PREMIER

(sgd) Robert Borbidge
Hon. Rob Borbidge MLA
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr BEATTIE: I think that this is a matter of some importance. I have no intention of delaying the issues before the House. The Leader of the Opposition and I have agreed on a time frame in which to hold this limited debate.

This motion is about providing access not only in terms of the Government to explain its policies but for the Opposition to make the Government accountable. If we look at what has happened in the media—and I have been in public life for well over 20 years—the media outlets for public debate are, in fact, shrinking, and they have been for some time. Too frequently, we get a focus of the major networks—and I am talking about ABC now—as being too Sydney/Melbourne oriented. However, this is the most decentralised State in Australia.

This motion is not just about being accountable in a democracy, it is also about being accountable throughout the State. Because we are the most decentralised State, we have people the length and breadth of Queensland and in the bush. They are entitled to know. The bush has demonstrated across Australia that it has had some concern about all the major political parties. I think that, in a

time like this, they are entitled to hear the issues debated by both sides of politics.

This is a bipartisan approach. It is a non-political approach. It is saying to the ABC that we believe that it is important that there be public debate and that the democratic process be accountable.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.32 a.m.): I have much pleasure in seconding the motion proposed to the House by the Premier. What is happening today is really quite unprecedented: politicians from both sides of the House are coming together and saying that we believe that the fair and objective coverage that the ABC in Queensland applies to the political process should continue and it should continue in its present form. In fact, in terms of the will of any Parliament throughout Australia on such an issue, this is probably unprecedented.

I would like to say that I understand that, in terms of the revised programming arrangements for the ABC, obviously that will involve the end of the Carolyn Tucker program. I understand also that there will be significant changes in the afternoon, which will mean that the Cathy Border program at drivetime will also be leaving us. I want to say that I do not think that that is acceptable. I regard both of those journalists as true professionals. We have seen that from both sides: the Premier has been Opposition Leader and I have been Premier. On occasions, we have both felt the heat. However, I think that we can be very proud of the standard of public affairs reporting that the ABC in Queensland has applied to political events in this State.

Yesterday, I wrote to Mr Donald McDonald AO, the Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, expressing my concern. Mr Speaker, I would seek your indulgence to also have that letter incorporated into the Hansard record of the Parliament.

Leave granted.

Dear Mr McDonald

I write to advise of my significant disquiet at programming changes announced for ABC Radio's Brisbane-based services, which appear to be further evidence that the Corporation has forgotten its vital role in effectively and fairly covering State affairs.

The Carolyn Tucker morning current affairs show is to end. This is the first time to my knowledge that Queensland has been denied its own ABC programme in this important listening slot. The afternoon State affairs coverage is also to be substantially reduced. These changes will disadvantage Queenslanders who demand quality, objective coverage of political and civic issues—the kind of quality and objectivity we pay to receive from the public broadcaster—and inevitably will lead to a decline in coverage of State affairs.

It is of particular concern that the announced changes to ABC current affairs coverage in Queensland follow the ABC's abandonment of the flagship television current affairs show The 7.30 Report as a State-produced programme. As the national public broadcaster, the ABC has a clear duty to support (and report) the regional imperatives that drive State affairs, and in my view cannot fulfil these duties with maximum effectiveness without locally-produced and local focused current affairs radio and television.

I would be grateful for an assurance that maximum coverage of State affairs remains a central ABC objective, and for an indication from you as to how the Corporation proposes to achieve this by reducing dedicated programming.

Mr BORBIDGE: This morning, I have much pleasure in joining with the Premier in signing this formal request to the ABC. I hope that the ABC will take what I believe should be the unanimous will of the Parliament of Queensland into account.

A few years back, we lost the 7.30 Report and political coverage in Queensland has not been the same since. We have suffered before because of this Sydneycentric view of the world by ABC management. I hope that Mr McDonald and Lucy Broad, who is the acting State General Manager, take on board the very strong concerns that have been expressed on both sides of politics in this place today.

I believe that it is important for the Parliament but, most importantly for the people, that the program formats that have been presided over by Carolyn Tucker and Cathy Border continue. They have our mutual respect. They are part of the political landscape of the State of Queensland. I think that it is quite wrong that, for whatever reason, ABC management has decided that Queensland can apparently do without these two programs. I do not think that is acceptable. I urge the ABC from the top to really have a good look at this proposal and make sure that, once again, Queensland is not short-changed, particularly when both sides of politics respect the enormous professionalism of the ABC reporters who come to this place and report on this place.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (11.35 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the motion that has been moved. I would like to

comment on its significance. Today, we have both sides of the House—the Government and the Opposition—speaking in one voice urging the ABC to listen to our concerns. I urge all Queenslanders to fall behind the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition and also echo their concerns about the ABC's proposal.

This is an important issue that affects all Queenslanders. Today, there is an opportunity for not just this House to send a message to the ABC but also for all Queenslanders to get behind the leaders of the political parties and say that we share the views and concerns of the members of this Parliament.

Mr FELDMAN Caboolture—ONP) (11.36 a.m.): I, too, rise to support the motion moved by the Premier and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. I must say that my particular organisation was always dealt with fairly by both Carolyn Tucker and Cathy Border. I think that it would be a shame if their voices were not heard, especially in country Queensland.

I think that it is a very opportune time for this Parliament to get behind this motion and send a message to the ABC that these programs are the essence of what is talked about in Queensland. Owing to the number of people who ring in and talk on these programs, I think that it would be a vast shame if these programs were dealt the blow that is proposed.

I would like to thank the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition for taking up the cudgels in relation to this matter and sending this message to the ABC.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.37 a.m.): On behalf of the Liberal Party, I would also like to support this motion moved by the Premier and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. Obviously, the Carolyn Tucker and Cathy Border programs are important to us, particularly in the Brisbane area, because they represent a significant mechanism for getting out the messages of both sides of the House. It is important that people have the opportunity to hear directly from the political leaders, whether they be from the Government or the Opposition. It gives me pleasure to support the motion.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (11.38 a.m.): I would like to say a few very quick words in support of this motion. Today, no woman has spoken to this motion, and these two women, who are very able presenters, are about to be axed from their positions by the ABC. I would like to say that they demonstrate the professionalism of females in their profession. The ABC should think again about taking women of that calibre off the major political commentaries of our day. That is exactly what is going to happen. I would like them to look at this proposal most carefully and to change their position.

Motion agreed to.

Mr BEATTIE: Unanimously, may I observe, and may there be any more unanimous resolutions of this Parliament.

Mr McGrady: Provided you move them.

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed.

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (11.38 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Constitution Act 1867."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (11.39 a.m.): I move—

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

Today I introduce a Bill that directly impacts on all members of the Legislative Assembly. The Constitution Amendment Bill 1999 represents the Government's response to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee Report No. 34, titled Report on relevance of House of Lords/House of Commons Joint Committee's Report on Parliamentary Privilege. The committee's report was tabled on 2 September 1999 and recommended that amendment to section 40A of the Constitution Act 1867, which relates to the powers, privileges and immunities of the Legislative Assembly, be made as a matter of urgency.

In its report No. 34, the committee advised that a House of Commons/House of Lords Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege has issued a report making 39 recommendations that will entail significant changes to parliamentary privilege in the House of Lords and House of Commons. Currently, section 40A of the Constitution Act 1867 links the powers, privileges and

immunities of the Legislative Assembly to those of the House of Commons. If the United Kingdom Parliament adopts any of the 39 recommendations relating to the powers, rights and immunities of the Parliament, those changes may then apply in Queensland under the current section 40A of the Constitution Act 1867. The committee's report No. 34 brought to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the fact that the Queensland Parliament's powers, rights and immunities may be changed without the Legislative Assembly's detailed consideration. On this basis, the committee recommended expediting amendment to section 40A of the Constitution Act 1867.

In its report, the committee did not comment on the merits of the House of Commons/House of Lords Joint Committee report. The committee conceded that some of the joint committee report recommendations may have some merit, although it did note that some of the recommendations conflicted with some of its previous recommendations. The committee correctly contends, however, that the issue is about sovereignty as much as it is about parliamentary privilege. It has previously been recognised by the Queensland Legislative Assembly that problems may arise in defining with certainty the powers, rights and immunities applicable in Queensland should the House of Commons divest itself of any of its powers or modify them in any way.

The Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, in its report Review of Parliamentary Committees of October 1992, expressed concern at the wording of section 40A. EARC contended that any change in the powers, privileges or immunities of the United Kingdom House of Commons would automatically flow to the Queensland Legislative Assembly. This linkage was then examined in the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee's Issues Paper No. 3 on Parliamentary Privilege in Queensland, released in July 1997. From this issues paper, on 8 January 1999 the committee tabled its Report No. 26, the First Report on the Powers, Rights and Immunities of the Legislative Assembly, its Committees and Members.

In the report, the committee indicated that problems may arise in defining with certainty the powers, rights and immunities applicable in Queensland should the House of Commons divest itself of any of its powers or modify them in any way. After considering various options, the committee recommended that section 40A be amended to provide that the powers, rights and immunities of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, its members and committees be those which applied to the House of Commons at the date of Federation, 1 January 1901.

I would like to emphasise at this point that the proposal to link the powers, rights and immunities of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, its members and committees to those which applied to the House of Commons at the date of Federation is similar to that which exists for the Commonwealth Parliament as provided for in the Commonwealth Constitution. It is not a controversial amendment. It wisely ties the powers, rights and immunities to a set period in time, meaning that they cannot be inadvertently amended by future changes in the United Kingdom Parliament.

In the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee's final report, Consolidation of the Queensland Constitution, tabled on 28 April 1999, the committee endorsed the recommended amendment to section 40A and included the amendment in its draft Constitution of Queensland Bill. The Government accepted the recommendation of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee to amend section 40A in its response to the committee's Report No. 26. The new version of section 40A was included in the Government's discussion draft Constitution of Queensland Bill 1999 at clause 8, which was released for public consideration and comment on 20 July 1999. As members are aware, the adoption of a consolidated constitution has been deferred until late 2000 pending the inquiry into reform currently being undertaken by the Queensland Constitutional Review Commission.

While the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee recognises that the Government's discussion draft Constitution of Queensland Bill 1999 includes its previous recommendation in relation to the powers, rights and immunities of the Parliament, the issue now is one of timing. This is important: the committee contends that the amendment to section 40A should be expedited separate to wider constitutional reform. The Government considers that there is merit in accepting the committee's recommendation to amend section 40A expeditiously. The potential for the Queensland Parliament's powers, rights and immunities to be changed by the United Kingdom Parliament without any consideration by the Legislative Assembly of Queensland is inappropriate and a dated notion for the independence and maturity of Queensland's Parliament.

The Government concurs with the committee that it is imperative that section 40A be amended now and not wait until the full consolidation and reform process in late 2000, given that the powers, rights and immunities of the United Kingdom Parliament may change in the intervening period. That is the timing issue. On this point, I understand that the House of Commons has recently considered and debated the House of Lords/House of Commons Joint Committee's report. Therefore, the need for this House to act quickly cannot be emphasised strongly enough.

This Bill is about protecting the powers, rights and immunities of the Queensland Legislative Assembly and will ensure that any changes to those powers will be made by this House and not the United Kingdom Parliament. As I have said, the proposal to link the powers, rights and immunities to those that applied in the House of Commons as at the date of Federation is similar to that which exists in the Commonwealth Constitution.

The amendment is not controversial and implements changes recommended by two parliamentary committees of this House. On this basis, I encourage all members to support the passage of this legislation. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Borbidge, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Dr G. Davis; Comments by Member for Clayfield

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (11.47 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday, the member for Clayfield acknowledged a visit to the public gallery by school children from his electorate. He then proceeded to give those innocent bystanders a graphic lesson in why politics and politicians are so often held in contempt, as they had to witness what was, in my view, a callous, cowardly and unprovoked attack by Mr Santoro on a public servant who, of course, cannot defend himself in this place. However, I am honoured to defend the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Dr Glyn Davis. I remain ashamed that the Leader of the Opposition allows his shadow Ministers to behave with such breathtaking disregard for the reputation of others.

Mr Santoro, the member for Clayfield, asserts that Dr Davis was appointed as a chief executive without going through a merit and selection process. He knows that this is not the case. Dr Davis was appointed to a director-general's position in late 1994 following national advertisement and interview by an eminent and independent selection committee. As I have told the House many times, my Government has appointed CEOs without advertisement only when they have gone through a full merit process in either Queensland or a comparable jurisdiction. We do so in accordance with the Public Service Act proposed and passed by a coalition Government. It is clear from his comments that Mr Santoro, the member for Clayfield, has no real information about the operations of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Dr Davis has proved a talented and able administrator. Let the House note a simple test: when the heads of Premiers' departments from every State and Territory in Australia recently met to elect one of their number as their chair and senior spokesperson for negotiations with the Commonwealth Government, they unanimously chose this outstanding senior public servant from Queensland. That was a decision made by both sides of politics.

The member for Clayfield, Mr Santoro, then criticised travel and entertainment by Dr Davis. He did not mention that every Director-General of the Premier's Department travels with the Premier of the day to Community Cabinet meetings and to major national and international meetings. I accept that costs are associated with Community Cabinet meetings, but this is about listening to the community.

The member for Clayfield did not compare the travel expenses of Dr Davis with those of his immediate predecessor, Mr Peter Ellis. In 1997-98 alone, Mr Ellis travelled overseas with Premier Borbidge to Hong Kong, Los Angeles, London and Paris, incurring travel costs in the course of his duty, just as Dr Davis does now. I have no criticism of Mr Ellis doing that. That was appropriate and he should have been there. The unhappy students from the Eagle Junction State School were then subjected to an outrageous set of assertions about entertainment by the director-general. Dr Davis entertains modestly and appropriately as required by his role as the head of the Queensland Public Service and as a representative of the Premier and the Queensland Government in a range of settings. For example, when the secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, Mr Max Moore-Wilton, recently sought discussions with the Queensland Government, Dr Davis provided him with standard departmental fare—a working lunch in a conference room. Indeed, Mr Santoro remains suspiciously quiet about the costs of entertainment, as he knows

from the Estimates hearings that typical working lunches provided by Dr Davis comprise sandwiches, orange juice and a fruit platter.

Mr Santoro made reference also to Peter Bridgman. For the information of the House, I table his personal details, together with his work history. I point out to the House that Peter Bridgman has worked for both sides of politics and, I believe, provided good advice to both sides of politics. If we look at his history, we see that he has worked for both sides of politics—and I have not worked out the exact dates—going back to Terry White and other Ministers. I think we need to rise above this sort of personal attack. For the information of the House, I table the information in relation to Peter Bridgman.

SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (11.51 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend various Acts about superannuation."

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy) read a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (11.52 a.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of the Bill is to amend the legislation governing the operation of the State's public sector superannuation funds to provide for the application of the Commonwealth Government's Superannuation Contributions Tax—"surcharge". The State's main superannuation funds fall under the Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990 and the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1970. In addition, the State provides benefits on retirement for judges via the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957 and the Governor of Queensland via the Governors' Pensions Act 1977.

The surcharge is an additional Commonwealth Government tax imposed on employer contributions paid to a superannuation fund on behalf of high income earners. The surcharge applies at the superannuation fund level and a conscious decision must be made to pass the surcharge to individual members. The Bill amends the Acts governing the Parliamentary and QSuper funds to ensure that the burden of the surcharge is passed on to members of Parliament and Government employees deemed to be high income earners under the Commonwealth Government's surcharge legislation. Had the Government not introduced legislation effecting these changes the State's superannuation funds would have been required to fund this additional tax.

The Bill provides for the surcharge to apply in a manner consistent with the announced intention of the Commonwealth Government's legislation and in this regard the Bill ensures that the surcharge will apply from 20 August 1996. The judges' and Governors' pension schemes, however, are constitutionally protected from Commonwealth Government taxation. As a result, the surcharge is a personal tax imposition on members of schemes of this type. Currently, no portion of a former Governor's pension or that of a judge may be commuted to a lump sum. However, in view of the fact that a lump sum surcharge debt will be applied personally to members of these schemes, the Bill provides for a portion of the pension to be taken as a lump sum to assist the recipient to fund the cost of the surcharge.

The Bill does recognise that there are some complexities and unresolved legal issues in relation to the application of the Commonwealth Government's legislation to the judges' and Governors' pension schemes. Therefore, the Bill provides for the amendments to these schemes to have effect from a date to be proclaimed. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Watson, adjourned.

MOTOR ACCIDENT INSURANCE AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (11.55 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (11.56 a.m.): I move—

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

The Queensland compulsory third-party motor vehicle insurance scheme ensures that people injured on our roads as a result of negligence are guaranteed compensation and that the legal liability of owners and drivers is fully protected. However, the ownership of motor vehicles extends widely throughout the community and the cost of CTP needs to be appropriate but restrained so it does not become a burden to those on lower and fixed incomes. Affordability is also a key in maintaining a high proportion of insured and registered vehicles, without which the scheme itself would not be viable.

With the premium rise implemented on 1 July 1999, the scheme is judged to be approaching the limits of affordability. In April, the Government appointed a committee of review to examine scheme design, affordability issues and the appropriate role for Government in the future management of the scheme. One of the key pressures identified is the significant increase in the frequency of claims brought about by the soliciting or inducing of injured persons to make claims. The committee was directed to consider a legislative amendment to the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994 aimed at prohibiting these practices.

The call for a prohibition on soliciting has stemmed from an identified practice where tow truck drivers, panel beaters and other intermediaries have been soliciting parties to motor vehicle accidents to lodge claims through particular solicitors. The practice has generally involved the payment of a spotter's fee to a tow truck driver or other intermediary for the referral of a client. These soliciting practices have resulted in a measurable increase in claim lodgments which in turn affects the affordability of the CTP scheme.

In general, the practice gathers the very minor and less meritorious type of claims but they still have a significant impact on premiums paid by motor vehicle owners. The committee of review has undertaken analysis of the scheme's data and reports that if the practice is stopped it is likely that a 3% saving on premiums could be made. It is also important that potential escalation of the practice is stopped.

In addition, one of the major concerns this Government has with the current practice of soliciting personal injury claims is that there is little, if any, regard for the rights of the individual, particularly the right to privacy of personal information. These tow truck operators, panel beaters, and other intermediaries are providing, without permission, the names, addresses, telephone numbers and registration details to other people such as lawyers or their intermediaries. There are instances in which potential claimants are then subject to a level of harassment to bring a personal injury claim which they may not have otherwise contemplated.

Before recommending to Government that a prohibition on soliciting be introduced, the committee of review fully considered submissions from the scheme's stakeholders. This included input from the Queensland Law Society, the Australian Plaintiff Lawyers Association and the Insurance Council of Australia. The support to curtail the practice was overwhelming. There is a sound argument that it is essential that those injured in motor vehicle accidents be fully apprised of their rights. The Bill arguably may limit a person's acquisition of knowledge as to rights of recourse at law. However, lawyer advertising for personal injury claims appears across a broad range of the media and the Bill provides a specific exclusion so that this advertising is not affected. This Government believes there are more appropriate ways for persons to be apprised of their rights than through persons without legal expertise operating in the stressful situation of an accident scene, and where these intermediaries may be dealing in private information and receiving a commission or fee for their role.

I note from the committee's draft report, which I tabled in this House on 26 October 1999, that the committee has recommended the establishment of an independent call centre and advisory service to assist the public with CTP inquiries. This centre, to be managed by the Motor Accident Insurance Commission, will enable potential claimants to receive the information they might require on all aspects of the scheme, including the claims and rehabilitation processes. This approach will be far more appropriate in advising injured persons of their rights and will deliver the service without compromising the privacy of individuals.

The Bill takes a three tier approach to prohibiting the soliciting of personal injury claims through particular solicitors. Firstly, the Bill makes it an offence at the accident scene for a tow truck driver or another person attending the scene of an accident in his/her employment to solicit or induce a person who has suffered or may have suffered an injury to make a claim. The Bill also prohibits any person from soliciting at the scene of an accident if the act of soliciting was unreasonable in the circumstances. The intention is to prevent anyone soliciting at a motor vehicle accident scene, very often an experience associated with trauma. However, the Bill is structured in a manner so as not to unintentionally capture persons genuinely assisting with advice.

Secondly, the Bill provides for offences in relation to nomination of a particular lawyer or a firm of lawyers and to the general disclosure of names, addresses and registration numbers of potential claimants to persons not authorised to receive such information. This provision is integral to alleviating any restructuring of practices designed at avoiding the prohibitions. This will, for example, prohibit a panel beater who obtains information in the course of business from using the information to solicit a person to make a claim.

Thirdly, the Bill makes it an offence at any time to pay, or seek payment of, a fee for soliciting or inducing a potential claimant to make a claim. The Bill also aims at strongly discouraging any professional person from involvement in these soliciting practices. In this respect, a conviction for soliciting under these amendments may be dealt with as misconduct under the relevant Act under which the professional person is registered.

In summary, this is a broad approach, but one which has safeguards against the capture of innocent parties. It is expected to be effective not only in stemming the current practices but also in addressing those areas whereby, through some restructuring of the activity, lawyers could circumvent the prohibitions. The approach ensures that legitimate practices are neither restricted nor prohibited and that appropriate mechanisms for injured parties to be apprised of their rights are not compromised, even at the accident scene.

Under the proposal, any person may advise the potential claimant of their legal right to compensation and advise the potential claimant that they should see a solicitor. However, the person advising may not direct the potential claimant to a particular lawyer or a firm of lawyers. Additionally, persons who have had a prior relationship with the potential claimant, such as a parent or guardian, may offer advice and nominate a particular lawyer or legal firm as long as they do not receive a fee for the nomination. The Bill will not impinge on a solicitor's right to advertise, provide service to existing clientele or use appropriate methods of obtaining instructions.

The Government has taken a very important step here in the overall interest of the CTP scheme and in maintaining the rights of individuals to privacy and protection from harassment. The Bill should provide the required braking effect on the number of claims from this source and help to stem the upward pressure on CTP premiums we have experienced in recent years.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Watson, adjourned.

PROSTITUTION BILL

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.03 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to regulate prostitution in Queensland, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr D'Arcy) read a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.03 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is the culmination of over a year's work by this Government and two and half years of work by the former coalition Government. Labor came to Government in June 1999 with a commitment to continue the review of Queensland's prostitution laws commenced by the former coalition Government. Permission was sought from the former Premier to access material considered by the Borbidge Cabinet relating to the work

undertaken by the coalition prior to its loss of Government. In what was considered to be a bipartisan gesture, Cabinet documents released to the Beattie Government included the public attitude survey carried out in 1997 and the working paper prepared by the coalition.

We were able to build on the work of the former Government by releasing a discussion paper in November 1998, followed by one of the most extensive public consultation processes in the history of this State. The results of the public attitude survey conducted by the previous Government, together with the results of Labor's public consultation, allowed me to frame a model for the reform of prostitution that took into account Queensland's history of prostitution and corruption, the conservative nature of Queenslanders and the experiences of other States. That model was approved by the Labor Cabinet in June, allowing the preparation of the Bill that is before the Parliament today.

Along with extensive consultation with members of the public—in November/December 1998 and again in June/July 1999—relevant stakeholders have been individually consulted. Organisations such as SQWISI—Self Health for Queensland Workers in the Sex Industry—the Local Government Association of Queensland and Queensland churches, have had meetings with Government and thus helped shape the Bill I am now asking Parliament to consider.

It is important to note that these reform proposals do not constitute a social experiment. I am not asking Queenslanders to take a risk on a bunch of untried and untested propositions. We have carefully studied the models of other States and taken into account their experiences—the positives and the negatives. Where there have been problems with other models, we have sought to avoid them.

Whilst the Beattie Labor Government has not reinvented the wheel, the model that I am putting before the Parliament today will have some features which will be unique to Queensland which take into account Queensland's history and the views of all Queenslanders. These laws, if passed, will be the toughest in Australia. We cannot ever forget the part prostitution has played in corruption and organised crime in this State during some dark years in Queensland's history. We must remain ever vigilant against corruption and organised crime, and the passage of this Bill will assist us in that task.

The framework for regulation of prostitution has been developed in the Prostitution Bill 1999 with the guidance of five principles—

ensuring quality of life for local communities;

safeguarding against corruption and organised crime;

addressing social factors which contribute to involvement in the sex industry;

ensuring a healthy society; and

promoting safety.

The framework attempts to balance the interests of strict regulation with the need to address the social factors that arise from prostitution. To achieve this, legal prostitution will be restricted to small licensed brothels and individual sex workers. Prostitution services provided in any other manner will be illegal, including street soliciting, escort agencies, massage parlours and unlicensed brothels. Licensed brothels are the Government's preferred option as they—

provide a safer work environment for workers and clients;

workers can receive peer support from other workers;

workers can be relieved of the responsibility of running a business;

brothels provide an access point for health and other service providers; and

it is easier to monitor and control safe sex practices in a brothel environment.

Advocates of the sex industry claim the Government has not gone far enough with these proposals. However, the most frequent concern expressed during the Government's period of public consultation related to the personal safety of single sex workers. The Government has acted on that concern by providing single sex workers with an option for employment which many will consider provides greater personal safety.

The operation of brothels should not be an intrusion into the day-to-day lives of members of the community who do not want to be exposed to the nuisance of brothel activity or advertising. For this reason, brothels will be permitted subject to strict licensing and local planning requirements. This will ensure undesirable persons are not permitted to operate within the legal industry and due consideration is paid to public amenity issues.

Under the Beattie Labor Government's tough plan, brothels will not be allowed within specified distances of people's homes or

places like schools, hospitals, kindergartens or other places frequented by children. Licensing requirements will be administered through the establishment of a Prostitution Licensing Authority. Planning requirements will be administered by local authorities in accordance with the provisions of the Integrated Planning Act and this legislation.

The new legislation will impose a number of restrictions on the establishment of brothels including—

a maximum of five working rooms for prostitutes;

between 2 and 10 workers at any time (including sex workers, staff such as receptionists and cleaners, and other employees including contractors);

no street signage identifying premises as a brothel;

no liquor on brothel premises;

not to be in any place other than a building; and

stringent financial and character checks on persons entering the industry.

Licensing system

A Prostitution Licensing Authority—the authority—will be established to administer the licensing system. There will be six members and a majority will form a quorum. Appointment of a well-respected community member as chairperson will ensure that the sometimes-competing interests of health and law enforcement are balanced, and that an appropriate level of consideration is given to the impact of licensed brothels on local communities.

The authority will rely heavily on police information when determining the suitability of applicants. Although it would be possible for the authority to simply seek information from the Queensland Police Service, representation on the authority will provide continuity and assist authority members to evaluate police reports.

The history of association between organised crime and the illegal prostitution industry in Queensland justifies the inclusion of a representative from the Queensland Crime Commission. The commission's skills and expertise in investigating organised crime will be of benefit to the authority in considering applications for licences.

Concern for the health of sex workers, and the community at large, has been a prime factor in the move toward licensed brothels. On that basis, the authority will benefit greatly from the knowledge and experience of a representative from the health or medical field. Queensland Health advise that an experienced sexual health physician would provide maximum benefit in assisting the authority to discharge its functions.

The Senior Legal Practitioner will support the authority in conducting investigations, hearings and making determinations of licensing applications. The appointee will be knowledgeable or experienced in criminal law, company law or administrative law. This will be a minimal requirement to ensure the proper functioning of the authority.

The role of local authorities in administering development applications is significant. While to a large extent the planning approval system is distinct from the licensing system, inclusion of a representative from the Local Government Association of Queensland will ensure there is a nexus between local government and the authority. It will also ensure that local issues are given proper consideration in decisions relating to the brothel licences. In this way, local government and the State Government will be working hand in hand to provide the best outcomes for Queensland communities.

Amongst other things, the authority will—

decide licensee and approved manager applications;

monitor the provision of prostitution through brothels;

be responsible for disciplinary matters with respect to licensees and managers;

take complaints;

liaise with police in relation to administration and enforcement;

collect fees; and

provide information to Government agencies.

Prostitution Advisory Council

A Prostitution Advisory Council will be established, reporting to a ministerial committee of the Ministers for—

Police and Corrective Services;

Tourism, Sport and Racing;

Health; and

Families, Youth and Community Care.

This council will be a completely separate entity to the Prostitution Licensing Authority. The functions of the council will be—

to advise the ministerial committee on issues related to the regulation of prostitution in Queensland;

to monitor the operation of this legislation;

to liaise with the authority, the police and other agencies with a view to enhancing interdepartmental coordination;

to refer relevant matters for investigation to an agency of Government or any other entity for investigation;

to coordinate the development of codes of practice, if appropriate; and

to promote and coordinate programs—

that promote sexual health care;

that help sex workers leave prostitution;

that divert minors and other vulnerable persons from prostitution; and

that educate sex workers, magistrates, police, community workers and the community about issues relating to prostitution—through the dissemination of information outlining the dangers inherent in prostitution, and focusing on security measures to improve the personal safety of prostitutes.

The members of the council shall include—

a person who represents sex workers in Queensland;

a person with experience as a sexual health care doctor or social worker with experience working with prostitutes;

a person with knowledge of the issues for marginalised or disadvantaged young people;

a person who is representative of religious or community interests.

In recommending people for appointment as council members, the Minister must have regard to the desirability of ensuring that a gender balance is achieved in appointing the membership of the council.

Development approval applications

The Beattie Labor Government has listened to the concerns of the community during an extensive public consultation phase. The framework proposal released by the Government in June 1999 included a requirement that a brothel may be established no closer to a person's home than 100 metres. Following a second round of public consultation in July this year, the specified distance has been doubled to 200 metres. In addition, brothels will not be established—

in residential areas; or

within 200m of a place of worship, hospital, school, kindergarten or other place frequented by children.

Local government will have the power to prohibit brothels in towns with a population of 25,000 or less. In areas where brothels may be permitted, planning approval applications will be considered in accordance with—

the provisions of the Integrated Planning Act,

the new legislation, and

a code issued pursuant to the new legislation.

Planning restrictions will ensure that local governments control the approval process for the establishment of brothels in industrial and commercial areas. Applications relating to industrial areas will require no public advertising; however, they will be assessed against the criteria contained in the planning code. In other areas where brothels may be permitted, public notification will be required, alerting potential objectors to the proposal. Anyone who lodges an objection within the specified time frame has a right of appeal under the Integrated Planning Act against a decision to approve a brothel.

As far as possible, the intention of the legislation is for the licensing and planning systems to remain separate. The rationale for this separation is that the licensing provisions attach to persons, while planning approval attaches to land. When a person seeks to establish a brothel on the premises, the authority will examine the nature of the association between the licensee and the owner of the premises, or any other person with an interest in the land. If the authority determines that the owner of the premises, or any other person with an interest in the land, is not suitable to be an associate of the licensee, the licence will not be granted to the applicant to operate the brothel on those premises. The Beattie Labor Government makes no apologies for these tough measures, and a determination to keep organised crime out of the prostitution industry in Queensland.

Sexually Explicit Adult Entertainment

Sexually explicit adult entertainment at licensed premises in Queensland has grown as a form of entertainment, raising community, social and legal concerns. Without any regulation of table top dancing and other similar activities, it is likely that the number of venues offering this form of entertainment will continue to increase. In the past, this entertainment has been inappropriately dealt with in the same manner as prostitution offences. The intention of the new legislation is to distinguish legitimate adult entertainment from prostitution, allowing both to be regulated

separately. To that end, adult entertainment will not be prosecuted—

where it occurs on premises for which a liquor licence or permit exists and a permit for the adult entertainment has been issued;

where the adult entertainment does not breach the conditions and restrictions of—

the permit;

this legislation;

the Liquor Act 1992, or liquor regulations of 1992;

where the behaviour does not involve an act such as sexual intercourse, or other serious sexual act; and

the person performing the adult entertainment is not under 18 years of age.

Where acts like stripping, lap dancing and tabletop dancing exceed these parameters, persons involved will be liable to prosecution under the criminal law for indecent behaviour—or in more serious cases, prostitution.

In addition, the Liquor Licensing Division, Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing, may require the licensee of the premises where unlawful adult entertainment occurs to show cause as to why their liquor licence and/or their permit for adult entertainment should not be cancelled. The Police Service and the Liquor Licensing Division will share responsibility for policing adult entertainment.

Police powers of entry

The Government is mindful of the attraction of criminal elements to the prostitution industry, as well as the scope for police corruption. The Government intends Queensland's prostitution industry to be the cleanest in the country.

In framing this Bill, we have sought to balance the rights of people operating legally within a legal industry with the need to limit the opportunity for illegal activity. To this end, the Bill includes provision for police to inspect and enter a licensed brothel at any time. It is our intention to restrict by rank and circumstance, however, entry by police to brothels. Only police above the rank of inspector, or those with written permission from a police officer with the rank of inspector or above, will be able to enter and inspect licensed brothels. As an additional protection measure, the Prostitution Licensing Authority will keep a register of periodic police entry to licensed brothels—and all police will be required to report in writing each inspection to the Prostitution Licensing Authority.

Prohibited brothels

A Magistrates Court may declare premises to be a prohibited brothel if it is satisfied on the balance of probabilities, on the application of a member of the Police Service, an authorised officer of the relevant local council, or a member of the Prostitution Licensing Authority—

that a person is carrying on business as a prostitution provider without a brothel licence and is making premises available for the purpose of prostitution; or

that premises being used for the purposes of the operation of a brothel are in contravention of the Integrated Planning Act.

At the hearing, the Magistrates Court may take into consideration any evidence that it considers credible or trustworthy in the circumstances. A declaration may be made for an unlimited period or for a period specified by the Magistrates Court and will remain in force until it is rescinded or expires.

Notice of the declaration of a prohibited brothel is to be placed in a prominent area on the premises and published in the local newspaper. In addition, a copy of the notice is to be served on the owner and occupier of the premises. It will be an offence for a person to be found in, entering or leaving a prohibited brothel. However, it will be a defence to the charge for the accused to prove that he or she was in, entering or leaving the premises for some lawful purpose.

A more serious offence will apply if any premises prohibited as a brothel are used as a brothel at any time after service of the relevant notice or the making of the declaration. The owner or occupier, as the case requires, will be liable to prosecution for this offence regardless of who is involved in recommencing operation as a brothel. To encourage owners and occupiers to ensure the premises do not reopen for business as a brothel, it will be a defence to show that all reasonable steps to prevent the premises being used as a brothel were taken. In effect, the declaration of premises as a prohibited brothel will mean the owner of the premises will be unable to use the premises for any other purpose until such time as the declaration is rescinded.

No person can legally enter premises that have been declared a prohibited brothel—providing a disincentive to irresponsible landlords. Experience interstate has shown that landlords are too often prepared to turn a

blind eye to a brothel operating in otherwise hard-to-rent premises.

The Magistrates Court may rescind a declaration and may do so on any terms, conditions, limitations or restrictions that it thinks fit. This may include a requirement that the owner or occupier offer a security to ensure that the premises are not again used as an unlicensed brothel.

Street soliciting

Street soliciting is not a victimless offence, as is often claimed. For the people of Cairns, and New Farm and Fortitude Valley in Brisbane, street soliciting has an extremely negative impact on their community amenity. Too often residents are woken through the night by the stopping of vehicles, and a range of antisocial behaviour.

Most complaints received by police and members of Parliament regarding prostitution relate to street soliciting. A public attitude survey conducted in 1997 showed that over 90% of the public are opposed to street soliciting. Once again, the Beattie Labor Government has listened to the views of the Queensland public, and will do all that is possible to stamp out street prostitution.

Street soliciting is to remain illegal under the new policy framework. From a criminal justice perspective, a three-pronged approach will be applied to effectively manage street soliciting, including—

the use of move-on powers;

reducing demand and supply by increasing penalties for clients and workers; and

increasing the effectiveness of police enforcement activities.

In addition, welfare considerations will be accommodated—

through the application of the Child Protection Act 1999 in respect of minors involved in street soliciting;

through the establishment of a Prostitution Advisory Council to focus on the underlying social problems surrounding the sex industry; and

through the facilitation of access to appropriate services and programs for sex workers wishing to leave the industry.

Move-on powers under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act will be the general response applied to persons engaging in street soliciting. This will allow police to deal with the nuisance associated with street soliciting—often the subject of community complaint—without undue use of police resources, and no requirement to take any enforcement action.

In some areas where street soliciting is a significant problem, such as Fortitude Valley, the Gold Coast and Cairns, the use of move-on powers and increased penalties may not be a sufficient deterrent. In such instances, it is essential that the police have a capacity to effectively respond to community concerns and take enforcement action in respect of persons who blatantly and repeatedly breach the law.

Targeted operations utilising covert operatives offer the greatest potential to effectively enforce the law in respect of street soliciting. However, covert investigations into street soliciting are difficult to conduct under the present law as officers cannot make an "offer" without committing an offence. In practice, this means covert officers must engage street workers or clients in general conversation without actually requesting or offering sexual services. This type of behaviour is quickly recognised by sex workers and many clients and is associated with police operations. Once a police operation is suspected, prostitutes and their clients ensure they do not commit offences.

To overcome this problem, provision will be made in the new legislation for a member of the Police Service to solicit for prostitution if the act is done under written instructions given in relation to a particular investigation by a commissioned officer. The acceptance of an offer made by a police officer—with the necessary approval—will constitute soliciting.

Applicants for licenses

To be eligible for a licence a person—

cannot be a corporation, a minor, or an insolvent under administration;

cannot hold a licence or permit under the Liquor Act 1992;

cannot have been convicted of a disqualifying offence;

cannot have had a brothel licence or other authority or approval cancelled in this State, or elsewhere, in the last three years; or

be subject to a Prostitution Licensing Authority order declaring the person ineligible.

However, the Bill allows a corporation can provide prostitution through a brothel if all its directors are individually licensed, and they each undergo stringent probity and character checks. Disqualifying offences include offences

under the Criminal Code and the Federal Migration Act 1985. Specific offences under the code include: official corruption; unlawful homicide; rape; abduction; kidnapping; demanding property, benefit or performance of services with threats; and specified offences relating to a child or intellectually impaired person.

A person is only entitled to apply for, or be eligible to be granted, one brothel licence at a time. Applications for a brothel licence are to be made to the Prostitution Licensing Authority. Applications must be by an eligible person in the approved form and accompanied by the application and licence fee. The application must include details of the applicant, the brothel address, the owner of the brothel premises, anyone who may be involved in operating the brothel, and the applicant's associates. The authority must refuse a licence if the applicant—

is not a suitable person;

has been convicted of running a brothel in Queensland or elsewhere;

has an interest in another licensed brothel; or

holds a licence or permit under the Liquor Act 1992.

The authority must also refuse a licence if it would result in the area becoming a "red light" district. When determining the suitability of an applicant, the authority, amongst other things, must consider—

the applicant's reputation, having regard to character, honesty and integrity;

whether the applicant has been convicted of an offence against this Act or a corresponding law elsewhere;

whether the applicant has been convicted of an indictable offence; and

whether the applicant has been charged in Queensland or elsewhere with any offence of a sexual nature that involves violence, intimidation, threats or children—including the circumstances surrounding the laying of the charge and whether the charge has been proceeded with or discontinued.

For example, if an applicant had been charged with several offences over the years for unrelated incidents, or where the charges may have been unsuccessful as the result of a technicality, or unable to be proved beyond reasonable doubt, the authority may want to consider the facts surrounding those incidents and refuse an application. Alternatively, the charges may have been the result of malicious complaints and the authority may choose to grant a licence.

