

THURSDAY, 2 MARCH 2000

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

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Prostitution Laws

From **Mrs Liz Cunningham** (13 petitioners) requesting the House to oppose any review of prostitution laws unless such review results in the complete abolition of prostitution.

Eumundi-Noosa Road, Speed Limit

From **Mr Davidson** (1,146 petitioners) requesting the House to reduce the current 100 km/h speed limit on Eumundi-Noosa Road between Cash Road and Beckmans Road to 90 km/h only where dedicated right turn lanes exist, otherwise reduce to 80 km/h.

Mackay, Public Transport

From **Mr Mulherin** (20 petitioners) requesting the House to provide more equitable public transport subsidies to ensure the viability of a public transport system based on a combination of taxi transit and bus services to the Mackay region, which is readily accessible to the community of Mackay and district, including older persons and the disabled.

Bruce Highway, Median Crossovers

From **Mr Pitt** (399 petitioners) requesting the House to investigate the options of two centre median crossovers on the highway north of Mill Road and north of Collinson Creek, Edmonton.

Bundaberg Base Hospital

From **Mr Slack** (349 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.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The following papers were tabled—

(a) Mrs E Cunningham—

Report of expenses for the Office of the Independent Member for Gladstone for period to 31 December 1999

(b) Mr Wellington—

Report of expenses for the Office of the Independent Member for Nicklin for period to 31 December 1999

(c) Mr Paff—

Report of expenses for the Office of One Nation for period to 31 December 1999.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Innovation Strategy**

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP)
(Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: On Tuesday, 8 February 2000 I launched the Queensland Government's innovation strategy, Innovation—Queensland's Future, at the Queensland Clunies Ross Centre. This Government sees the creation of a culture of innovation among Queensland business as central to the development of new jobs in the coming years, especially through the encouragement of both focused research and applied development in new technologies.

What this strategy is essentially about is beefing up our research capacity and, as importantly, finding ways to apply the products of that research so that they are commercially viable. Among the measures that we have taken to achieve these ends are \$97.6m being spent and directed to cooperative research centres over seven years, \$24m to new facilities at the Queensland Centre of Advanced Technologies, \$30m to further development of the Queensland Government's Scientific Services Laboratories, \$15m to the capital cost of the Institute of Molecular Bioscience and \$77.5m to support operations there for the next 10 years, a further \$55m to the construction of a comprehensive cancer research centre being built at Herston and the commitment of \$8m of the \$13m capital cost of Griffith University's Centre of Biomolecular Search and Drug Discovery at its Gold Coast campus.

The growth of these centres of excellence fosters innovation by their very nature. They are supplemented by technology parks, universities, colleges and private sector research and development. To ensure that we

do not adopt a scatter gun approach to implementing our innovation strategy, the Queensland Government has established a high-level advisory body which ensures that the Government's initiatives are coordinated and focused, that body being the Queensland Innovation Council. The council's members comprise Queensland-based industry and visionary leaders from the public, private, academic and research sectors and from the broader community. This high-level advisory body will influence both the development and implementation of the innovation and technology initiatives of the State Government.

Many of these measures deal with a research aspect. However, this Government has accepted the view that there is a gap in the market for innovative, high-tech ventures which have difficulty attracting start-up capital. Consequently, what this Government is putting in place is the innovation start-up scheme, which will provide up to \$75,000 for individual ventures with an overall budget of \$1.5m over the next two years. What we have found is that companies which are just starting out have trouble attracting seed funding from traditional sources. This scheme is designed to fill that gap. This is not a hand-out. The companies themselves must put in some money and we also give them some assistance with commercial aspects of their operation.

Australians as a whole are generally very good at inventing things but not so good at putting them into commercial production. This scheme is one way of keeping small, innovative ventures close to home and nurturing those companies so that they can grow and create more jobs for Queenslanders. But I stress that this is only one part of an overall strategy. To further promote the strategy and to showcase Queensland's capabilities nationally, on Wednesday, 9 February 2000 I attended the National Innovation Summit held in Melbourne. Over 500 leaders from across business, industry, research, education and Government sectors attended the summit and the overwhelming consensus was the importance of innovation to our economic prosperity and social wellbeing. There was a keen level of interest in the Queensland Government's strategy from the delegates at the summit and many delegates were impressed by the high level of commitment from the Queensland Government to innovation and technology related activities and initiatives.

I stress that this is a targeted scheme but still broad enough to encourage some risk taking. We have to face the reality that, in

some instances, the best research possible will fail commercially through no fault of the researcher. But what this strategy does is set up the framework for business to use and undertake research which can be applied commercially. This is yet another way that this Government is focusing on creating jobs for Queenslanders—not just for now, but for the future.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Protection for Witnesses and Jurors

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: It gives me great pleasure to announce to the House this morning another initiative demonstrating the Beattie Labor Government's commitment to being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. This week, Cabinet gave approval for legislation to be prepared to amend the Criminal Code, making it an offence for anyone to take revenge or make reprisals against witnesses, jurors, judges, court staff and others involved in the administration of justice. Provision already exists to deal with cases where reprisals or threats of reprisals are made against jurors and witnesses before or during a trial, but this amendment creates a specific provision to deal with situations which may arise after a trial is over.

This law reform gives protection to those who take part in the administration of justice in this State. For example, it will have particular relevance in domestic violence cases or other contentious court cases where witnesses may fear paying a price for being a good citizen. Those witnesses and our jurors, judges, magistrates, legal practitioners, court staff and others who play their part in making our society safer deserve this protection.

The protection offered will be comprehensive. It will make clear that a conviction for exacting reprisals or taking revenge on those involved in the administration of justice, or threatening to do so, could earn the offender a maximum penalty of seven years' jail. The new provision will also afford protection to the family and friends of these people. It will also cover people who may have cooperated with authorities, for example, by making a statement to police, but who do not appear in court.

This legislation will add to a series of reforms by this Government. These reforms include strengthening our stalking laws,

increasing penalties for child cruelty and abduction, introducing a more effective system for disclosing information about child sex offenders, our commitment to a drug court trial, keeping fine defaulters out of jail, and more funding for victims of crime and legal aid. These reforms are making a real difference to Queenslanders and demonstrate this Government's commitment to our election promise to be tough on crime and the causes of crime.

By comparison, while we continue to make real changes, the members opposite continue on their chosen path: policy by slogan. Queenslanders do not want fine-sounding but ineffectual slogans to replace real policy and real reforms. That is what this Government is giving them.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Flood Repairs, Assistance by Prisoners

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: The devastating floods in western and north Queensland have understandably captured the public's attention in recent weeks. The Beattie Government, through the Premier and Emergency Services Minister, Stephen Robertson, has outlined the amount of assistance available to people affected by the floods. As a north Queenslander originally, I know from my own experience how heartbreaking floods can be.

Floods in the Burdekin where I grew up used to be an almost yearly occurrence. Just after we repaired the damage caused from one flood, another one was just around the corner. Cleaning up and repairing infrastructure can be a long, drawn-out process, especially if available labour is in short supply, which is normally the case in many of the outback areas such as Longreach and Winton. Prisoners have provided some of the much-needed labour in the repair work following natural disasters in the past. I was keen to make sure that the local authorities and emergency personnel could call on corrective services for any help they needed.

I therefore instructed the Department of Corrective Services to lend every assistance possible through our WORC program and prison farms to the shires affected by the latest floods. I am pleased to say that the department, through the Blackall WORC Program manager, has already contacted the Longreach Shire Council and offered WORC program prisoners to assist in flood damage repair. At this stage, WORC program prisoners will be assisting in the repair of fences in the

Longreach area as they did in 1997 following similar flooding. Seven WORC prisoners and a supervisor should have arrived in Longreach this morning and will start work immediately on flood damage repairs.

In Winton, a similar offer of assistance has been made. Prisoners from the Boulia WORC program are currently in Winton, carrying out work under the direction of the local council. In north Queensland and far-north Queensland, the general managers at the Townsville and Lotus Glen Correctional Centres have contacted the respective emergency services representatives to offer the assistance of supervised open security classification farm prisoners.

The WORC program has proven to be an outstanding success since it was introduced, and the type of community assistance following natural disasters I have outlined today is based on the same philosophy. Community based work by prison farm inmates and WORC program prisoners will help ease some of the burden on flood affected residents and property owners and will also have an important rehabilitative effect on the prisoners. To use a well-worn saying, it is a win-win situation. Prisoners put something back into the community and, at the same time, gain a sense of pride in their work as part of their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

North-west Queensland Development Initiative

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (9.43 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House of the progress of the north-west Queensland development initiative. As I have mentioned before in the House, in April last year I announced chapter 2 of the Carpentaria/Mount Isa mineral province.

In 1992, industry and Government came together to form the original Carpentaria/Mount Isa study group. This was a rare experience for Queensland and Australia: rival companies and Governments at all levels getting together to resolve common problems. All told, some 2,000 new permanent jobs were directly created and a further 6,000 to 8,000 jobs in other industries arose through multiplier effects.