In processing an application, the licensing authority should consider—

whether an applicant has, or is able to obtain, financial resources that are adequate to ensure the financial viability of the business;

whether the applicant will have in place arrangements to adequately provide safety arrangements;

whether the proposed business structure is sufficiently transparent to enable all associates of the applicant to be readily identified;

whether the applicant is an associate of a person who, or a body corporate which, has been convicted of an indictable offence; and

whether the applicant is an associate of a person who holds a licence or a permit under the Liquor Act 1992.

The list is not exhaustive and the authority can consider other matters if they are relevant. The authority must not decide that an applicant for a licence is not a suitable person to carry on the business of providing prostitution at a licensed brothel only because the applicant has worked as a prostitute.

As I have said, we have consulted widely and extensively on prostitution. This Bill reflects the results of that public consultation.

The Local Government Association of Queensland has made some very useful contributions to the legislation and has made a range of supportive comments about the Bill. However, it is clear that not everyone is happy with this legislation. Those within the sex industry would like us to go further with prostitution reform, but it is also patently clear that the conservative nature of the Queensland people means that the general public would not accept anything more than what the Beattie Government is proposing in this Bill.

The feedback from our public consultation and the Public Attitude Survey made it obvious that Queensland people could not tolerate a major change in the prostitution laws. Some church groups have taken a philosophical position against prostitution but have said that, if the Government intends to make changes, health and safety concerns have to be uppermost in the Government's consideration. This was a very balanced approach and I thank these church representatives for their informed views.

In contrast, there were other church groups who wanted prostitution to be outlawed and a return to draconian approaches taken in other jurisdictions. These approaches have proven to be dismal failures and have only exacerbated the problems associated with prostitution. Even in some Middle East countries where prostitution offences carry death penalties, prostitution has not been eradicated.

Some critics have said that the model contained in this Bill would be too restrictive and costly and would prevent normal people from owning a licence. The cost of licences will not be prohibitive and, under the regulations we are considering, application fees will be set at $1,000. Licence fees will be $5,000 and $1,000 per room so that for the largest brothel the total cost to a successful applicant will be $11,000. There will also be an annual fee of $5,000 for each licence holder. In anyone's calculation, these costs are not excessive and would not preclude many people who choose to go through with the expense of establishing a brothel.

The Opposition has attempted to tap into this limited criticism of the Bill by saying that it would repeal any laws which legalise brothels. This is the coward's view of the issue. The coalition had two and a half years to come up with a prostitution model but was too scared to follow the lead of the member for Crows Nest and former National Party President, Sir Robert Sparkes. It has yet to come up with a model for prostitution reform, and the Borbidge Government will go down in history as the ostrich Government. Every time it faced a tough decision, it stuck its head in the sand.

The Beattie Government does not shy away from the tough decisions or take the easy and most palatable option. We have listened to the public on prostitution reform and this Bill accurately reflects the views of the vast majority of Queensland people. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

SUGAR INDUSTRY BILL

Resumption of Committee

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) in charge of the Bill

Resumed from 9 November (see p. 4776).

Clause 141—

Mr PALASZCZUK (12.36 p.m.) I move—

"At page 96, lines 15 to 26 and page 97, lines 1 to 9—

omit, insert—

'BSES budget

'141.(1) Each year the BSES must propose its operating budget ("budget") for the period from the start of the crushing season in the year until the start of the crushing season in the following year (the "budget period").

'(2) However, the budget is of no effect until it is approved by the Minister under subsection (6).

'(3) The budget must state how much of the income of the BSES is to be charged to the corporation (the "corporation portion") and when the corporation is to pay the BSES.

'(4) Before proposing the budget, the BSES must consult with sugar industry representatives and, for the corporation portion, the corporation.

'(5) The BSES must submit the budget to the Minister.

'(6) After consulting with industry representatives, the corporation and the BSES, the Minister may approve the budget, with or without amendment.

'(7) The budget approved by the Minister is the budget for the budget period.

'(8) The corporation portion approved by the Minister is payable by the corporation to the BSES as stated in the budget.

'(9) At any time during the budget period—

(a) the BSES may ask the Minister to vary the budget; or

(b) in relation to payment of the corporation portion—the corporation may ask the Minister to vary the budget.

'(10) Before the BSES asks the Minister to vary the budget, other than in relation to the corporation portion, the BSES must consult with industry representatives.

'(11) Before the BSES or the corporation asks the Minister to vary the budget to the extent the budget relates to the corporation portion, it must ensure consultation has taken place between the BSES and the corporation.

'(12) In considering any request to vary the budget, the Minister must consult with sugar industry representatives, the corporation and the BSES.

'(13) After complying with subsection (12), the Minister may vary the budget as requested, either with or without amendment.'."

I believe I said everything I need to say with regard to this clause when I was dealing with clause 118 which was, of course, the precursor of this clause. I would like to recognise the representations which the honourable member for Mulgrave made to me on behalf of his constituents who have concerns in relation to this clause and to the funding of the BSES. Their concerns were similar to the concerns raised by the honourable member for Crows Nest, the honourable member for Hinchinbrook and other members of the Opposition. I believe I have addressed those concerns as best I can.

Mr COOPER: We canvassed the coalition's views in relation to clause 118 and we are now dealing with clause 141. We have considered the Minister's amendment to clause 141, but we still have some fundamental problems with it. I have conveyed these concerns to the Committee and to the Minister. To briefly reiterate, the coalition is worried about the fifty-fifty ratio in relation to funding. That is the ratio that currently exists but which will no longer exist as a result of this legislation. We are concerned that the funding ratio will be altered and that the millers will be contributing 33% and the growers will be contributing 66%. The Minister was not able to give us the guarantees that we sought. However, he has said that consultations are continuing.

We want to see this in the legislation. It is somewhat airy-fairy and is not good enough for the Minister to say that he will give it his best shot and attempt to end up with a fair breakdown of funding. The growers themselves will not be satisfied with that. As we know, growers—be they growers of sugarcane or producers of other things rural—are always the ones who bear the final costs. They cannot pass on the costs. They cannot set prices because they are price-takers and not price-makers. Someone has to defend those people. If that job falls to us on this side of the Chamber, so be it.

I will not take the matter any further because I canvassed it very thoroughly when we were dealing with clause 118. We are not able to accept the Minister's assurances because the breakdown of funding is not set out in the legislation. As a result, we will oppose the Minister's amendment.

Mr ROWELL: It is important to acknowledge that the Minister is trying to do something about the situation in regard to the division of funding. This matter has a history. I do not believe that the millers would have originally agreed to the fifty-fifty breakdown had they not thought that it was necessary to start the process of supplying cane to the mills in such a manner that it would be of benefit in making good sugar.

I think that is really where the millers are coming from. I have not heard any complaints from them about the actual cost that they have incurred with the proposal that they are funding in terms of this fifty-fifty split, because they recognise that the BSES is a professional organisation that, in the past, has assisted them greatly with some of their milling problems. I think what the Minister has done was not something that was accepted by the Sugar Industry Review Working Party; it has come out of the blue, mainly because other legislation, which we cannot mention, has been brought to this Chamber that makes it difficult to impose levies.

Although we think that we are going to improve legislation by doing certain things, there are some downsides to it. That is recognised in this instance because there was agreement by the two parties on the way in which they were prepared to pay for the funding of the BSES. Now that legislation that has changed the whole scenario has been introduced, it has made it more difficult. However, this is something that the Minister decided to do and it is something that he has fix. In this clause there is no real recognition that that is going to be done. We accept the fact that the Minister is going to try to do it—there is no problem there—but the fact is that it is not in the legislation. Because of that factor it is very, very difficult—in fact, it is impossible—for us to accept this amendment.

In terms of the role that the BSES plays in the whole process and what they do for both millers and growers, the Government has reinforced our concerns about the level of involvement by the Government, which is $3.5m. Of course, the industry is always looking for more funding, because it is a very competitive industry in the world market. The industry recognises that, if it is going to survive, it has to be at the leading edge of technology. The BSES is just one of those organisations—probably the main organisation—that is concerned with research and development. Certainly, they undertake extension work day by day to ensure that they can provide any assistance or any advice to growers on a whole range of issues, including the varieties that they breed, which is a very important program. The Minister is aware of the

problems of the low sugar levels of cane in the north. In that regard, the BSES is the principal organisation that will be doing work on breeding varieties of cane. I know that the Government has contributed something like $1m to get over that problem. The work involves not just a breeding program but also a crosspollination program to find solutions as to why there has been a decline in sugar levels. That is so important.

I want to reiterate the importance of the BSES. I am sure that the Minister is aware of that. There is no doubt about that. However, the funding mix for the BSES really has the Opposition concerned, because there has been a determination by industry partners—and that is the grower and the miller—that they would pay it in a ratio that was acceptable to both of them.

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

AYES, 39—Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 39—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

The numbers being equal, the Chairman cast his vote with the Ayes.

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clause 141, as amended, agreed to.

Mr KNUTH: I rise to a point of order. Mr Chairman, I do not think that you should be reading this out until all members sit down or leave the Chamber, because no-one can hear.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order in the Chamber!

Clause 142—

Mr COOPER (12.50 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 97, line 13—

omit, insert—

'142.(1) The Minister must establish cane production boards for mills.'."

In relation to this clause, the Opposition is really concerned about two words. This clause states—

"A cane production board may be established for 1 mill or for more."

The Opposition's amendment states that the Minister must establish cane production boards for mills. The reason I say that it has to be "must" is that, as it stands, the Bill does not require the Minister to establish cane production boards. The clause provides that the Minister may do so, but we are worried about the fact that there is no compulsion.

The Opposition recognises that the wording of this clause is similar to that of section 38 of the Sugar Industry Act 1991. However, in that regard I would like to make two points. Firstly, this Bill is supposed to improve the situation and not maintain the unsatisfactory status quo. We believe that these boards are central to the operation of the Bill and leaving the question of their establishment up in the air, as the Bill does, is not good enough. Secondly, under this Bill, at the moment the Governor in Council establishes the boards. However, under this Bill also, the cane production boards are established by the Minister alone. It is in the context of giving sole power to the Minister that we believe that extra safeguards must be put in place. My colleague the member for Hinchinbrook will deal with this matter in greater detail, but I make those two points very clearly.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The Government agrees to accept the amendment proposed by the Opposition.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 142, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 143 to 145, as read, agreed to.

Clause 146—

Mr COOPER (12.52 p.m.): There are one or two procedural points that I would like the Minister to comment on in relation to clause 146, which concerns the membership of cane production boards. I note that members of the cane production boards are to be appointed by the Minister, whereas at the moment the members of local boards are appointed by the Governor in Council. This is really only of significance in relation to the chairman.

As the Minister knows, it is often very important that a person appointed to the chair of a key industry body be vetted by Cabinet rather than the appointment being left solely to the discretion of a single Minister. Also, having regard to the expanded and very important role that cane production boards will perform, I would have thought that, if anything, there will be an increased need for vigilance and checks and balances in the selection of a chairman.

My first question to the Minister is: why has the Bill been drafted to give sole power to the Minister and away from the Governor in Council?

My second query relates to the term that the members will be appointed for. Currently under section 40 they are appointed for a three-year term, but under this Bill they will be appointed for "a term not longer than 3 years". As I read it, that gives the Minister the power to appoint a member for six months, 12 months, two years or whatever, provided that the term is not more than three years. My second query is: why has the Bill been drafted without fixed terms for members? Will the Minister be adopting a uniform and consistent policy on terms for members appointed to cane production boards?

Mr PALASZCZUK: On the first issue relating to the chairperson to be appointed by the Minister—that will be done on the recommendations of people in the local area. The recommendations will come to the department and then, as Minister, I will go through those recommendations and appoint the person. In relation to the appointment for a term no longer than three years, basically that covers the situation in which a person resigns and another person has to be appointed.

Clause 146, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 147 to 168, as read, agreed to.

Clause 169—

Mr COOPER (12.55 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 112, lines 7 to 14—

omit."

Again, we are dealing with political activity. This amendment is consequential to our amendment No. 18. We have been through all the arguments about political activity. We had a pretty comprehensive discussion on that yesterday. I will not elaborate on that any further, except to say that we will be supporting this amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: Please note that Mr Cooper's amendment No. 21 actually seeks to omit clause 169. Therefore, Mr Cooper opposes the clause.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 169, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 170 to 178, as read, agreed to.

Clause 179—

Mr COOPER (12.57 p.m.): I will comment on Part 6, clauses 179 to 186. The Opposition's amendment to clause 180 will be moved by the member for Hinchinbrook, but I wish to comment on negotiating teams.

One matter that has come up in various discussions that I have had with industry representatives concerns grower representatives on negotiating teams who may have a conflict of duty and interest problem. As the Minister knows, the Bill contains a number of provisions that are designed to deal with these issues. I refer in particular to clauses 113, 133 and 168. Likewise, the current Act also has a specific section dealing with conflict situations, which is section 104.

When one reads the current provision, one sees that it only applies to what is termed a "disclosure body". This is defined in section 94 to include the board of directors of the Queensland Sugar Corporation, a local board or a board of directors of the BSES, but does not include a negotiating team. It would appear that exactly the same philosophy is carried right through the Bill. However, currently no allowance is made for individual agreements, and the very reason that there is no need for a disclosure provision now will arise as soon as this Bill becomes law. The ACFA has referred to the problem as a "serious moral hazard". The Australian Sugar Digest states—

> "Both the grower members of the negotiating team could be covered by individual agreements to supply the mill for which they have responsibility of determining absolutely the supply conditions of all other growers in the mill area. The problem of 'moral hazard' in these circumstances is extreme."

The Opposition would have thought that the Government could have dealt with this problem by providing that a member of the negotiating team must not have an individual agreement or be negotiating with a mill owner for one. The potential for a severe conflict of interest is obvious. Alternatively, and at the very least, a disclosure provision is required so that at least growers know what the situation is. At the moment, the Bill totally fails to recognise the problem and, by doing so, could well create problems for growers, negotiating teams and the acceptability of some collective agreements.

With all due respect to the Minister, his explanation in his reply to the second-reading debate as to why there was no provision to prevent conflicts arising was not sufficiently convincing. I suspect that he may have had some bad advice on this issue. He might like to comment on that further. Now that he has had more time to consider the matter, I hope

that the Minister will be able to appreciate that guidelines need to be put in place in legislation of this type. As the Minister would be aware, the Opposition has circulated an amendment to clause 180 which is intended to prevent conflicts from arising. Before we speak to that clause, we thought it would be appropriate to outline our general concerns and give the Minister an opportunity to address the problem before the amendment is moved and debated.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I believe it is inappropriate to suggest that grower members of negotiating teams must be growers who intend to be bound by the collective agreement that they are responsible for negotiating. The mill suppliers committee is responsible for nominating grower representatives of negotiating teams and must be trusted to make the appropriate appointments. Negotiating team members should have the appropriate expertise, be able to operate on a commercial in confidence basis and be professional about their interests. Negotiating teams, rather than the Bill, set the requirements for members. Requirements for disclosure of interest and other like matters are accordingly anticipated to be along usual probity lines. Therefore, it is not reasonable to attempt to ensure that grower members of negotiating teams will not enter into individual agreements for some or all of their cane production areas. I believe that basically sums up what the honourable member for Crows Nest raised in his contribution. I believe that also answers the moral hazard problem that he raised with respect to this clause.

Clause 179, as read, agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 1.02 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Clause 180—

Mr ROWELL (2.30 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 116, after line 21—

insert—

'(5) Each member of a negotiating team appointed by a mill suppliers' committee must, at all times when the team is considering a collective agreement, be a grower who intends to be bound by the collective agreement.'."

This clause deals with the membership of the negotiating team. There has been some controversy regarding the membership of the team. The representative of growers is appointed by the mill suppliers committee and before 1 January each year the mill suppliers committee and the mills have to tell each other the names of their respective members. There is a range of issues that the negotiating team addresses in a mill area. In particular, the team is required to make a collective agreement. The following situation may never develop, but what if a person appointed by a mill suppliers committee who has every intention of being involved in a collective agreement at the commencement of duties finds that his circumstances change after being appointed and considers it best to enter into an individual agreement? This example is highly speculative. Nevertheless, such a situation would be highly undesirable for members of a collective agreement. Can the Minister indicate what would happen in that situation under this legislation?

The negotiating team has four members—two miller and two grower representatives. It determines a whole range of issues, including the future direction of a mill area. I have cited a hypothetical example of a person who changes his mind. I see that the Minister is consulting with his policy advisers. If a person nominated and approved by a mill suppliers committee to be involved in the negotiating team finds for whatever reason—for example, it might be because of early sugar or he might have one of the problems identified earlier in the legislation—that it is best for him to move out of a collective agreement and into an individual agreement, any collective agreement that had been formed would have serious problems. That is why I am proposing this amendment, which is a very simple one. It states—

> "A Mill Suppliers' nominee to a negotiating team must be a member of a Collective Agreement."

That is basically what this is all about. The amendment makes it foolproof. There will be no question that the representatives of the negotiating team would not be members of a collective agreement.

Because of the other legislation that we cannot mention, in future the mill suppliers committee may not necessarily include a representative of the Canegrowers organisation. That would complicate matters. Which member of the mill suppliers committee would be nominated by the mill suppliers to become a member of the negotiating team? Will that person be from the ACFA or Canegrowers? How will we determine from where that person will come? In the past it has been accepted that that person would be from the Canegrowers organisation. That group does the negotiating at present. It represents all of the canegrowers. But there will be a new

ball game probably in three years' time and definitely in five years' time with respect to who, under the legislation, can be the mill suppliers representative. Importantly, I ask the Minister to address, firstly, the issue of collective agreements and the people who are representatives of mill suppliers on negotiating teams. Will they definitely be in a collective agreement and not in an individual agreement?

Mr PALASZCZUK: When I spoke to the previous clause, I explained to the Committee the reasoning behind the Government's proposal. I refer honourable members to the amendment to be moved by the Government in respect of Schedule 2. The amendment makes it clear that mill suppliers committees are established under the Bill and not under any other legislation and it makes it clear that members of mill suppliers committees are established for mills "by the majority of growers whose cane production areas relate to the mill". I do not believe that when members are being nominated from the local mill suppliers committee people without the right expertise would be appointed. That would not be in the best interests of the local area.

Mr ROWELL: I think the Minister has missed the point entirely. The fact is that they could be people with the right expertise. They could be very knowledgeable. They could probably be very switched on people. However, when we put together legislation it is always good to have fail-safe mechanisms in place. At the time of his nomination by the mill suppliers committee, a person may have every intention of being in a collective agreement. 75% is the figure referred to by the Minister. The legislation that we cannot talk about because it is yet to be debated in the Chamber will create a whole new ball game as to who those people could be. For whatever reason, be it because of politics or something else, if it is decided to change the status quo of the Canegrowers organisation representing all people—and the Government will probably have the numbers to achieve that—two people from the mill suppliers committee, whoever that group of people represents in the future, will still go on the negotiating team for each mill area. After that person is nominated by the 75% of the membership that the Minister has spoken about, if that person decides it is more advantageous to go into an individual agreement rather than a collective agreement, there is nothing to stop him from doing that.

I am saying that this amendment makes it compulsory for the person to be a member of a collective agreement. I am speaking about the person who is involved in the negotiating team and who is nominated by the growers' group. The terminology that is used now is the mill suppliers committee, but that may not be as relevant further down the track. If the Government wants to be absolutely certain that those persons are involved in a collective agreement and not an individual agreement, it should support the amendment that I have moved because it will ensure that. The bulk of mill suppliers will be involved in a collective agreement. This amendment just enshrines some certainty into the legislation that the person representing all the mill suppliers in an area will be a member of a collective agreement and not a person who has an individual agreement.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 180, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 181 and 182, as read, agreed to.

Clause 183—

Mr KNUTH (2.40 p.m.): I withdraw my proposed amendment to this clause.

Clause 183, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 184 to 186, as read, agreed to.

Clause 187—

The CHAIRMAN: I take it that the member for Burdekin is not withdrawing his proposed amendment to the next clause? Can the member just answer my question?

Mr KNUTH (2.41 p.m.): Yes, I withdraw my amendment No. 34, too. Because of the flow-on effect of my previous amendments, which were negatived, it is no longer applicable.

The CHAIRMAN: Are we talking about your amendment No. 33, which proposes to insert a new clause?

Mr KNUTH: Yes, I am withdrawing that.

Clause 187, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 188 to 192, as read, agreed to.

Clause 193—

The CHAIRMAN: Is the member withdrawing his proposed amendment No. 34 to this clause as well?

Mr KNUTH (2.42 p.m.): Yes.

Clause 193, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 194 and 195, as read, agreed to.

Clause 196—

Mr COOPER (2.42 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 123, lines 1 to 4—

omit."

This amendment seeks to omit the clause in order to oppose it because of the issue, as we have heard before, of political activity. Again, there is no need for me to elaborate further. We had the big discussion on it yesterday and so our opposition stands.

The CHAIRMAN: Honourable members, please note that Mr Cooper's amendment No. 23 to clause 196 intends to omit the clause.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 196, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 197 and 198, as read, agreed to.

Clause 199—

Mr KNUTH (2.44 p.m.): I withdraw my proposed amendment to this clause.

The CHAIRMAN: I say to the member for Burdekin that we have running sheets here of amendments that he proposed to move. If he knows he is going to withdraw amendments, could he please give us some indication beforehand?

Mr KNUTH: I am waiting for you to call them out, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: Can the member call out which ones he is withdrawing?

Mr KNUTH: I withdraw proposed amendments Nos 35 and 36.

Clause 199, as read, agreed to.

Clause 200, as read, agreed to.

Clause 201—

Mr COOPER (2.45 p.m.): Mr Chairman, you might be getting frustrated, but I can tell you that there are a few people who have been involved in this issue for a lot longer than you have. However, at the end of the day—

The CHAIRMAN: I hope that is not a reflection on the Chair.

Mr COOPER: Hardly, Mr Chairman. I can tell from your voice that you sound a bit frustrated. The Minister probably does, too. The point is that a lot of work has gone into this legislation. At the end of the day, because a lot of people have been heavily involved in it, we will get better legislation. Certainly the fact that a lot of points have been made during the discussion on a Bill of such major importance will result in that being worth while. So a little bit of frustration can just continue.

As the Minister will recall, this clause relates to Chapter 6—Authorisations for Competition Legislation. During the second-reading debate, the member for Burnett raised the concerns of Cane Harvesters. Cane Harvesters, the organisation representing the sector, wrote to both the Government and the Opposition seeking support for an amendment to the Bill to give some recognition for this integral sector of the industry. The amendment requested by Cane Harvesters was to this clause and, in particular, to the definition of "harvesting equity committee" to ensure that harvester owners would be represented.

The reasons for this amendment were explained by my friend the member for Burnett. In his response, the Minister pointed out that the Bill does not establish harvest equity committees or dictate their composition. The Minister said that he understood the harvesters' concerns but did not believe that the amendment that Cane Harvesters was putting forward would achieve the results intended.

I do not disagree with the Minister's analysis of the Bill, but the coalition would like to know what action the Government intends to take to ensure that the legitimate concerns of Cane Harvesters are recognised. We appreciate that the complex and important legislation cannot be amended simply to recognise each and every interest group, but I would say to the Minister that the representations of Cane Harvesters were measured and they were reasonable. They do play an integral role in the industry and have an enormous amount of capital invested. The maintenance of this sector is critical and, in these circumstances, we would like to know what action the Government will be taking, whether it is now or at some time in the future, so that these people are not forgotten and their legitimate claims are, in fact, recognised. I would like to hear from the Minister on that point.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Just briefly, let me first recognise the contribution of the billion dollar cane harvester industry to the sugar industry in Queensland. It is something that I think members of this Committee should be aware of. They perform a wonderful job out there. I am also pleased to say that, after representations from the Cane Harvesters group, I was able to also include them on SIDAC, which is my advisory committee. Their voice is very well heard at SIDAC and, as I mentioned to the Committee yesterday, the next meeting of SIDAC will be held next week.

However, to be more specific to the honourable member's comments, I would just like to remind him that I did refer to this issue at length in my summing-up of the honourable member's contribution to the second-reading debate. However, I must add that this section is only descriptive; it does not set up harvest equity committees, which are set up by

growers themselves. The Government basically has no role at all in that matter. To reassure the honourable member, let me just say that the cane harvesters' voice is heard and will continue to be heard on SIDAC.

Mr ROWELL: I have something to say about this issue, because I believe it is quite important.

Mr Purcell: Don't you like cane harvesters?

Mr ROWELL: Does the member want to go out and cut it manually?

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr ROWELL: They were probably the ones from Childers or somewhere else.

The Cane Harvesters organisation makes a very significant contribution to the industry, as do the individuals who are members of that organisation. They have to be regarded as part of a range of other groups that service the sugar industry, such as fertiliser companies and tyre companies. They all have significant investments in the sugar towns throughout Queensland. Cane harvesters are associated a little more closely with the industry because of their direct involvement on a day-by-day basis during the crushing period of the year.

I have had a cane harvester myself and I operated one for a short period. The individuals involved do get it pretty rough at times, particularly in relation to the allocation of the bins when they are harvesting a crop. Recently in my part of the world we have seen them waiting for six and eight hours for an assignment of bins to come to them so that they can harvest the afternoon's rakes. I do not know whether that goes on in the rest of the industry.

Three or four people are involved in a cane harvesting operation, using equipment valued at half a million dollars plus, depending on the level at which they participate. They deserve some due recognition for their involvement, because they work under some pretty difficult conditions. Sometimes it is very wet. At other times it can be particularly dry. Under wet conditions there is a lot of wear and tear on the machines and it is very costly to repair them.

Mr Malone: Up to a $1m investment.

Mr ROWELL: There can be a $1m investment. The smallest operators are somewhere around about half a million dollars. Operators are going to full-track units. One does not see many wheeled units around the countryside any longer. They try to insulate themselves from the weather conditions. There is a need for them to increase the size of the harvest. I think the average size is somewhere around 50,000 tonnes to 60,000 tonnes. In the Tully area, where it is particularly wet, it is around 80,000 tonnes, and they work extremely long hours to get the crop off. They deserve some recognition for the role that they play, because without them—

Mr Welford: I don't think you'll get a reply when all this finishes.

Mr ROWELL: I would like to see the member harvesting some cane by hand. I can assure him that would be an interesting experience. The member for Bulimba would be all right; he would find his way around the block, but I do not know about the Minister for Natural Resources.

In returning to the Bill, I stress that some recognition is needed of the harvesting groups.

Clause 201, as read, agreed to.

Clause 202—

Mr KNUTH (2.53 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

> "At page 127, lines 20 and 21 and page 128, lines 1 to 15—
>
> omit, insert—
>
> '202.(1) The granting of, or the refusal to grant, a cane production area, or an increase in the number of hectares included in a cane production area, by a cane production board is specifically authorised for the competition legislation.
>
> '(2) Subsection (1) applies to the granting only to the extent it is made for giving effect to a settlement.
>
> '(3) The granting is authorised even if it has the purpose, effect or likely effect of substantially lessening'."

This clause deals with excluding activities from the Trade Practices Act 1974 and Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Act. Each of the subclauses that I have moved to delete grants exemption under this Bill from application of the two Acts by approving the imposition of non-competitive restrictions on the harvesting and delivery of cane and who a grower may use to cut and deliver the cane. In other words, this subclause completely ties the hands of growers behind their backs for the purpose of harvesting and delivery of cane so that they can no longer opt to cut their own cane or change cane harvesting and haulage contractors. This is totally unacceptable to growers. The inclusion of these matters in the Bill is yet again not in keeping with the Sugar Industry Review Working Party report.

The Bill as it stands gives total power to the mills to dictate everything about harvesting and delivery. No grower has any means of escape if the mill owner will not agree to the grower's proposals. This Bill is clear and sufficient in relation to the millers' interests. Under the Bill, the Minister's powers are great and far reaching. However, in relation to the growers and their interests, the Bill is silent, lopsided, ambiguous and totally uncompetitive.

I return to the issue of the NCP intergovernmental agreements. Under those agreements the parties intend to achieve and maintain consistent and complementary laws and policies that will apply to all businesses in Australia regardless of ownership. The agreements also refer to the competitiveness of Australian businesses. Canegrowers is an Australian business.

I put it to the Minister and the Beattie Government that for the past 18 months I have heard the Beattie Government pay lip-service to its being against National Competition Policy. I have continually seen passed in this Parliament legislation that is totally beneficial to multinational companies and big business. But when it comes to helping out the small businessman, the battler, the grower, there is absolutely no competition for them. The competition guidelines are one-sided, as is this legislation.

I will cite an example that occurred in the Burdekin last year. We had unseasonal, unprecedented rain and many cane harvesters and haul-out operators could not operate in the Burdekin. Many farmers in the Burdekin were calling on operators and harvesters to come down from Hinchinbrook, because most of the Hinchinbrook and far-north Queensland equipment is tracked and can handle the wet conditions. Under this section of the Bill, that will not be available to growers. Where will they stand on that issue? Provisions must be made very clearly in this clause to provide for those circumstances.

Once again I reiterate that this Bill does not comply with National Competition Policy guidelines. Although I am against that policy totally, I believe that, if we are going to draft a Bill, it must be fair to small business, the battlers. I am not seeing that in this legislation and neither are the small businesspeople and the farmers. The Goss Government signed that intergovernmental agreement, and many of the current Ministers are from that era. I want to start seeing legislation brought into this Chamber that follows the guidelines of National Competition Policy, otherwise the Government should stop talking about that policy once and for all. The Government should stop using it against the Opposition for political gain. The Government's legislation does not accord with what Government members are saying to members on this side of the Chamber.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The issues raised by the honourable member for Burdekin are quite legitimate. He has certainly shown concern for his constituency. I still believe that the honourable member has misunderstood the purpose of clause 202. Clause 202 is not an empowering provision but an authorising provision. It specifically authorises for the purposes of competition legislation certain activities in relation to cane production areas. It is not appropriate that this provision be altered.

Parliament has now approved all provisions up to this point. If the Government were to accept the honourable member's amendment, it would effectively undermine earlier provisions in relation to cane production areas. If the amendment were now passed, it would potentially give rise to actions based on breaches of the Trade Practices Act 1974, which the honourable member referred to. I also reassure the honourable member that this clause will not affect harvesters coming down to the Burdekin from the Herbert, nor will any other clause in this Bill.

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

AYES, 39—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 39—Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

The numbers being equal, the Chairman cast his vote with the Noes.

Resolved in the **negative**.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the member for Burdekin intend to proceed with his amendments 38, 39 and 40?

Mr KNUTH: I will not be moving those three amendments.

Clause 202, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 203 to 210, as read, agreed to.

Clause 211—

Mr KNUTH (3.08 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 134, lines 27 to 29 and page 135, lines 1 to 5—

omit, insert—

'Commercial price for domestic sugar

211.(1) All contracts entered into by the corporation for the sale of domestic sugar must be at commercial prices and not be affected by export parity pricing.

'(2) Despite section 101, the Minister may not give directions to the corporation about the price of domestic sugar.'."

I move yet another amendment to prevent Government meddling in commercial pricing of sugar for virtually the same reason I gave in relation to a previous amendment. Clause 211 must be amended. The entire clause should be replaced to read—

"(1) All contracts entered into by the corporation for the sale of domestic sugar must be at commercial prices and not be affected by export parity pricing.

(2) Despite section 101, the Minister may not give directions to the corporation about the price of domestic sugar."

The purpose of this change is to eliminate any avenue for sugar price direction by the Primary Industries Minister. Government intervention must be kept to an absolute minimum to allow the Queensland Sugar Corporation to sell its sugar at the best possible price for Queensland growers. Ministers who believe that they must hold the hand of what is a market-governed industry do little but insult the intelligence of the people within that industry. Ministerial meddling is unwarranted and unwelcome. If the Queensland Sugar Corporation can sell sugar domestically at above the world sugar price, then so be it.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The member for Burdekin seems to consider that clause 211 is an empowering clause. This is not the case. The clause specifically authorises certain things for the purposes of the competition legislation. As I stated in relation to clause 202, Parliament has now approved all provisions up to this point.

I refer again to clause 202. I really want it recorded in Hansard that the Country Party and the Opposition have just shown total hypocrisy in relation to the NCP. Honourable members opposite voted to attempt to remove protections against NCP put into the Act to secure growers and millers in continuing their legitimate activities. These same sorts of protections allow us to protect the single desk. Unfortunately, the Opposition's words on the NCP are quite hollow. They would expose the industry to the full effects of competition with absolutely no exemption.

Mr KNUTH: Every time we try to get some fair pricing for canegrowers on the domestic market we hear this response that the single desk will be threatened. If we read the findings of the 1987 Senate report we see that the single desk would not be threatened under the workings of competition policy. I cannot see any reason why we cannot get rid of parity pricing to help benefit the farmers in Queensland. A better price on the domestic market could mean up to $10,000 extra in the average farmer's pocket. I think we should be putting farmers before overseas interests. I really cannot abide by the Minister's response.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I refer the honourable member to the publication "Sugar—Winning Globally, Main Report, Report of the Sugar Industry Review Working Party". I believe that if the honourable member had a good look at this report, he might be convinced otherwise than the statement that he has just made in relation to this clause.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 211, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 212 to 257, as read, agreed to.

Clause 258—

Mr PALASZCZUK (3.13 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 158, lines 15 and 16—

omit, insert—

'• a mill supply contract to which the owner of the mill known as the 'Plane Creek Mill' is a party

• a mill supply contract to which the owner of the mills known as the 'Macknade Mill' and the 'Victoria Mill' is a party

• a mill supply contract to which the owner of the mill known as the 'Mossman Mill' is a party'."

The Government moves an amendment in subclause (5) to the definition of "existing mill supply contract". This amendment is necessary, on the advice of the Australian Sugar Milling Council and the Queensland Sugar Corporation, in order to complete the list of existing mill supply contracts. Originally, the clause provided only for contracts with the

Mossman mill and the Tableland mill. The corporation's records indicate that there are also contracts with the Plane Creek mill, the Victoria mill and the Macknade mill. Accordingly, the amendments provide for inclusions of mill supply contracts with those three mills that were omitted.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 258, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 259 to 261, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 1, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 2—

Mr PALASZCZUK (3.14 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 173, lines 4 and 5, from 'under' to '1926'—

omit, insert—

'by the majority of growers whose cane production areas relate to the mill'.

At page 173, line 8, after 'established for the mill'—

insert—

'by the majority of growers whose cane production areas relate to the mill'."

The Government moves an amendment in Schedule 2 to the definition of "mill suppliers committee". The amendment makes clear that mill suppliers committees are established under the Bill and not under any other legislation and makes clear that members of mill suppliers committees are established for mills by the majority of growers whose cane production areas relate to the mills.

Amendments agreed to.

Schedule 2, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Bill Taken into Consideration

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (3.16 p.m.): I move—

"That the Bill as amended be now taken into consideration."

Mr ROWELL: The position that I hold in particular—and I think it reflects—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Dr Clark): Order! I will seek the advice of the Clerk. I am advised by the Clerk that the member can speak when the question is put that the Bill be read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (3.16 p.m.), by leave: I move—

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

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (3.17 p.m.): I think that, in every way possible, the Opposition—that is, the coalition parties—have tried to work through this Bill with the Minister. This Bill has been largely devised by the Sugar Industry Review Working Party. However, I think that a few things have been introduced into the Bill which do not necessarily reflect what that review party intended. Of course, the change that is now occurring in the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act is of some concern to us, because it does interrupt quite severely the structure of the growing side of the industry.

Over a long period, that structure has served the industry particularly well. Unfortunately, this Government has decided to do away with that structure. I do not think there is a lot of support out there on the growing side of the industry, yet there is an independent organisation which, over a period, has flourished. Any grower who was not satisfied with what was happening with the statutory organisation had the right to join that particular organisation, and it has quite a considerable membership.

There are things that we have discussed in the Bill, such as the sugar analysis and the check chemists, about which we are not satisfied. What is going to happen regarding the funding for the BSES is not very clear. That is of particular concern to the growers but more so to the millers. They have a need to have some input as regards the quality of cane and the methods of growing it.

As to the funding—there is a direction by the Minister that he is going to address that situation so that the fifty-fifty equity of both growers and millers is maintained. Yet, unfortunately, that is not reflected in the legislation. I have no doubt that the Minister will try to do something about it, but until we see something in black and white in legislation we will continue to raise this issue because it is one of the key elements regarding the future direction of the industry. We have had success over a long period in growing and milling the crop. When it comes to cane production, we have led the rest of the world in many respects. Unfortunately, many countries such as Brazil and some of the undeveloped countries have adopted a lot of the principles

and the technology that we have developed in Australia. They have taken that technology and, with low-cost labour, have been able to compete more than favourably against us. That causes us a great deal of angst.

I am concerned about the political direction of this legislation. I spoke about this matter yesterday and I do not want to deal with it at any great length today. For an industry to flourish it has to have the capacity to get on with the job and not be subject to undue influence from Government departments purely on the basis of political policy. I can only hope that the Minister will take that message to Cabinet. I sincerely believe that the Minister will do that. I know how many people sit around the Cabinet table, and I know that sometimes things do not go in the direction that one desires. There are competing interests in the Cabinet room. For the most part, the Minister belongs to a party that is more interested in the Green vote than it is in the welfare of primary producers.

Despite what is contained in this legislation, I have never witnessed any of the four organisations that the Minister has mentioned displaying political activity. I would hate to see any prohibition placed upon those organisations because of some perceived political interference. The people involved in those organisations are very professional people. I have never thought of asking them whether they belong to any particular political party. If we are going to get the best out of those organisations, the last thing we want to do is cast any doubt upon their political views as individuals. I am extremely disappointed that this has been so clearly spelt out in the legislation.

The sugar industry is a very big industry and it contributes an enormous amount to the economy of Queensland. I hope that we will not see this legislation having a detrimental effect on the industry. I sincerely hope that this legislation will be reviewed when the coalition returns to Government. I would ask the Minister to review the legislation if he finds that difficulties arise in the future. We do not want anything to inhibit the organisations involved in the industry. This is an industry which places 85% to 90% of its product on the world market. It has to be an efficient industry to be able to do that. A lot of hard work has gone into the building up of this industry. Mistakes have been made, but it has been a very good industry for Queensland.

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest—NP) (3.25 p.m.): I concur with the remarks made by the member for Hinchinbrook. He and the member for Mirani are involved with the sugar industry.

Mr Palaszczuk: He is after your job.

Mr COOPER: And I hope he gets it. One thing is for sure: he will not let the Minister off the hook. I did not rise in this place in order to indulge in this sort of carry on. As far as I am concerned, this is an extremely important piece of legislation. Members on this side of the Chamber recognise that, in spite of the groans of frustration coming from members opposite.

I want to acknowledge some of the people and the organisations involved. Honourable members who come from sugar electorates have obviously been listening to their constituents. That is their job. When the provisions of the Bill were made known to the constituency, it was probably the first time that the constituents were heard and were given a reasonable run. That is why the legislation has engendered so much comment. The comments made by coalition members and the member for Burdekin have emanated from the concerns of constituents. If we do not voice those concerns we are not doing our job. If those opposite see fit to ridicule members on this side of the Chamber, so be it. If those opposite want to sound off about it, I invite them to go right ahead because I know who will win. The constituents will come first.

We believe that we have made every attempt to get this legislation right. If we have succeeded, we are pleased; if not, we have nevertheless made our point. That is the name of the game.

I acknowledge the member for Logan, who took the Chair during the early part of the Committee stage. The member demonstrated a great deal of patience, because he knows and understands the complexity of this legislation. Members on this side of the Chamber knew that it would be difficult to work our way through this legislation. I pass on my compliments and commendations to the Minister's staff, who have unhesitatingly given advice to honourable members when required.

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—IND) (3.27 p.m.): I concur with the comments made by the member for Crows Nest and the member for Hinchinbrook. What they have said just about covers my sentiments with regard to this Bill.

One of the saddest aspects of this legislation is the division that has been brought about between the Canegrowers organisation and the cane farmers. In the Burdekin we had a very sad meeting at which a lot of verbal abuse was directed at Harry Bonanno. This

was an indication of the grief and despair that growers in that area felt towards this legislation.

On quite a number of occasions, the Minister has accused me of listening to the ACFA. I am not supporting any particular organisation. The ACFA seems to be more committed to grassroots views than the Canegrowers organisation. I am not knocking the canegrowers. Plenty of canegrowers' organisations throughout north Queensland have done a tremendous job. These groups suggested a lot of amendments, but they were not always in agreement with the Canegrowers organisation in Brisbane.

I know that the Minister believes that the findings of the working party are supportive of this legislation. However, I am saddened that the Canegrowers organisation in Brisbane did not listen to many of its members in north Queensland. The Minister must understand that from Proserpine north the mills are privately owned. CSR is understandably looking after its own interests. The millers felt that the legislation was biased towards the growers.

A lot of growers are very distressed about certain sections of the legislation. I believe that within a couple of years some problems will arise as a result of this legislation. As the only member of the Country Party in this Chamber, I hope that in the near future the Government of the day will review this legislation so that it works for millers and growers alike.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA)(3.30 p.m.): I would like to record a few short words in respect of the Bill. With the passing of the Sugar Industry Bill, today is quite an historic day. Its genesis was back in late 1991 when the Goss Government brought in the revised sugar legislation, with a review to be undertaken five years later. In 1996, the time for that review fell due and the Sugar Industry Review Working Party was formulated and spent quite a lot of time working through the issues.

Certainly, many of the recommendations of that working party have been included in this legislation. However, it is quite amazing that quite a lot of issues that have come forward—

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! The Minister for Environment will not interject from other than his own seat.

Mr MALONE: It seems that quite a number of issues have come forward and been included in this legislation that were never recommendations of the Sugar Industry Review Working Party. I think that the way in which workers, farmers and people involved in the industry have put forward their views in respect of this matter is quite historic. Indeed, if it had been up to the Government, this Bill would have been passed in August without any amendments at all. I think that it is historic that the Government has accepted more than 23 amendments to the legislation, simply because people have had their say. I think that that is fortunate. I have to say that I think this legislation is far better because of that. I know that, from the Government's point of view, it is rather frustrating to deal with amendments. Quite frankly, the Opposition has worked hard to try to put forward views that are acceptable to all.

At the end of the day, I think that the legislation is better for it. Even though it is not entirely as the Opposition would like, I think that it is as good as we are going to get from this Government. Let us hope that it all works well in the future and is perhaps reviewed, as the Minister indicated that he would review it if there were any problems.

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (3.32 p.m.): I would like to make a few comments. First of all, I would like to express my thanks to the representatives of all the industry organisations who helped to draft the Bill. Of course, this Bill is as a result of the industry working with the Government. I would also like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Mr John Desmarchelier, who has been up in the gallery continuously for the past whatever number of days it has taken for this Bill to be passed. I am quite sure that he would be very pleased with the final outcome. I would also like to thank all the industry leaders, such as Harry Bonanno, Graham Davies and Ron Verri, who set the policy in the working party. I would also like to thank my backbench committee. I would like to single out in particular Warren Pitt, who has certainly consulted widely with growers and millers and reported their concerns back to me. A number of amendments that the Government moved were as a direct result of our backbench committee members being out there doing the work.

I want to support the effort of the global alliance for sugar trade reform in Seattle. I believe that is very, very important, simply because the global sugar markets need to be freed up. I want to place on the record of this House that I am very disappointed that the US has reduced its imports of Australian sugar. However, I believe that this Bill sets the scene for a more competitive, viable industry.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Dr Alan Neill and all of his staff in the Department of Primary Industries and an adviser from my office, Paul Martin, for all the work that they have put together in getting me organised and also the briefings that they have given to the Opposition. I believe that their efforts have been well rewarded because, finally, we have seen this Bill pass through the House. With those few words, I would like to thank the Opposition as well for their participation in the debate.

Motion agreed to.

FAMILY SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 24 March (see p. 739).

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (3.34 p.m.): This Bill amends the Family Services Act 1987, which is the overarching legislation for the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. It is worth while noting the objects of that legislation, because I think that they are significant—

> "Without limiting the operation of this Act, the objects of this Act include—
>
> (a) the promotion and support of the welfare of families as the basis of community wellbeing;
>
> (b) the establishment of services and the encouragement of the development of services that promote, support and protect the wellbeing of families;
>
> (c) the encouragement of the development of coordinated social welfare services and programs that promote and strengthen local neighbourhood and community interests;
>
> (d) the promotion of the wellbeing of the community by assisting individuals and families to overcome social problems with which they are confronted."

I think that we need to keep those objectives in mind when we are debating this piece of legislation.

In rising to support the object of this amendment legislation, I think that it is fair to say that the amendments are to ensure that children and people with intellectual disabilities cared for by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care are suitably protected by providing appropriate screening procedures for departmental staff. However, areas will need to be monitored carefully, and I emphasise the word "monitored". This Bill gives the director-general of the department significant powers and likewise imposes obligations on current departmental staff and future job applicants as well as the Queensland Police Service and prosecuting authorities. At the end of the day, this Bill is aimed at ensuring that the Director-General of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care is aware of the criminal history, in the widest sense of that term, of anybody who wants to work in the department in any capacity and in any area.

The Bill replaces and expands the obligations imposed under the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986 and section 13 of the Public Service Regulation. Before commenting on the Bill, I will deal with some recent history that illustrates why the very broad and intrusive powers set out in this Bill can be considered to be needed by our society. The starting point is the 1995 Stewart report into allegations of misconduct at the Basil Stafford Centre. Stewart dealt at length with the issue of criminal history checks. Although his comments on pages 324 and 325 of the report are lengthy, they are worthwhile recording in Hansard. He states—

> "Severely or profoundly intellectually disabled persons, such as those residing at the Centre, are in an extremely vulnerable position. On the evidence before the Inquiry, many of those clients do not have any regular or substantial contact with family members or other concerned persons. While an entity such as the Office of the Public Trustee may administer the affairs of such clients, to an overwhelming extent, their welfare, and the safeguarding of their rights, is placed in the hands of those officers employed by the Department to provide services of support and day to day care. The public at large, and the Division must of necessity place a great deal of trust in those officers; trust that they will act properly, in accordance with the objectives of the Division, and in a diligent, honest and lawful manner. That trust is amplified in circumstances where the supervisory or regulatory mechanisms of the Division have not been, on the evidence before this Inquiry, adequate in all respects. Unfortunately, the evidence before this Inquiry indicates that this trust has all too often been broken.
>
> I cannot think of any group of society which is in a more vulnerable position than those intellectually disabled persons whose welfare and protection is entrusted to facilities such as the Basil Stafford

> Centre. In those circumstances, it is essential that those persons intending to apply for positions within the Division responsible for the administration of the welfare of the intellectually disabled, should be called upon to disclose all criminal convictions... While such a disclosure requirement, to an extent, impinges upon an applicant's rights, the situation is one where those rights must not be placed before the rights of the vulnerable intellectually disabled.
>
> Accordingly, I recommend that the provisions of section 9A of the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986 be amended so that applicants for positions within the Division of Intellectual Disability Services be required to disclose any and all contraventions of or failures to comply with any provision of law, whether committed in Queensland or elsewhere."

Stewart specifically recommended that convictions include those instances where a person pleaded guilty but no conviction was recorded. In 1997, the royal commission into the New South Wales police force, when dealing with paedophile activities, noted that in that State there were no clear and consistent guidelines for screening those workers and volunteers who have close contact with children and that that was a significant complicating factor in providing protection to those most in need of protection.

Of even more pressing concern were the reports late last year of the notorious paedophile Raymond John Simpson, who was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment for various child sex offences over a 15-year period. Simpson worked for the department, ensuring that youths complied with probation and court orders. One of the victims whom this sexual predator was convicted of molesting was a juvenile whom he cared for as a child care officer. Simpson abused the youth on the very day that the youth was released from a detention centre. Simpson was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment and the judge also ordered that he report his address to police for a further 10 years after release because of the risk of reoffending.

Having just read into Hansard the comment of Stewart J, it is profoundly disturbing to see that Simpson worked as a residential care officer at the Basil Stafford centre from 1995. At the time, the Minister said that Simpson had twice been the subject of departmental criminal history checks, but that this failed to identify any problems. I assume from that that Simpson had not been convicted previously but had only been investigated by the police without charges getting to court. In any event, I assume that if this Bill had been in place it may have picked up Simpson. Perhaps the Minister could confirm if this is the correct assumption.

I approach this Bill with a keen appreciation that there are some extremely dangerous members of society who seek to obtain access to the young and vulnerable to satisfy their criminal intentions. They are very cunning individuals and often plan their activities carefully and over a long period. Sometimes they are part of a group of like-minded criminals who offer mutual support and assistance. To successfully and proactively deal with those criminals and deviants before they ruin the lives of vulnerable people, it is clear that expanded criminal history checks are needed.

Before commenting further on this element of the Bill, I wish to say that many of the problems that I have with the current approach in this initiative relate to the fact that it is a reactive proposal. It is aimed at getting information on persons who have already applied for jobs or who are already employed in sensitive areas in the department. I accept that, so far as existing departmental staff are concerned, expanded criminal history checks are a sensible way of proceeding. However, so far as those not already in the department are concerned, surely there are other methods of approach. I suggest to the Minister that we should be deterring potential paedophiles from making a job application to the department in the first place. We should be sending a clear signal to persons who wish to abuse a position of trust and who have a track record of serious sexual misconduct that they are not welcome.

Further, by the provision of a penalty up front we should make it clear that, if any person with a serious record of sexual offences even seeks employment in this sensitive department, they will face prosecution. In the scheme of things, this would be the best deterrent of all. It would be far better if we had a strong publicly advertised or advised proactive policy of saying, "Don't bother applying. You won't get a job. We will do a criminal history check and if we find out about your past history as a sexual predator, you will be subject to a possible lengthy jail term." I suggest to the Minister that a message like that would nip in the bud many of the problems that may arise in the future.

I turn now to the provisions of the Bill. While it is clear that we need to arm the department with broader powers, we should

never forget that appropriate checks and balances must be put in place. Giving intrusive powers to public servants carries with it a series of ethical, administrative and even criminal implications. I am sure that the Minister is fully aware of the careful balancing of rights and protections for all concerned that has to occur. However, considering some of the comments that the Minister made in her second-reading speech, I question whether she fully appreciates the extent of the checks and balances that we need to put in place.

The essence of this Bill is that, in the future, any person considered for employment in any capacity within the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care will be subject to a search that will potentially provide information on any criminal history background. The Bill allows for the provision of information that goes beyond convictions or even charges being laid. Pursuant to proposed section 26, the Commissioner of Police will disclose the existence of any investigations into serious offences committed by the applicant.

It is important to realise that this Bill covers convictions, sentences where no convictions were recorded, charges that were either dropped or where the person was found not guilty, and even investigations—and I emphasise investigations. The fact that information can be disclosed about investigations where no charges have been laid is a major extension of the law. It is a matter that warrants very careful scrutiny to ensure that innocent persons are not subject to unfair treatment. In fact, when introducing the Bill the Minister acknowledged that potential exists for the disclosure of information that could be "potentially erroneous".

I also suggest that the provision of possibly misleading information could not only result in a person unfairly failing to gain employment but, if the information is misused, could also ruin a person's reputation. In fairness, it should be mentioned that if a person is subject to an investigation, that does not have to be disclosed in various circumstances—most importantly, under clause 26, if the investigation is unlikely to lead to a person being charged with a serious offence.

While that protection is reassuring, as the Minister and her advisers would recognise it does not result in any iron-clad guarantees that inappropriate, unfair or erroneous information may not be disclosed. I accept that the protection of the vulnerable is the most important consideration in this equation, but there is a consequent need to ensure that potentially erroneous information is handled correctly and in a strictly confidential manner. I emphasise that, because it is particularly important.

I wish to pursue briefly two matters in this area. Firstly, in her second-reading speech the Minister claimed that the powers that this Bill proposes are the same as those already available to check criminal histories of teachers and some others. I refer to the Minister's statement indicating that it is not quite the same. In fact, there are at least two major differences. I will focus on those differences and spell out their seriousness, because it is important that the public realises what those differences are. Even though one might support this legislation, one has to be aware of these very serious differences. In doing that I will not only demonstrate the significant path that this Bill is taking us down, but I will also indicate to the House how the provisions of the legislation could, in fact, be made more acceptable.

As I have already indicated, the legislation is required to weed out paedophiles and sexual offenders should they apply for jobs in the department. The Minister indicates that the powers being proposed by this Bill are already available in relation to checking the criminal histories of workers under the Education (Teacher Registration) Act, the public transport Act and also in the gaming/casino control area. In this regard, honourable members should be aware of the practical implications of the Bill. Firstly, as I have indicated, it winds back the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders Act) 1986, in that offences that would normally not be disclosed by the operation of that Act will now be reported to and acted upon by the Minister's director-general. That in itself is a significant legislative action.

However, the Bill goes further in that it requires police to provide information on investigations in addition to charges and convictions covered by other legislation that I mentioned a few moments ago. It is a little misleading for the Minister to claim in one breath that the powers are already available under those other pieces of legislation and then in the next breath to concede that "there are ... two things contained in this Bill which are not contained elsewhere in Queensland's statute book". That is right. The "two things" are momentous. Therefore, we need to be aware of them.

It can be argued that these amendments undermine a basic principle of the system of

justice that is paramount in our society, namely, the assumption of innocence until proven guilty. Furthermore, the Bill clearly breaches the doctrine of the separation of powers. In relation to people applying for jobs, the fact that there will be reporting under this Bill will mean that it will no longer be the courts that decide guilt or innocence. Even if a person is proven innocent in the courts, in the eyes of the director-general that person may still be considered unsuitable—or perhaps some would say "guilty"—for a job within the department. This also conflicts fundamentally with one of the great principles underlying the system of justice and the system of government on which our society is based. One wonders how this legislation would have gone down many centuries ago when people were fighting for the separation of powers and for a person to be considered innocent until proven guilty in an independent court of law. How times and society's attitudes to these matters have changed.

If the Minister is saying in her second-reading speech that a number of people are getting off in the courts because of the age of children giving evidence and because of the way in which evidence is being tendered, then the references that I made back in 1997 to the Queensland Law Reform Commission in relation to these issues, which are now under consideration by the commission, are timely and need to be pursued. I look forward to the report and recommendations of the Queensland Law Reform Commission. It is looking not only at the issue of evidence but also at the recommendations of the Sturgess report. It is important that this be looked at by an independent body such as the Queensland Law Reform Commission, which can then make an independent assessment of what is needed in our courts in respect of the important area of evidence from children—the way in which that evidence is presented, the pressures on children and the need to ensure that people before the courts also get a fair hearing. Audiovisual technology can now be used to assist the courts in this regard. I predict that significant changes will be made. However, we will have to wait for the report of the Queensland Law Reform Commission, which I believe is the appropriate body to carry out this thorough investigation, which has to be undertaken sensitively and carefully. I trust that the commission will resolve these issues soon so that any legislative changes can be considered by the House.

Another issue that has been conveniently blurred in the discussion of this Bill is the extension of the powers of the director-general, which are significant. I predict that there will be all sorts of problems down the track whereby people who are subject to investigations and who have not been proceeded against in court will claim that they are being unjustly discriminated against. We are granting this extension of power for the benefit of children and those with disabilities, and society will have to live with that. The Minister tells us that under this legislation the risk is reduced in respect of repeat offending involving paedophilia and in respect of difficulties arising in gaining a successful prosecution because of lack of evidence. This should mean that children are better protected from a departmental employee being involved in this type of activity, including sexual offences—and I would think in particular because of sexual offences. That may be so. Nevertheless, the Minister is faced with an apparent contradiction between a fundamental assumption on which her department operates and these proposals for unilateral and virtually unreviewable actions by the director-general of the department.

Secondly, I note in the legislation that the definition of "criminal history" covers not only convictions but also, importantly, charges for every offence in Queensland, interstate and overseas. It reads—

> "(a) every conviction of the person for an offence, in Queensland or elsewhere, and whether before or after the commencement of this definition; and
>
> (b) every charge made against the person for an offence, in Queensland or elsewhere, and whether before or after the commencement of this definition."

Clearly, if overseas or interstate offences are involved, in many instances it will be up to the individual to supply that information, as I am sure that the Commissioner of Police would not have access to that information in all cases. I accept that the commissioner can check with Interpol and a whole range of other organisations. However, there is no guarantee that a lot of this information will not slip through once people are outside the jurisdiction of the State of Queensland and even if, within the State of Queensland, the Police Service is undertaking investigations of which the commissioner may not be aware. I presume that the commissioner will appoint a senior officer to liaise with the department in relation to these matters. For example, in one part of this vast State investigations might be in the process of being undertaken in relation to a

matter involving a person who is making an application. That might still not come to light even though the investigations are well advanced and involve a serious matter. There are concerns. This is another reason why I believe we need to be imposing the onus and duty on those people making applications for jobs.

The duty imposed on the Commissioner of Police is to comply with the request from the chief executive of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. However, it applies to information in the commissioner's possession or to which the commissioner has access. I have already outlined instances where that may not be the situation. What is of greater concern and what constitutes the major shortcoming in the legislation is the lack of requirements for due process in the handling of this information when it comes to the director-general's review of a decision stemming from its use. Also crying out for an answer is the question as to why information relating to mental health issues is not required to be supplied but only that relating to criminal histories. For example, someone with a mental health history could make an application. In the absence of a legislative basis for the submission of such information, there is no way that such relevant medical advice could be obtained. I think it is fair to question the Minister as to why only alleged criminal acts—I stress "alleged"—and not mental health conditions are covered by this legislation. Mental health issues can often be just as serious as criminal histories when it comes to the department's dealings with people. I look forward to the Minister giving an indication of why that was not covered and what consideration was given to it. Some mental health conditions could prove just as serious as criminal acts.

I mentioned the need for natural justice, which is a glaring omission from this Bill. I accept that there may be some difficulties with that. We have a selection panel. Of course, the Minister will no doubt argue that that is separate from the director-general. Of course, the director-general has the final say. We know that the director-general is responsible for all staff within the department. One could argue that the director-general, because of that responsibility, must have the final say. Nevertheless, people will be interviewed by selection panels and some may feel that they have been denied natural justice by them. No appeal mechanism has been put in place within this legislation. I am not sure whether that has been considered. One of the issues I will mention in detail later is that, according to the Explanatory Notes, there was no public consultation on this issue before the legislation was drawn up. I take it that this is something that the department did not consider worthy of inclusion. I would like the Minister to explain the reasoning behind this, because the consideration that was given to this matter should be put on the record. I know this will be an issue that will crop up in the future. People will feel that they have not been afforded natural justice. They will argue that the selection panel is part of the departmental process under the control of the director-general; that the director-general has had some say; that it is Caesar appealing to Caesar. We need to clear up that issue and get something on the record in relation to it so that independent and fair-minded people can see what the situation is.

The Minister in her second-reading speech made much of the fact that the Bill contains what the Minister calls "a whole set of safeguards to ensure that powers contained within this Bill do not impact unfairly on individuals". I suggest that that may not be the case. We will have to wait and see. To say it in those terms without including some of the other checks and balances shows that the Minister does not really understand what checks and balances we need to apply in this regard. I do not think that she can make the assertion that it is contained within the legislation.

Of course, there are other matters that one must take into account, which is where the Minister has trouble, namely those matters that members on this side of the Chamber are supporting. All of us know how feared the department is in the community. Every electorate office has tales to tell in this regard. Although the department is going to be given more significant powers in this respect, complementary powers are not being given to the Children's Commissioner. Perhaps a way to overcome this is to give some of the accountability for the department to the Children's Commissioner.

I mentioned before that the Minister was creating some red herrings by referring to the legislation that covers casino workers, teachers and taxi drivers. I think this legislation goes further than that and has much wider provisions. This Bill does allow for the disclosure of matters that are under investigation or even those that may not lead to charges being laid as well as those that do not lead to convictions. Clearly this has to be understood by all.

It is clearly set out within the Bill that the duty imposed on the Commissioner of the Police Service to comply with a request from the chief executive applies to information only in the commissioner's possession or to which the commissioner has access, but the commissioner has to be reasonably satisfied that giving the information will not prejudice charges being laid. At the same time, if the commissioner believes it is relevant, then the commissioner has to supply it to the department. For an investigation that has been completed and the investigation has not led, and the commissioner is reasonably satisfied it is unlikely to lead, to a reasonable suspicion that the person has committed a serious offence, then it is not necessary to put that forward. On the contrary, if the Commissioner of Police believes that it might do so, then he is required to supply that relevant information.

Another matter that I just want to refer to is one that has raised some concern within the community—and we need to give some careful consideration to it—is the wide term "engaged by the department" used in the legislation. I find it difficult to fathom that work experience students from high schools and universities will be caught up in the legislation. The Minister no doubt will indicate the reasons for this in due course, and I look forward to hearing them. Nevertheless, it is going to mean that people who are volunteering for a little work experience are going to be picked up by this legislation.

I read carefully the reasons advanced by the Minister for such a broad definition in her letter to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. The Minister said—

> "Each of the persons included within the proposed section 18 definition of `engaged by the department' is likely to work within, or on occasion have access to, a Departmental office. Information of a confidential nature is contained on files located within such offices. Many area offices are quite small and there is little or no physical delineation between sections of the office where officers may be working on child protection matters, disability matters, or other more administrative operations. A person with an undetected criminal background could potentially gain access, whether as part of their job or by unauthorised prying, to personal information about vulnerable clients of the Department. Such information could include the names and address of the clients and other information about their day to day lives."

This is only part of the response. The Minister went on to deal with the issues of secondments and the possible misuse of information inappropriately obtained. The Minister's reasons are compelling up to a point. However, as I understand it, in all the problems that have arisen in the past with persons abusing trust and sexually preying on clients of the department, they have been carried out by staff with physical access to departmental clients. I am not saying that all departmental staff—even if they have no contact with juveniles or people with a disability—should not be subject to rigorous criminal history searches. However, I question whether the very width of the legislation is potential for injustice. I have required a more targeted approach to which persons it would apply.

As I said, I find it a bit over the top that a work experience student or a volunteer who has no access to vulnerable clients or files should be subject to this sort of intrusion. I suggest to the Minister that perhaps it would have been fairer to have provided that staff without physical access to clients be subject to one level of criminal history checks and those with access be subject to the highest level of checks. This could have applied both at the appointment stage and the stage of secondment and transfer.

The reason care has been shown is that not only are staff subject to criminal history searches, but they also have positive obligations imposed on them to disclose information, with the Bill penalising disclosures that are "false, misleading or incomplete in a material particular". If, for example, a person fails to disclose that they have pleaded guilty and did not have a conviction recorded for whatever reason as an impressionable 18 year old, then they could have the full weight of the law come down on their heads under this legislation. I fail to see the logical justice in that. I also fail to see what harm such a person could pose to anybody in the community, including a client of the department.

A key provision in the Bill is proposed section 31, which imposes on the department a requirement to establish guidelines for use of information gained or disclosed. In addition, the Bill provides that information gained or disclosed can be used only to determine a person's suitability for employment. An applicant is to be given the opportunity to respond to information provided by the police. The Minister has publicly disclosed the draft guidelines, and it is reassuring to see that the criminal history checks with the police will be limited to the preferred applicant or applicants.

The guidelines also differentiate between the type of offences and the type of work that an applicant will be performing.

There is an attempt to differentiate between the seriousness of the record and the risk of harm to clients. Nevertheless, under the guidelines, it is clear that copies of all employment decisions are to be forwarded to the department's workplace relations section where they, according to the draft guidelines, "will keep a confidential central database on all decisions so as to guide future decisions made and promote departmental consistency." Extreme care will need to be taken to ensure that information of this very sensitive nature is not disclosed or misused.

The risk that a person's reputation could be damaged or career destroyed is all too apparent. I note the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee queried why the confidentiality requirement is limited to only present and former public servants. The Minister's reply to the committee was correct so far as it went, but I would suggest that the Bill should have been drafted to deal with any potential problems that may arise. In the scheme of things it is highly likely that, as time goes by, sensitive information will be disclosed to non-departmental staff either innocently or deliberately. For whatever reason, and no matter with what intention, I think we should have a provision that picks up such persons and imposes on them a confidentiality obligation. I think the focus of the Bill should have been not so much on the character of the person who has obtained access to the confidential information but on the fact that such information, once obtained, must be kept confidential. In her reply, I would ask the Minister to give further indication as to whether that has been considered. If not, perhaps it is an issue that needs to be considered in an amendment.

As to confidentiality—members are well aware that in the past the Criminal Justice Commission has leaked like a sieve. In spite of all the formal and procedural safeguards under which it operates, it has become one of the biggest leaks in town. What assurances do we have that that will not occur with the highly personal material that is referred to in this Bill? That potential problem has been referred to by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. When going through the Bill, one cannot help but pick up that aspect. A high profile person may apply for a particular job, but something from that person's history may crop up, such as a conviction or a police record of an investigation that was carried out that did not lead to a conviction. That matter would become an issue that is quite sensitive indeed.

Proposed section 30 spells out that a public servant is not to disclose information that comes to their attention. It would appear that such information cannot be given to the Minister or the Minister's staff. However, if it does accidentally happen to be disclosed, we then face other problems. I ask the Minister to clarify the situation in that regard, because it would be intolerable if a public servant were able to disclose that information to the Minister or a member of the Minister's staff. I do not believe that is permitted, but I would like it clarified. A public servant may give that information to somebody else and we want to ensure that those people are bound by confidentiality provisions.

The penalty for disclosure is 100 penalty units—$7,500—or two years' jail. During her second-reading speech, the Minister had a crack at me because I raised some of those issues during a radio interview. The Minister has addressed some of the issues since then. To be fair, some of the issues still exist and the Minister will have to answer them. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has raised them and I will raise them. Of course, they will not be resolved satisfactorily here, although there is no doubt that we will be proceeding with the legislation. They are relevant issues. The Minister is very touchy on some of these matters. It is clear from details about these matters that, in some cases, the homework has not been done. After reading through the Bill quickly, it was obvious what the situation would be. I would have thought some of those issues would have been covered in the Minister's second-reading speech.

I turn now to the issues raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. If it were to become known that a person had been dismissed by or refused employment with the department, that person will have long-term problems obtaining jobs in the wider community—even though a conviction may not have been recorded. We have to recognise that. If someone does not get a position because of information received by the department, the mere fact that some type of information was obtained by the department will produce a suspicion that that person fell within the broader ambit of some of the areas now taken into account by the department when considering people for jobs. Even if a person has not been convicted but the Police Commissioner sees fit to forward information to the department and if that is the basis of a person not getting a job, that can have quite an horrific impact on a person.

I refer to the section of Alert Digest No. 4 which covers that issue—

> "The potential for the bill's provisions to impact adversely upon individuals is self-evident, not only in respect of the privacy of the persons concerned but in its actual or potential effect on their employment prospects in the department, and quite possibly in the wider employment market."

I think we have to be aware of that last part. The report continues—

> "For example, a person dismissed from his or her position in the department because of information obtained under the bill might find that dismissal in itself to be an impediment to re-employment outside the department."

Of course, there is the issue of false allegations leading to charges. I am sure we are all aware of that. Unfortunately, that has happened in this State. We have seen people's lives destroyed because of it. Equally unfortunately, there is no doubt that we will see more of it in the future. A person who is allegedly involved in child molestation is treated by the community as a pariah. That is fair enough, unless it is a person about whom false allegations have been made. We have to be very careful that in going down this track we ensure that natural justice is preserved.

I refer to the clause that details to whom the legislation applies. The legislation states that it applies to Public Service employees in the department, an honorary officer, an agent or a person working in the department as a volunteer or as a student on work experience. I presume it relates to the department and not to foster carers, who are covered under section 143 of the Child Protection Act. I refer particularly to the definition of "agent". I ask the Minister to clear that up. The term "agent" covers consultancies, but the limitations and parameters of the definition are not clear, even though the Minister indicated in her second-reading speech that they are. The term is not defined in the legislation. I know that it is covered under section 9 of the legislation. An amendment to the Child Protection Act amended this Family Services legislation. An agent means an agent under a contract entered into under section 9 of the Child Protection Act. Section 9 refers to the Family Services Act. Under the heading "Engagement of agents", section 9 of the Family Services Act states that the chief executive may enter into contracts for services with such persons having qualifications and experience appropriate to the proper discharge of the contracts that the chief executive thinks fit with a view to those persons acting as the chief executive's agent giving effect to that Act or any other Act.

Of course, under the Acts Interpretation Act, which is also relevant to this, "person" includes an individual and a corporation. The term is still not clear, because of the range of people with which the department deals. The department deals not only with consultancies. The Minister need turn only to the annual report to be aware of the many community organisations with which the department deals. I would like the Minister to give some advice as to whether that provision picks up those community organisations. Has the Minister received Crown Law advice on that aspect? If so, would she table it so that the Chamber can be perfectly clear in relation to it. The provision could extend to that degree, because of the various functions that are performed by others on behalf of the department and on behalf of the director-general. I do not think that is stretching the imagination too far. There are hundreds of organisations in the community that perform those functions. Of course, a person includes a corporation. Most of these organisations are incorporated. The Minister needs to clarify how far that provision goes in relation to community groups, because they receive Government funding and do valuable work within the community, many of them directly on behalf of the Government. They sign service agreements with the department and/or the Government to provide specific services in a range of fields. The question is whether those services constitute contractual services for the department or Government and thereby create an agency relationship. I think that needs to be cleared up.

I look forward to the tabling of legal advice. While the Minister may indicate to the Chamber one way or the other, I would like to see the legal advice provided by Crown Law so that we can talk about this with certainty. The community at large should be certain that Crown Law advice has been sought and obtained and that it clarifies the situation. There is some unease in the community about whether these provisions extend to community organisations. Even though various people have given indications to me about it, I am far from convinced of the exact situation.

The Bill states that the legislation relates to persons engaged by the department—that is, a Public Service employee in the department, an honorary officer, an agent, or a person working in the department as a volunteer or as a student on work experience. It does not appear to cover those who are

employed by or who act in a voluntary capacity in community agencies, as distinct from the community agency itself. That is another point that needs clarification. If the legislation does relate to anyone in community agencies, does it relate to any of those volunteer groups that are engaged by them? Government funding is disbursed by the department to community agencies, who employ a large number of workers.

I will outline what I think is a fundamental flaw in the legislation—that is, the onus on convicted offenders to disclose their criminal history. The legislation states quite clearly that convicted persons have to indicate their criminal history in their application. Failure to do so carries a fine of around $1,500—and that is it. That is not much of a penalty on someone who has failed to clearly spell out their criminal history in their application. It does not put the onus on a child molester. Of course, one may have to go to court to resolve those issues, and that is fair enough. There might be people who innocently leave information out of their applications. It would then be a matter of the director-general deciding whether to take any action.

I think we need to look at this from the point of view of child molesters—those who are looking to get around the law. A penalty of $1,500 is not going to worry those people. It will not be of any concern whatsoever. I think there needs to be a real onus on these sorts of people to disclose their criminal histories, because these predators—child predators, child molesters and sexual offenders—are surely the types of people we are trying to keep from making applications and obtaining employment within the department. That is the area of real concern.

It is nonsense to say that this information will be picked up by the department or by the Police Service, because it may not be. I believe there needs to be a severe up-front penalty. We need to make it very clear that the onus is on the people who apply for employment with the department. There needs to be a very severe penalty for those paedophiles and child molesters who do apply and try to get through the net, because there will be some. As I say, $1,500 is hardly going to stop them from making that application.

There needs to be quite a severe maximum term of imprisonment whereby action can be taken in relation to these types of people. Surely these sorts of people should be banned from gaining employment with the department. I thought something like that may have been included in the legislation—putting the onus back on the convicted offender, because that is surely where it needs to be. There has been some talk in recent times—my colleagues have been discussing it—about the Labour Government in the United Kingdom going down this track in relation to this matter.

As I read the provisions of the legislation, if a public servant leaked confidential information on one of these convicted sexual offenders he or she would be liable for a jail term of a maximum of two years or a fine of $7,500. However, the person seeking the job who does not disclose their criminal history in their application—who is trying to get around the department to get the job—faces a fine of only $1,500. I do not know that that is justice. I think there need to be changes in that area. There needs to be a screening process. An onus should be put on the sorts of people we are trying to keep from obtaining jobs in the department.

The Minister is now talking about going much further with the legislation covering the community. I understand that the Minister will have some consultations in that regard. That is fine, but the amendments to this particular piece of legislation do not go that far. I have outlined some concerns about the Bill. It would be true to say that a reasonable person would have a large number of questions in relation to it. I am sure that the Minister would be the first to agree that in a Bill aimed at giving meaningful protection to the most vulnerable of our community a difficult balancing of interests has to take place.

In the past few years we have seen far too many horrific cases of persons misusing power to abuse vulnerable people to not draw legislation in a way which gives the benefit of the doubt to those at risk of sexual offences or physical abuse rather than departmental job applicants. The risk posed by paedophiles is just too great. We must arm the department with power to weed out these predators before they do harm to those in need of protection. This does not mean that we should turn a blind eye to a problem with the Bill and potential injustices.

We must maintain an ongoing capacity to deal with paedophiles. There must be public support for tough, proactive laws. That support will dissipate if the laws are drafted too broadly or applied too indiscriminately and innocent people are harmed. It is incumbent upon the Minister and her department to administer these powers in an appropriate way in order to maintain ongoing public support for tough but fair laws. It is necessary for the Minister and her director-general to be vigilant in monitoring

these powers and administrative practices to ensure that the duty of confidentiality is maintained and that the innocent slip-ups are not the subject of overreaction. I think that is particularly important.

In summary, the Opposition supports the Bill. Ample reasons, produced by numerous inquiries and court cases, can be found for the introduction of this sort of legislation. But it is a great disappointment that this Bill has been allowed to lay on the table for some seven months. It was introduced on 24 March. It is now November.

Of course, it is the Government that decides the priority of legislation. The Government decides the order in which these Bills come before the Chamber. A piece of legislation dealing with interactive gambling was introduced and passed very smartly. I note that the Premier introduces numerous pieces of legislation which he gets through after the mandatory waiting period of 13 days. Quite a number of Ministers do it. I could get out the list, if honourable members would like. I notice that Ministers with sugar Bills do it, too. We have had a whole range of legislation come and go, but this Bill has gone further down the list. I am pleased to see that it has finally made the grade today—seven months later.

It is of concern that there has been no consultation in relation to the legislation. Clearly, the Minister could have gone out and consulted. I think some of the issues raised could have been resolved had adequate consultation taken place in the first instance, instead of bringing the Bill in, letting it sit on the table for seven months and then trying to make out that something is other than what it is.

I thank the Minister's departmental officers for the briefing which was given to me and other members. However, it is disappointing that even though extra sitting days have been set aside, members spent a whole day debating the interactive gambling legislation and a whole range of other pieces of legislation, yet this Bill has been left to wither on the vine. However, at long last—and before Christmas—this legislation has been brought on for debate. I know that people are going to watch this legislation very carefully. I look forward to the monitoring of it. The Minister has indicated that there will be other legislation forthcoming in relation to volunteer and community organisations that deal broadly with young people.

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh—NPA) (4.31 p.m.): I support the Family Services Amendment Bill 1999 because it tightens existing procedures surrounding the conduct of criminal history checks in respect of staff who are employed, or will be employed, by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. As a result of this amendment Bill, criminal history checks will be broadened to provide information about not only a person's criminal history but also about charges which had not led to convictions or had not proceeded to trial. This same power already exists in checking other employee groups, such as teachers, taxidrivers and casino staff. It is important that Family Services staff be subject to the same level of checking.

In her second-reading speech, the Minister said that there are a number of circumstances in which the presence of certain charges, even without convictions, is a relevant factor in making employment decisions. This is particularly the case in relation to sexual offences against children. The Bill describes a serious offence as including serious violent offences such as incest, rape and manslaughter, as well as the offence of possessing dangerous drugs. I note the listing, in the Schedule to the Bill, of other serious offence provisions of the Criminal Code.

This House may remember that on 18 November 1997, Mrs Lorraine Bird, the former member for Whitsunday, introduced into the Legislative Assembly a private member's Bill, the Criminal Law (Sex Offenders Reporting) Bill 1997. On Mrs Bird's motion, the Assembly resolved to refer the Bill to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee for investigation and report. I chaired the committee at that time. That particular Bill proposed that persons who commit sex offences against children be required to report their personal details and details of their convictions in this regard to the police. The Bill further provided that the Police Commissioner may keep a sex offenders register which may include, among other matters, those personal details. Provision was also made in the Bill for information from that register to be disclosed to certain persons.

The committee's very difficult task at that time, in view of the fundamental issues of competing rights and interests contained in the Bill, was to determine the appropriate balance between the problem that the legislation was trying to overcome and the appropriateness of the proposed legislation in addressing that problem. The committee's decision is now history. We recommended that before Parliament gave further consideration to the Bill, the member for Whitsunday should clearly clarify the Bill's objectives and consult with the

then newly formed Queensland Crime Commission. We believed this consultation to be particularly important, given its jurisdiction with respect to paedophilia. The Bill lapsed when Parliament was prorogued prior to the 1998 State election.

Although that failed Bill really has nothing to do with the Family Services Amendment Bill, I have mentioned the background to Mrs Bird's proposed Bill in this context because some of the LCARC's research is pertinent to the problems with the legislation before the House that members are trying to tackle today.

In Chapter 2 of its report to Parliament in February 1998, the committee provided Parliament with important background material to which it had given serious consideration and which it believed was necessary in making its assessments. I strongly recommend that members refresh their memories of the report and study the background research as detailed in Chapter 2. I will not go through that chapter in detail but will summarise some of the points raised from this well-researched document, because it is the unacceptable risk of paedophile behaviour that the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care is trying to address in the amendment Bill that members are debating today, and which—as the member for Indooroopilly has advised the House—the Opposition will try to tighten up even further in amendments at the Committee stage.

Paedophiles, correctly identified, are in a special category of offender because they often regard their sexual activities as acceptable, and paedophile behaviour does increase with time. In this context, the need for early intervention with child and adolescent offenders was noted in the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee's report. Paedophiles are often respected people in the community and, indeed, can come from any walk of life. Studies show that long-term treatment of paedophiles is of little success and that the risk of reoffending is numerically high. The importance of intervention in the case of young paedophiles was also noted in the LCARC's report. Some paedophiles show little remorse and are thus dangerous. Paedophiles who have a real risk of reoffending are, of course, also dangerous, whether or not they are remorseful.

The true extent of paedophilia has been underestimated in the past. This would appear to be particularly so in the case of extra-familial offenders or offenders against male victims. There is a divergence of opinion as to the precise definition of "paedophile", although there is a general agreement that a paedophile is a person whose sexual desire is directed towards children, usually of prepubertal or early pubertal age. The victims of paedophiles are particularly vulnerable because of their age.

It is extremely difficult to determine the extent of child sexual abuse in Australia, particularly as sexual abuse is underreported. Child sexual abuse exists both within the family—familial—and outside it—extra-familial, and some sex offenders may seek to become part of a family in order to gain access to child members. Child sex offenders can be classified as preferential or situational, the latter meaning that the sexual abuse occurs more as a result of easy access to children rather than preference. Offenders who commit sex offences in the family setting are generally considered to be situational. However, these two classifications can be confused and, therefore, familial sex offenders should be accorded careful attention in any coordinated scheme to combat child sexual abuse.