Significant improvements to infrastructure have been carried out, and the major projects have begun operations or are close to doing so. The next step in the development process

is called "the north-west Queensland development initiative". This initiative has a broader perspective than its predecessor. This new study group comprises representatives of Government, industry and the north-west Queensland community. I believe the second stage study could result in major investment and job creation on the same scale as the first stage.

I am pleased to advise the House that I recently chaired the second meeting of the principal group. At this meeting, the progress of the individual issues groups was discussed. Without going into too much detail, I can advise that some very exciting work is being done. The business enterprise development group is examining the possibility of developing a conference centre/country club at Lake Moondarra. The agribusiness group is working with the Bynoe Corporation to provide stock holding areas near the port of Karumba. The tourism group is identifying the opportunities and impediments to tourism growth in the region.

These three examples highlight the excellent work that all seven of the issues groups are doing. As well, the north-west development initiative will be represented at the mining expo held in Mount Isa in April. This will build on the successful community information session that was held in north-west Queensland last October. The representation at the mining expo will further inform the people of the north-west of the progress of the study and also advise of opportunities and enable them to have input in the initiative.

I believe the people of the north-west have a lot to offer, and I feel this latest information opportunity will give them further ownership of the initiative. The Government has provided resources for this initiative, but it is also asking for assistance from relevant stakeholders who comprise the different groups. The Government has created this initiative, and it is now up to the principals team, the management team and the issue groups to keep the momentum rolling and to ensure this initiative is as successful as the first stage study. I am very pleased to be able to say that all parties are holding up their end of the bargain to ensure the success of this initiative. I would like to thank the participants for their involvement and encourage them to keep up the hard work.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Q-Build Apprenticeships

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for

Housing) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House that 90 young Queenslanders have secured employment and training opportunities with the State Government's maintenance and minor works arm, Q-Build. These 90 new apprentices will start work later this month with Q-Build—a business unit of the Department of Public Works.

The apprentices have been engaged in a broad range of occupations, including carpenters, plumbers, painters, electricians, glaziers, fitters and turners, upholsterers and refrigeration mechanics. The 90 new apprentices include eight school-based apprentices who will undertake trade training while completing schooling, giving them an opportunity to earn while they learn.

Honourable members would also be interested to know that 42 of the 90 new apprentices will work with Q-Build in rural and regional centres, including three of the school-based apprentices. This underlines Q-Build's contribution to regional Queensland, both in terms of building our State's skills base and the direct economic benefits that flow from the employment of young Queenslanders at the local level.

Once again, there was a big demand right across the State for Q-Build apprenticeships when they were announced late last year. In fact, more than 2,200 applications were received for the 90 new positions. This indicates a strong desire by young Queenslanders to secure trade skills that will help underpin their long-term career prospects. It also highlights the good standing Q-Build has in the community both as an employer and as a training organisation.

In addition to the 90 new apprenticeships this year, it is also hoped that Q-Build will be able to retain 50 existing final year apprentices so that they can secure further training and qualifications. This commitment to provide a total of 140 employment and training opportunities is part of the Beattie Government's commitment to improving the employment prospects of young Queenslanders.

Before the last election, we committed ourselves to use public sector organisations to provide employment and training opportunities for young Queenslanders. We are delivering on that commitment. Most Q-Build apprentices end up working in the private sector at the end of their tenure. So the 90 new apprenticeships are a real and direct investment in our State's building industry.

Our approach stands in stark contrast to that of the coalition parties. The coalition's

policy is to scrap or privatise Q-Build. If the Opposition had its way, the 90 young people starting work next week would still be looking for jobs and training. They would not have the chance to gain life-long trade skills that will underpin their future career prospects.

Q-Build's apprenticeship program gives young Queenslanders a headstart in life. But the coalition, especially the economic rationalists in the Liberal Party, continue their attacks on Q-Build. Their sole aim is to throw people out of work. Every one of Q-Build's 2,500 employees, including almost 330 apprentices, are well aware of the coalition's attitude. They know that the coalition wants them sacked. I challenge coalition members, especially the eggheads in the Liberal Party, to tell the 90 new apprentices why they should not have a chance to gain a job and trade skills. I also challenge them to explain who would train these 90 apprentices under a coalition Government and where the private sector would secure future tradespeople if Q-Build did not exist. This Government will continue to support Q-Build and its training programs. We will continue to invest in our building industry and in our young tradespeople.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Basil Stafford Centre

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: I rise to inform the House that the Criminal Justice Commission has announced a routine review of recommendations from the inquiry into the Basil Stafford Centre conducted in 1995. The review is to be carried out in close cooperation with officers from Disability Services Queensland. The review will be led by the Honourable Bill Carter, QC, a former Supreme Court judge. Mr Carter is recognised as a person of independence and integrity.

The CJC's inquiry into Basil Stafford revealed disturbing stories of abuse and neglect of residents. Five years on, it is important to review the recommendations made and monitor how well they have been implemented. This is not an investigation into misconduct, nor is it an attempt by the CJC to reopen the inquiry. The CJC, in close cooperation with Disability Services Queensland, is simply conducting a review to monitor the implementation of the recommendations by the inquiry in 1995.

As the current Disability Services Minister, I welcome the review and look forward to the CJC's feedback on the progress made to date. The CJC's investigation was conducted originally by Justice Stewart between December 1993 and August 1994. The report was released in April 1995. Action by Governments since 1995 include—

- the establishment of the Official Misconduct Unit;

- the introduction of tough criminal screening of all staff;

- improved training and supervision of staff, including in first aid;

- a reduction in the number of residents by 40%;

- a reduction in the staff to client ratio from 1:6 to 1:4;

- the introduction of quality of care guidelines and a tougher code of conduct;

- the establishment of a family's advisory group to advise on enhancements to service delivery;

- the establishment of a family support project;

- a capital upgrade of the centre; and

- a review of the Coroners Act under way by the Attorney-General.

Though the inquiry recommended that the Basil Stafford Centre should be closed, the coalition Government stopped the process and reallocated the funds available for the closure project. The Beattie Government has provided \$11.6m over four years to relocate a number of people living in the centre to alternative accommodation. As a result of these ongoing relocation programs, it is estimated that fewer than 30 people may be living at the centre by 2001, at which time Disability Services Queensland will work closely with families to identify the best options for their relative living at the centre, whether that be staying at Basil Stafford or moving to a new residence.

The Beattie Government is committed to improving the care of people with disabilities. I look forward to the results of this review and commend the Criminal Justice Commission for ensuring that the recommendations from this important inquiry are carried out. Practices and standards will improve only with vigilance, scrutiny and review.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mobile Homes Act

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: I am proud to announce the release today of a discussion paper, which I will table, which forms part of the Government's review of the Mobile Homes Act. The planned changes to the legislation will address a large number of concerns raised by residents. Up to 10,000 people live in mobile home parks throughout Queensland. More and more people, particularly the elderly, are opting for this lifestyle. They are looking for support and security and consider mobile home parks a low-cost alternative to a retirement village.

Naturally, with the popularity of mobile homes on the rise in recent years, the Office of Fair Trading has reported an increase in the number of complaints from residents. Common complaints include—

rising rents—and a feeling among residents that they may be forced to abandon their homes and sell them at a loss;

rights and obligations in parks—and special conditions such as the right to own a pet;

rent payments when homes are unoccupied;

harsh and unconscionable purchase agreements; and

the need for an improved dispute resolution process.

The Office of Fair Trading, in conjunction with the Residential Tenancies Authority, will conduct a review of the legislation. Preliminary discussions at this stage have involved residents associations, the park owners association, relevant Government departments and local authorities. I have spoken to residents and I understand and appreciate the seriousness of their concerns. Last year, I launched an information brochure to better inform residents of their legal rights and responsibilities. Once again, I welcome input from mobile home residents into the Government's discussion paper. It sets out issues and problems raised by both home owners and park owners and it also sets out proposed options as a starting point for discussion on how we can best address these issues together.

Once written submissions have been received, I will form a working party of key stakeholders to resolve outstanding issues. The working party's recommendations will form the basis of our new legislation—legislation that will ensure a balance between the rights of home owners to a quality lifestyle and the expectations of park owners to run commercially viable businesses.

In closing, I cannot let this moment pass without a word or two about the unwelcome intervention of the Federal Government's GST on mobile homes. I am sure that many honourable members are as disturbed as I am about the discriminatory impact of this tax on mobile home park residents. The letter from M. and S. Hayes of Maroochydore in this morning's Courier-Mail makes the point eloquently—

"Renters of property in the mainstream market will not be required to pay the tax. It seems unfair that we should be penalised."

The letter stated also—

"... we will be paying rent far above what we can afford."