The extra-familial sex offender is usually known to the child and seeks to establish a long-term relationship. This relationship is formed by a number of means, but often an essential element is the ability to provide the child with material or emotional support which they otherwise lack. There is a high rate of extra-familial abuse and an increasing awareness of the existence of males as victims of sexual assault. The Queensland Crime Commission, together with the Queensland Police Service's Task Force Argos, have specific roles in relation to targeting paedophilia in Queensland. While there may not be organised groups of paedophiles in the organised crime context, there are networks of paedophiles in Australia.

There is a high rate of recidivism among child sex offenders. Punishment seems to have little value in reducing recidivism. Whether treatment will reduce recidivism is unresolved. However, there is evidence to suggest that some treated sex offenders reoffend less, and also less often, than their untreated counterparts. Research has also shown that offenders do not like to be exposed. Adolescent sex offending is, however, different and there is more likelihood of success in treatment. The damage to the victim beyond the incidence of the abuse is often horrendous. There is evidence that this extends to later criminal activity by the victim and even, in some cases, child sexual abuse by them, thus completing a vicious cycle.

I have gone through the points made in the LCARC's report because I want to stress how important they are. The objective of the Family Services Amendment Bill 1999 is to strengthen the criminal history checks applicable to employees of and persons being considered for engagement in any capacity within the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care.

There is an increasing community awareness of issues surrounding child abuse and the care of children by the State. Children in care and people with intellectual and other disabilities should not be subject to abuse by the criminal activities of staff who are employed to protect. The Government has a duty of care to ensure that this does not occur. This duty of care will be enhanced by strengthening the ability of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care to access information held by the Queensland Police Service on employees or potential employees of the department in relation to charges, background of charges and current investigations relating to serious offences.

There are safeguards in the legislation to ensure that the new powers are not used unfairly or capriciously. The Opposition will seek to tighten up this legislation even further in two amendments to be moved by the shadow Minister in the Committee stage. These amendments are directed at toughening up the penalties and, more importantly, banning sex offenders from even applying for a job. Persons convicted of an offence of a sexual nature must not even seek to be engaged by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, with serious penalties for breach. I commend the Bill and the Opposition amendments to the House.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (4.40 p.m.) This Bill amends the Family Services Act 1987 in relation to criminal history checks applicable to employees and persons being considered for employment in any capacity within the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. Under the existing legislation, criminal history checks are mandatory for all persons being considered for employment in any capacity within the department. It is also the existing law that the protection normally afforded by the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act of 1986 in respect of expired convictions are expressly excluded for applicants for employment in the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. Whilst it would be expected that these already powerful criminal check provisions would provide protection for the clients of the department, it is sadly found that this has not been the case.

As the Minister pointed out in her second-reading speech, her department can only be provided with information about convictions. Obtaining information about charges and investigations is still outside the authority of the existing legislation. The Bill will remedy this, as it provides the police with power to provide information about a person's criminal history, including charges, as well as investigations against the departmental staff member or prospective employee.

Of course, there is nothing new in the police having this power. As other speakers have pointed out, and as was pointed out by the Minister in her second-reading speech, this same power exists in relation to other employee groups, including teachers, taxi drivers and casino staff. These powers are also consistent with the Child Protection Act and will bring into line equal scrutiny of departmental staff, as well as prospective carers of the children for whom the department has responsibility.

I must also point out that the House recently passed another piece of legislation which contained similar criminal history checks. I refer to the Road Transport Reform Bill which provided for criminal checks of crossing supervisors—the lollipop ladies and men who safely take our children across the road when they are going to and from school in the morning and afternoon.

This Bill reflects contemporary community expectations where the protection of children is concerned. It has been by bitter experience that we have learned that there are some individuals who, for perverse and sinister reasons, seek to have close contact with children. It is as a result of inquiries and commissions such as the Wood royal commission that we have learned of the traits of paedophiles. The member for Burleigh, who has just spoken in this debate, mentioned some of these traits. I, too, would like to mention them in my contribution today.

I have gained a lot of this information from the excellent legislation note prepared by Kelly-Anne Collins from the Queensland Parliamentary Library. I will now quote the relevant section of the report of the Wood royal commission into the New South Wales Police Service which are applicable to this debate. In his report, Justice Wood stated—

> "It can be a trait of a paedophile that he seeks and attains positions where he can be in contact with or have influence over children. Also sad, but true, is the

> fact that the paedophile may well be extremely plausible, devious in their exploitation of children and capable of gulling those caring for them and of covering up his activities."

Adding to this, Justice Wood also comments—

> "Once a person engages in an act of paedophilia there is a great likelihood that he will re-offend, whether with the same or another young person."

The probability of recidivism is accordingly an important factor in the balancing exercise that underlies a fair and responsible approach to the problem. What we have also learned from other inquiries and from criminal cases is that convictions in respect of child sex offence cases are often difficult to secure. Often it is subsequently found that there has been a history of offences being committed over an offender's lifetime. Just because a conviction has not been secured does not necessarily mean that the offence has not been committed.

The Wood royal commission was replete with evidence to support this view. For example, witness P7, a clerk employed by the Department of Community Services in New South Wales to handle sensitive child protection files, testified that he had been peddling obscene photographs of boys for years and had used confidential information to prey sexually on a former ward. His victim complained but the allegations did not lead to charges or convictions. Because nothing was proved, P7 had the right to require that the allegations be removed from his personnel file.

A later police prosecution based on 6,000 obscene photographs—photographs seized from his home—failed, too, because P7 had a right not to be prosecuted on evidence obtained by a technically flawed warrant. In that case, the police did not tell the Department of Community Services of what they found.

Moira Rayner, in an article entitled "Children's Rights Must Have Priority", uses this example to argue that our legal system values the word of an adult more than the complaint of a child. She uses the example of witness P7 to drive home this point. She says—

> "The righteous outrage is misdirected. P7 kept his job because he had rights that we value more than children's rights. His victim complained but his word was not good enough in law to prove P7's misconduct. The police didn't tell the Department of Community Services what they found, no doubt because P7 had the right to protect his reputation. P7 couldn't be sacked unless he confessed. Even now, he cannot be prosecuted on his Royal Commission evidence because he has a right not to incriminate himself."

I hope the member for Indooroopilly is taking note. She continues—

> "Putting adult needs and interests before children's is the essence of child abuse. A paedophile's emotional needs which are satisfied by sexual relationships with children are so powerful that they override both the universal ethical obligation to use adult power over children for children's benefit and conventional taboos. Paedophilia is not just a sickness, nor a paedophile's powerless reaction to their own childhood abuse, though many convicted paedophiles—a fraction of the most common, extreme offenders—seek so to excuse themselves. Most abused children do not grow up to abuse children."

In the 1989 Burdekin report it was recorded that paedophiles select their partners from among children who feel unloved and who are emotionally needy, or who are homeless, detached from or deeply unhappy in their families, and needing "father figures". Paedophiles graze on children who are not only already victims of abuse and neglect, but an astonishing proportion of whom are State wards who are entitled to our special protection. The best is a family environment of love and understanding.

The provisions of this Bill are a powerful protection measure for children and for persons with an intellectual disability. It goes without saying that in strengthening the powers of the chief executive of the department to make inquiries there may be an adverse impact upon some individuals. As legislators, we have to strike the balance between doing good by protecting our children and the potential damage we may do to some individuals.

In saying that, I note that there are a number of safeguards in this legislation. For example, information about investigations cannot be given by the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service if he or she considers that the investigation is unlikely to lead to a reasonable suspicion that the person committed the offence. We have safeguards which include, for example, that the chief executive may only use the information obtained under the provisions of the Bill to

assess the person's suitability for engagement or continued employment by the department. The person must be given the information obtained from the Commissioner of Police and be given an opportunity to respond to that information to the chief executive officer.

The Bill also contains confidentiality provisions, accompanied by offences and high penalties for breach. One of the most notable and positive aspects of this Bill is that it also provides for guidelines for the use of information about criminal history checks. I commend the Minister for tabling these guidelines in the Parliament at the time of the introduction of this Bill.

These draft guidelines set out general principles to be followed when assessing prospective employees and continuing employees with a criminal history. Although certain offences would automatically preclude a person from a job or placement, the existence of other offences is only an indicator. In meeting the duty of care, the department will give overriding consideration to the safety and wellbeing of children and clients with an intellectual disability.

Children and people with an intellectual disability are our most vulnerable members of society and deserve our full protection. I know from talking to those who work in the child-care industry and talking to teachers and professionals who work with children or who work with people with an intellectual disability that they have no qualms about having criminal history checks made. The only complaint I have heard is the length of time that it takes for that criminal history check to come through from the police. I understand that the police advise that, for those seeking the checks, it will take about 28 days.

As a member of my local Safety House Committee, I also know that the committee members and prospective safety house providers have no hesitation in signing authorities to have criminal history checks carried out. We all have a duty to do everything in our power to protect our children and protect people with an intellectual disability. I will fulfil that duty by supporting this Bill before the House today and I trust that all honourable members will do likewise.

Hon. B. G. LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs—NPA) (4.51 p.m.): In rising to speak to this Bill, it is not surprising to note that both sides of the House support what is being addressed by the legislation. I note from the Minister's second-reading speech and the comments of the Opposition spokesman, the member for Indooroopilly, that the Bill pertains to people within the Minister's department. Regrettably, this sort of legislation is necessary to further enhance these criminal history checks because of some revelations of recent times.

I notice in an article in the Courier-Mail of Monday, 25 October, that Mr Terry O'Gorman of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties had a bit to say about the legislation. He queried whether or not this piece of legislation went too far. However, I make the comment that, because we have to give a higher priority to children than to other members of the public, there is a good excuse for the Minister and the department going down this track. I can see that a lot of thought has gone into the sorts of procedures that have to be put place to be as fair as possible to those people who are checked.

However, I have taken note of some of the comments and issues raised by the member for Indooroopilly. I look forward to the Minister's comments clarifying how the various Acts will relate to each other. In that regard, I want to speak about paedophilia and child molestation across the whole community, because part and parcel of the responsibilities of the Department of Families is to reach out to community groups.

One of the things that is having an effect on many good people who have worked in a voluntary capacity in their community for many, many years is the threat of being accused of paedophilia, even though it is committed by very few people. I pay tribute to those people who work with children in the institutions within the department and, secondly, to the people in the wider community—the teachers, the sporting coaches, the Cub leaders and the people involved in youth groups—because there is a real feeling that, as a result of adverse publicity, people are now not as willing to make themselves available for that type of youth work as they once were.

First of all, it is the right thing to do to clean up the Act as it relates to the department. I also note the Minister's intention to act in relation to community groups. It is only then that confidence will be restored to those people who in years gone by have put in an enormous amount of time outside their own vocational pursuits to try to help their community. The more that we can do for them, the better.

I recall that, prior to the 1995 election, the member for Indooroopilly, the member for Crows Nest and I toured the State to attend law and order seminars. Of course, part and parcel of the problem of crime is the break-up

of the family. I remember attending a meeting at Strathpine at which one gentleman talked about the role of the community supporting the family. He made the comment that the trouble was that we had lost the real feeling of the tribal group. He went on to explain that, although the family unit is the basis of society, the family itself needs to belong to a small tribal group—be that a small church group, some sort of organisation, or even a small town or suburb—because the family needs the support of such a group. I have always remembered those comments.

At the time I was the shadow Minister for Family Services, and I was very supportive of the idea of the department encouraging community groups to look after the local people. In fact, I was pleased to see the efforts of my colleague the member for Beaudesert and Allan Male, who was at that time the director-general, strengthen the use of community groups by giving them more funding and implementing programs. The department could then assess the success or failure of those programs and ensure the accountability of the funds being made available. I thought that, with the community helping itself, the department was getting better value for its money and it was also strengthening the moral fabric of that tribal group. I think it was probably also helping to overcome a shortage of funds within the department. I am very much aware of just how great the need is and how scarce the funds are. We are never going to have the perfect solution for all the ills of society. However, I was pleased to see more and more money going towards community groups. It will now be necessary for the Minister to follow up with criminal history checks within community groups.

I also draw the attention of the House to an article in the Sunday Mail of 24 October titled "Running wild". In that article, the Juvenile Aid Bureau was critical of the Department of Families, which has to look after children in care. The article stated that, although the courts have the right to put children in care, it is beyond the capacity of the Department of Families to give those children 24-hour a day care. In that article the Juvenile Aid Bureau points out that very often it is after hours, when the departmental officers have quite legitimately finished their day's work, that these children are running loose and getting themselves into more trouble. That adds to my argument that the more we can use community groups and people within their own family groups to help these children who are at risk, the better it will be. It also backs up my argument that we have to do more to make sure that these checks on the history of the people who work with children are much more watertight.

With that small contribution, I once again pay tribute to all of those people, be they departmental officers or people working in community groups, who are prepared to work with the young people of Queensland. They deserve a lot of credit. It behoves us to make sure that we can get rid of those people who abuse the privileges given to them or the positions that they hold. I support the Minister's legislation. However, I commend the member for Indooroopilly for raising issues that I believe are quite complex, especially as the Minister has indicated that she intends to go further by having these checks extended to community groups. I wish the passage of the Bill well and hope that the points that the Opposition has raised can be clarified.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (4.58 p.m.): In speaking to this Bill, firstly, I would like to thank the Minister for giving me the opportunity to be briefed by her staff. That occurred quite some time ago now, but I can remember that the briefing was extensive and the officers were more than prepared to discuss any of the issues that either Amanda or I had. I thank the Minister for that. In common with other speakers, I would like to acknowledge the information that has been prepared by Kelly-Anne Collins of the Parliamentary Library and the access to information from a number of reports and investigations that have been carried out not only in Queensland but also in New South Wales.

I think it is a sad indictment on our society that this type of legislation is necessary. For the majority of decent Queenslanders, the notion of intentionally harming a child or a dependent adult either physically, sexually, emotionally or psychologically is abhorrent. However, the reality is that, for a minority of people, these constraints are necessary and must be employed vigorously.

The purpose of the Bill has been described as being to ensure the protection of children and people with an intellectual disability within the department's care by providing appropriate screening procedures for departmental staff. The Wood royal commission gave an alarming indication that child sexual abuse was occurring extensively in the community. Indeed, recent investigations in Queensland have shown that significant and institutionalised abuse has occurred in this State.

Even with systemic change, effective protection of our vulnerable children and adults will require constant vigilance. The Wood royal commission indicated the absence in the New South Wales system of clear and consistent guidelines for screening those workers and volunteers who have close contact with children or possess care and protection responsibilities in relation to them. The tabling of this Bill shows that Queensland has the same deficiencies, at least at the moment. As referred to by previous speakers, the relatively recent conviction of a now ex-departmental employee in Queensland of 26 child sex offences confirms the inefficiencies of our current system. I commend the Minister and the previous Family Services Ministers who have taken steps to try to address that deficiency.

The community finds these incidents unforgivable. While people are always sensitive to a loss of rights, in this type of circumstance honest and honourable residents accept these changes without objection.

The inclusion of people with disabilities is also critical. Parents, doctors and other health care providers, teachers and all groups who regularly have contact with children are educated as identifiers of child behaviour, attitudes, emotional states or inappropriate sexual information so that they can recognise potential at-risk individuals. People with disabilities, particularly serious or profound disabilities, cannot communicate abuse in that way.

I also commend the Minister for including current departmental employees as well as potential employees in the legislation. That inclusion, and our support of the measure, is in no way intended as a slight on anyone working in the department currently. The safety of our children and all other vulnerable people demands this breadth of application.

Safeguards in the Bill cover inaccurate information, malicious allegations or admissions by third parties. The Bill also contains significant confidentiality obligations. However, those safeguards and the safeguards of individual rights must be balanced by the difficulty of convicting paedophiles, child molesters and other offenders against children and other vulnerable people. The legislation notes recorded that, commonly, multiple offences will be committed against one victim. Often, the offenders threaten their victims to make them keep quiet, and some do for many years. Also, the court system works against successful convictions, for example, through the cross-examination and badgering of young victims; the lack of support, both physical and emotional, provided during hearings; and the superiority of the performance in court of the adult predator as compared to the child victim if, indeed, the victim is capable of conveying the details of the incidents. The list of obstacles to effective convictions continues. Therefore, it is essential that this Bill allows for a history of complaints and charges, as well as convictions for serious offences, to be taken into account.

The Bill places an obligation on the Police Service or the DPP to advise the department if a person is convicted of one of a list of offence types if either the police or the DPP is aware that the convicted person is an employee of the department. I would ask the Minister to clarify that point. The Bill places the obligation on the police and the DPP. It states that if a person is convicted and the Commissioner of Police or the DPP is aware that that person is an employee of the department, they must advise the department. Given the enormous structure of both the Police Service and the Families Department, and given the fact that the Bill includes volunteer workers, how will it be possible practically for the Commissioner of Police or the DPP to know such things? When I tried to think through that point, I wondered whether the Commissioner of Police was going to be given a confidential list of names of people who work in the department. How will the heads of quite extensive organisations actually become aware that a convicted person is an employee of the department?

There are a number of issues outlined in the draft guidelines that I want to raise with the Minister. The intention is to provide information to the director-general of the department on applicants who reach a certain level in the appointment process. At that stage, criminal history checks on those people will be furthered. An issue that came up in the briefing was the method of destruction of that information. Perhaps three or four people will get to the interview stage or beyond and one will be appointed. How will the records of those who are not appointed or, indeed, the records of the person who is appointed be destroyed? What obligation will be placed on the department to destroy those records?

I also notice that it is at the discretion of the Commissioner of Police whether or not he or she discloses information in certain circumstances, particularly where the disclosure may compromise an investigation. Given the descriptions that we have heard of the sorts of investigations that may be compromised, I can only presume that, in

order not to compromise an investigation, the Commissioner of Police would not even indicate to the director-general that the person who is the subject of an inquiry is under investigation.

This may be outlined in the Bill and I have missed it, but I wonder what process would be involved if, during the course of an investigation, the person being investigated was appointed to the department. The Commissioner of Police would advise the department of the outcome of the investigation. What steps would have to be put in place for that person to be dismissed, particularly if the investigation was successful? Such things may never eventuate, but it is a very sensitive area. I know that endeavours have been made to put the greatest amount of protection in place for both the applicants and the victims.

There are two other factors that have to be considered and I wish to link them. One of the factors is the length of time since the offence or the alleged offence occurred. The second point is whether the offence or alleged offence was committed by an adult or a juvenile.

In England, an incident occurred where two young boys—and they were astoundingly young—tortured and murdered a four year old boy. That offence was committed when the boys were quite young and I am sure that it will devastate their futures. There is talk of their being released fairly soon. That crime was committed when those boys were juveniles, but it was a serious and massive offence. I certainly hope that those sorts of incidents would preclude people from being employed in any situation where they had unsupervised access to vulnerable people. A person could commit an offence as a juvenile and step into adulthood quite soon after. In such circumstances I want to ensure that the close proximity of the offence will still be considered when an application is made for access to the department.

Unfortunately, human nature has shown that the people who commit these offences are the sort of people who will, at times, take every opportunity to access vulnerable people. As I said earlier, it is because of this tendency that the Bill has been introduced.

I turn now to the consideration of whether the offence or alleged offence is still considered a crime. I can understand the sorts of circumstances in which those criteria will be applied and I understand the principle behind it. I encourage the Minister to consider—and she possibly already has—that although values may change it has to be recognised that at the time the offence was committed the person who committed it was prepared to break the law. That must be an indicator of that person's personality. Obviously, that would depend on the type of incident.

The other factor was the inclusion of provocation, peer pressure and the effect of alcohol. However, the footnote states that the effect of alcohol is not considered an extenuating factor in relation to a sexual offence. I commend the Minister for that. However, I also highlight my concern that the effect of alcohol should not be considered an extenuating factor in relation to violence against children, either, because although it may be against the rules of the work force to come to work in an inebriated condition, the fact is that most honourable members would have learnt of situations where people have gone to work drunk and have either hurt themselves or committed an offence and been dismissed, and an unlawful dismissal process has ensued. Even though it may be against work practices to come to work inebriated, those who do—and there will be some—who have violent tendencies must also be precluded from coming into contact with young and vulnerable people. I commend the Minister for this legislation. In the future, many children will be grateful for the detail that this Bill takes account of in relation to people's histories. I believe that in the future many children will be spared abuse and other forms of mistreatment because this legislation, albeit intrusive, is in effect.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (5.11 p.m.): When we were kids it was drummed into us that we should be wary of strangers. Family and friends were trying to protect us from stranger danger, but the risks in our own backyard were not acknowledged publicly. It is a sad indictment on our community that children and adults are at greatest risk of harm from someone known to them. Most abuse occurs within the sanctity of the home and within an existing relationship, be it child to family member or child to caregiver of some kind, including people in positions of authority in community or sporting groups. The Government must play a lead role in ensuring that children and adults are not at risk within the care-giving roles provided by the State.

Our Government is serious about protecting children from harm. We set up the Forde inquiry and we introduced the new child protection legislation. Those two achievements are monumental. The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for

Disability Services deserves much of the credit for these achievements. She is a Minister who continues to tackle complex and sensitive issues with a listening ear and an astute problem-solving capacity. The Family Services Amendment Bill is a further example of this capacity. The Minister is publicly acknowledging that children in the care of the department can, at times, be at risk of harm from those in positions of trust, departmental officers included. There are vulnerable children and adults in my electorate who are under some form of departmental care. I am sure that they and their families would support the Minister in acknowledging the risks and acting swiftly and effectively to minimise harm.

The Family Services Amendment Bill will, among other things, require applicants for departmental positions to identify criminal charges and convictions against them and give the department legislative authority to obtain Queensland Police Service information about offences and existing complaints that have been brought in respect of prospective employees. These provisions are not a Big Brother of the nineties. Mandatory checking of this type already exists for croupiers and taxi and bus drivers. These workers have far less responsibility for children than Family Services staff. The provisions will assist in screening out employees who will pose a risk to departmental clients, many of whom are vulnerable due to age, lack of family support, a disability or other life situation. They are often people with little power and few resources.

Valid civil liberty and privacy concerns exist in relation to the provisions in the Bill. To protect people's rights and liberties very thorough processes for natural justice are built into the legislation and will be central to departmental procedures and protocols. For instance, only preferred applicants—not all applicants—will be subject to criminal checks. It is important that people who have committed minor offences in the past are not forever punished. People must be given every opportunity to get on with their lives. They must be free to get a decent job so long as they do not pose a serious risk to other people, particularly those who are least able to protect themselves. Privacy concerns can be well managed while also enabling risk factors to be identified early. The Minister's proposals are light on relative to similar provisions in North American statutes that I have examined. For instance, in order to prevent the sexual abuse of vulnerable clients, the State of Minnesota passed Statute 148A in 1986, which compels non-Government and Government human services to obtain self-disclosure from applicants of their history regarding ethical and sexual abuse breaches. Further, organisations are obliged to contact previous employers over the past five years to ask whether the applicant has carried out improper ethical or sexual behaviour in relation to clients.

There are many strategies that all Government and non-Government organisations ought to adopt to prevent sexual exploitation occurring within an employee/client relationship. These include effective recruitment practices, including past employer and security checks, binding ethical standards for employees in codes of conduct, and effective management of breaches of these ethical standards. For instance, we have heard far too many reports of people in authority—priests, scout leaders and others—who have simply been moved on rather than having their violations dealt with. In recent years, many courageous people have spoken out about sexual exploitation at the hands of adults in positions of authority. All too often the courage and capacity to speak out occurs years after the violation. This is not good enough. All children and adults must be safe from sexual exploitation. Community organisations, churches, health practitioners and Government agencies must all take effective steps to prevent child exploitation. Some organisations are well advanced with their anti-violence and anti-abuse protocols. Others are lagging well behind. I commend the prompt action by the Minister. I commend this Bill to the House and I encourage all relevant organisations to adopt effective practices and protocols to prevent violations of personal safety.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (5.17 p.m.): No member of this Parliament would disagree with the sentiment underlying this Bill, which is to try to protect children in care and people with intellectual and other disabilities from abuse through criminal activities of staff employed to look after them. Each and every caring person would have been shocked and disturbed by the deeply troubling accounts by many people who have been subjected to sexual and other abuse in institutions over the past few decades. The evidence given at the Forde inquiry and the findings of Mr Justice Stewart from the CJC inquiry into the Basil Stafford Centre only compound the sense of community unease.

There can be no more profound breach of trust in life than one involving vulnerable people, whether they are children, people with intellectual or physical disabilities or the elderly. When that fundamental breach of trust occurs,

ordinary people—and that includes 99% of humanity—feel a mixture of anger, helplessness and sorrow. In addition, they want action to help prevent any repetition of such cowardly, base and disgusting behaviour in the future.

This Bill is an attempt to deal with the community's desire to do something positive and practical. From that perspective, I understand what has motivated it, and I say to the Minister, as a fellow citizen anxious to support any measure that will do some good in preventing the abuse of the vulnerable, that I know where she is coming from and I can appreciate how difficult it is to craft legislation to deal with this troubling issue. It is essential, though, that this Parliament carefully scrutinises legislation such as this, which overrides certain civil liberties so that vulnerable people are protected. We must be sure that the legislation achieves its aims effectively and is also a proportionate and reasonable response, and one which in turn does not result in the perpetration of different injustices.

Legislation of the type we are now considering is not of the partisan type. The legislation involves fundamental issues that transcend party politics. The protection of children and vulnerable adults is not a matter that divides us; it unites us. I enter the debate on this Bill in an endeavour to put forward comments designed to help progress good legislation that will actually achieve the object that unites us.

When introducing this Bill, the Minister said that people in the care of the State must not be subject to abuse by staff who are employed to protect them and that the Government has a clear duty of care to ensure that this does not occur. On this point, there is absolutely no disagreement. The Minister also said that the vast majority of the staff of her department are honest and professional people who strive to protect vulnerable clients from harm. I also concur with this assessment.

The Minister did, however, point out that there is a very small number of people who, over the years, whilst in the employ of the Crown, have abused the trust reposed in them. This small minority have, to used the term used by the Minister, engaged in their own gratification at the direct expense of the most vulnerable of the department's clients. This Bill is designed to weed out these individuals and, further, to prevent people who may be inclined in this way from ever being employed by the department. Once again, there would be, I am sure, unanimous support for this objective. However, the question we have to debate is whether this Bill as currently drafted maximises the achievement of this objective or whether it could be improved.

Before I proceed further, I must say that I read with great concern the facts surrounding the successful prosecution of Raymond John Simpson late last year. He was a former child-care officer who pleaded guilty to 26 child sex offences committed over a 15-year period in the Brighton/Redcliffe area. The very disturbing aspect of the case was that Simpson's role in the Family Services Department was to ensure that youths complied with probation and court orders and was employed to offer support and direction. As a result of this position of trust, he abused one of the youths under his supervision in 1996.

Also of concern was the fact that Simpson worked as a residential care officer at the Basil Stafford Centre, the Bush Children's Home and a local youth club. This predator told his psychiatrist that the boys he abused "were served to me on a platter". The sentencing judge described the offences as being in the worst category of their type, and it is clear that disgusting, despicable sexual predators such as Simpson deliberately seek access to positions of trust so that they can manipulate, abuse and corrupt vulnerable people. These criminals are the lowest of the low and, because of their predatory behaviour and the premeditated nature of their criminal modus operandi, are some of the most dangerous individuals that our society has to deal with. Anything responsible that will help to weed out these criminals has to be tried.

I would like to briefly state that, although I have some concerns with certain elements of the Bill, I applaud any improvement in our laws and administrative practices to detect and deter sexual predators from gaining employment in this critical department. In fact, my concerns relate not so much to penalties or loss of certain civil liberties, but to the risk of innocent persons being harmed by the innocent or wilful disclosure of possibly erroneous information. I would think that it would improve this legislation, for example, to have an up-front deterrence, in other words, to deter people with a history of serious sexual crimes from even applying for employment in the first place.

The honourable member for Indooroopilly, as he has foreshadowed, will deal with a very good initiative in this regard during the Committee stage. I urge the Minister to give careful and positive consideration to his proposal because we on this side of the

Chamber would like to see legislation with a proactive edge. I think all of us would like to see a situation in which we can prevent people who want to gain access to vulnerable people for criminal purposes from even approaching the department for a job.

This brings me to the provisions of this Bill. When the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act was first developed by the then Minister of Justice, Neville Harper, it was the first of its kind in Australia. It was designed to ensure that those persons who had served their time in jail and had later not committed offences could be given, as far as possible, a "clean slate". It was a further and positive step in the progressive rehabilitation and reintegration of people who had broken the law back into the mainstream. I think that that particular Act reflected the sentiments that have been expressed by the honourable member who has just preceded me. Yet even from the outset it was recognised that this laudable objective was subject to the need of society to protect the vulnerable.

The Act contains in section 9A a list of exceptions to the general rule about sealing of criminal records. One significant exception relates to employees in the Minister's department and any agent of the chief executive of the department, whether under a contract of service or a contract for service. So it has always been accepted that the desire to rehabilitate criminals by the sealing of criminal records takes second place to the protection of vulnerable people who are covered by the Family Services Act. Again, no responsible person could object to that provision.

This Bill goes much further than that. The principle at the heart of this Bill is to move away from the criminal record of people and to compel the Queensland Police Service to provide information on employees and potential employees, including charges laid, the background of charges and even investigations which may or may not result in charges being laid. At the moment, under the Public Service Regulation, criminal history checks are mandatory for all persons being considered for employment within the Minister's department. The exception in section 9A of the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act facilitates the provision of a comprehensive criminal history record. However, there is no head of power at the moment for the department to access information on charges or current investigations. This Bill will provide such a head of power.

Unfortunately, as Ian Dearden of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties pointed out, there is the potential for the powers in this Bill being misused or at least misapplied. Yet one reads with some surprise the statement in the Explanatory Notes circulated that there has been no community consultation, which I know was a point that was elaborated on and stressed by the honourable member for Indooroopilly and about which I would like to add a few more words.

That statement appears on page 3 of the notes and causes me concern. How do the Minister and the Government know that this Bill is desirable and needed if there has been no consultation with the community and with affected persons and groups? It appears that the only consultation has been with Government departments. This is akin to having a conversation in an echo chamber. I would have thought that a Bill which intrudes so significantly on the rights of public servants and members of the community should have been handled in a different way from this. In particular, I would have thought that the Minister would have had lengthy discussions with Gordon Rennie, the SPSFQ and the other relevant public sector unions.

As this Bill has languished on the Notice Paper since March—another aspect of the progress of this Bill that has been elaborated on extensively by the honourable member for Indooroopilly, and I do agree with his comments—in the charitable mood that I am in this afternoon, I want to say that it is possible that the Minister has since had those discussions. I would be pleased if she could inform us of that in her summing-up.

A reading of the Bill does give rise to the question of whether some elements of it may have been drafted too broadly. For example, the Bill covers persons who are engaged by the department. Yet when honourable members look at whom this includes, many would be surprised to learn that it deals with not only public servants and agents but also honorary officers and even people working or seeking to work in the department as a volunteer or as a student on work experience.

I find it surprising that the whole weight of this Bill will be brought down on high school and university students who may only be working in the records section of the department or learning basic computer skills on a short-term job placement or even a shorter work experience exercise. The way that this Bill has been drafted means that an 18 year old student at a tertiary institution who gets three weeks' work experience can be

subjected to the most extensive of criminal history checks imaginable, yet this student may, in the scheme of things, be nowhere near vulnerable people. So my first point is that the type of people caught in the net is very broad.

In fairness, I read the Minister's response to the report of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee of 28 April, which is set out in Alert Digest No. 6. The Minister's explanation for keeping the term "engaged by the department" very broad was very helpful, but I still would suggest that it would be relatively simple—and good administration as well—to keep far greater scrutiny on internal staff movements. There are always two ways to approach such a matter: by either casting the net as wide as it will go at the beginning or putting in place checks and balances. I understand the Minister's rationale for keeping the net broad, but she has to recognise that administrative problems are bound to arise. I hope that there is appropriate contingency planning in place and that her departmental officers approach this matter with some sensitivity and a sense of proportion.

Secondly, the Bill is not limited to people actually having any dealings with vulnerable people or the potential of dealing with vulnerable people. Some would suggest that, if we want to protect those at risk, there would be some attempt to link its operation to people who have contact with them, or who realistically may have. Yet, as I read it—and the Minister can inform me if I have misinterpreted the Bill—it would cover the tea lady or the cleaner in the department's head office in the city. As I recall, Mr Justice Stewart, in his report on the Basil Stafford Centre, made recommendations on criminal history checks that were specific to persons working in those parts of the department who had access to vulnerable people.

While I appreciate the Minister approaching the issue in a different way, I would suggest to her that perhaps it would have been more appropriate to delineate those parts of the department where there is the potential of a risk posed by staff to vulnerable persons and apply the full weight of this Bill to those persons working in that area, seeking a job in that area or being seconded or transferred to that area. As I just said, the Minister has explained why the net has been cast so broadly, but adopting this approach does have serious administrative ramifications.

The coverage of the Bill is important for two reasons. The first is the requirement for an employee to disclose to the chief executive their complete criminal history, and that includes every charge ever laid against them. Let me be clear: this obligation applies to every charge—not just charges in relation to serious offences but every single offence.

The Bill sets out in great detail all of the particulars that have to be disclosed. If a person omits to disclose every single charge and all of the relevant details in relation to such charges, then they can be prosecuted and fined up to 20 penalty units. One does not have to exercise much thought to come up with instances when a person may not wish to disclose every charge ever laid against them, especially when the charge was dropped or the person found not guilty. Yet if a person, say on work experience in the computer section of the department, who may have been charged with stealing a packet of bubble gum and then had the charge dropped omits to disclose this embarrassing episode to the chief executive, that work experience student in turn can be prosecuted. I fail to see the logic or justice in such a situation.

Secondly, the chief executive is empowered to seek from the Police Commissioner the following information about persons working in or for the department or job applicants: a written report about the person's criminal history; a brief description of the circumstances of a conviction or charge mentioned in the person's criminal history; and information about an investigation relating to the possible commission of a serious offence by the person. In short, the chief executive can obtain from the police almost every bit of unsubstantiated gossip, innuendo and unproven information imaginable.

It is important to emphasise that the type of information being obtained is not information relating to charges that have been proved. It may not even be information with respect to charges that have been laid. It could, and often will, include information relating to allegations that did not even result in the police laying any charges in the first place. The implications of all of this are contained in the Explanatory Notes circulated by the Minister herself. Page 4 of the notes states—

> "The Bill may breach fundamental legislative principles of the Legislative Standards Act 1992 in that potentially unproven or erroneous allegations or information concerning a person's criminal activities may be provided to the Department and potentially used in a way which is adverse to a person's interests."

The key word in that quote is "erroneous". This Bill will pick up not just unproven allegations but also erroneous ones—possibly allegations motivated by ulterior motives to blacken a person's name.

Of course, the Minister points out that there are protections in the Bill. Firstly, the information obtained can be used only for the purpose of determining a person's suitability for continued or prospective employment by the department. Secondly, the chief executive when assessing the information has to have regard to matters such as when the offence was committed or the charge or allegation made and the nature of the charge, conviction or allegation and its relevance to the proposed duties in question.

Thirdly, the person has to be notified about the information obtained, and that person is given a reasonable opportunity to make representations to the chief executive about the information. Finally, there are requirements about the confidentiality of the information obtained. So there is substance in the Minister's claim that, although this Bill is intrusive, the decision-making processes for all concerned will be transparent and fair, rather than conducted under a veil of secrecy.

I will touch on a few matters about these safeguards. First, it is clear that enormous power is to be given to the chief executive. The chief executive will become, in more ways than one, the judge and jury so far as staff and potential staff are concerned. With all due respect to the Minister, the safeguards inserted in the Bill are flimsy, to say the least, so far as the exercise of the chief executive's powers are concerned. I am not casting any aspersions on the current chief executive of the department or any future one, but I simply point out that this Bill gives to the person holding that position intrusive powers and ones that can be misused, albeit unintentionally.

Who is to say that the chief executive of the day properly weighs up all of the factors that this Bill requires under proposed section 28? When confronted by an unproven allegation, it will be only natural that the chief executive or the member of a selection panel will play it safe. The Minister has said again and again that there is a pressing need to protect the vulnerable, and when a chief executive or a selection panel is confronted with serious unproven allegations, despite what the person may say in their defence, it is only human nature that they will try and play it safe.

The Minister claimed in her speech that the existence of charges or convictions will not automatically prevent employment within her department. However, I would suggest to the Minister that, in the future, people who may have only had a charge laid and then dropped or who may only have been the subject of vicious gossip will have very little chance of gaining employment within her department. So we may have on many occasions in the future people's job prospects harmed or ruined by unproven and sometimes erroneous allegations.

There will be enormous scope for sensitive information to be leaked. In the future, the department will have access to information which could seriously compromise a person's life. It is pleasing that the Bill contains provisions dealing with confidentiality and guidelines for dealing with information, yet when highly sensitive information is around there is always the temptation for people to leak it for whatever motive. The fact that the guidelines outline that the confidential information will be sent to the department's workplace relations section, where there will be a central database, only highlights the potential risks that are posed.

Additionally, the confidentiality provisions of the Bill only extend to present and former departmental staff and persons on selection panels. The Minister's reasons given to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee for not extending the confidentiality provisions to pick up other persons is technically correct, but I would have thought that it would be better to play it safe and have a more broadly drafted provision. I would suggest that anybody getting their hands on such highly confidential material, by whatever means, should have a positive statutory obligation placed on them to not disclose it to third parties. I ask the Minister to keep this matter under active review.

I said at the outset that I support the objects of this Bill, and I do. When it comes to protecting the vulnerable, it is incumbent on those in authority to do everything possible to protect them, and the State in particular has a very heavy duty of care. Accordingly, I strongly support this legislation, but I do so with my eyes wide open. I have raised those matters in a bipartisan fashion and in the hope that the legislation will be administered rigorously when required and with justice and sensitivity when appropriate.

I welcome any and every legislative move to help children, vulnerable people and the elderly, even if that entails restricting the civil liberties of others. But we need to be vigilant to avoid creating another group of victims. In fairness, this area involves very difficult

balancing acts. It also involves speedy responses. When I originally prepared my speech notes, I was going to conclude my contribution by congratulating the Minister on her speedy response. That was back in March or April. I have watched with disbelief this Bill remain near to the top of the Notice Paper for almost six months now, with the Government giving it no priority at all.

I would have thought that, following the revelations of Raymond John Simpson in November last year, the Minister's colleagues would have ensured that this Parliament could have debated this legislation at the first practical opportunity. Instead, legislation which we are told is critical, needed and overdue has been allowed to gather dust since March. It really is a shocking indictment on the Beattie Government.

No-one would disagree that we need to weed out unsuitable people who prey on the vulnerable in the care of the State. No-one should seriously quibble about arming the department with the necessary powers to make sure that this occurs. If in the process some rights have to be curtailed, then that is a price that must be paid. However, it is essential that the Minister continues to keep this legislation and the practices of her department under very close supervision, lest this House ends up debating incidents of unproven and possibly false claims resulting in innocent job seekers being victimised.

Time expired.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (5.37 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Family Services Amendment Bill 1999. It is good to put in perspective the ethos behind the Bill—that is, to strengthen criminal history checks to include the convictions and charges applicable to employees of and persons being considered for engagement in any capacity within the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care.

I agree with the Minister for Family Services that it is essential that staff employed within the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care are honest and professional workers. In common with speakers before me, I firmly believe that the great percentage of these employees are honest, trustworthy and highly professional people. However, records have confirmed that in the past client abuse has occurred by staff employed by the department. Although this may not be common, the fact remains that it does happen. Indeed, the department services children and people with intellectual and other disabilities—individuals who certainly require protection from harm, especially from those who are employed to care for them and who enjoy a position of trust.

As we are well aware, it is difficult to identify people in our society who possess immoral motives—individuals who pursue the vulnerable as easy targets to satisfy their criminal cravings. One Nation has always had and adopted from the very beginning a strong stance against the defilement occurring within Government institutions and services, and it was largely due to our persistence in seeking out the truth, especially about the Heiner document shredding, that this Government was shamed into setting up the Forde inquiry. The Forde inquiry has not addressed all those concerns, but it certainly highlighted the abuse that occurred in the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre and the fallout over that matter. I assure the Government that the concerns about those matters will not go away.

These inquiries, along with other discussions on the issue, have emphasised that the problem of client abuse is evident within some Government institutions and services. Therefore, it is essential that the department employ the strongest of strategies to safeguard its clients from harm sooner rather than later. These strategies must be fair yet send a strong message to persons contemplating work with and around children and the physically and mentally challenged. The strategy of enforcing stringent checking procedures on current and potential staff of the department would be a reliable way of verifying that staff are indeed honest, trustworthy and have a sound character and nature. By allowing the department to have increased interaction with the Queensland Police Service to gain information in relation to convictions, charges and background to these charges and current investigations relating to serious offences applicable to staff and potential staff, the department will be able to fully scrutinise any potential risks. It is, in fact, not just a reality of a risk but a potential risk that is the essence of these checks.

The concept of requiring prosecuting authorities to disclose to the chief executive criminal information pertaining to an individual whom they know is engaged by the department would also be achieved by this objective. Some, however, may argue that not all staff employed by the department should be subject to these criminal checks. I note that the honourable member for Indooroopilly raised this matter and included these categories in his speech: work experience students, trainees and university students. However, I disagree. For example, public

servants employed in areas of finance and administration would not normally have any direct contact with departmental clients; therefore, one could question the reason for their being subject to the disclosure requirements.

This is a debatable issue. However, in my view, staff employed under this category still can have access to departmental records detailing client particulars. We must remember that most deviant people use the weaknesses of others as a control mechanism over them. Just recently, we have heard about a paedophile in north Queensland who has been abusing disadvantaged street children who themselves have criminal histories—using their very criminal histories as a weapon against them. Offenders make statements such as: "No-one will believe you when you tell them what I did." "I will make a complaint about you concerning your criminal history." "They will believe me before you because of the position of trust that I occupy." "It is you that is the criminal." These people trade on the weaknesses, the low self-esteem, the intellectual incapacity or the age of their victims.

As a further example, someone working within information technology services may be asked to configure a database containing confidential client details. This person would have access to sensitive information that could be misused to the detriment of a client, especially should that worker be someone with an unsavoury background. Another example could be—as was highlighted before—cleaning staff who work in institutions. These employees generally work outside hours—for example, early mornings and late at night—and normally have no direct contact with clients as part of their job responsibilities. However, these employees work in the vicinity of clients, hence posing a possible threat to the clients residing in institutions. Therefore, I believe that it is necessary for all departmental staff to be subject to the disclosure of any criminal history, as those two examples clearly demonstrate that staff do not necessarily need to have direct contact with clients in order for those clients to be open to abuse.

Let me also reiterate the fact that similar criminal history checks currently apply to individuals such as teachers or staff employed under the Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988, casino staff hired under the Casino Control Act 1982 and staff working under the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994. These checks are in place for obvious reasons, and it only makes sense that the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care should adopt the same standards.

In closing, I commend the Minister for the safeguards and the confidentiality provisions implemented in the Bill to protect the rights and liberties of departmental staff and potential staff. I also thank the Minister and her staff for the comprehensive briefing in relation to this Bill and for helping to alleviate some of our initial concerns, which were hammered out during those briefings.

The disclosure of criminal history particulars in private and sensitive information must be respected accordingly, and no staff members should be penalised for their honesty. In addition, I note that additional costs of obtaining these criminal history checks will be met within current departmental budget allocations. One Nation supports this action, as we believe that no additional cost should be imposed on any individual or departmental staff.

However, the Government does need to allay some of the fears created by some of the rumours circulating out in the community in relation to local sporting clubs and the like, as there is considerable concern that those community organisations will not be able to fund any checks on some of their officials—and perhaps some dozens of officials. I firmly believe that the Government must go head on and not back down when it comes to the safety of children, especially children in care and in care facilities. I do not believe that mandatory checks, especially those called for under this Bill, are over the top or an extension of the Big Brother philosophy or point of view. These checks are necessary and, I believe, will result in many who are in care now and in the future being saved from sexual exploitation and unwanted sexual attention. I support the Bill.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (5.45 p.m.): I also rise in support of the Family Services Amendment Bill 1999. The reasons for the Bill are simple—child protection. The Forde inquiry into the abuse of children reflects the growing community concern and awareness of issues surrounding child abuse and the care of children by the State. The findings of abuse of persons with an intellectual disability highlighted these same community concerns. Children in care and people with intellectual disabilities should not be subject to abuse by the criminal activities of staff who are employed to protect them. This Government is making sure that its duty of care ensures the safety and protection of its children and adult persons with an intellectual

disability receiving residential care services from the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care.

The CJC report into the Brisbane Basil Stafford Centre said that some staff had physically and sexually abused patients. This duty of care means a strengthening of the ability of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care to access information held by the Queensland Police Service on employees or potential employees of the department. There are already provisions for mandatory checks of the criminal history of all persons being considered for employment in any capacity with the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. However, there are no provisions providing the department with access to information in relation to charges or current investigations of serious offences. The current legislation provides no authority for the department to confirm with the Queensland Police Service whether or not a prospective or current employee is under investigation for a serious offence. No information is available regarding the complaint. This is what this Bill is about, with the introduction of laws that will ensure that departmental employees will have their past criminal records thoroughly vetted.

Despite the complaints expressed by some regarding an invasion of privacy and innocence unless proven guilty, as has already been said today there are already in place a range of disclosures required from people wanting employment in other parts of the Public Service, including the Police Service, schools and, most appropriately, the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. Broadly, this means that the Minister's present proposals amount to a small extension of the requirements for disclosure in the existing law.

As a teacher and the mother of five children, I believe first and foremost in the protection of children in my care. I am aware that simply because a person was not convicted as a paedophile does not mean that that same person is suitable for employment in sensitive areas in the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, including the welfare of children or intellectually disabled people. It is a fact that some convictions are notoriously difficult to obtain. Indeed, I believe that some lawyers have published guides showing how sex offenders can best escape conviction. Some sex abuse cases can also be thrown out because of the unreliable testimony of child witnesses. Our Minister is demanding that those seeking employment in her department must have the highest qualifications, not merely that they have not been convicted of various offences.

This Bill represents the State's responsibility for children in its care and is doing its utmost to protect them. In its most basic form, this means protecting the vulnerable from sexual predators at all costs. While this new system may not stop all undesirables from slipping through the net, it will certainly make it tougher for them. Comprehensive checks like these have been operating in Education Queensland, making all new teachers subject to criminal investigation.

These checks cover all charges and convictions, both minor and indictable, regardless of how long ago the charges were laid. Where the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act does not allow an offence to be traced after a certain time period, the Board of Teacher Registration legislation overrides that and encompasses all offences, no matter how old. The Board of Teacher Registration legislation requires all schools and authorities from State and non-State sectors to notify the board if a teacher is dismissed for serious misconduct.

We are not talking about traffic offences here; we are talking about indecent dealings with a minor and relevance to the profession. Why is this the case? It is the case because the duty of care, once again, is to provide protection for our most vulnerable. It is simple. Tuckshop workers, sports day helpers, contract cleaners, regular delivery and tradespeople and administrative staff all have to declare that they have no criminal convictions before setting foot in Queensland schools. Those who provide false information will face a $7,500 fine, termination and dismissal. Why is this so? It is so because the priority is overwhelmingly to protect children.

This mandatory checking will close some of the gaps that exist and will be the same as checks carried out on employees in other areas such as croupiers, child-care workers and public transport drivers, including taxi, bus and limousine drivers. This tightening of the existing procedures will provide further safety for the vulnerable in the care of the State, and it is also balanced with safeguards to protect departmental staff and potential staff. I recommend the Bill to the House.

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (5.51 p.m.): I rise to support the Family Services Amendment Bill. Previous speakers have alerted us to community concerns over issues surrounding child abuse and the protection of children and people with intellectual disabilities in the care of the State.

We understand that the Government must fulfil its duty of care in the protection of the most vulnerable members of our community.

The Family Services Amendment Bill 1999 seeks to balance the rights of clients to confidential, safe and quality services from the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care with the rights of employees to natural justice and consistent, thorough guidelines for use by the department. The Bill addresses the public and governmental concern over gaps in criminal history checks of potential employees who are charged with the care and protection of children and people with a disability.

In response to concerns from Family Services officers and others, the Bill legislates for mandatory checking of Queensland Police Service records of investigations, charges and convictions of any potential employee of the department. Mandatory checking to this degree already exists for croupiers, teachers, child-care workers and public transport drivers, including taxi, bus and limousine drivers.

I know from my six years on the Board of Teacher Registration that care has to be taken to ensure that teachers on the register are fit and proper persons to teach. It is difficult to develop processes which protect children, yet which respect an applicant's right to natural justice. I believe that this legislation achieves those ends.

Natural justice is enshrined with the invitation for applicants to detail charges and convictions together with information which should be considered in conjunction with criminal history. As well, applicants will be advised that, as part of the selection process, a criminal history search will be conducted. Criminal history searches will only be conducted on the preferred applicants. This should not result in an overly heavily burden being placed on the Queensland Police Service or the department.

Records are to be stored in a confidential and secure location, with limited access and in accordance with guidelines which meet the provisions of the Library and Archives Act 1988. Records will not be accessible under freedom of information. Instead, they will be exempt under section 44 of the Freedom of Information Act 1992. Exempt information can only be released after consultation with each person to whom disclosure may reasonably be expected to be of substantial concern.

All of these protections are built into the legislation and they are welcomed by people within the industry. Among other requirements, the Family Services Amendment Bill 1999 will ensure that charges, as well as convictions, are raised in criminal history checks of potential employees sought by the department. Departmental employees will be required to provide written notice of any charges brought against them and any convictions imposed. The department will need to formulate policy and establish guidelines for the use of this information and for the protection of its confidential status by prohibiting disclosure.

I note the comments of an earlier speaker in this debate, the uninformed member for Clayfield, who said that there was no public consultation in this matter. What the honourable member has neglected to tell the House in his parody of half-truths is that this legislation resulted from inquiries which formed part of the most detailed consultation with victims and with people in this industry.

The honourable member's refusal to acknowledge that community consultation, which occurred over a period, shows that he is not prepared to tell the truth. I hold up a copy of what was tabled by the Minister on 24 March 1999. This consists of guidelines and procedures in a draft form relating to criminal history checks and was developed by the Minister's department. These 10 or so pages have been lying around for seven or eight months. The public, and people within the industry, have been able to look at the types of guidelines that the Minister and the department were planning to implement. To say that there has been no community consultation is an absolute fabrication.

As well, the member for Clayfield dishonestly tried to say that this Bill's position on the Notice Paper indicated a lack of concern on the part of this Government. Again, the member for Clayfield is misleading the House and tells only half the truth—if not a complete lie. He knows only too well why the Notice Paper is in its present state. The Leader of Opposition Business would be able to confirm that. When I say that, I make it clear that I am not referring to the Sugar Industry Bill. Although the debate on that Bill took a lot of time, members who are involved in the industry put forward the viewpoints of people in the industry in a legitimate, reasonable and rational way. The problem lies with Bills which were debated three or four months ago. We had 10, 20 and 30 members opposite reading 20-minute speeches on Bills, about which they knew nothing, merely to filibuster.

If the member for Clayfield wants to talk about this Bill not being debated sooner, he should speak to the member for Indooroopilly. He should also consult his own conscience

and ask himself why it has taken so long for this Bill to be debated. Members who are new to the Chamber should realise that there is usually a build-up of legislation towards the end of the year. In May and June of this year we could see what was going to occur.

Day after day we saw large numbers of Opposition members reading 20-minute speeches. I have no complaint about the debate on the Sugar Industry Bill, even though it took many hours. Mr Rowell, Mr Cooper and Mr Knuth raised legitimate concerns about important issues. Members have seen how, in May and June of this year, the Notice Paper became cluttered because of numerous lengthy speeches, which had no relevance to the matter being debated, being made by Opposition members.

The hypocrisy of the member for Clayfield is there for all to see. I contrast the attitude of the member for Clayfield with the can-do attitude of the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services. This is an extremely difficult area.

The member for Mundingburra and I have two things in common: we are parents of five children and we have both been teachers. We recognise the delicate balance involved in trying to preserve the rights of parents, the rights of teachers and the protection of children. I believe that this Minister, through her consultation process and through the excellent work of her department, has come up with legislation which will achieve those goals. I support the legislation.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (5.58 p.m.): I do not think that the Family Services Amendment Bill is a difficult subject at all. In fact, I think it is a very simple subject. We should do anything and everything possible to ride paedophiles and people of their ilk into the deck, and we should leave no stone unturned in doing that. I fully support the Bill and I fully support the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services in her actions. I would like to congratulate the Minister for taking this stance on behalf of the people of Queensland. The Bill has my support.

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (5.59 p.m.): I want to compliment the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services for the presentation of the Family Services Amendment Bill. We must, at every opportunity, expose people who would seek to take advantage of our young and disadvantaged. I have no hesitation at all in supporting a Bill that defends the right of children to live a normal life without fear of abuse by people in positions of trust. I have been involved with people and children with disabilities for many years and this is an ongoing commitment for me. I welcome further tightening of this legislation. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Ms Bligh, adjourned.

ELECTIVE SURGERY WAITING LISTS

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (5.59 p.m.): I move—

> "That this Parliament condemns the Minister for Health for her callous manipulation of elective surgery waiting list figures that provides shallow self-promotion whilst ignoring the plight and pain of thousands of patients who are waiting for surgery."

There are a number of serious issues which the Health Minister has failed to explain away: her fanatical blocking of so-called public information for release under freedom of information laws; grave discrepancies between her waiting list figures and the hospital figures; the lack of a specialist access plan that she promised to produce 12 months ago; the doubling in long waits for semi-urgent patients at Royal Brisbane Hospital, despite her claims that alternative services were in place; the fact that doctors are speaking out and saying that alternative services are not in place; and the fact that the Health Minister is closing wards and beds at the Royal Brisbane Hospital when she admits that the Royal Children's Hospital also needs to use the RBH's operating facilities at this time because their own facilities have been closed down while being reworked.

Of course, there is also the issue of the Minister's inability to satisfactorily explain why the State Public Service Commissioner's annual report tabled in Parliament yesterday showed that there had been a drop of 1,066 full-time equivalent staffing positions in the Health Department. The Health Minister says that the Public Service Commissioner's figures are wrong but, during the Estimates process, the Health Minister refused to produce the information that I asked for about the number of full-time equivalent positions in the districts. If I was given the choice of trusting the Public Service Commissioner or the Health Minister, I would come down on the side of the commissioner.

I turn to the elective surgery list and why the Minister's information is so hard to believe. Why would a Government that has nothing to

hide block the release of waiting list information when I sought it under the freedom of information laws? The veracity of the Health Minister's claims about wait times cannot be trusted when she has refused to release the background information relating to waiting lists. If the Minister has nothing to hide, I suggest that she release all of these documents that she has most cynically refused to make public. These are the documents that she chose to take to Cabinet through the back door after I lodged my FOI requests.

Together with the Minister's fanatical zeal to stop uncensored information being released through FOI, the Health Minister—or "Stealth" Minister—also has to explain why there is a vast discrepancy between the information being released by one local hospital about wait times for elective surgery and the information that the Minister has formally released in the waiting list report. This morning, I referred to the information that has been released to GPs on the Sunshine Coast. To give one example of this information, I refer to the latest elective surgery figures that show only a modest number of people waiting for eye surgery at the Nambour Hospital. The official July 1999 figures at the hospital were fairly similar to the figures for October 1999. However, a different lot of figures distributed by the hospital shows that there is up to a 58-week wait for appointments to even see an eye specialist. These people are not even on the surgery list yet. According to these figures, once they have seen a specialist they can wait up to 82 weeks for surgery.

These figures contradict totally those figures that the Minister promotes in her elective surgery wait list report. In her wait figures for July 1999 and October 1999, there were no apparent long waits for Category 1 and Category 2 eye surgery, and Category 3 non-urgent surgery looked to be close to an acceptable target of no more than 5% long waits. Yet the published specialist outpatient wait times has people waiting for up to two years for appointments and surgery.

How many other hospitals have a similar story to tell, with the real wait times for surgery not being published? This story has been repeated at hospitals around the State. At a time of record Health funding—an extra $1.3 billion from the Commonwealth—the funds have gone to fatten up the bureaucracy at the expense of the State's hospitals.

Cataract operations may not be life threatening but they affect people's quality of life. If a person cannot see, that person loses the ability to drive a car and needs greater assistance in the home. Simple pleasures such as reading or watching television become very difficult. To have to wait several years for a cataract operation is just unbelievable. Likewise, with knee or hip operations, a lack of mobility is not always life threatening but it means that a person is extremely dependent upon others and one's quality of life is severely affected. According to the hospital figures, the wait to see an orthopaedic surgeon for an outpatient appointment at Nambour is up to 44 weeks. The wait for surgery is up to 269 weeks.

Increasingly, these types of operations are out of the reach of ordinary Queenslanders. The Beattie Government has no targets to reduce the wait for Category 3 non-urgent surgery, and hundreds more people have not even made the published surgery list.

The picture of cutbacks at Brisbane hospitals is far more sinister, where even the published waiting list figures for semi-urgent surgery have blown out—all this under the Minister who said that services were not being downgraded and that patients would be shifted elsewhere, but this has not happened. Firstly, I will deal with the issue of the fudge that the Minister has done on specialist outpatient appointments and her broken promise. I table an article outlining the Minister's commitment 12 months ago to address the need for a specialist access plan. This morning, when I asked the Minister about this, at first she said that it was on the Internet. I say to the Minister that it is not on the Internet.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Miss SIMPSON: I suggest that, if the Minister wants us to believe that she is doing something to address the anomalies in waiting times for specialist consultations, then she has to publish this information publicly. It would certainly help the various regions to check out who has access to services and who does not.

Currently, there are more than 38,000 people in this State waiting for surgery. However, the real figure is far higher because of the fudge job that has been done by the Minister on ward closures.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Miss SIMPSON: I suggest that the Minister reads Hansard and checks the question that she was asked, because she simply was not listening. The figures published in the Health Minister's elective surgery waiting list report do not reflect the thousands of extra people in the community who are waiting for

surgery. This Health Minister has failed to keep a promise to do something about that. Even on the Minister's published data in the Brisbane area, where there have been savage cutbacks with closures of operating theatres, there is no denying that there are more people waiting longer for surgery and semi-urgent surgery.

The move to close hospital beds and operating theatres in Brisbane has had nothing to do with winter ills. That is a Labor Party whopper. The Health Minister, through central office, ordered the hospital to reduce its activity due to budgetary problems, but the alternatives were not in place to take those displaced patients, thus the blow-out in wait times. The latest elective surgery wait figures show that there has been a doubling in the number of people waiting longer than acceptable for semi-urgent surgery at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. Each month, the Royal Brisbane Hospital is doing some fewer 240 operations than it was doing in the previous three months. In that short time, the proportion of people waiting too long for essential surgery has blown out from 5.5% to 13.5%. They are waiting for up to one year or more for their surgery instead of the recommended 90 days. It is unacceptable that 40% of all of those waiting for non-urgent surgery—nearly 3,000 people—are not being treated within 12 months.

This Minister has closed two surgical wards, two operating theatres and 40 outpatient clinics at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, and all this while the hospital has taken on additional surgical workload from the Royal Children's Hospital. The Minister told us that patient care would not be affected, but what a hollow promise that has proven to be. This is appalling mismanagement on her behalf, and patients are suffering.

The latest official elective surgery waiting figures for October show that the number of patients waiting longer than ideal times for essential Category 2 surgery has blown out to 13% of patients at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, 18% of patients at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital and a massive 23% of patients at Prince Charles Hospital.

What are the doctors saying? They are saying that the alternative services to take up the axed activity are not in place at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. The Health Minister has provided no evidence that the very rapid closure of services at the RBH has been anything other than a budget-driven objective. Yesterday on ABC radio, the Medical Staff Association President, Dr Roderick Roberts, stated—

> "The infrastructure hasn't been established at those small hospitals to deal with those emergencies and we did have the occurrence recently of a vascular emergency that was moved from several hospitals in the periphery and finally to Royal Brisbane."

Doctor Roberts went on to outline an example of a gunshot victim who was sent to Caboolture Hospital and then to Redcliffe Hospital before several hours later being sent on to the Royal Brisbane Hospital because at that time a surgeon was not at Redcliffe. The President of the Queensland AMA, Beres Wenck, in a press statement stated—

> "While on paper shifting patients to other areas may appear to address waiting list discrepancies, there is a good possibility that patients could be shifted to hospitals that don't have the level of infrastructure provided by RBH."

In Saturday's Courier-Mail another doctor, Dr Rob Hodge, the Queensland Chairman of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, said that the elective surgery figures showed the human cost of cutbacks to Queensland hospitals. With reference to the cutbacks at the RBH, Dr Hodge stated that services had not been introduced elsewhere and that Queensland Health had placed more pressure on RBH by refusing to fill several recently vacated anaesthetist positions. He stated further—

> "They"—

meaning Queensland Health—

> "have used the lack of anaesthesia services."

Time expired.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (6.10 p.m.): I formally second the motion before the House moved by the Opposition spokesperson for Health. It gives me no joy to condemn the Minister for Health or the Government in relation to their handling of the Health portfolio.

As the Minister for Health well knows, the people of the Burnett and the Bundaberg region are very dissatisfied with how the Beattie Labor Government is choosing to handle this vital portfolio area. A major budget blow-out in our district health services, which has resulted from a substantial increase in demand across-the-board, particularly in emergency and surgical treatment areas, has been met with the skewed approach of cutting existing services to the bone. This Health

Minister has shown a willingness to mislead people over the actual funding situation and has taken a big-stick approach to hardworking health professionals and district health committee members who, after all, have the best interests of patient care utmost in their minds.

At one stage, the Health Department even attempted to axe up to 20 full-time equivalent jobs as a way of dealing with the hospital budget problems. That was an incredibly short-sighted measure that may have looked good on the budget papers for one year, but it created long-term turmoil for Bundaberg. Fortunately, those staff cuts were scuttled after negative publicity when a Health Department memorandum was leaked to the local press and an irate union—I stress, a very irate union. Hardworking staff at the hospital remain on alert for extreme cost-cutting measures that seem to have infiltrated every corner of the hospital's operations, including mental health, outpatients and community health.

One area which continues to cause consternation and which the Health Minister seems to be impervious to community complaint about is the general practice outpatients clinic. That facility closed its doors on 1 October which was, ironically, the International Day of Older Persons. After 45 years of serving Bundaberg and district pensioners, unemployed, and otherwise financially disadvantaged residents, the clinic closed despite a groundswell of public opinion against the decision. As you would know, Mr Speaker, this morning a petition containing over 900 signatures attesting to that fact was tabled in the Parliament. To date, that means that more than 7,000 signatures protesting the closure of the clinic have been tabled in the Parliament. That represents well over—

Mrs EDMOND: I rise to a point of order. What the member is saying is misleading the House. The first 6,000 signatures were about the general outpatient facility—the whole outpatient facility.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SLACK: The Minister continues to deny something that is a fact. We have never misled anybody. The people of Bundaberg who know full well the circumstances that exist in the hospital are the ones who have signed the petitions. Is the Minister saying that she is right and 7,000 people are wrong? That is fine, but that is what the people say.

Mr Beanland: That is arrogant.

Mr SLACK: That is the height of arrogance. The Minister is supposed to listen to the community. Is she listening to the community? She is saying, "I am right and 7,000-plus people are wrong." Is the Minister suggesting that those people do not talk amongst themselves?

Mrs EDMOND: I rise to a point of order. I am not saying that the community is wrong. I am saying that the member opposite is wrong. He is misleading the House. He is telling whoppers in this place. He is talking about petitions on completely different things. He misled the people of Bundaberg.

Mr SLACK: The Minister is debating the issue. The Health Minister may harp on the fact that one clinic that bulk bills has opened in Bundaberg, but that was only discovered after the decision to close the GP clinic was made. It is totally inadequate for a city of 45,000 people.

As the seriousness of the general practitioner shortage in Bundaberg looms, it may well be time for the Health Minister to revisit this ill-considered decision to close the general practice outpatients clinic. Very credible figures supplied to me by the Bundaberg division of general practice show that by the end of this year there will be one general practitioner to service about 2,000 people.

Mrs Edmond: Have you written to Wooldridge about it?

Mr SLACK: The Minister is going to blame the Commonwealth now. Traditionally, we have had about 60 GPs and soon we will have about 40 GPs. When one compares that to the average in Brisbane, which is one practitioner to every 500 to 600 patients, one can see how chronic and dangerous this shortage could become. With a large number of long-term Bundaberg general practitioners now due to retire, and as most doctors have closed their books to new patients for years anyway, the Health Department could not have picked a worse time to cost-shift its responsibility to the private sector. That is what this is about.

In the past 12 months, my electorate officer and I have dealt with more complaints relating to cost-cutting measures at the Bundaberg Base Hospital than ever before.

Time expired.

Hon. W. M EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha) (Minister for Health) (6.15 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'Parliament' and insert the following—

'congratulates the Minister for Health for removing the secrecy and openly publishing the Queensland elective surgery waiting list figures hospital by hospital, category by category, and speciality by speciality.' "

The Opposition's motion is desperate and it is dishonest. There has been no manipulation of waiting list figures. The waiting list data is available to all. The quarterly elective waiting list report is put on noticeboards in hospitals. It is available at the rooms of local GPs. It is available on the Internet. The media receives copies. Thousands of these things are printed and distributed across Queensland. Only the member for Maroochydore cannot find them. She is the only person I know who does not seem to be able to find them. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition—who, this morning, had to be reminded of the months that make up winter—I point out that "quarterly" means figures that are published every three months.

The quarterly report for July, August and September was published at the end of October. This data is collected by exactly the same method used by the Opposition when it was in Government. The only difference is that this Government publishes the data openly and honestly as part of its elective surgery strategy and as part of its commitment to open and accountable Government. The Opposition only ever leaked the good news and covered up the bad news.

These are the facts: on 1 October 1999, 2.9% of Category 1 patients had waited longer than 30 days. In October 1998, 2% of patients had waited too long, and in October 1997, 4.8% of patients were considered to have waited too long. Of Category 2 patients, which are the semi-urgent cases, on 1 October 1999 the long waits were 9.9%. That is a better result than was ever achieved by the Opposition when it was in Government. That figure is down from 1,462 patients to 946 patients, which is a drop of 35%. Despite this, members opposite still whinge and whine. In October 1998, Category 2 long waits were 14.7%, and in October 1997 under the coalition they were 42.9%. Did we see that figure on the Internet? Did the coalition put that figure on the hospital noticeboards? You can bet your bottom dollar that it did not!

I give the House two very good examples that illustrate this Government's performance. When this Government came to power, two of the worst performing hospitals were the Gold Coast Hospital and the Toowoomba Hospital, which also had the biggest budget blow-out. My predecessor as Minister for Health, the member for Toowoomba South, did not tell us about that, did he? Did he tell us anything about the figures then? Did he tell us anything about how the budget blow-out in Toowoomba was worse than anywhere else in the State? The silence from the Leader of the Opposition was also deafening.

Members should consider this: on 1 October 1998, 37.5% of Category 2 patients at the Gold Coast Hospital had waited too long for surgery. That was the legacy of the coalition Government. On 1 October this year, long waits in Category 2 at the Gold Coast Hospital were 9% and improving. On 1 October 1998, three months after this Government won office, Category 2 long waits at the Toowoomba Hospital were 26.3%. In October this year, Category 2 long waits had been reduced to 12% at the Toowoomba Hospital. The budget is coming in and it is improving.

Obviously, Opposition members got a bit excited when they read Saturday's Courier-Mail, which published an article that—shock, horror—said that the number of people waiting too long for elective surgery had increased in the September quarter compared with the June quarter. That is comparing apples with oranges. Every media statement about waiting lists that I put out states that waiting lists go up and down. Elective surgery is about 15% of the total hospital activity and seasonal factors such as winter make a difference.

I can understand why the Opposition got so excited by that Courier-Mail article. It is beyond the ability of Opposition members to come up with any original ideas, so they thought that they would climb on the bandwagon. I am sorry to say that the article's heading was also wrong—dead wrong. There have been no funding cuts to any hospital in Queensland, and that includes the RBH. As an aside, I must point out that in October this year patient activity at the RBH was up by 6.4% when compared to October last year. That means that the RBH is seeing more patients than ever before, not fewer.

The Opposition is, indeed, desperate and dateless. It operates in a policy-free zone. Its only Health policy offering is to bring back the seventies model of hospital boards that left a heritage of run-down hospitals, no community health, a mental health system that was condemned worldwide and, added to that, a $700m debt that was run up by the hospital boards for Queensland Health to repay.

Time expired.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to second the amendment moved by the Minister for Health. We came to Government almost 18 months ago with a number of important goals in respect of improving health services for the people of Queensland. One priority was the progressive implementation of our Waiting List Reduction Strategy. That strategy has resulted in measurable improvements in the way in which public hospitals deliver surgical services to the people of Queensland. The eight-point plan to cut waiting lists for surgery has ensured an unprecedented level of transparency for hospital waiting lists and a much more efficient use of hospital infrastructure. An important element of our Waiting List Reduction Strategy is the careful monitoring of performance across all health districts. When one hospital has a backlog in a particular speciality, a neighbouring hospital may have spare capacity that can be used. For example, the spare capacity at the QE II is being used to take some of the workload off the other hospitals.

Another of our key objectives has been to build safer and more supportive communities. We strive to achieve this objective across every portfolio and our success in the Health portfolio is particularly outstanding. Our main aim in Health is to keep people healthy and out of hospitals. Members opposite, most notably the Opposition Health spokesperson, have sometimes scoffed at our efforts. How could we ever forget her faux pas on 4QR's morning program on 16 March when she attacked us for spending money on what she called "soft, social welfare areas"? We can only assume that she was attacking such activities as our Strengthening Families initiative and our school nurses program. She found out very quickly that she was out of step with the community and also with members on her side of the House who not only support these tremendous initiatives but have also been lobbying hard to have them introduced in their electorates.

The core program under our Strengthening Families initiative is the Positive Parenting Program, or PPP. Through PPP we are providing parenting programs to Queenslanders free of charge from some 30 locations across the State, including in my electorate. This includes two pilot programs being developed in indigenous communities—one remote, the other one urban—to develop models that are culturally appropriate to indigenous families. The Government is also in the process of expanding the PPP program to the bush. In the first half of next year, 60 existing community and child health nurses located in rural and remote locations will be trained and accredited in the Primary Care PPP, Group PPP and the Self-help PPP.

I have spoken to the parents involved in the programs at the Palmdale Community Health Centre in my electorate. The Minister was with me when we launched the program. The participants would not call them "soft, social welfare areas", they would call them real life programs that offer real life solutions. For example, one program addresses the sleeping routines of newborn babies. That not only greatly assists the babies but also the mothers. Once again, these programs are providing real solutions and real results.

We have allocated more than $1.2m a year to employ 20 child behaviour specialists, including psychologists and other trained professionals, to provide intensive support for parents experiencing particularly difficult behaviour problems in their home. PPP aims to strengthen the family unit and prevent the development of a range of social, behavioural and mental health problems. Our Strengthening Families initiative supports a wide range of programs, including non-Government initiatives. For example, more than $40m will be invested over four years in a school-based youth nursing program. Up to 100 school-based youth health nurses will be working with secondary students in 194 State high schools and 60 high top State schools. Rochedale State High School, in my electorate, asked for this service. It got it and it is really happy with it. About half of these nurses are in place, providing much-needed assistance and advice to adolescents to help them make a safe and healthy transition to adulthood. The school nurses are an important link in our drive to prevent suicide amongst young people by picking up the early signs—isolation, withdrawal and bullying. Nurses are also alert for mental health problems, such as depression. We know that early treatment leads to better outcomes.

These are some of the facts concerning what this Government is doing. Unfortunately, members opposite do not want to know the facts. The list goes on. This Government is committed to providing safer, more supportive communities and a better quality of life for all Queenslanders. The boost we have given health services is clear proof that we are achieving those objectives, which is in contrast to the record of members opposite during the two and a half years that they were in Government.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.24 p.m.): I join this debate to support wholeheartedly the motion moved by the member for Maroochydore that this Parliament condemns the Minister for Health for her callous manipulation of elective surgery waiting list figures that provide shallow self-promotion while ignoring the plight and pain of thousands of patients who are waiting for surgery.

There is no better illustration of the Beattie Government's preoccupation with information manipulation than this Minister's handling of the Health Department and surgery waiting lists in particular. The tragic fact is that no matter how those waiting list figures are manipulated they represent an intolerable burden of pain and frustration for thousands of Queenslanders. In my electorate office I deal with many people who are simply not getting a fair go from the health system and who know from first-hand experience that the Minister's rhetoric on this issue shows her callous disregard for the truth.

Tonight I will cite an example—a very human and real example; I could have picked from many—that puts a very human face to the rhetoric and the meaningless statistics that we see the Minister continually presenting to this Parliament. In early March I was approached by one of my constituents, Mr Geoff Lewis of Biggenden, who had been advised that he would need a knee replacement operation. He had been advised by the surgeon at the Bundaberg Hospital that he would need to wait at least 12 months for the surgery, even though that very day he had seen the Minister on television saying that waiting times at Bundaberg did not exceed four months. Because his pain was obvious, on 18 March I wrote to the Minister for Health concerning Mr Lewis' situation. In a letter dated 27 April, the Minister replied—

> "The District Manager, Bundaberg District Health Service has advised that Mr Lewis was seen in the Orthopaedic Clinic on 25 February 1999 and at this visit a decision was made to list Mr Lewis for a total knee replacement ... Mr Lewis can expect his operation to take place at the end of August 1999."

On 30 September, one month after the operation was promised by the Minister, I was again contacted by Mr Lewis. He provided me with a copy of a letter from his local doctor to the director of orthopaedics at the Bundaberg Hospital, which stated—

> "As of today"—

that is, 30 September—

> "he has not had any further contact regarding his operation. His knee is progressively painful."

That is what this debate is about. That is why this House should carry this motion. In common with so many others, this man has waited seven months, with no contact from the Bundaberg Hospital—a month longer than the Minister promised him and three months longer than the Minister quoted to the whole of Bundaberg and central Queensland in her television appearances. There has been no contact from the surgeon and the hospital.

Can honourable members imagine what it would be like to get up each day and wait for the phone to ring or for a letter to come, and all the while the pain was getting worse? The Minister promised surgery by the end of August. August came and went, with no contact, no communication and no surgery from the Bundaberg Hospital. On 7 October I again wrote to the Minister. Five weeks after the promised date of the surgery, I have still not received a reply from the Minister's office. I made contact with the elective surgery coordinator at the Bundaberg Hospital and I was unable to get any confirmation of a planned date for Mr Lewis' operation. I was able to get only a vague prediction that it would be some time next year.

This morning I again rang Mr Lewis. He still has not had any contact at all from the Bundaberg Hospital and he still has not had a date set for his operation. I queried the definition of "elective surgery" with the coordinator at the Bundaberg Hospital and I was advised that "elective surgery" meant by choice, preferred or selected. This definition is hardly appropriate in the case of degenerative conditions that require knee and hip replacements and which cause increasing pain over time and completely ruin the quality of life of many sufferers.

This motion is about the quality of life of so many Queenslanders—people whose lives are being destroyed by their inability to access badly needed surgery at places such as the Bundaberg Hospital, while the Minister for Health stubbornly refuses to even acknowledge that there is a problem. Tonight the Minister should be condemned for that callous disregard. This motion is all about people—people who wait patiently in the face of ever-increasing pain for the surgery that is promised. They are the reality of the waiting list figures. They are the human face of the issue which the Minister chooses to ignore in the pursuit of a political defence to cover an intolerable situation. This House should carry the motion moved by the member for

Maroochydore and condemn the Minister for Health for her callous disregard for the pain and plight of thousands of patients who are awaiting surgery.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.29 p.m.): I am indeed supporting the amendment tonight, but I am absolutely surprised at the lack of policy on the other side of the House and the lack of recognition that the waiting lists that we have in Queensland public hospitals are not waiting lists that the Minister for Health or any of us on this side of the House choose to have. It is the lack of assistance in finding solutions and the failure to recognise the causes of the waiting lists on the part of those on opposite side of the House that is stunning. It would indeed be helpful, for example, if members opposite would give a clear recognition, a clear understanding, of the Commonwealth's failure to fund Queensland appropriately.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive. I and other members on this side of the House have raised the concerns of our constituents many times.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! They were not directed at the member. The member will resume his seat.

Ms BOYLE: It is important for all members of this House, particularly those on the opposite of side of this House, to understand that the Commonwealth funds general practitioner services around Australia. That is its responsibility. When we have in our diverse and widely spread State many areas in rural and remote parts of Queensland where there are no GP services, it is left to the Queensland health system to provide, in effect, GP services. When we are not compensated appropriately for that by the Commonwealth Government, then we are behind the eight ball.

We could reasonably expect in the interests of the health of all Queenslanders that we would have the support of honourable members on the other side of the House in calling out to the Commonwealth Government about this dreadful inequity. This is a matter on which we should join forces to speak loudly to the Prime Minister, who refused, despite other States joining with Queensland, to call for a wide-ranging review into the health system by the Productivity Commission. The Commonwealth Government and the Prime Minister walked away. They said no. Thank heavens members of the Senate recognised the seriousness of the problems that all States have in the provision of health services and their failure to meet the level of service wished for—required—by the public. The Senate inquiry into public hospital funding is going ahead, and I understand that Queensland Health has been invited to give evidence tomorrow.

The Queensland public hospital system is being short-changed by the Commonwealth Government by up to $100m a year. Honourable members should think of what we could do in Queensland if we were given our equitable share. Opposition members may well say that there are improvements that should be made in all of the services that they seem to think are just services that we as a Government refuse to provide. It is a matter of money and of us not getting our fair share in this State, which is very difficult to service.

The same applies, of course, in other areas in terms of the provision of primary health care services in Queensland, particularly in remote areas where the Commonwealth again is not paying the State fair compensation. It is estimated that that compensation should be of the order of $31m each year. Queensland is a further $65m out of pocket for treating patients in emergency departments who should have been seen by a GP, funded by Medicare. If the Commonwealth honoured its obligations, Queensland would be able to provide many more services within our public hospital system.

Let me turn now to the Federal Government's private health insurance rip-off, for that is what it is. While members opposite cry crocodile tears about the State's waiting lists, the Commonwealth Government is pouring $100m more a year into propping up private health insurers than it allocated to our entire public hospital system. There is no evidence—not one shred—that this $1.2 billion a year investment of public funds into private health companies will have any positive impact on the public hospital system.

It is also time that we spoke out together about another problem, one that is particularly common in regional areas. There are doctors who have been well educated through our universities in Australia, who have worked for some time as specialists in the public system and have built their local networks, who have then gone into private practice and made a lot of money because they are so highly skilled, but who have forgotten why they became doctors. They refuse to supply services in regional areas and allow patients to sit on waiting lists because they will not provide some of their time and instead choose to serve only

rich patients. They are a minority of doctors, but they are holding back the services provided in many specialist areas in regional parts of this State. It is why there is such a list of appointments—and such a long list of appointments—in Cairns.

Time expired.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (6.34 p.m.): I rise this evening to support the motion moved by the honourable member for Maroochydore and, in supporting this motion, I condemn the desperate Minister for Health for her handling of this very important Health portfolio. My particular concern once again is the contemptuous treatment of people of regional and rural Queensland by this Government and by this Health Minister in particular. We have seen hospital and medical services disappearing by stealth under the guise of refocusing the health services.

Mr Sullivan: That is rubbish and you know it.

Mr JOHNSON: The member would not damned well know because he has not been out there. Part of this refocusing has many country hospitals under the Health Minister's scalpel to be downgraded to aged care or rehabilitation.

Mr SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order. I have visited the member's area and other areas, and I find that offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr JOHNSON: I will withdraw.

The hospitals in Nanango, Murgon, Wondai, Gin Gin, Malanda, Forsayth, Gordonvale, Sarina, Springsure and Stanthorpe are all under the threat of closure or refocus. The member opposite should sit back and listen. This Government has no appreciation of the importance of the base hospital to the people in rural and remote Queensland. For that matter, it has no appreciation of the importance of rail jobs, which are also on the agenda for cutting, but we will talk more about that next week; they say that is another story. Again, the Public Service razor gang is back in town and this portfolio of Health, under this Minister's stewardship, is certainly under the scrutiny of that razor gang.

It is a matter of fact that country areas are still facing a serious shortage of medical expertise. To be fair, this is not a new problem, but of recent times it has been made worse by the poaching of some of our overseas trained doctors by Victoria and Western Australia because this Minister has been too slow off the mark. As usual, we have had Government by press release, with the Government announcing its Doctors for the Bush scheme, but it was not until last week that the Minister got around to amending the Medical Act to enable the Medical Board to register appropriately qualified overseas doctors.

In my own experience, about three years ago I met a South African doctor who was willing to settle in the west in an area that had had no doctor for some time. The very able and very capable Minister for Health at the time, the member for Toowoomba South, and I made representations to Dr Michael Wooldridge which were instrumental in the development of the Doctors for the Bush program. Of course, the medical school in Townsville at the James Cook University, with training campuses in Cairns, Mount Isa and Mackay was an initiative of the coalition Government designed to attract country kids to medicine in the belief that, because of their rural background and experience, they would be happy to develop their careers and return to the bush to provide surgical services across the whole of this State. That is what this Opposition is all about. That is what this lady here, the member for Maroochydore, will certainly initiate when she becomes Health Minister in the next Government.

Of course, medicine in the outback also relies heavily upon the services of trained and dedicated nursing staff and the flying medical services in particular. I cannot emphasise sufficiently that, without those medical staff—without nurses and that type of staff—there would be no medical services at all. There is growing concern that Minister Edmond's nursing task force is not going to be allowed to address the shortage of nurses. The Mount Isa Hospital is already flying in intensive care nurses. That may be a tactic of this Government, to use the shortage of suitably qualified staff as an excuse to close country hospitals.

There is any number of examples of mismanagement by this Minister and by this Government. Do honourable members remember the Cabinet submission that contained the secret plans to wind back the free public hospitals that went through unchallenged, in common with the recent submission that would have seen the decriminalisation of the possession of massive quantities of cannabis? Where was the Health Minister when this clanger was dropped in Cabinet? We have had a patients forced to spend a month in darkness after a cataract operation was postponed because of staff and bed shortages. We have had rural and regional couples removed from eligibility for

travel subsidies and accommodation costs. Typical examples of the concerns of the coalition and the people of regional and rural Queensland include the closure of the Gayndah medical centre on 29 October. Also, the council for remote area nurses says that the Government needs to provide sufficient funding to attract more nurses to rural areas.

Before Government members rush in and suggest that these fears are some sort of figment of the Opposition's imagination, let me quote some other critics. On 23 August Bill Ludwig—and members opposite know who Bill Ludwig is—said that his members were sick of wasteful reviews by the top heavy Health bureaucracy that seems to have its priorities wrong. What we have in this State is health by bureaucratic decision, not by Government. The Borbidge/Sheldon Government ran Health, not the bureaucrats.

Time expired.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (6.39 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Minister for Health. We on this side of the House welcome tonight's debate and say thank you to the Opposition for giving us another opportunity this year to put our health achievements on the record. The Opposition has given us a free kick to put our health achievements on the record seven times already in the past year. So it is with much pleasure that I once again highlight our health achievements.

We are proud that Queensland Health is currently implementing the largest hospital building and refurbishment program in Australia. The program includes the rebuilding, refurbishment and re-equipping of public hospitals, aged care facilities and community health centres in metropolitan as well as regional, rural and remote communities. This program will provide Queensland with well-equipped, modern and up-to-date facilities able to meet the State's future demand for health care where people live.

But the achievements do not stop there. This is not just about achievements in capital works programs; it is also about achievements in service provision. In relation to service provision I will speak about Caboolture, which services my electorate of Kurwongbah, as an example of this Government being one of action and commitment—a Government about providing services where people live. Of the 34,500 patients per month who receive specialist outpatient services from the Royal Brisbane Hospital, about 40%—that is, 13,800 patients—come from outside the district. About 27%—that is, 9,315 patients—attend the hospital for secondary-type services that could potentially be treated elsewhere, for example at the Caboolture Hospital.

This change has the capacity to impact positively on clinic waiting times, as does the availability of public and private specialist services in districts such as Caboolture. For example, Caboolture Hospital offers specialist services such as general medicine, general surgery, gynaecology, oncology, orthopaedic surgery and paediatric general medicine.

Also in the area is the Redcliffe Hospital, which offers specialist services in areas such as diabetes, gynaecology, neurology, oncology, ophthalmology, orthopaedic surgery, general surgery, paediatric general surgery, paediatric general medicine, urology, vascular surgery, palliative care, pain, respiratory, rheumatology and general medicine. Clearly, as services in the Redcliffe and Caboolture district are increased, there will be a lessening need for people to travel to Brisbane, be it the Royal Brisbane Hospital or the Prince Charles Hospital, for treatment services.

In addition to achievements in relation to hospital services, there are other health service achievements of this Government in the Caboolture area. These include the provision of help for sexual assault victims through the allocation of $130,365 to the Caboolture rape and sexual assault support service; the inclusion of Caboolture as one of the additional 15 locations in Queensland to offer free courses for parents as part of the Government's Strengthening Families initiative; and the boosting of funds for local home and community care services to aid local frail older people and younger people with disabilities and their carers.

I hope that the member for Caboolture has taken note of these facts and that he will not once again blindly follow the Opposition in voting against the Government, as he has done in the previous health debates. When the member for Caboolture decides on which side of the Chamber he and his party will sit when the division bells ring, I hope that he bears in mind the following. If he votes with the Opposition, he will be voting against the increase in funding for the Caboolture rape and sexual assault support service; he will be voting against Queensland Health offering free courses for parents to strengthen families in the Caboolture area; he will be voting against boosting funds for local home and community care services for older persons—I wonder what the residents of Bribie Island would think of that; and he will be voting against new and improved health services for Caboolture. It is

time that the member for Caboolture took a stand and voted to support his community, for I know that it warmly embraces these services.

Finally, I can honestly say that I am proud to be a member of a Government that can truly say it delivers. I am proud to be a member of a Government that does not play politics with people's health. The Minister should be congratulated on removing the secrecy and openly publishing the Queensland elective surgery waiting list figures—hospital by hospital, category by category, and specialty by specialty. I also commend the Minister for taking services to where the people live.

Time expired.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (6.44 p.m.): This amendment moved by the Minister is meaningless. It simply congratulates the Minister for Health for removing secrecy and openly publishing the Government's elective surgery waiting lists. Every night this Government moves an amendment to the private member's motion to the effect that it is proud of its record, that it is proud of what it is achieving for the people of Queensland. This is achieving nothing for the people of Queensland. The Government knows that the waiting lists grow longer by the day. The Minister knows it and the people of Queensland know it.

This is what we call a Clayton's amendment. Compared with the original motion, it shows very clearly what this Minister is about. The original motion "condemns the Minister for her callous manipulation of elective surgery waiting list figures that provide shallow self-promotion"—the very thing that she is doing here again this evening. There is nothing for the people.

The Minister has fallen into the trap again. She has shown arrogance to the member for Burnett. The people of Bundaberg have been subjected to the Minister's arrogance time and time again over this issue. It has been shown that the Minister is not interested in them at all. Accordingly, they are not interested in the Minister.

We see the same treatment being handed out in Brisbane. The Minister says that nothing has happened in Brisbane. There are more and more closures but nothing put in place to carry the load, and the waiting lists grow longer by the day. What has the Minister done with the additional $1.3 billion—that is $1,300m—that the Commonwealth gave in funding? Has she fattened up the bureaucracy? Has she fattened up head office? Has she fattened up the regions? The Minister has done nothing constructive with it at all in order to get waiting lists down. The Minister knows it and the record shows it. There is no point in the Minister coming into this House, mealy-mouthed, carrying on as she did this evening. The amendment shows that the Minister is ashamed of her record—and it is a shameful record indeed.

Let us look at the Cairns District Health Service. That health service says that there is no evidence to suggest that patients will be endangered by a ward closure at the Cairns Base Hospital. Medical staff at the hospital said that a quarter of the beds at the hospital were lost when the G-East ward was closed without warning. A hospital spokesperson said that the hospital had introduced a flexi bed policy to maximise the use of its facilities and also called on medical staff to be more efficient.

This is probably a bit like Fly Buys in that people will have to accumulate points to get a bed. Is this the new program? Accumulation of points? I suppose we will go home and find information in the mail to the effect that we will have to accumulate points to get a hospital bed. That is what the Minister is doing. What a farce this Minister is!

This Minister knows that she has failed on this issue. She has failed time and time again. Now she is trying to hide elective surgery figures and others. The Minister is not producing them. We know that she is taking them off to Cabinet so that they are not subject to FOI. The AMA caught up to the Minister in Brisbane on the issue of ward closures. A recent media release from the Queensland branch of the AMA states—

> "The closure of two general wards ... is another warning sign the State's public hospitals don't have the resources to meet budget."

The president of the AMA in Queensland said that the loss of the wards and 40 outpatient clinics at the RBH means that patients will now find it even harder to get on a waiting list at the hospital.

The point is that the waiting lists grow longer and longer by the day. The best the Minister can come up with is some useless amendment to the effect that she is happy at the fact that she is releasing some waiting list figures. She says nothing about being proud of her record in reducing waiting lists, because they are growing longer. They are not getting shorter; they are growing longer by the day. The record speaks for itself.

We have not heard anything from the Minister about what she is doing with the

$1.3 billion from the Federal Government. Not a word has been said about that. This is a Government of blame. All we have heard tonight is blame: blame the Federal Government; blame the people of Bundaberg; blame the people of Brisbane; blame the people of Cairns. Blame everybody!

Mr Quinn: Blame the doctors.

Mr BEANLAND: Blame the doctors, as the member for Merrimac says. But the Minister does not accept the blame herself. What an embarrassment this cant-do Government is to the people of Queensland. What an embarrassment this Minister is to the people of Queensland. "Can't do it" is here again. This Minister cannot get those waiting lists down. Of course, we hear it time and time again. We have not heard where the Minister is squandering the money—

Time expired.

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (6.50 p.m.): I rise to support the Minister's amendment. Firstly, I would like to comment on what the member for Burnett said. I have had the privilege of travelling with the current Minister on two or three occasions, I think, to the South Burnett and Bundaberg health facilities. The Bundaberg Hospital outpatients clinic has not closed. The Bundaberg outpatients clinic is new and three times larger.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: What has closed is the private part-time GP service. And if the "kid from Callide" would close his mouth for a minute, he would know that, in February 1996, when Mr Borbidge came to Government, that service was operating for 22.5 hours a week. By the end of Mr Borbidge's term, it was operating for nine hours a week. And the member for Burnett, a senior Minister in that Government, did not raise this issue once in the Parliament. He made not one speech, not one two-minute speech, not one Adjournment debate speech. So the member for Callide ought to keep quiet in shame, because the member for Burnett—as a senior Minister—knew that, because of the way in which that service was set up, it was being phased out. What is there now is an improved outpatients clinic.

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. I put it on the record that I wrote to the Health Minister and approached the then Health Minister several times about that issue.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member will not debate the issue.

Mr SULLIVAN: I thank the member for Burnett for confirming, from his own mouth, that not once did he raise in this Parliament the concerns of his constituents. He is party to a petition which deliberately misrepresents the truth.

Mr Seeney: He's doing it now.

Mr SULLIVAN: Of course, he is doing it now. He knows that the private GP service has closed and the outpatients clinic is new, three times bigger and offering extended services.

The member for Gregory said that, under the coalition, they had a health service that was run by Government, not by bureaucrats. That is true. That is not a boast. That is an admission of incompetence. We know that the member for Toowoomba South issued directives to the District Health Service in Toowoomba and instructed them on what they would or would not do. As well, between March and July 1996, he made the decision to take the community health services out of the Prince Charles Hospital and move them back to the RBH, so that the ageing population in the suburbs would have to travel all the way in along Bowen Bridge Road so that the "Medical Mafia" at RBH would feel comfortable.

Mr Borbidge: "Medical Mafia"?

Mr SULLIVAN: The Leader of the Opposition heard me correctly. The member for Gregory knows that it was his colleague, the member for Toowoomba South, who made those decisions, not based on medical need—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: The member for Gregory stands condemned, because the 10-year hospital plan which was worked out by medicos throughout Brisbane said that those services should be moved to where the growing population is. And it was the politicians—not the bureaucracy, which was the medical profession—who made the decision to keep them at RBH, which meant that people in Caboolture now have to travel to RBH rather than to facilities at Chermside. So the member for Gregory stands condemned by his own admission. And as for the shadow Minister for Health—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory!

Mr SULLIVAN: I admired the shadow Minister for Health for being the first person, to my knowledge, to use a computer in this Chamber for her day-to-day work. Yet today she admitted that she could not access the Internet and actually read the figures which were on the Internet and which are in this

report. Is that incompetence or deliberate misleading?

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. I did not make that claim. I said that the outpatient specialist figures are not on the Internet.

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

Mr SULLIVAN: If, in fact, the member did not want to go to the Internet, she could do what any person here could do, that is, go to one of the 33 hospitals and see on display there the report of the waiting list. This occurred under the Labor Government. It was never there under the coalition. Mr Borbidge is smiling, because he knows that it was the Cabinet decision—or maybe it was not; maybe it was just the member for Toowoomba South, as Minister, who made the decision not to publish those figures. Near the entrance to the main block at the Prince Charles Hospital is a display area showing the waiting list—publicly available for everyone to see.

Time expired.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 39—Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 36—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Turner, Veivers. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! For any future divisions the bells will be rung for two minutes.

Question—That the motion as amended be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 39—Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 36—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Turner, Veivers. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Sitting suspended from 7.03 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 27 October (see p. 4475).

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (8.30 p.m.): What is proposed in this Bill is a minor—administrative—change to arrangements that have long been in place to protect the special and nationally honoured status of Anzac Day in our society. We do not, in this Bill, face anything that should necessarily be a matter of partisan argument. It is not an issue that—as the Government wants to pretend—should attract the whip. It is a matter of conscience. It is a matter of nurturing a tradition and a rite that Australians have long held dear.

It is not something that we on this side of the House would normally expect those opposite to have any difficulty with. But this Bill is before the House because the Government refused to consider acting as it should act in this instance—acting to defend those who are taking part in an act of reverence against those who, for whatever reason and at whatever instigation, seek to disrupt this great national occasion. It should not be an embarrassment to the Government that, in this instance, it has been looking the other way and pretending not to see a problem that requires attention. That has been its practice, anyway, since it came to power. It should be used to that by now.

The measure contained in this Bill would, if passed by the House—and I hope it will be—meet the requirement of the millions of ordinary, decent, good-mannered Australians that the Parliament will react with speed and energy to protect social norms and established tradition if that becomes necessary.

I believe that this action is necessary. It has been made so by incidents that have marred dawn services. It is not something that can be dismissed—as the member for Bundamba wants it to be dismissed—as an issue that would be addressed were it to be reported more widely. I am sure that the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing knows very well that—as with the number of cockroaches that might be seen skittering around the kitchen in the middle of the

night—one cannot rely on reported incidents to gauge the extent of a law and order problem. With cockroaches, the rule of thumb is to multiply the number of sightings by 10 to arrive at a reasonable number for actual infestation of the area in which these pests have been seen. With incidents that disturb the peace in our human community, it might be argued that a similar computation is warranted.

How many of us here in this House tonight know of, have seen, or have even been the passing victims of inappropriate behaviour and yet not reported it to the authorities? I believe that most Australians are tolerant of the excesses and errors of others, particularly in the area of alcohol abuse. And that is fine—that is sensible, because no-one wants us to become a nation of sneaks or, worse, wowsers. But I also believe that most Australians—the overwhelming majority of Australians—would have no problem with an early curfew on Anzac Day eve. I am sure that if the Minister bothered to ask ordinary Australians about this, he would be drawn to the same conclusion. If he will not be drawn to this conclusion, he will be driven to it by public pressure.

The change is necessary because of disturbances to some Anzac Day dawn services by people who were recently patrons of nightclubs in the vicinity. That is not to say that the problems are extensive. It is to say this—that any problem of that nature with a dawn service on Anzac Day strikes at the very heart of this country's great national day.

The Bill proposes that on Anzac Day eve, nightclubs and other establishments must close at midnight instead of the 3 a.m. shutdown mandated by the present Act. In the light of certain recent elitist events that have fallen over because their promoters seem incapable of understanding the principle of the democratic majority, most people—and I emphasise the words "most people"—would see no problem with that. It is one day a year—for one day of the year.

I believe it would be instructive to honourable members to recall what the member for Gladstone said in this place on this issue on 11 March this year. The member for Gladstone said that she was proposing a reduction of approximately four hours' trading on a day when people were most likely to congregate in the early hours of the morning. In response, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing made a gratuitous and, I venture to suggest, offensive remark that midnight closure on the eve of this one day of the year would make Queensland a laughing stock.

I would like to move on from that gratuitous remark by the Minister to another set of gratuitous insults recently reported in the Cairns Post newspaper. On Monday, the newspaper reported—under a headline than ran "Diggers' rum caught up in booze ban call"—that the State Government had warned RSL clubs that it could crack down on diggers who have a shot of rum with breakfast if the League pursued new Anzac Day legislation.

A person identified in the press as "Mr Gibbs' spokesman" is quoted as saying—

> "If they want us to crack down on nightclubs and bars, we will have to look at our policy of turning a blind eye to Diggers drinking rum at 4.30 in the morning with their cornflakes."

Speaking about the "Gold Coast incident" which he claimed had sparked the coalition's call for new legislation and which he also asserted had been blown out of all proportion, this ministerial mouthpiece, speaking on behalf of the Government, went on—

> "It was an isolated incident and there was no evidence the people who may have been responsible had even been to a nightclub. They could have been to a private party."

So there we have it!

The distilled wisdom of the Minister's office is that either there is not a problem or that—and we hear this from this failed embarrassment of a Government all the time—if there is, the blame can be laid at the feet of someone else. Anyone but the Government—the Beattie doctrine, alive and well in regard to everything that this Government cannot do, does not want to do or gets wrong.

Earlier today in this place the Minister used the privileges of the House to evade responsibility for material which emanates—whether authorised or not—from his office. He could not, or would not, face the issue squarely. He knows that his office—his spokesman—has got it wrong again, but he will not do anything to put that right. We are told that it was taken out of context. I do not see how one could take those remarks out of context. I say to the Minister: you are a Minister of the Crown, not a thug. When people express their wishes and their concern on this particular issue, they need to be treated with respect. That applies to all issues, but particularly on an issue as sacred to the heartbeat of Australia as Anzac Day.

Tonight I issue a challenge to the Minister. Can he tell the House, and the

people of Queensland, whether the views ascribed to him by his paid mouthpiece in fact represent his views and the views of the Government. If they do, why? If they do not, why is he allowing his office to be used to threaten the RSL and its many branches and members throughout Queensland in his name?

I issue another challenge to the Minister's party colleagues—the member for Cairns, the member for Barron River, the member for Mulgrave and his ministerial colleague the member for Cook. I notice that they have been remarkably silent. They have been the Government's representatives in their electorates instead of being their electorates' representatives in the Government. The challenge to them is this: are they prepared to come out publicly and back their colleague the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing, whose own office and whose own paid mouthpiece is slinging off at a sacred day in this country's tradition and culture? Do they back the Minister? By their silence, we can only assume that they do. I am sure that the people in Cairns, in Barron River, in Mulgrave and in Cook will remember that.

If those members are not supporting the Minister—and they should not—then how will they explain their party colleague's views and the policies of their Government, which they supported in the caucus and which they are about to support in the Parliament? In particular, how will they explain them to Cairns RSL Sub-branch President, Merv Hains, who is disappointed that the Government will not support the sensible amendment to the Liquor Act that we are proposing in this Bill. Especially, how will those members explain those views and policies to their constituents in the Cairns region who, on all the evidence, are more likely to support a midnight closure without the Minister's threatened reprisals against ex-servicemen and women over the traditional tot of rum served with pride and an element of reverence on Anzac Day morning. To answer it in any way other than that, we should expect those who participate in or attend the dawn service to accept the risk that these solemn ceremonies might be disturbed by drunken revellers, by people for whatever reason insensitive to the importance of the events being commemorated.

We on this side of the House do not say that the problem of public drunkenness is prevalent, but if is deliberate it is offensive to the spirit of the Anzacs that Australians in their thousands commemorate with pride and reverence on 25 October each year. We simply say that, in a community such as ours—this Queensland, our Queensland—we can wear one more day of midnight closure for places of entertainment. As the honourable member for Gladstone has noted in this place, it is only a small amount of time. It is for a solemn occasion that we make this sacrifice, and such a small sacrifice it is. In fact, it is no sacrifice at all when one considers the sacrifice of those who landed at Gallipoli on that first fateful Anzac Day, the blood covenant that made our country a nation and is exemplified by the sacrifice of so many Australians in war in the years since then.

Mr Johnson: Our sacred day.

Mr BORBIDGE: As my colleague the member for Gregory interjects, it is our sacred day.

When this Bill was last awarded debating time in this House on 27 October, I was heartened to hear from the honourable member for Bundamba that, in relation to Anzac Day last year, the Government had a very close look at the activities on Anzac Day and that he and his colleague the Minister for Police made sure that there was a cooperative approach by both police and the licensing authorities. I thank him for that, and I thank him for that vigilance. However, I remind him that vigilance is but one part of sensible regulatory policy in terms of social controls that Queenslanders—free people in a free country—who wish to be free of disturbance and who certainly demand that their most sacred and solemn moments are free from interference willingly accept and, in this case, plainly demand. It has been said from one end of Queensland to the other—and I say to honourable members opposite that, if they do not believe me, they should open their ears—that one of the benefits of Federation is that a State has certain sovereign and legislative rights. Among the other things that the Anzacs fought to protect was that very basic freedom.

The member for Bundamba says—and I mentioned this earlier—that he does not want Queensland to be a laughing-stock. Let me say that, on that one, I am with him. However, he should talk to the "Not me" Premier or the "It's them" Deputy Premier about that and then, for good measure, have a sharp word with himself. They are the people who are so busily creating the image of Labor-ruled Queensland as the half-smart State. He knows that there is no evidence that a sensible amendment of Queensland law causes outbreaks of mirth either here at home or over the border. What is more, I know, and I am sure that the member for Bundamba

knows—or if he does not, he should know—that ordinary, decent Queenslanders ignore the mirth of anyone who claims to have found something amusing in a community acting to protect a sacred right. Let them laugh if they wish. Let them laugh. It is they who have the problem.

Mr Sullivan: No-one's laughing. You stop lying. You're a liar.

Mr Healy: Another embarrassment for this Government.

Mr BORBIDGE: Another embarrassment for this Government and the embarrassment who is the Government Whip, who cries "liar" across the Chamber and who should know better, should open his ears. He should get around his electorate. What is the shame? What is the problem in supporting this Bill?

Tonight, I am saying that this Bill deserves to be passed. The measure that it would implement would disadvantage no-one. It would protect the solemn commemoration of the first Anzac Day that is enshrined in the dawn service.

Mr Healy: Very simple.

Mr BORBIDGE: It is simple. Why the argument? For heaven's sake, why are the members opposite siding with drunkards? Why are the members opposite siding with people who disrupt Anzac Day services? What about standing up for the core values of Queensland and the spirit that built this nation? No partisan position is threatened by this Bill. No partisan advantage is offered by its passage.

I appeal to the Government to allow a free vote among the Labor members of this House. If the Government is prepared to do that—and I make that request in this House tonight formally to the Premier—I will be the first to congratulate him. I will be the first to say, "Well done. You have done the right thing." Why is it that, in relation to something that is so fundamental to the spirit of Australia, to the great traditions of Australia, that we see the party machine, the party whip, being applied? If this legislation is passed, there is no embarrassment to the Government. People would applaud the Government. By passing this legislation, there is no threat to the Government. The Government is still here tomorrow. I know that many honourable members on the Government side of the House in their hearts know and support the intent of this Bill. They would love to vote for it.

Tonight, I say to the Premier: let them vote for it. Remove the party whip. Allow a conscience vote on this particular legislation. It in no way represents a threat to the Government. In fact, if the Premier was permitted or agreed to make sure that there was a conscience vote on this particular issue, I think that there would be a large number of members on his side of the House who would welcome that and who would be relieved. If he is prepared to do that and if he does so, then I will be the first person to congratulate him and my colleague who introduced this Bill will be the second.

How many lessons of modern day politics do we need? Last weekend we saw it repeated. We saw it in the Victorian election. We have seen it at every test at the polls: people want their Governments to listen. People want their Governments to reflect their will. People want their Governments to govern for the majority. What is this Parliament going to do—govern for the majority or govern for a few nightclub owners who are making a few bucks on Anzac Day eve? Will it govern for the diggers? Will it govern for the returned servicemen and women or for a few of those irresponsible revellers who seek to disrupt this proud and sacred national day?

This is a test for the Parliament. This is a test for the good sense that I know is in the hearts of many Government members. To the Government members who are not participating in this debate, obviously because they have reservations themselves, I say, "Take it back to your caucus. Talk to your Premier. Allow a conscience vote on this particular issue." If ever such a vote was warranted in this Parliament, it is warranted on the private member's Bill that we are debating this evening.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (8.50 p.m.): I am very pleased to speak on the Liquor Amendment Bill 1999. As everyone knows, Anzac Day is one of the most special days of the year. The proposal before the House tonight is to restrict trading hours to midnight on the eve of Anzac Day. That is not a major change, but it is an important change. This amendment has strong community support. One only has to listen to the radio, talk to people and hear what is going on to know that the amendment before the House tonight has very strong community support.

Mr Fenlon: You want to ban refrigerators; is that the idea?

Mr HOBBS: The member for Greenslopes says that we should ban refrigerators. I am not sure that that would be a good idea. I do not think that the diggers would think that such comments contribute to the spirit of tonight's debate.

Tonight I wish to talk about respect for diggers and what they stand for. I have attended many RSL conferences and I know what great people the diggers are. They are continually helping one another, particularly the aged veterans. They do an enormous amount of work in their communities. A lot of them are getting on in years, but they are still doing a great job. I have the utmost respect for them.

Mr Johnson: Our next generation of diggers are up in East Timor—men and women.

Mr HOBBS: There is no doubt about that. They will be a part of the Returned Services League. Certainly I believe that they will be welcomed home in a much better fashion than the Vietnam veterans were. They will become a part of the RSL and they will keep it going.

There has certainly been a resurgence of support for Anzac Day over the last few years. More children are becoming involved in the Anzac Day parades, which they attend with their parents and grandparents. It is quite warming to see the strong support, love and affection that people have for the old diggers and to hear the clapping as the parade goes by. I think that we lost that a few years ago. Numbers were dwindling, but in the past three or four years there has been a great resurgence of interest in Anzac Day. Anzac Day is one of the most special days in the year. This is not just another holiday; it is Anzac Day. That is so important.

Anzac Day is a key day for many organisations. For example, Anzac Day functions held around Australia are always televised. In fact, a service is held every year on the other side of the world at Gallipoli. This is a very special place for people to commemorate Anzac Day. Indeed, a new memorial is currently being built at Gallipoli. Bruce Scott, the Federal Minister for Veterans Affairs, will visit Gallipoli again this year and further ceremonies will be held on Anzac Day. It is a heart-wrenching day that is a part of our history. It is a great day that we celebrate in support of the diggers and to remember those who did not come home.

Unfortunately I am unable to attend a lot of the services that are held on Anzac Day in my electorate of Warrego, because the electorate is so large and I am usually tied up in one place. However, I know that nearly every town and community holds some sort of function to commemorate Anzac Day.

The tentacles of the RSL stretch very widely; it is an organisation that is loved across Australia. I take this opportunity to advise the House of the progress of the RSL club in Charleville. Many members would be aware that the flood of 1990 damaged the RSL club. Extensions were almost completed when, believe it or not, the building was burnt down. In typical RSL fashion, they kept things going in the old shed at the cordial factory. One of the sad things was that they lost a lot of the memorabilia that was housed in the premises that burnt down. They had gathered together a lot of extra memorabilia that was to be used in an exhibition, and it was all lost. It was so disappointing to lose so much memorabilia, which had been gathered from near and far. Unfortunately, these things happen. The new facility has opened and it is a focal point of the town. Graham Andrews, the Mayor of Murweh Shire and the local publican, has done a great job. He has put a lot of time and a great deal of effort into keeping the club going.

Mr Healy: It is one of the most magnificent clubs in the west.

Mr HOBBS: The Charleville RSL is a magnificent club. It is a great facility and it provides a great opportunity for people to get together. Certainly all the diggers will be there on the next Anzac Day, and that will be a wonderful thing to see.

Every town has either a community RSL hall or a memorial of some description. There is always a story associated with the hall or the memorial, such as how it was built, the number of people involved and things such as that. Many RSL clubs have been incorporated in new sporting complexes or the like, but people still say, "There is the old RSL hall." Some of the stories are quite extraordinary. One that comes to mind involves my home town of Tambo. The old RSL hall is now part of the bowls club, although it is still referred to as the RSL hall. Another example is at Mitchell, where a fantastic sporting complex has been built. They moved the old RSL building out of town. They set it on stumps and built a verandah around the building. It now holds pride of place and will be there for generations to come to enjoy. The people know the hall and they love it.

The legislation is based on the premise that we do not want drunks disrupting Anzac Day proceedings. We hope that that would not happen, and I do not think that it would happen in the west as much as it would happen in the bigger towns. However, it can happen and that is the issue here. It could happen anywhere. I ask members opposite: what is wrong with supporting this Bill? I cannot see how they could vote against it. It is not as if anything significant is holding them back. I

can accept the argument that there should be consistency. However, the general public's view would be that that argument does not hold water. The general public is very supportive of this move. I do not believe that anyone could raise legitimate arguments in opposition to the shadow Minister's Bill. I would like to hear what Government members believe. However, there are no Government speakers on the list, just Opposition members—although it appears that the member for Fitzroy will speak to the Bill. I appreciate that.

Mr Healy: He's an RSL man.

Mr HOBBS: He is a returned serviceman. We would appreciate his telling us his views about how this will impact on people. I cannot see an argument against it.

This amendment Bill allows a certain amount of flexibility in that alcohol can be sold for consumption on a premises when it is consumed as part of a meal between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. at special functions. So there is a small exception for people attending a special function. However, we do not want to see grog flowing freely in cabaret venues and other places. We do not believe that people need to have that option. This is one day of the year when we think some restraint should be shown. As far as I am aware, the RSLs support this legislation. I suppose a few of them might not. However, I understand the majority of them support it. I do not see why we cannot do something about this issue in the House.

Mr Healy interjected.

Mr HOBBS: As the shadow Minister pointed out, at its last annual conference the Local Government Association also supported this change. Nearly 1,000 members from local governments debated many issues over several days, and this was one of them.

Mr McGrady: There was nowhere near 1,000 delegates.

Mr HOBBS: Delegates and observers. The conference debated the issue and there was—

Mr Healy: Overwhelming support.

Mr HOBBS:—overwhelming support for it. I find it difficult to find reasons why there should be any opposition to this Bill. My family have been great supporters of the Returned & Services League. My sister Angela won the Girl in a Million Quest in 1966. We had a very active RSL branch in our home town and the members convinced her to enter the quest. We have had a close association with not only the club but also the people and the movement behind it. That has been a wonderful experience for me. I was only a young fellow at the time and—

Mr Healy: Not long ago.

Mr HOBBS: That is right; it was not long ago. During the call-up period, I spent some time at the 49th Royal Queensland Regiment. That gave me a bit of an insight into the digger's attitudes. Although I did not go to Vietnam, I still had a good insight into how the diggers felt, and that has given me a close association with the issue. This is not a party political issue. We cannot say, "The Labor members are voting this way and the conservatives are voting that way." I do not understand why some sort of a compromise cannot be reached on this issue. Members opposite should be able to work out something. No honourable member opposite would want to have any early morning parade disrupted by drunks. The police cannot be everywhere at once. They have enough on their plate at present as it is. For example, on the Gold Coast it is very difficult for the police to control the public the whole time. They do their very best. I take my hat off to them; they do a fantastic job. However, there are times when they cannot be everywhere at once. That has been proven in the past. Let us hope that it is not proven next year.

In conclusion, I urge members opposite to consider some way around this so that a reasonable compromise can be reached and everybody will feel reassured that RSL members—the diggers—will have a good day.

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (9.06 p.m.): Tonight I rise in support of the Liquor Amendment Bill because it is a worthy and right Bill and there is potential for good to come from its being passed. Anzac Day is an Australian institution. It is a day when families share a common interest and when the living generations come together to remember the unimaginable sacrifices our men and women made in years gone by so that we can live in this country in the manner that we do. No, there might not be many instances of drunks disrupting a dawn service, but there are definitely more today than there were 10 years ago and there are probably not as many today as there will be in 10 years' time. But why should there be any?

As the member for Hervey Bay stated, Queensland is on the move and everything is changing. It was not long ago that no shops opened after 5 p.m.. There was a time when pubs and clubs shut earlier than they do now. But we progress, and progression is a good thing. With progress comes change. People

being people, there is an element that does not change for the better. No, we cannot stop people drinking. But on one night a year we can encourage them to go home early or perhaps to go to a private party. But at least private parties are usually located in private residences. All throughout history decisions have been made. Some are right and some are wrong. Sometimes, time alone reveals how grave these decisions are. There comes a time when all of us must look at decisions we have made and ask, "Is it right or is it wrong?" There are times when we must change. There are times when we must say, "This is wrong. We can change it and we must change it." There is no shame in changing our mind on an issue, but there is shame in letting something go on when we could have changed it. There is shame in being led by the nose when we know that it is contrary to our belief. This is an issue on which a conscience vote could be granted. It is an issue that is relevant to every Australian—every mum and dad and girl and boy—who feels and remembers the Anzacs.

It is well documented that Anzac Day attendances have risen quite considerably over the past 10 years. The few hours that we are talking about are not a very big thing, not compared with a power station extension at Tarong. They are not a big thing compared with 400 jobs at the South Burnett meatworks. They are not a big thing in comparison to the unemployment figures in the Wide Bay region and not a big thing in relation to coming to a workable agreement with respect to the RFA. But this could very well be one of those little things that niggles at people's minds. And who knows? We all know how aggravating a little thing can be. It is often stated in respect of relationships that it is not the big issues that break up a marriage but the little things.

I have trouble with Labor's stance on this Bill. I know there are members opposite who believe strongly in this Bill and would support it. I also know that it cuts those members to the quick to have to oppose it.

I did quite a lot of impromptu polling of people throughout the electorate. The responses I received were, "I wouldn't have a problem with that." "I can't see anyone being too unhappy by just a few hours." "It's not much to ask when they did so much for us, is it?" So it would seem the only people who have a problem are the members opposite. Yes, we must progress, but at what cost to society, at what cost to families? Our Governments have taught us to be selfish. Our Governments have taught us that we must progress—and well we must. However, we do not have to sacrifice respect and tradition in the process as we become driven by greed.

I have seen greed slowly destroying our society, encouraging our drinkers to drink more and enticing our gamblers to gamble more. Take, take, take and keep on taking till the people who cannot stop themselves have nothing left. Take and take until our children are left sitting outside casinos, till people can no longer feed their families and need food vouchers from our charitable organisations just to survive. Take and keep taking until the charitable organisations no longer have enough to go around because greed has left nothing to give. Everybody takes because the boundaries of decency and responsibility have been stretched and twisted until nobody knows what is right and wrong any more. No-one knows where their responsibilities lie. No-one accepts that they themselves are responsible and they must start somewhere to take control of their own lives. They must stop taking and start to give back.

This is a Bill that can give something back to society. This is a Bill that can put our priorities back on course in a very small way. It is a small step to pass a Bill which pays due homage to the heroes of this country. Heroes are in short supply—and I am talking about real heroes, not sporting heroes. Sporting heroes change yearly, if not daily—not that I belittle their endeavours for I would love to have their determination to achieve. But when I speak of heroes, I am talking about real heroes: those prepared to die for their beliefs, prepared to die for family, friends or country—people of immense courage.

I would like to draw a picture—a fairly old picture but one which will never be forgotten and should never be forgotten. These are my heroes. I make no apologies for being emotional because these heroes—true heroes—make people emotional. The first person I would like to talk about is Private William Erskine. He held his rifle high above his head, he jumped into the darkness and felt the cold salty water of the sea engulf him. He struggled towards the shore, hearing the splashing, the suppressed oaths of others who jumped into the sea with him and the cries of pain of those he knew he would not see again. He felt the dry sand of the beach against his face as he threw himself down to gain what little protection he could from bullets that coursed through the air. He heard the dull thud as one was stopped by the man beside him. This was his introduction to Gallipoli.

For 12 weeks Private Frank Llewellyn marched day after rainy day across the fertile

fields of France in mud-filled boots with feet covered in blisters that festered. He thanked God for the rare sunny days that caused his greatcoat to steam as it dried and the nights when he had shelter in a bombed-out barn. He thanked God when the meal he lined up for was actually there and he thanked God when the drink he lined up for each night was, in fact, tea and not just hot water. His arrival in France was his first experience of war, but in those first 12 weeks he only heard, but never saw, the enemy.

Private Colin Lander spent a lot of his time trying to survive not on the battlefield but as a prisoner of war in Changi. He saw just as many suffer and die in Changi as did those on the battlefields. Each and every one of us know a Private William Erskine, a Private Frank Llewellyn or a Private Colin Lander. They are our brothers, our fathers, our uncles, our sons. Private Erskine came home from Gallipoli and suffered his private hell in solitude. Private Llewellyn kept a daily entry in his spiral backed notebook. For 12 weeks he saw no action, and finally the word came and he went forward in darkness to do battle. The shelling was heavy that night and he did not write in his notebook again. He did not come home. Private Colin Lander returned home emaciated, unable to walk unaided from the ship that carried him home, but he was determined not to have those who had come to meet him see him being carried off.

But what about the women? Nurse Molly—for that is how the wounded and dying knew her—was there to dress their wounds and hear their cries. When the young soldier at death's door called for his mother, she held him as life left him and was his mother. When the seasoned soldier in his last moments called for his wife, Nurse Molly became that wife and shed the tears. Young Connie X never saw the battlefields of war. She worked in intelligence, deciphering the messages and breaking the codes that were intercepted. Connie knew that the success of her efforts and many others would bring an end to the suffering, would bring an end to the war.

There have been many wars. The men and women of the Vietnam, Iraqi and other combat zones will gradually take the places of those of earlier wars. There are men, women and children suffering the horrors of war as we stand here tonight. Their countries are being torn apart, their families scattered or lost, their lives scarred. War is raging all over the planet, threatening to spill out into neighbouring countries. Just to our north in Timor is one such example. Let us pray that our young men and women do not have to display the courage of the Anzacs once again.

We did not come here tonight to glorify war, for there is no glory in what these men and women have endured. What we do tonight is acknowledge that these individuals went forth knowing that they may never see their families and countries again. They risked all in wars they did not start but were prepared to help stop. All of us here acknowledge their courage. We are here remembering tonight. We all honour the Anzacs—honour all who have fought in all wars, for they have given each and every one of us the greatest gift at the highest of prices.

What we should not be doing is debating this Bill. We should not have let this happen. That we could not have passed this Bill without debate is shameful. I ask all honourable members to just listen for a moment. Just take a second, be quiet and just listen. What they hear is peace. That is what those men and women gave us. What this Bill endeavours to give to those men and women is what they gave us—peace. They gave peace for generations born after them. Why is it so hard for us to give them peace for a few hours on the day when all generations join together to remember, to honour them? Lest we forget.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (9.16 p.m.): I have thought long and hard about making a contribution to this debate. As a returned serviceman, I am not one for talking up my active service or any other role that I have played while I was in national service. However, I felt that I should say something during this debate. With a very humble background, I am not recognised in this House as a good speaker, but I can say that when I do rise to speak, I speak from my heart. The things that I will be saying in this debate are from the heart and are spoken with sincerity.

First, I wish to correct a claim that I made in this place during an earlier debate on the same issue. Honourable members may recall that I claimed to be the only returned serviceman in the Parliament of Queensland. I have since been made aware that there is actually another Vietnam vet who is a member here. I respect his right to his privacy and to keep that active service to himself. I apologise to the House for making that claim about being the only member to serve in South Vietnam. I was not aware of that fact at the time. In fact, I think it is great that we do have a second member in this Parliament who has served his country.

In over 40 years of attending the Anzac Day services—in the last 10 years as a local

member doing two, three and four services on the day—I have to tell honourable members that I have never ever seen a service disrupted by any member of the public. Never have I seen a service disrupted by any one or any thing other than by, I have to say, people such as myself. We go to the dawn service, we have a few little rum and milks—a few drinks—the day starts to roll on and we start to enjoy ourselves. I said this here before the last time I spoke and some idiot from the media took an opportunity to misquote me and take the whole thing out of context.

I have stood at the morning service, in particular, after the dawn service after we have had brekkie and I have had to chip some of my mates. I probably have been chipped, too, because I have been having a good time. It is my day; I am going to enjoy myself. We have had to be chipped, but it is not because we were disrespectful; we just forgot where we were at the time. We have our mates there, we are talking about times of the past and how things are, and we just forget. With a little bit of pulling back into line, everybody falls back into the respectful part of the service. That is the honesty of it. That would be about the only way that I have seen a service disrupted: through people like me having a bloody good time and standing there and just forgetting where I am. We mean no disrespect to the service, no disrespect to the diggers of the world wars that have been before us; we were just having a good time.

Sadly, the Opposition has turned this debate into a farce. To me, this debate is an embarrassment. We have politicians in this place who are prepared to turn a non-existent problem into a political issue in the hope that they will hit on the emotions of every Queensland citizen who has respect for Anzac Day, the diggers who gave their lives, the diggers who still suffer from the effects of war and their families and communities. There are former prisoners of war who still suffer.

The Anzac Day trading hours issue is a cheap stunt. Every member who has spoken in this place has talked about what Anzac Day means to them and their families. I believe that they have been sincere about their personal feelings, about how they feel about Anzac Day, and I respect that. Every person on both sides of the House respects the feelings of others here. There is something wrong with us if we do not. I do not think anybody in this place should question the sincerity of anybody else in this place in relation to how they feel about Anzac Day.

The member for Gregory is not a member of the same party as I am, but his electorate adjoins mine. We talk on a regular basis and I consider myself a pretty good friend. Since I have known Vaughan, I do not think a year has gone by in which he has not contacted me in the days leading up to Long Tan Day and wished me all the best. That is how he feels. He is fair dinkum, he is sincere and I appreciate those calls that he gives me.

As I said, every member in this place respects Anzac Day, but I believe that the need on the part of some to turn Anzac Day into a political stunt is a disgrace, because there is no issue. Some members are drumming up something that does not exist. It is an embarrassment to me to sit here and listen to some of the arguments that have been put forward to try to justify the position that the Opposition is taking. It is obscene, because there is no issue.

The Minister mentioned the amendments made to the Liquor Act in the 1960s or 1970s. He told the House that the Returned & Services League of Australia—the representative body of the returned members of the armed forces in this country—had an input into the legislative changes. It had the opportunity to raise the matters we are discussing in this debate. Over the years the RSL had plenty of opportunities to seek changes if it felt that Anzac Day services were not getting the respect that they so rightly deserve. The RSL clubs can set an example, if an example needs to be set, by closing their own doors.

It is 84 years since the first Anzac Day service and we have had 34 years of conservative Government since World War II. In that time there has been one reported incident—at Surfers Paradise. The then Premier felt at the time that it was not an issue. Did he go to the police? I cannot recall him going to the police. When he was in the box seat, as the Premier, did he seek to change the legislation? He was in the right place to get it done as quickly as possible. Did he seek to change the legislation to restrict trading hours? No. Was there an outcry from the RSL movement? No. Were there calls from the public for legislative change? No, because it was an isolated incident. There was no call for change. There should be no politically-driven emotional push for change in this place at this time.

If we look at restricting trading hours for hotels and nightclubs, we should look at locking bar fridges, stopping the sale of takeaway and stopping people from having

parties in the lead-up to Anzac Day morning. That is what those opposite are talking about, because people are going to enjoy themselves and have a few drinks. It does not matter whether they are out in the city, out at a barbecue or whatever. If they are going home at that hour of the day, they are still in a position to cause trouble, but they do not because the majority of Australian citizens respect Anzac Day for what it is.

This debate is a sham. It is a political stunt and it is members playing politics. Since this debate started I have had not one person contact me asking me to support this legislation. I have spoken to a number of other members and they have said that they have had no-one contact their office in relation to this matter. I have had no RSL contact my office asking me to support this legislation. I cannot see where the issue is. As far as I am concerned it is a non-event.

As an ex-serviceman, I can assure members—members know that I can get pretty angry at times—that if I thought Anzac Day services were under threat from disrespectful drunks I would be the first person into this place to try to do something about it and I would fight all the way. I would want change because there would be a fair dinkum reason to demand change.

Some of the things said by members on the other side of the House are a bit of a joke. There has been one registered complaint in 84 years, and here we have an outpouring of emotions and a call for changes to be made to the liquor laws. For years when those opposite were in Government they refused to pass legislation in relation to this issue. They had the opportunity to legalise two-up, for example. Police were required to turn a blind eye to people breaking the law. Those opposite let that happen because they respected Anzac Day for what it is.

One of the greatest shams of this debate that has come to light is the hypocrisy of the conservatives in this place. They stand here attempting to shame the Government into accepting this unnecessary legislation because they pretend to want to ensure respect for Anzac Day, yet they fail to do the decent thing in maintaining support for our returned servicemen and women and their families, who did the right thing for us. Some did not return and some who did return still suffer.

Those opposite allowed their own constituency—small businesses in Queensland—who were party to a 1965 agreement with the Government, to welsh on a deal that they made when they were in Government some 34 years ago. Members might recall: before 1965 Anzac Day was a closed day in Queensland. No theatres, hotels, clubs, sporting venues or stores were allowed to operate. The day was the most solemn in the annual holiday calendar for Queensland.

In 1965, the conservative State Government agreed to allow afternoon trading on the understanding that businesses would support an annual appeal from their trading profits. The businesses allowed to trade under the agreement were supposed to make voluntary donations to help the widows, the families and the organisations that were out there looking after returned servicemen and women—the very people those opposite call on us to respect.

Mr Healy: With bipartisan support.

Mr PEARCE: That is right. The Government of the day legislated to have proceeds from racing, hotels and other sanctioned activities go to an Anzac Day trust fund. That was great. I think that was a good thing to do. However, the Act did not require businesses which trade on Anzac Day to make donations. The agreement was made in good faith. What has happened to that agreement? All but about 200 Queensland businesses are not honouring that deal. More than 2,000 small businesses are not contributing to what was set up to look after the families of ex-servicemen. These are the constituents of members opposite, but what are they doing about this to make sure that those people contribute? I have spoken about that in this place before.

Mr Healy interjected.

Mr PEARCE: The member has a small business constituency, and he has allowed them to get away with this for years. One has only to look at some of the figures. In 1989-90, $13,970 came into the fund from small business. In 1991, the figure was $13,800; in 1991-92, $11,000; and in 1992-93, $12,000. In 1995-96, $761,000 went into the trust. Only $11,000 of that came from voluntary contributions. It is those people out there to whom members opposite gave the opportunity to trade who are supposed to be giving money to organisations that look after returned servicemen and women and their families and all those widows who need help. But they are not doing it.

How fair dinkum are Opposition members if they are trying to pull at the emotions of Queenslanders and trying to force this Government into changing trading hours, which they implemented, when they do not have the courage to go out there and talk to

small businesses and say to them, "Contribute to this organisation, because that was part of the agreement"? This whole issue is about getting into the gutter to score political points. It is about self-interest ahead of a sincere and genuine concern about our most solemn day, when we remember so many people who made the supreme sacrifice and those who still suffer today—their families and all those other people who care about them.

The other alarming aspect of this debate and the arguments that have been put forward by members opposite is that it was the conservative Government in the 1970s that extended trading hours for hotels and other entertainment venues—in the 1970s; 30 years ago. No-one, until 1998, has had reason to raise the matter of extended trading hours for licensed hotels and clubs; there has been no reason to, because Australians—young and old—respect Anzac Day for what it is. But after one isolated incident—a media stunt, a media opportunity—the Opposition, which has no direction, is wasting the time of this Parliament on an issue that does not exist. Opposition members are making it up. They are pulling at people's emotions because they want to try to score cheap political points.

The Opposition, the Nationals, the Liberals and others have disgraced themselves on this issue in their creation of the perception that our young Australians are drunks and disgraceful and disrespectful to our diggers and their families and those in the community who attend Anzac Day services. They want to close down their entertainment venues—a lifestyle that they enjoy and which was fought for and won by our diggers. If those members are fair dinkum, they should be out there talking to small businesspeople and getting them to contribute to a fund which was set up to look after returned servicemen and their families.

There is one other thing that I am going to put to members opposite before I close, and if they are fair dinkum they will support me on this one, too. Members may not be aware of this—and the figures may not be 100% correct, but I think that I am pretty accurate—but there are only about 50 World War I veterans still alive today. World War I, or the Great War as it was known, was falsely predicted to be the war to end all wars. Fifty of the 333,000 young Australian volunteers who went abroad to fight at Gallipoli and in the battlefields of the Middle East and in France are still alive. More than 60,000 died and more than one third of the rest were wounded. Of those World War I heroes, I believe—and I could be proved wrong—only three veterans from Gallipoli remain alive today.

If members opposite want to show respect for those people, I put this to them. A constituent of mine by the name of Neville Thring was right when he said to me recently, "With the inevitable passing of those veterans, another chapter in the history of Australia will close." I want to see Australian Governments prepare now for what will be a sad day for all Australians, that is, the day when we lose our very last Gallipoli digger.

On the day of that funeral, all Australians should be asked to observe and respect one minute's silence. The Australian flag should be lowered at half mast with the playing of the last post across the airways of Australian radio and the ringing of church bells across the nation. That should be a special day—a day in which members opposite are trying to tell me they believe, respect and trust. It should be a special day, a day that has the support of all people, a day when we say "goodbye and thank you" to those who fought at Gallipoli—the place that inspired the spirit of the Anzacs, and that spirit will linger with us all.

I urge our Premier, other Premiers and the Prime Minister to move now and put in place plans for the day when, unfortunately, we will lose our last Gallipoli veteran and he is buried. Let him go. Let that man go with the knowledge that all Australians will remember him and those who went before him.

Members, this debate is a farce. As a returned serviceman, I am embarrassed by some of the things that have been put up. I know that Opposition members are sincere in the respect that they have for Anzac Day, for the diggers and what it means. But they are trying to force this Government to support legislation when there is no need to change legislation, because the issue does not exist. Amongst the public to whom I have spoken—and I have gone out of my way to do so- I have not had anybody say to me, "Jim Pearce, I want you to get up in the Parliament and support that legislation."

Time expired.

Hon. B. G. LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs—NPA) (9.36 p.m.): In rising to support this Bill proposed by the member for Toowoomba North, I see this debate as a comparison between two things. The Bill is calling for a little bit of self-denial from we of the here and now because we think that we should give full respect to those people about whom the member for Fitzroy spoke—those who made the supreme sacrifice and those who are still suffering. I bring the debate down

to that issue: we are calling for a bit of self-denial on one day of the year because we think that we owe it to the nation and to those people to make sure that we pay due respect on Anzac Day.

I want to give members some sort of an explanation of why I am speaking tonight. I have been alive long enough, I think, to have grown up in an era of self-discipline and conformity. I suppose that is the sort of thing that the British Empire was built on; that if you were not quite normal, you had to go and make yourself normal and fit in with the group. And you might have thought that was a bit tough, but it did you a lot of good and you ended up realising that, for the common good, you had to change your ways a little bit. Since then, the psychologists of the world and all those people who are studying human thought and human behaviour have got us to the "me" era. The member for Fitzroy was talking about an Act in 1995, which was part of the way down the track, when we thought that we could be respectful for half a day and then do some trading. As a society, we went along with that because we had come to accept that sort of thing. But we have gone further into the "me" era, when everything is for "me".

I am speaking today because I sense what people out there are thinking. People came to me when they heard about the incident on the Gold Coast. They thought it was a bit over the top and they said, "Surely, these people who have access to liquor outlets until the wee hours of the morning can show just a little bit of self-denial on this one occasion. We have a pretty free and easy sort of a lifestyle, but on this one occasion surely we can show a bit of self-denial and due respect for that specific day."

I thought about this for a while before I spoke tonight. I thought about the way that things have changed since I was a kid. I lived in the country, and we did not get to town for Anzac Day. But we eventually went to live in Chinchilla, and I saw my first Anzac Day parade in the fifties. It was still close enough to the end of World War II for there to be a bit of open emotion. I did not miss too many marches. I marched with the local State school and watched the parades go by. I think I recognised that there were blokes marching in those parades who could be my uncle or the next-door neighbour or the butcher. They were just ordinary Joes around town, and I knew them. But when they all stood there together and the band started to play and they swung off down the street in ranks of three or four, it was something special. That was my first impression. Thinking back, I can see that we became a bit blase during the 1960s and 1970s. That was a time when only returned servicemen, the boy scouts and a few other people turned up. It was a voluntary matter for the schools and a couple of students turned up. Thankfully, through the late 1980s and into the 1990s we saw something of a resurgence.

I have two memories that I can share with honourable members. The Dalby Agricultural College has some 160 students—all boys of 18 or 19 years of age; the same age as those blokes who went off to the various theatres of war around the world. The students took part in the street parade in Dalby. They were wearing R. M. Williams boots, white moleskin trousers, plaited kangaroo hide belts, Akubra hats, and please yourself with the shirt. However, it was a uniform.

My memory went back to the Coo-ee March where men marched from rural New South Wales to Sydney, recruiting as they went. A re-enactment of that march occurred on the Darling Downs a short time ago. While I watched the march in Dalby, I thought to myself, "These young fellows have got something here." They were keeping alive the memory of what our servicemen were all about when they were prepared to go overseas and serve their country.

More recently, I have been impressed with the school cadet corps at Chinchilla. Cadet corps are voluntary these days. We all went through the cadets at school, whether they be Army cadets or Air Force cadets. We had to polish our boots, and that sort of thing, and I must say that I did not like it very much. I watched the way these kids presented themselves in Chinchilla. They presented themselves on the parade ground with pride and I was impressed with their movements around the cenotaph.

A change is occurring. People are prepared to put aside the "me" attitude and be part and parcel of the national spirit. I believe that there are people in our community who do not think it is unreasonable to support the Bill which has been introduced by the member for Toowoomba North. I believe that we can ask for a little bit of self-denial. We gain something by acting collectively. People in the trade union movement say that, on their own, they are nothing, but collectively they are a strong force. That applies to our nation as well.

There are people in our community who think it is indecent that some young people, who are probably having a good time, can do such things at an Anzac Day ceremony on the Gold Coast. People in my part of the world have said to me, "That should not happen." It

is obvious that these young people were thoughtless. I believe that we can ask the Minister to amend the Liquor Act to allow a little bit of self-denial on this one day—a day that has established the character of Australians.

We are asking people to pay respect to those who paid the supreme sacrifice, to those who are still suffering, and to the families who are left. I am not here to score political points. I can understand the various points of view that have been put forward tonight. I can also remember some of the emotional speeches that were made by honourable members when we last debated this Bill. I did not contribute on the last occasion, but I have thought long and hard about the matter. I am prepared to stand up tonight and say that I think that the attitude of our young people has changed. They are more conservative these days. To some degree, they are putting aside the "me" attitude and they recognise that strength can be gained by being part of the community.

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA) (9.43 p.m.): I rise to have a quiet talk on the Liquor Amendment Bill. I will not take much longer than the member for Western Downs. I support the private member's Bill introduced by the member for Toowoomba North—not for political reasons, but simply because I live on the Gold Coast. I have to say to the honourable member for Fitzroy, whom I notice has left the Chamber, that people on the Gold Coast do not always act as responsibly as do other country people in Queensland. Sadly, I have to admit that. I represent the electorate of Southport and we do have some undesirables on the beachfront. I know that this occurs in every city, but we have our fair share of them.

I believe that the Liquor Amendment Bill introduced by the member for Toowoomba North is trying to suppress the mugs and the fools that we have in our community. On 25 April, we celebrate a very special day in the history of our quest for peace, justice and equality. As the member for Western Downs said, we all take an active part in the various ceremonies. At the Southport RSL we find that the crowds are increasing.

As the member for Western Downs said, for some time interest in Anzac Day seemed to be slipping away. The situation has changed on the Gold Coast. Some days prior to Anzac Day the school students march to Anzac Park to lay wreaths. Some 1,000 students take part and they are all warming up to Anzac Day. They are learning why those men and women went off to war. They know that they came back, but they were afflicted in some way—we see them all the time—and the students are learning why these people made such great sacrifices.

I had a couple of mates—one was a regular and one was a national serviceman—with whom I played football. They did not come back. When I was younger, I found it very hard to come to terms with that. When the Vietnam War veterans returned to Australia they were spat upon and urinated upon. It is no wonder that it has taken 20 or 30 years for them to settle down—if one could call it settling down. I am great mates with the majority of these fellows because I am in the same age group.

I get up every Anzac Day morning, have a shower, and get out there. I have been doing it for 13 years. I did it when I was in Beaudesert, and I am still doing it at Southport. One simply has to go there and feel it. People are starting to do that.

I have broken the law, too, Minister, on most of these occasions. I have drunk plenty of rum and coffee on those mornings. I do not drink coffee now because I am on a diet—I just thought I would get that across. I am not going to have rum in my tea, so I will be just having plain straight rum, probably. I have shouted a 90-litre keg, but I have been outdone by a fellow called Mr Fankhauser who bought all the one-litre bottles of Bundy rum at the Southport RSL. He is the late Mr Fankhauser now. His son has stepped into the breach. It is all part of getting together and remembering one's mates.

As the honourable member for Fitzroy said, the veterans get together and they just want to remember the good times. It is impossible to get them to talk about the bad times. We have blokes who had been in Changi. Wally Row is 85 years of age and he drinks rum with the best of them. He has never had a heart problem. He said to me, "It's easy, son. I can tell you why. For four years I had water and rice. It's the best thing. My arteries are clean. I am a surfer now." He is surfboard riding these days. These men just look to enjoy the sorts of things in life that we take for granted.

This is what Anzac Day is about—the young people, the mums and dads who march at 8 o'clock in the morning, those who stand there with their flags, their flowers, with their kids on their shoulders, or those who stand there clapping. That is Anzac Day—remembering the people who served and those who did not come home. We want to keep those traditions.

I am not going to get into the politics of the whole darned thing. As I said, I had a couple of mates who did not come back. I would not be speaking if I was not serious about this issue. I would not be bothered talking. These days, I do not have to talk; I am a junior backbencher. I do not have to muck around with it. I am treated almost like Russell Cooper; they have already got me in the retirement village. I am speaking because I am serious about this issue.

In contrast to the honourable member for Fitzroy, I have been asked by members of the RSL and some of those Vietnam vets to get up and tell members that they do not want any mugs or louts interrupting the Anzac Day dawn service. It may be, as the member for Western Downs said, that those people can sacrifice their drinking from midnight until the next morning. However, some of us will break the law and we will have our rum and cokes. I do not know how the Minister will get around that.

I was the shadow Minister for Tourism prior to the member for Toowoomba North holding that position. I do not know how one can condone breaking the law. It is a tradition for people to drink rum and coffee and play two-up on Anzac Day. If people are hooting and hollering and having a great time and they are not upsetting anyone, I do not know how we can stop it. The boys at the Southport RSL said, "Just support the legislation and hope Gibbsy says 'yes'." That is all I can ask for.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (9.51 p.m.): Tonight I take the opportunity to join in this debate. It has been a long debate and it has been a very emotional debate. At the outset, I state that I do not have any family members connected with Anzac Day, so I do not have the emotional attachment to Anzac Day that some of the other members have displayed in this Chamber during the course of this debate. I respect the emotion that has been displayed. I think for everybody it is an emotional debate.

Although I do not have that emotional attachment directly through family members, as part of my role in this job and before I had this job in other community leadership roles I have attended a lot of Anzac Day services and I am more than familiar with many of the RSL clubs in the rural communities in my electorate. I do not think that any of them would suggest that the problem of a disruption to services in those rural communities is very real. I do not think that anyone would suggest that there are statistics or that we should look for statistics about how many times the services have been disrupted or how many times incidents have been reported to the police. I think that the nature of these rural communities is that, if such a thing happened, they would sort it out fairly smartly themselves. Anyone who dared to transgress in that manner would feel the full wrath of the community and they would get sorted out pretty quickly, especially on an occasion such as an Anzac Day service.

However, what concerns those people—and I speak here tonight on their behalf—is the very thought of it happening, or the potential for it to happen. It is not an argument about how many incidents have occurred or what the police can do to prevent it from happening; it is the very thought of it happening, or the potential for it to happen, that makes people angry. That is a potential that has probably developed of late. It is not something that has been around for the past 80 years since Anzac Day services have been held. The development of the nightclub culture—and I use that term because I cannot think of a better one—or the idea that young people need to stay out at nightclubs until three or four o'clock in the morning is a recent development. It has arisen in particular parts of the State only in recent years. It has probably coincided with an increase in respect for Anzac Day, which has been referred to by many members. That is something that is common to all parts of the State, not just to those people who live in areas where these types of incidents are more likely to occur.

While people feel that increased respect for Anzac Day, they react even more strongly to the very thought that those services may be disrupted. I am pleased that the Minister is listening now, because he was not listening before when I made the point. It is not the statistics that are important; it is the thought of the services being disrupted and it is the potential for them to be disrupted that makes people angry. It has become more likely since the development of the nightclub culture, which has arisen in conjunction with an increase in respect for Anzac Day. I know that I am repeating myself, but I said it again for Minister's benefit because he was not listening when I said it the first time.

As I have said, this has been a very emotional debate. Although that is understandable, the debate has strayed somewhat from the core issue and it is probably as well that we remind ourselves just what we are debating. Some members have made the point that we should not be debating who has the most respect for Anzac Day. We all share the same respect. The member for Barron River said that nobody has a mortgage on the way we feel about Anzac Day, and that is very true. We should

remember what we are debating. With due respect to some of the other members who have spoken, I think that they lost sight of that—possibly because it is such an emotional subject. We are debating the Liquor Amendment Bill 1999, which seeks to amend the Liquor Act 1992 by replacing section 9(3), which relates to the trading hours on the eve of Anzac Day. It is proposed that liquor licences, including on-premises or cabaret licences, cease at midnight on the day prior to Anzac Day rather than at three o'clock, or four o'clock, or whatever other time.

The question that has been posed over and over again by speakers on this side of the House—and it has not been answered by the members opposite—is: what is wrong with that? What is the downside? Why not do it? Nobody has stood up and tried to justify or explain logically what is wrong with it. Why not do it? Why turn it into a political stand-off? What is the problem? That is really the issue. As I said at the outset, as somebody who does not really have any emotional connection with the subject, I am struggling to understand that point.

As I have sat in this Chamber and listened to the debate, which has gone on now for some time, it has been particularly noticeable to me that the majority of the members on the other side of the House do not have any great commitment to the course of action that they are pursuing. We have seen from the members opposite some impassioned performances about Anzac Day. In some instances, they were particularly good. However, there has been no commitment from them as to what this legislation is about. Nobody has been prepared to argue the crux of the matter. In fact, the body language and facial expressions of some of the members opposite on the backbench would lead me to assume that they have been, to say the least, press-ganged into this. I do not think that anybody opposite is terribly comfortable with it. I think the vibes that are coming from the Government side indicate that this is not a particularly positive or particularly well-accepted course of action.

This raises the question: what is the Minister's position? I hope that when he sums up this debate that he makes an effort to address the crux of the matter, which is: what is wrong with the proposal? As some members have said, it will not be the be-all and end-all. It will not cure every ill. It will not completely remove the potential for this sort of incident to occur. It has been said that revellers could come from private parties, and so they could. It has been said that people could buy liquor at takeaway stores the day before, and so they could. However, this particular proposition removes one source of potential disruption. No-one is suggesting that it will completely solve the problem. In the course of all the addresses that have been given by members on this side of the House, no-one has suggested that it is the be-all and end-all. No-one has suggested that it will preserve forever the solemnity and respect that we all want to see shown on Anzac Day. However, it will not do any harm either, so what is the downside? What is the reason for the Government's opposition to this Bill?

I say to the Minister, before he leaves the Chamber, that when he sums up at the end of the date, he addresses that issue.

Mr Gibbs: You don't understand Standing Orders. I don't get to sum up. You're spokesman gets to sum up.

Mr SEENEY: I apologise for that. You get that when you are new at a job.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): I remind the member for Callide to speak through the Chair.

Mr SEENEY: I apologise—through the Chair.

Ms Spence: Stop saying you're sorry.

Mr SEENEY: I am sorry if I put too much pressure on the Minister.

Mr Healy interjected.

Mr SEENEY: I am sure that, as the member for Toowoomba North has indicated, he will reinforce these points when he sums up the debate.

It is a shame that nobody from the other side of the House has taken the opportunity to address the crux of the matter. My good friend the member for Logan is sitting over there. Perhaps he may take the opportunity to do so. He is one of the better exponents on the other side of the House of the art of oratory. With his grasp of logic, he may take the opportunity to address the crux of the legislation, which has been ignored by every other speaker from his side of the House. I welcome the member for Rockhampton into the House, because I remember well the contribution that he made to the debate.

Ms Spence: It was the best one.

Mr SEENEY: I was going to say that it was a good contribution. The member for Rockhampton said very little that I disagreed with. However, like so many other Government speakers, he did not address what the Bill is about. He talked about addressing the reasons for this type of behaviour. That is

absolutely right, but what is the downside to the proposition? Why can we not do both things together? Why can we not address the reasons for the behaviour, as the member for Rockhampton quite rightly suggested in his contribution to the debate, and, at the same time, accept the change that is proposed by the legislation? Why not do both things together? No effort has been made to outline the downside of the proposition.

Mr Schwarten: I said that in my contribution. I said if I thought it would solve the problem, I'd do it.

Mr SEENEY: Before the member came into the Chamber I indicated t that nobody is suggesting that this is the absolute solution, but it is a step in the right direction. It removes a potential in one particular area. We concede absolutely that there is potential for the problem to be created by other factors. That is absolutely right. However, what is the problem with removing the potential in this particular area, which can be done so easily, at so little cost and with so little downside?

Mr Schwarten: I actually don't think that's right. That's where you and I differ, but I respect your views.

Mr SEENEY: We will agree to differ.

Mr Cooper: Three apologies in a minute.

Mr SEENEY: No, this is a serious issue and, probably for one of the very few times ever, I agree with the member. I reinforce what the member said in his contribution to the debate.

I do not think that we should turn this debate into a political slanging match. The member for Rockhampton and I know that we can both handle ourselves in a political slinging match. We could have a political slinging match about this issue, as we do on a number of other issues. That is fair enough, because this is a place of robust debate. The member for Fitzroy made the point, and I agree, that this should not be a political issue. He was dead right. It should not be a political issue. In a lot of respects, what the member said about the debate being turned into a political farce is right. However, it has been turned into a political farce by the stubbornness and the intransigence of the other side of the House.

No attempt has been made by members opposite to address the crux of the issue. No attempt has been made to address the issue logically and the issue is: what is the problem with agreeing with the Bill? It is fair enough that members may say that it might not solve all the problems. It is fair enough that members may say that it is not a perfect solution. However, it will remove the potential for this problem to be generated by one source. It will not take away the potential for it to be generated by every source, but it will reduce the problem.

Mr Schwarten: No. I thought I did. This is where you and I disagree.

Mr SEENEY: Okay. The legislation will address what everybody knows the public perceives as a problem. There is a groundswell of support for the legislation. There is a groundswell of public disgust at the thought that Anzac Day ceremonies are disrupted. There is a groundswell of public concern at the potential for ceremonies to be disrupted by a very small number of people.

I take this opportunity to place on record my admiration for the increase in the Anzac spirit, which I think has been illustrated by the debate tonight. The depth of feeling and the emotion conveyed by many participants in the debate is a reflection of the increase in the Anzac spirit within the wider community. That is illustrated in many ways. It is important that, while we talk about a problem that is being caused by a small number of young people, we also acknowledge that there is a much larger body of young people who have very great respect for Anzac Day. Not only that, those young people are participating in the whole Anzac tradition in increasing numbers.

Mr Schwarten: Ninety-nine per cent.

Mr SEENEY: That is absolutely right. The member and I have never agreed so much before.

A good illustration of this point is the cadets from the small community of Monto, where I come from. A couple of years ago when I had another role, a group of people came to the shire council with a proposal to form a cadet unit. I said, "Yeah, it will probably last a couple of months." Anyway, we gave them a bit of assistance and they set up the cadet unit. It has been an outstanding success. I will not try to quote the figures because I will get them wrong, but at some time or another a large percentage of the young people of the relevant age group from the district have been members of the cadet unit. Quite a number of young people who joined the cadet unit have gone on to become members of the regular Army. That cadet unit now has sub-branches in Eidsvold and Mundubbera. They, too, are growing and enjoying great support from the young people of those districts. Given that we have spent so much time debating unpardonable behaviour on the part of some young people, it is important that we acknowledge the

contribution being made to the furtherance of the Anzac spirit and Anzac ceremonies by these cadet corps. Without exception, the cadets turn up to the dawn services. As most honourable members know, Monto is a cold place, especially in April. It can get a bit cold—

Mr Schwarten: A bit?

Mr SEENEY: Yes, just a bit!

At the dawn service I attended the young cadets had the sleeves on their uniforms rolled up. They were absolutely blue. They stood to attention during the dawn service as I stood there shivering in two warm coats. Their contribution to the dawn services and Anzac Day services throughout the district made us all feel proud. I congratulate them and wish them every success.

In the short time that I have left, I wish to reiterate the basic point that I have tried to get across in my contribution to this debate, which is that, although we can respect the emotion and the depth of feeling that has been demonstrated by just about every honourable member who has spoken in this debate, we have to remember what this legislation is about. We have to remember exactly what is being proposed. If honourable members are going to oppose this or any other proposal, let us them do it logically and sensibly and put forward some sensible arguments for why this proposition should be rejected. That has not been done by honourable members opposite. No downside has been pointed out in respect of this proposition. Nobody has stood up and logically tried to build an argument that this proposition will cause problems or any great inconvenience to anybody. Instead, there has been an outpouring of emotion, which is quite understandable.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (10.11 p.m.): Tonight it gives me great pleasure to speak to the Liquor Amendment Bill, which has been brought into the House by the member for Toowoomba North. Honourable members on both sides of the Chamber have recognised that politics should not have a place in the debate on this Bill. Unfortunately, it seems like a bit of a game is being played. We might have thought that commonsense would prevail and that this Bill would be passed quickly through this Chamber. Unfortunately, at the last election there was a huge anti-politician swing. The things we do in this House are treated with scepticism by the general population. For example, Bills such as this one, which should go through the House quickly, seem to be held up and, at the end of the day, commonsense does not seem to prevail.

It seems strange to me that there is opposition to any practical move to help maintain and encourage participation in Anzac Day, which is one of the most important days of remembrance in this State. In recent years, we have seen an upsurge of interest in this day, which is one of celebration as well as one of remembrance. Throughout the State people are responding in greater numbers and showing their appreciation of the sacrifices made by so many people—men and woman—who fought overseas to protect this country and many others who worked for and supported this country at home during years of conflict. We give them official recognition on one day of the year. Many people recognise the contribution that these heroes make and privately thank them every day of the year. From time to time all of us reflect on what a lucky country we are. Were it not for the contribution made by our Army, Navy and Air Force during previous conflicts, we might not have been so lucky. Officially, we give them recognition on just one day of the year.

The licensed premises referred to in this amendment can operate 363 days of the year. They have a 363 to one advantage over Anzac Day. This amendment will not even change that advantage. However, based on the reaction of this Government, especially that from the Minister and his office, people could be forgiven for thinking that this was an all-out bid to close them down completely. This amendment seeks to limit by the barest amount—I repeat: by the barest amount—the hours for serving alcohol at nightclubs and some other licensed premises in an effort to help maintain the enjoyment and the dignity of dawn services that signal the beginning of that very special day. Unfortunately, there have been some incidents—I repeat: some incidents—that have interfered with the Anzac Day program in a few areas. The amendment Bill seeks to address that issue before it becomes a bigger one. As I have said, there is no big drama at present, and the people who support this amendment are not trying to turn this into one. The problem is not widespread yet. Certainly, in my electorate, which has many country areas, that is not the case. However, in the more urbanised areas, such as Mackay, which is part of my electorate, there have been a couple of instances over the past couple of years. We certainly hope that it will never become a major problem.

This amendment is a preventive measure. It is a very minor change and a move to head off what is seen by many people as a potentially serious threat to the conduct of the day. However, it now appears that the serious

threats are looming—and I am speaking not politically but from fact—from the office of the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing. People who have supported the move to protect Anzac Day are now being threatened with recrimination by his office if they do not change their stance and support him. The standover tactics that have worked so well for him in the past are being introduced again. Why should the people who want to protect the sanctity of one day of the year be subjected to this type of behaviour? Why is it deemed necessary by the Minister's office to bully these people and threaten them when the rest of the State spends this one day of the year thanking them? It is my understanding that nightclubs and other similar premises can serve alcohol until the early hours of the morning on all but two days of the year. They are treated very generously, and the people who frequent these establishments are able to enjoy the entertainment at these facilities to their heart's content.

Several times in the past it has been stated that some patrons may pose a threat or become a source of annoyance to people attending dawn services on Anzac Day. There might have been only a few instances up till now, but in the years ahead there is potential for many more disruptions. As anyone who has attended a dawn service, as I have, would know, it takes only the stupid actions of a few thoughtless individuals to take away the dignity of the service. In years past, dawn services attracted mainly older members of the community. Declining numbers certainly were of concern. I guess a solemn dignified dawn service did not rate highly with the majority of younger people. Thankfully, these days the number of attendees at dawn services appears to be increasing each year, with the numbers being boosted by children and teenagers. Certainly, as the previous speaker has indicated, cadets are becoming a bigger and bigger part of the Anzac Day parades. Family groups are attending Anzac Day parades. As the ranks of world war diggers gradually diminish, they are being replaced by even greater numbers of servicemen and women from more recent conflicts.

There is no intention through this amendment Bill to impose unfair or unreasonable restrictions on any young people who enjoy nightclubs. All we are asking through this amendment is that on one day of the year they give up just a few hours of drinking time—that is all. They can still stay there and dance or do whatever they normally do, but they cannot drink alcohol for just a few hours in the very early hours of Anzac Day morning.

The Government's response to this proposal is to bring out the big stick and threaten supporters of this significant, once-a-year event. The Government sees no need to impose a few hours of restraint on one section of the community but seems to have no qualms about bullying and threatening the other section, which of course is the organisers of Anzac Day.

On Anzac Day it is well known that some diggers enjoy a rum with their cornflakes or, quite often, just the rum without the cornflakes. They gather at their RSL clubs and other premises in the early hours of the morning on that very special day, preparing for the remembrance and celebration of not just one event but many famous and infamous events of our history. This morning the Minister stood up in the House with feigned indignation, claiming his office did not make any threats concerning the tradition of having a rum with cornflakes on Anzac Day; the very thought of the use of bullyboy tactics were abhorrent to him. At least he is sticking rigidly to the Government's method of operation in blaming somebody else for the Government's blunders. This time apparently it was a journalist's fault. It was bad reporting. His office would not use threats—no way. Maybe the paper got it wrong. "Don't blame us, blame somebody else."

I am one of the most trusting and believing members of this House and, unfortunately, I could not accept the Minister's assurances this morning. His past performances in this place and elsewhere would indicate that he is not above the use of strongarm tactics when he thinks that he might benefit from their use. In fact, the Minister has often bathed in the glory of his ability to get his own way not just in this House but in other forums one way or the other.

In April this year the Minister earned the wrath of the community by comparing diggers who had rum with their cornflakes on Anzac Day to people who had been out drinking all night and into the early hours of the morning at nightclubs and other licensed premises. The criticism was unjustified and certainly still is. The Minister must be smarting from the criticism that he copped because this time he did not just insult the diggers with a few badly chosen words; he picked up a copy of the licensing Act and threatened to belt them over the head with it!

The very fact that we have to debate this amendment in this House is an indictment on this Government. As I said earlier, what should have been a simple and logical thing has become a major issue.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr MALONE: I listened to the speech of the member for Rockhampton, and I think that he would have been better off reading it.

Mr Schwarten: I'd read it a bloody sight better than you're reading that, I'll give you the drum.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! The Minister's term is unparliamentary. I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr MALONE: The Minister is interjecting from the wrong seat, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to withdraw the term.

Mr Schwarten: What term are you worried about?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The expression. I do not want to get into an argument. The member will just withdraw it.

Mr Schwarten: I withdraw.

Mr MALONE: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker.

What should be a simple and logical thing has become an issue only because the Government would not act to ensure the safety and dignity of thousands of people who attend Anzac Day dawn services. In my electorate Anzac Day dawn services are held in numerous centres big and small from Marlborough in the south, to Mackay in the north and up to Finch Hatton in the Pioneer Valley, through the western areas out around Nebo and, of course, Glenden and out to Coppabella. As I said earlier, many of those places would not be affected because they are not in the vicinity of nightclubs and other premises where the problem might occur. It is always interesting to attend those services because the people there are genuine and they work hard to ensure that their dawn services and their parades run smoothly. The services are certainly well attended, as I said earlier, by cadets, schoolchildren and others.

Everyone associated with Anzac Day regards the dawn services with a lot of respect and reverence. It is the one day of the year that people remember with pride and sorrow, the one day of the year that people get together to ensure that this nation never forgets the sacrifices that have been made by so many people. Nobody wants the services marred by idiots who are full of booze and bad manners. Nobody wants their physical presence threatened. Nobody wants the atmosphere ruined.

Mr Schwarten: Is Hatton in your electorate?

Mr MALONE: Absolutely!

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr MALONE: It certainly has.

Ms Spence: What about Nebo?

Mr Schwarten: Nebo? People standing around drunk, abusing people?

Mr MALONE: If the Minister had listened to what I had said and had interjected from his correct seat—

Mr Schwarten: I am. I am in charge of this Bill at the moment. You will learn that.

Mr Rowell: They left him in charge of the Blood Bank. Heaven help us.

Mr MALONE: That is a worry.

Mr Schwarten: It is a worry when you are making those sorts of statements about me interjecting from the wrong seat.

Mr MALONE: If the Minister had listened to what I was saying, he would know that I was saying that those problems rarely come about during the dawn parades at Nebo; it is in the areas adjacent to nightclubs where the problems arise.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr MALONE: The last time I looked there were no nightclubs in Nebo.

Ms Spence: I lived there. I lived in Calen.

Mr MALONE: Calen is not in my electorate, as the Minister well knows. It is a pity that these Government members do not realise where the boundaries of electorates are.

Mr Schwarten: You've got top people in Longreach, top people in Rocky.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! The member will continue his speech.

Mr MALONE: When the interjections cease, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not speaking until this nonsense stops.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! If the member is not going to take interjections, perhaps he should desist and we can get on with it. The member will please continue.

Mr MALONE: One of the most heartening aspects of being a member of Parliament is attending events such as the one that I will be attending on Saturday, that is, the passing out parade of the 131 RCU in Sarina. That cadet unit has been in operation for 25 years. They are doing a wonderful job. The commander in charge of that unit has passed the age limit.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will cease interjecting.

Mr MALONE: Because of a change to the Act, Paul Carroll, who has been in charge of the unit for quite a long time, is able to continue on in that role. I pay tribute to Paul for the work that he has done over many years in establishing that cadet unit and for the wonderful cadets who have been a part of that unit. They invariably turn up to Anzac Day parades and work hard to ensure that the diggers are looked after. They travel on the bus from Sarina down to Carmila and to St Lawrence and back again and take part in the parade in Sarina at 10.30.

It is with great pleasure that I speak to this amendment Bill, even though I realise that some members on the other side of the House want to make a joke of it.

Mr Schwarten: This is not a joke.

Mr MALONE: If the member for Rockhampton would desist from making comments, we might get some sense out of this debate.

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (10.28 p.m.): I am pleased to be given the opportunity to speak to the Liquor Amendment Bill. I do not intend to make a lengthy contribution, but it does afford me the opportunity to refer once again to an issue that has been of great concern to me ever since I became the member for Mooloolah in 1992.

Two Ministers responsible for licensing and three Ministers for Police are well aware of my continual concerns over the past seven years about the behaviour of a minority of people—many from other areas—leaving the nightclub area of Mooloolaba for various destinations during the early morning period. The troublemakers are not necessarily all nightclub patrons, as many are underage and underdressed for the clubs. It is a huge social problem on the Sunshine Coast and it is not restricted to Mooloolaba. Much of the behaviour is not necessarily unlawful, but it is anti-social and noisy. It includes sometimes foul language, noisy vehicles and other boisterous behaviour, as well as a considerable level of vandalism from time to time.

For the benefit of those members who represent electorates that have not experienced this problem, I should go into a little detail as to one aspect of the problem. We used to have 3 a.m. closing, which I understand is the normal situation in many areas of Queensland now. We had the slow wind-down of this boisterous night-life activity overlapping with the legitimate early morning activities of mainstream Sunshine Coast residents and visitors. These activities for hundreds of locals comprise walking, jogging and heading for our beaches from about 4.30 a.m. onwards—men and women, old and young. What a shock it was for them to be often confronted with the behavioural dregs of the night before.

The consensus of the community outrage was such that a few years ago we as a community were able to cobble together an agreement with the licensees and other stakeholders to draw back closing time to 1 a.m. This was not the end of the world for either the nightclubs or the nightclub patrons, because life continued on much as it was. As a matter of fact, the problem is to a certain extent still there but between the hours of 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. instead of between the hours of 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. The conflict between those who got up early in the morning and those who stayed up very late at night was removed.

I do not claim any right to dwell on Anzac Day, apart from reflecting on its solemn and sometimes silent observance and the fact that more and more young people are attending services. But Parliament does have a responsibility to ensure that Anzac Day can be observed without even unintended interruption wherever possible. Although I am not aware of any recent conflicts between the sometimes noisy activities of that minority of people departing the nightclub areas and those observing dawn services on the Sunshine Coast, I believe that such an occurrence would be quite possible had it not been for our decision to pull the closing hours back from 3 a.m. to 1 a.m. A 3 a.m. closing time is still the norm in many parts of Queensland.

The question is: should this Parliament put in place legislation to avoid this happening at some time in the future, particularly as such an incident has occurred in the past? I believe that it should, as long as the proposed legislation is not unduly restrictive on the wider community.

The Liquor Amendment Bill seeks to amend the Liquor Act 1992 by replacing section 9(3), which relates to trading hours on the eve of Anzac Day. It is proposed that all liquor licences, including cabaret licences, cease at midnight on the day prior to Anzac Day. It is proposed that these premises be able to reopen from 1 p.m. on Anzac Day.

So the real question—the only question—is this: is this restriction on licensees and their patrons to cease serving alcohol at midnight on the eve of this very special day unduly restrictive on the wider community in its endeavour to avoid a possible conflict? This is

particularly the case on a day on which we should be enjoying a singleness of purpose. I have little difficulty in saying that I believe the potential benefits of such a Bill far outweigh any reservations. I strongly believe that the Liquor Amendment Bill should receive the support of this House.

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.33 p.m.): I join with all of those who have chosen to speak to the Liquor Amendment Bill 1999. I commend the member for Toowoomba North for foreshadowing an amendment to the Bill. There are several reasons I want to speak in this debate. The main reason, of course, is out of sheer respect for Anzac Day and all that it means to this nation. We on this side of the House do not have a monopoly on respect for Anzac Day. It is generally shared around the Chamber.

I am not one who is so emotional as to wear my heart on my sleeve, so I will not be indulging in that particular side of the debate. If others wish to, that is their prerogative. Certainly the RSL people that I knock around with, the men and women around the State, do not indulge in that. They are very straight people who have absolute and utter respect for Anzac Day. They know that they do not have to do that sort of thing. They are the epitome of society and we look up to and respect them. They are a great example for others to follow.

One of the other reasons I speak is to make sure that my constituents gain an understanding of what this debate is all about and why it is being held. Naturally, a few speeches from those on this side, and no doubt from those on the other side, will be circulated around the State in order to let people know where we are coming from and what we think of not only Anzac Day itself but also the reason for the legislation.

It is proposed that all liquor licences, including cabaret licences, cease at midnight on the day prior to Anzac Day. That is really what we are seeking. As the member for Fitzroy said, there has been one reported incident in 84 years. That is not a lot. I recognise that. I reckon there might have been a few other incidents besides, but this one incident received attention around the State, and rightly so.

This is an opportunity to reclaim the early hours of the morning—that is, midnight to dawn on Anzac Day—in a mark of respect for Anzac Day. Others may think that is no big deal, but as far as I am concerned this is an opportunity to take back those particular hours. It is not much to ask, but it is a major mark of respect in relation to Anzac Day and all that it means.

I think what really happened—I know that a lot of people on the other side of the House recognise this—is that a mistake was made. The member for Fitzroy said that the debate is a farce, that it is obscene and that it is an embarrassment. Unfortunately, those words really belong with those on the other side, because they have made it an embarrassment. They have made it obscene and they have made it a farce, simply because they have made a wrong decision.

Once the incident occurred and it was suggested that we claim back the early hours of Anzac Day morning, those opposite could have taken a decision to go to the party room and have a little chat about it and then say, "It is not asking for much. This is something we could agree to. Let's do it." But of course those opposite were not big enough to do that. The decision was rushed. It was made in the heat of the moment. It was a wrong decision. That has caused a lot of members of the Government to be embarrassed. I understand that. I think that is a pity, because if a different decision had been taken we would not have been going on with the discussion for so long.

We intend to go on with this debate because, as I said, it is our opportunity to pay respect and to talk about Anzac Day as such—all that it means, all that goes on during that time and what it means to our young people as well as ourselves as one of the most sacred days that we have in the nation. A lot of people we talk to now say that Anzac Day is their Australia Day.

When this matter was previously debated, the member for Ferny Grove made some derogatory remarks about the member for Gladstone. The member for Gladstone, as an Independent and as someone who has been heavily involved in Anzac Day as a result of family involvement and so on, really summed up what this debate is all about when she said that three hours is not much to ask as a mark of respect. The abuse she copped for that was quite extraordinary.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr COOPER: How is the Minister going? Is he all right?

Mr Schwarten: Yes, we are all right. Actually, he talked a bit of sense.

Mr COOPER: I take umbrage with the Minister about that. As I said, we can compare notes out there in the public arena—after this

is over or before. We will let the people judge. That is the main thing. We will let the people judge whether what the Minister is saying—

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr COOPER: I have no doubt that Hansard are getting down all of the Minister's interjections.

Mr Schwarten: I hope they are.

Mr COOPER: I hope they are, too. The Minister is showing absolute and total disrespect for the argument we are putting forward. As I said, that is something that will be spread all around the countryside. If that is the sort of thing the Minister wants, that is the sort of thing he will get.

Mr Schwarten: If it's all right by my old man, it's all right by me.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order!

Mr COOPER: The Minister is obviously out of control, Madam Deputy Speaker, but he is yours to control. I do not worry about him.

This gives me an opportunity to mention some of the people in my electorate who are the epitome of society. They are the pillars and the bulwarks of the communities out there and right across the State. This is a wonderful opportunity to tell their story. I first went to an Anzac Day service in about 1976 at Yuleba. That was when I started to get an understanding of what Anzac Day was all about. Members have said that Anzac Day started to gain momentum in the seventies. However, I recall going to Anzac Day services in the sixties, when many of our institutions came under attack from Left Wing elements, particularly the ABC. At that time, the ABC was a Left Wing element, and I think it more or less encouraged the testing of our institutions. Back in those days Anzac Day was marked by disrespect and graffiti on monuments, but the nation rose against that very strongly. Anzac Day withstood all that, and it became stronger and more widely respected.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is testing the patience of the Chair.

Mr COOPER: As I said, our institutions came under that form of attack, but they withstood it. Since then, people have come to the realisation that Anzac Day is not going to go away; that it will be perpetuated for as long as we exist. That is a good thing for this country, because we do need standards, icons and things to respect. We need examples to be set by people, and I believe that we are very fortunate to have that.

Other members have spoken about how many of our young people attend Anzac Day services. They are not forced to do that. Some people might think that the kids are forced to turn up and play in the marching bands, but they do that because they want to. In the wee hours of the morning, we see them at the dawn services. People think that this is quite incredible; that mum and dad must have forced them to do that. But our young people know a lot about Anzac Day. It is good that they have those standards to live up to. They have a great understanding and respect for their elders and those people who served this country. The benefits that our young people get from Anzac Day are extraordinary. That is why, when opportunities such as this arise, we should claim back some time for Anzac Day. There are lots of reasons to do that.

I turn now to some of the people who are involved in RSL reunion dinners. No doubt members on both sides would have been attending those dinners lately. Unfortunately, when Parliament sits many of us are unable to get to those RSL dinners, but they are fantastic, and I believe that they are gaining support. Many people put a lot of time and effort into those particular functions to make sure that they are a success and that they are real reunions. That is why they are so well attended.

I would like to mention a few people in Crows Nest. St John and Lola Burke uphold the traditions of Anzac Day in that area, along with Bob and Heather Rolfe. Many members would know them. Bob has one of the greatest collections of firearms and ammunition that one would find anywhere, but he looks after them well and treats them with the utmost respect, knowing full well the dangers of those sorts of things. But nevertheless, they are reminders of wartime. Bob and Heather are the epitome of society in that area, as is Bob Baulch of the Oakey RSL, which is going ahead in leaps and bounds. Some extensions are being undertaken on that RSL hall, and I wish them well with that. Similarly, the Goombungee RSL is making a great impression. I pay respect to Max and Lyn Foote, who uphold those traditions, and long may they continue to do so.

Those people who are in East Timor at the moment will eventually take their place in the RSL on their return. I do not think that anyone really wants to have to serve their country in places like East Timor; but when called upon, those people went, and they have done an unbelievably professional job—a beautifully executed job—and they have earned our respect. It is great that Australia

has people like them who are available to do those jobs and carry them out so well. This is an opportunity to wish them well and a safe return and to thank them for their service.

The member for Mount Isa spoke about the local government conference in Toowoomba. There were 1,000 delegates there—whether the Minister likes it or not. It is interesting to note that they had a very strong view about Anzac Day, and they supported this amendment.

Mr Healy: Overwhelmingly.

Mr COOPER: Overwhelmingly. They did not carry on stupidly about it as some members have. They said, "It is not much to ask. It is very simple. It is a great opportunity to take back those few hours in the interests of Anzac Day."

I have mentioned the RSL dinner at Crows Nest. We had some guest speakers there. One was the sergeant of police in Crows Nest, Sergeant Neil Gilloway, who referred to the debate on the republic. He did not say what side he was on; he just said that the very fact that we were able to have that debate on a republic was because this country had been kept safe as a democracy so that we could have freedom of speech. Again, that was because our armed servicemen—our defence forces—had prevailed at various times throughout the past 84 years. I do not think it is too much to ask to return these small things to them.

I need to put on the record the unbelievable remarks made by a spokesman for the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing, Mr Gibbs, in an article in the Cairns Post about the Cairns RSL. I want to make people in the Crows Nest electorate aware of what was said and done. The article headed "Diggers' rum caught up in booze ban call" states—

> "The State Government has warned RSL clubs it could crack down on Diggers who have a shot of rum with breakfast if the league pursues new Anzac Day legislation.
>
> The warning from a spokesman for Tourism ... Minister ... came after Cairns RSL sub-branch president Merv Hains said he was 'disappointed' the Government would not support a proposed alcohol ban after midnight on the eve of Anzac Day."

The article goes on to say—

> "Premier Peter Beattie already has indicated the Labor Party will vote against the moves which are due to come up in State Parliament on Wednesday.
>
> The ban first was proposed by the Coalition following an incident where drunk people disrupted an Anzac Day service in 1997."

The spokesman goes on to say—

> "If they want us to crack down on nightclubs and bars, we will have to look at our policy of turning a blind eye to Diggers drinking rum at 4.30 in the morning with their cornflakes."

That is so incredible that I can only shake my head at the fact that it was said.

It is not every Anzac Day when they have rum at a dawn service. I wish they did! I know that the one at Old Gowrie does. I am only too happy to partake when I see a couple of bottles of Bundy there at about 4.30 and it is freezing cold. A lot of people are quite happy to accept it—whether or not they normally drink it—because it gets them going for the day. It is a tradition. It does not make people drunk. And the fact that they can do those sorts of things is fine by us. It sets the tone for Anzac Day.

I do not want to prolong the debate except to say that some of the comments that have been made tonight have been a little over the top. Some of those comments have been caused by embarrassment. I believe that most Government members would have been quite happy to support this legislation. However, they were caught out. The decision was made for them without their input. That put them on the spot. I know that those sorts of things can happen; they happen to us sometimes. One has to eat humble pie. It is unfortunate that it occurs in a situation such as this where the matter should be completely apolitical. It is important that we are able to reclaim those precious few hours from midnight to dawn on Anzac Day as a mark of respect.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.50 p.m.): In joining the debate on the Liquor Amendment Bill, I have to say that Australia, in comparison with most other countries in the world, has a very short history. The tradition of the Anzacs commenced in World War 1. A lot of young men went to that war thinking that it was going to be an experience. They really did not know what they were facing. Australians joined with forces from a number of other nations and went to fight on foreign soil. We have done this on many occasions. We joined with other forces to defend principles that are so important to our Australian way of life.

A lot of very young Australians who were involved in the First World War found that the period from 1914 to 1918 was very tough. That was really the start of the Anzac tradition. It is a tradition that has lived long. It is a tradition that is being upheld by the celebration of Anzac Day throughout the country. I believe it is a tradition that members on both sides of this House support.

It appears that we have a minor disagreement regarding the way in which we observe Anzac Day. The celebration of Anzac Day is a mark of respect for those Australians who defended our country. Unfortunately, some of them did not return. If there is any prospect that someone will disrupt our celebration of Anzac Day, members on this side of the House want to be in a position where we can do something about it. We are asking people to make a small sacrifice by not being able to drink on licensed premises after midnight on Anzac Day eve. We want to ensure that Anzac Day services are not interrupted.

We have Anzac Day services right throughout my electorate. Because of the nature of the electorate, it is difficult to attend all the Anzac Day services that are held.

Australians have been represented in a number of theatres of war. Fortunately, none of those wars have been fought on our soil. This is something which is of great importance to us. Having said that, Australians have given their lives in order to ensure that we did not have to defend our own country.

In the Second World War Australians were involved in the European campaign and in the Middle East. A lot of people will remember what happened at Tripoli. I believe we are all aware of the sacrifices that our troops made in those areas. I believe we all have relatives or friends who were involved in the Second World War. I was quite young at the time, but I remember when the small submarines entered Sydney Harbour. A net had been placed across the harbour, but the submarines found their way through the net. I think that was one of the closest threats we have had to Australia's soil. Of course, we also had the Japanese bombing of Darwin.

The Battle of the Coral Sea was a matter of great concern to Australians. It occurred only 700 miles from the eastern shores of Australia. The people of Cardwell have recognised the Battle of the Coral Sea by developing a park which contains a cenotaph. We have the Battle of the Coral Sea march in Cardwell in May each year. This parade remembers the Australians who lost their lives in the Battle of the Coral Sea, which was a particularly significant event for Australia. It was the turning point of the Second World War.

Australia has been involved in other theatres of war, namely Korea and Vietnam. One honourable member on the other side of the Chamber has spoken of the Vietnam campaign. I can understand his feelings with regard to this legislation. Whilst he may not necessarily be in agreement it, I think he would agree that the principle of what we are doing is very important.

We now have Australia's involvement in East Timor. It is instability around the world that causes these sorts of problems. From time to time, Australians have to bite the bullet and support other countries in their time of need. We have to show that we are ready, willing and able.

Australia has always had very strong ties with Great Britain. Those ties have, to a certain extent, dissipated. Australia relies very heavily on the United States of America. Australia has an alliance with New Zealand. It was that alliance which was the genesis of the Anzacs.

There is tremendous recognition of Anzac Day in my electorate. I have to say that more and more young people are attending Anzac Day marches—

Mr Fouras: What does that have to do with the Bill?

Mr ROWELL: That is an extremely inane comment. If the member for Ashgrove would like to go back to his own seat—

Mr Fouras interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! The member for Ashgrove shall not interject from other than his correct seat.

Mr ROWELL: Put him back in his cage. It is extremely important that we have the recognition of the young people who come out very early in the morning. We do not want to see disruption of marches by late revellers who have been on the booze until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. These people are going out there—

Mr Fouras: Nobody wants that.

Mr ROWELL: We are trying to prevent it; does the member not understand? All one needs to do is put two and two together and hope that somebody such as the member for Ashgrove can understand our position. It is quite evident that he does not understand.

Ms Struthers: You would have to have a curfew to achieve what you want to achieve.

Mr ROWELL: No, we are simply saying to stop the drink at 12 o'clock. I have not heard the member for Archerfield interject before. This is something new for her. I find it hard to believe because I believe she is a very pragmatic person, one who has empathy for people who are disadvantaged.

Debate, on motion of Mr Rowell, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Septimus State School

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (11 p.m.): I would like to draw the attention of the House, and especially the attention of the Minister for Education, to the proposed closure of Septimus State School, which is located within my electorate of Mirani. Some members of the House may think that the future of the Septimus school and that of its present and future students is of little interest to them. However, it would be of vital interest to them because of the threat that exists in this State to so many small schools in both rural and urban areas.

My main concern is naturally for the Septimus State School and the other small schools which appear to be under constant threat of closure. I am concerned that there is an enormous chasm between the stated policy of this Government and the determination within the Education Department concerning school closures. I believe that the experience of the Septimus State School is typical of the experiences of many other schools throughout the State. The honest, hardworking people involved in this school are fighting an uphill battle to keep their school open. This is not just an isolated case. I believe that in more recent years there has been a concerted effort by some individuals or sections of the Education Department to close schools for no reason other than economics. Unfortunately, Governments have sometimes bowed to the so-called wisdom of these bureaucrats and we have seen valuable resources in the form of schools and people sacrificed to the detriment of communities.

During the term of the previous Borbidge Government, moves were made to close the Septimus school. I immediately made representations on behalf of the school and the community to oppose those moves, because I could not stand by and see a community robbed of a very important asset. The Borbidge Government recognised its community service obligations to rural communities and kept the school open with an assurance that it would remain open.

Quite obviously, the Education Department's brains trust has used the change of Government to again attack the students and parents associated with this school and, by doing so, has attacked the community at large. In essence, this is an attack on the small, proud and independent communities in this State. The department appears determined to get its own way, even though its policies appear to be totally opposed to the stated policy of the Government.

On 26 October this year, the Minister for Education issued a media release that said in part—

> "This Government is not about closing schools in pursuit of some economic rationalist agenda."

I ask members to compare that statement with an equally clear statement in the report by the department's district director recommending the school's closure at the end of this school year. The district director said—

> "Prime issues are the financial viability of the school not student outcomes."

It is a little frightening to think that student outcomes are not a consideration of the Education Department. This Government claims to be outcomes driven. It preaches outcomes. However, its outcomes appear to be dollar driven. People and quality of life do not seem to be in the equation.

Where is the encouragement for people to settle in rural Queensland if a Government department can place so little value on people and base its decisions on financial viability only? What about the financial viability of the residents and small communities? What about the quality of life of the children and the parents in those communities?

On behalf of the Septimus State School and all other schools that find themselves in a similar position, I ask the Education Minister to tell his department which policy is to be followed. It is quite clear that this department makes recommendations by conducting some sort of financial audit. Students do not count. Parents do not count. Communities do not count. The only apparent measuring stick is the calculator on the finance officer's desk.

Another cause of serious concern is the apparent belief within the department that children attending small country schools are socially disadvantaged. This concern has been highlighted in the Septimus State School P & C Association's submission to the Minister. I sometimes wonder, even despair, at the academic attitude taken by some people in high places when they make decisions and judgments concerning small communities and their residents. I have not conducted any research into this matter, nor have I studied the findings of the so-called experts in the field. However, I am convinced that many students who graduate from these small rural communities are better balanced, less scarred and more mature than their counterparts who graduate from schools in larger urban communities.

The record of Septimus State School students, as they have progressed through higher education and into the work force, emphasises that they have not suffered from any social disadvantage. They can and have taken their place in society without any serious baggage being imposed by their environment. In fact, there may even be some room for claims that some children attending big schools in urban areas are more damaged by their environment than are their country cousins.

The record of the Septimus community in providing support to the local school is typical of so many small rural communities throughout Queensland. The local school is a major part of many local communities; it is not just a place where the kids go during the day.

Time expired.

Acacia Ridge Jobs Boost

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (11.05 p.m.): This week, I felt like I had won Gold Lotto. Under the Queensland Industry Development Scheme, industries in an area that I value dearly—Acacia Ridge and Archerfield; the economic hubs of south-east Queensland—have received a major financial boost. I say "economic hubs" as Acacia Ridge alone produces 10% of Brisbane's economic product. This State Government support of local industry initiatives will lead to jobs, jobs and more jobs in my area.

Some of the industries whose innovative ideas are being fertilised by QIDS include Agen Biomedical Limited, which was given $80,000 to develop a prototype packaging machine; Palmer Tube Mills, $50,000 to move into e-commerce, from which 20 new jobs are expected; Galilco Food Processors, $30,000 to introduce new long-life vacuum-sealed packaging—that must be to keep the odour in for the garlic products—and the Latex Mattress Foam Centre, $14,000 to market in Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. These are just some of the initiatives that were funded.

This injection of funds could not happen at a better time. I have initiated an Into Work project to support unemployed, mature-aged workers in Acacia Ridge. The men and women involved in this project now have a stronger chance of finding work. These local companies are being given support by this Government to expand. My out-of-work friends may soon feel like they, too, have won Gold Lotto.

Attention Deficit Disorder; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.06 p.m.): Tonight, I rise to address a very alarming matter that is affecting my electorate. This is the very concerning issue of attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which over the past few years has gathered momentum. Large numbers of children are being diagnosed with ADD and schools and counsellors are learning to manage the behaviour of these children. As a former teacher and guidance officer and, indeed, as a mother, I understand the enormous pressures that we face through having children in our care. However, for those people who have the added burden of coping with children diagnosed with ADD, the daily crises seem insurmountable.

Parents in particular who cannot cope any more with the dangerous and often psychotic behaviour of their loved ones are desperate and no answers are forthcoming. Many parents have welcomed this Government's Positive Parenting Program to assist them in raising children who have difficult behaviours. Parents of children who have ADD and ADHD face complex issues and have varied needs frequently requiring differing programs and strategies to assist them. The burdens placed on the education, child health and welfare systems in Townsville alone are overwhelming. Although Education Queensland recognises ADD as a medical condition and makes provision to meet the educational needs of children diagnosed with ADD, with or without hyperactivity, all the other departments still have a long way to go to address the issues confronting these people.

As we approach the 21st century, the needs of individuals and families affected by ADD cannot be ignored as the cost to the

individual, the family and society as a whole is too high. Individuals and families affected by ADD need well-informed and responsive medical services, a flexible education system and family support such as respite and case management similar to those supports that are offered to children who suffer from autism. In Queensland, a number of support groups are advocating for changes within Government policy and service provision so that families and individuals have the support that they need to contribute in a meaningful way to the community in which they live. They are encouraging the community to work with them, not against them, so that the best outcome can be achieved for individuals and families affected by ADD and ADHD. A preference for interdepartmental liaison with an interdepartmental working group is critical if we are to address this very alarming condition that affects such a large section of our community.

Greyhound Racing Industry

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (11.08 p.m.): It is more than disappointing that tonight I speak in defence of yet another group of people who appear to have been targeted by some in the Government for disadvantage. Over a long period, many of us here have expressed our concerns about the potential disadvantage to the rural and regional racing industry with the privatisation of the TAB. We have argued that, when the almighty dollar becomes a focal point for decision making, the populated areas take over and rural Queensland gets nothing. Perhaps to be kind, Cairns for tourism, Townsville for population and Rockhampton for politics may get a guernsey. However, the rest of the State outside the south-east corner gets zero.

However, tonight I am not speaking of the turf racing industry, which is very important in my electorate and is worthy of support. I refer to the greyhound racing industry that operates throughout the regional areas of the State. Initially, I was approached by a family from my electorate. That family is very concerned about the direction that greyhound racing is being forced to take. I would have to say that the family members are staunch supporters of the Labor Party. They are hardworking people who are focused and very warm. Harold, the husband, has not enjoyed the best of health during the last few years. He and his wife are very close. Together they have put a great deal of energy and money into their greyhounds. Those are not just dogs; they are an important part of their daily lives.

Neither Gladstone nor Calliope has a greyhound racing track. Supporters and participants travel to Rockhampton to participate in the greyhound racing program at the Rockhampton Jockey Club. The RJC charges a 52-week fee for half that number of meetings. Charges for the sound system remain at the full program level, and still the greyhound racing fraternity works. The greyhound racing program has been almost halved, yet the enthusiasm and support for greyhound racing continues.

Now the Greyhound Racing Authority tells them to prove their viability while giving them absolutely no help. Prize money has been cut, and still the supporters struggle on. To have a TAB supported race meeting, the local association has been told that it must have a full racing card. The Rockhampton club has one dog short of the required 80 entries when one includes the reserve entrants in each of the races currently run. Still no TAB racing is allowed. What do these people have to do? Like turf racing, it is not just about the work that is done on the day of the races. Owners, trainers, fodder suppliers and an entire range of people are involved in the industry.

The ultimate indignity came in September/October when the Queensland Greyhound Association announced that $400,000 was to be taken—I would say "stolen"—from regional greyhound racing and reallocated to the south-east corner. When this was announced, the racing fraternity in my area erupted. I was inundated—as were, I am sure, many other members of the Parliament—by constituents who were angry at this action.

I spoke with a representative from the Greyhound Racing Association who said, "The regional areas will benefit once the south-east corner gets back on its feet." That is bull! There will not be a regional racing industry then. The south-east corner will eat the country areas alive if they think it will ensure that the south-east corner will survive. People in our electorates who are fully supportive of the greyhound racing industry are not being considered in this decision. I spoke to the Premier's office about this theft. To date, I have not heard back. I can only hope that they are busy kicking butts and that that is why they have not had time to call back.

I implore the Minister for Racing not to do this to regional and rural racing. I ask the Government not to be so selfish in its attitudes. Regional greyhound racing deserves more than what it has been handed. I call on the Minister to reverse the decision to bleed

the dollars from regional Queensland. Supporters of this industry deserve better. Regional greyhound racing is an important part of our community and people involved in regional greyhound racing contribute greatly to the local economy. I call on the Government to support regional greyhound racing on this issue.

The Sunshine Club

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (11.13 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak to the House about a wonderful event that was held in Cairns last Thursday, 8 November, that is, the world premiere of the Queensland Theatre Company's The Sunshine Club. I would forgive honourable members of this House for thinking that, yet again, this will be a speech about how wonderful Cairns is, but it is not. It is a matter of good fortune for Cairns that it hosted the premiere of this important and wonderful musical by the Queensland Theatre Company.

All who attended the first night shared the privilege of enjoying the brilliant work of writer and director Wesley Enoch, the musical compositions of John Rogers, the choreography of Steven Page, and the brilliance of script consultant Nick Enright, production designer Richard Roberts and lighting designer Matt Scott. The full cast and crew were excellent. It is a wonderful production.

Of course, it is usual for such productions to premiere in Brisbane at least, if not in Sydney. It is a determination of this Government that regional Queensland will share fully, with the capital city, in arts programs and thus the production was premiered in Cairns. I commend this production of The Sunshine Club to the House. It is exciting, it is good fun, and it is truly about Queensland, our culture and our history. At the same time, it brings us exciting music and dance.

The Sunshine Club presents an inspiring story based on real events. The story is set in the dance halls of the 1940s and 1950s at a time when Aboriginal people did not have full citizens' rights. Black and white Australians came together to socialise at the dance halls. The early scenes in The Sunshine Club show Australian soldiers marching in uniform as though coming home from the Second World War. It was a surprise for the audience to see that of those five soldiers, two were indigenous Australians—black faces. Somehow it came as a shock to see indigenous people so clearly representing their efforts on behalf of our country.

This is the story of the post-war years when Aboriginal men who had served our country attempted to reintegrate into an Australia that had not yet fully recognised their rights. While that serious, sad and hurtful part of our history is represented, the human spirit of joy and loving, regardless of cultural or racial barriers, is also represented.

The dancing skills of the cast are tremendous. In 1991, leading American ballet director Martha Graham said—

> "Think of the magic of that foot, comparatively small, upon which your whole weight rests. It's a miracle, and the dance ... is a celebration of that miracle."

This is a musical to enjoy. It has wonderful songs, wonderful dances and wonderful actors. It does not have one or the other, but all three rolled into one. The production is also a testament to the Goss Government's investment in the Queensland Theatre Company. The production has taken over three years to come to the stage. It takes courage for a Government to invest in the arts for the future, knowing that the outcome is uncertain and unpredictable, and that the benefits may not be reaped till many years down the track. The Goss Government deserves credit for doing that.

The schedule for The Sunshine Club is to move from Cairns to Mackay and then to Townsville. From there it will travel to Brisbane to commence its season there in December. I encourage all honourable members, their families and friends to go along for a wonderful night's entertainment. I guarantee that they will enjoy it. In January, as Queenslanders, we can proudly enjoy The Sunshine Club's premiere at the Opera House in Sydney, where I am sure it will be received very well indeed. My own prediction is that this particular production will become an Australian classic and a Queensland classic in particular. It will be something that the Government—the former Goss Government and the present Government—can be proud of.

I pay particular tribute to Robyn Nevin, who was the Queensland Theatre Company's director during the period when this production was commissioned and substantially produced. She has now completed her contract and has moved back to New South Wales. As Queenslanders, we can be proud to recall our history.

Time expired.

Coachtrans

Mr BAUMANN (Albert—NPA) (11.18 p.m.): I bring to the attention of the House the plight of pensioners living in a couple of the northern areas of the Gold Coast which form part of my electorate. Those people have been left stranded by the closure of two shopping bus services. The local bus company operating in that area is Coachtrans. Last week, Coachtrans ended its twice weekly services between the Coomera area and Southport and the five times a week service between Jacobs Well and Beenleigh.

Mr Mackenroth: Isn't that the one you used to own?

Mr BAUMANN: Yes. Incidentally, I was the chief executive officer of that particular bus company.

Mr Mackenroth: They wouldn't have closed down while you were CEO.

Mr BAUMANN: I am glad that the member has some concern for the company.

Mr Beanland: Is he going to subsidise it?

Mr BAUMANN: We will delve into that and no doubt spend some time with the Transport Minister.

Mr Mackenroth: It could be a pecuniary interest. I will not fall for that one.

Mr BAUMANN: No, there is no pecuniary interest here.

I now wish to quote from the Gold Coast Bulletin of 9 November, which stated—

> "The company said it could no longer afford to keep the routes going because they were losing more than $1000 a week.
>
> The two services carry about 150 passengers a week, mainly older people with no cars or those who no longer drive ..."

or those who are too young to drive. Some 150 passengers per week will now be disadvantaged. Of course, the managing director has blamed the State Government for its ongoing refusal to subsidise these types of services. I know that the Minister's office has been contacted in relation to this matter. I will need to have some further discussions with him in relation to this issue.

The history of this matter goes back many years. Under the former Goss Government, our former coalition Government and the current Labor Government the area has been neglected in that many changes have been made to the operation of public transport within those service areas. Gone are the old licensed areas that were in existence previously, when the area was allocated to a particular operator who could work exclusively in that area, similar to the way the contract works now. The contract areas now reflect the same thing. But, unfortunately for this particular operator, since the licence has expired in the area no contract has been issued. Hence, there is no security of tenure. Problems have then arisen because there is no collateral to take to the banks to continue to borrow, expand and operate services. In previous years, the services were able to be cross-subsidised from the profits made from within other company operations and these services were able to be maintained. That joy and bliss does not exist these days.

A reason for that is the Federal Government initiative introduced by a former State Labor Government that gave us the marvellous Gold Coast rail service. Nobody would knock that service; it is marvellous. It has carried more than five million passengers since it was opened in February 1996. I have travelled on the service and appreciate how good it is. However, that service is subsidised to the tune of about $80m a year. Although none of us questions the commonsense of providing that subsidy, given that the south-east corner is the fastest growing area in Australia and that these services will almost certainly be fully utilised at some future time, this bus company, operating as it is between two other well subsidised operators, has received no assistance and now has no ability to continue to offer services to the likes of pensioners. The article I mentioned carries a photo of two old ladies hitchhiking near the bus stop because the bus service no longer exists.

I beg the Minister to consider this case and expedite this issue through the bureaucratic maze. The rail stations at Coomera and Pimpama have no bus services operating, even though there are many bus bays available. I can see by the look on the face of the Speaker that my time has expired so I will discuss the issue with the Minister tomorrow.

Time expired.

Sunshine Coast Independent Living Service

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (11.23 p.m.): I rise to congratulate the people involved with the Sunshine Coast Independent Living Service on their very successful open day held in Nambour today. Many people with disabilities are now able to live independently in our community and enjoy activities that they could only previously dream about thanks to

the enormous efforts made by many people associated with the Sunshine Coast Independent Living Service. I recognise the contribution made by the association's President, Peter Watson, the Manager, Liz Arthur, and all of the volunteers and helpers involved with the association.

This year the clients of the Sunshine Coast Independent Living Service have undertaken a wide variety of activities. They have learnt how to eat healthy food, have had lessons in arts and crafts and put on their own art show, which was a great sell-out success, with some drawings by Matthew Burr now on display in Germany. I congratulate Matthew. They have had swimming lessons, and two of the Sunshine Coast Independent Living Service's star swimmers are heading off to competitions down south. Who knows, one day they may compete in the Special Olympics. I wish Ellen Nissen and Nicki Thompson all the best in their swimming competitions.

Other clients, including our brilliant poet Glen Sheppard, attend Nambour TAFE. The list goes on and it is all good news. On the social front, clients have attended a large number of functions. They have gone on outings and trips, including an exciting one to Vanuatu. Money is always needed. Importantly, money was raised recently when some Sunshine Coast Independent Living Service clients and volunteers delivered thousands of new phone books to residents in the region. As a result of assistance from the association, there has been a dramatic improvement in the quality of life for the association's 126 clients. This is excellent news for the families—the mums and dads—who never thought the day would come when their children would be able to live independent lives. The importance of the service provided by the association to the clients was clearly illustrated today when, in a very moving and emotionally charged speech, one of the fathers said that the Sunshine Coast Independent Living Service has brought immeasurable happiness and fulfilment to his son. I offer my heartfelt thanks to the workers and volunteers associated with the Sunshine Coast Independent Living Service for their great service to our community. I wish them and their clients all the very best for the Christmas holiday break and for the coming year. Congratulations!

National Competition Policy

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (11.25 p.m.): The current Labor Government provides more than a glimmer of hope for those of us who believe that Governments should intervene in the economy to facilitate a fairer distribution of wealth and to defend the public interest. Significant signs are emerging that the blind faith in the free market so evident in Governments of all persuasions throughout the eighties and the early nineties is on the wane. The recent decision of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to reassert the role of Government by abolishing the corrective services corporations and re-establishing responsibility for corrective services with a new department is a fine example. Under the corporatisation model he abolished, the Minister was almost reduced to an interested bystander in terms of decision making, but was held fully responsible and accountable when things went wrong.

More important are the recent changes made to the public benefit test guidelines under the National Competition Policy. Despite the rhetoric of the coalition while it was in Government, it allowed National Competition Policy to be implemented along strict economic rationalist lines under guidelines that were kept secret from the public. However, the Beattie Labor Government has moved to humanise National Competition Policy and place much-needed attention on social justice issues. The Labor Government is restoring the balance between the economic and social objectives of our Governments and our communities.

The new public benefit test guidelines are now available publicly and are designed to ensure that the interests of people and communities are put ahead of economic ideology. This is principally achieved by the introduction of a requirement to conduct employment and social impact assessments as part of the public benefit test process. I commend the Premier and the Treasurer for these worthwhile initiatives and encourage them to examine other areas of Government where such reforms can be implemented.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 11.27 p.m.