I hope that the honourable member for Burleigh, who has expressed a lot of concern about these issues, and the members for Maroochydore and Caloundra, who also have a lot of mobile home park residents in their electorates, will join with this Government in opposing this tax on battlers who live in mobile homes.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report and Submissions

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (9.55 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee's Report No. 19 on the implications of the new Commonwealth electoral enrolment requirements. The committee believes that these new requirements, which directly concern Queensland under the current electoral arrangements, have the potential effectively to disfranchise a significant number of eligible voters. I table also further submissions received by the committee in relation to this inquiry. I move that the committee's report be printed, and I give notice that on Thursday next I shall move that this House notes the committee's report.

Ordered to be printed.

**OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT MEMBER
FOR GLADSTONE**

Report of Expenses

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND)
(9.57 a.m.): I table the report of the expenses for the Office of the Independent Member for Gladstone for the period ending 31 December 1999.

**OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT MEMBER
FOR NICKLIN**

Report of Expenses

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND)
(9.57 a.m.): I table a report of the expenses for the Office of the Independent Member for Nicklin for the period ending 31 December 1999, as prepared by the Ministerial Services Branch.

OFFICE OF ONE NATION PARTY

Report of Expenses

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ)
(9.57 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the public report of the expenses for the Office of One Nation for the period ending 31 December 1999.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT REPEAL BILL

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition)
(9.57 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to repeal the Vegetation Management Act 1999."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr Borbidge, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition)
(9.58 a.m.): I move—

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

This Bill seeks to repeal the Vegetation Management Act 1999. This matter has been the subject of widespread concern because it represents an unprecedented assault on freehold land tenure in Queensland. As recently as last night all non-Government members expressed the view that this

legislation should be repealed. The Government should return to the negotiating table to achieve an outcome which is suitable to the key stakeholders—the freehold landowners of Queensland.

It is an insult to those land-holders, and to the rights attached to the tenure they hold, that the Government has instead merely pandered to the excesses of Imogen Zethoven and the Queensland Conservation Council. Political deal making, not conservation, has been the Government's self-confessed key motivation in the Act this Bill seeks to repeal. Queensland's freehold land-holders are prepared to negotiate an outcome which provides a desirable environmental outcome, but they will not accept this Government, or any Government, riding roughshod over the rights that have long attached to their tenure. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Welford, adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ)
(10 a.m.): It is not often that honourable members see me rise in this House to thank the Federal Government for anything, so stand by; I have to do it. I have to thank it on behalf of the Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre. The Federal Government has completed its review of small business incubators, a review conducted by the independent firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. The principal conclusion of the national review of small business incubators in Australia is that their funding should continue. Mr Reith said that it will and I certainly hope it does.

The Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre venture started in 1995 and was abandoned by the Beattie Labor Government last year when it conducted a similar review. The Beattie Labor Government is not showing much confidence in itself and small business, and this lack of support was reflected in the statement made by the Premier yesterday morning. One asks why, when the Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre was also selected by the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business as one of 72 small business incubators to be reviewed.

Let us look at its record. The Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre was established in 1995. It stands alone. It owns one site outright. It contains predominantly light industry and is suitable to the availability of

unemployed people in Caboolture. The CBEC itself employs six full-time staff and two part-time staff, has 63 tenants or small businesses operating out of its site, has a 100% occupancy rate and has sponsored 35 businesses which have graduated off site to become established businesses in Caboolture.

Where is this State Government's commitment to the jobs, jobs, jobs when one considers that the excellent achievement of the Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre but for the lack of more financial support could be further improved upon to do even more for the unemployed people of the Caboolture area? The unemployed people of Caboolture ask: where is this Government's commitment and where are its plans for more employment in the Caboolture area? Perhaps we here in Parliament should be asking what is going on with the unemployed people and we should be asking what are this Government's plans in the Caboolture area to actually decrease the level of unemployment in the Caboolture area when it is not funding good and independent enterprises such as the Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre.

Howard Government

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (10.01 a.m.): As I move around the Archerfield electorate, I meet many people who are working, but they have insecure casual or low-paid work and only earn a few hundred dollars a week. I meet unemployed people who are trying to eat, drink and keep a roof over their heads on their benefit of \$163 per week. That is a mere \$23 per day. It is an indictment on the Howard Government that the national wage claim of \$24 per week for low income earners is being rejected by Mr Reith. It is an indictment on the Howard Government that unemployment benefits for adults of \$163 per week are 21% below the poverty line, and for adults under 21 years of age the payment is a shameful 33% below the poverty line.

The Howard Government has given us the GST, a tax system in which coalition members opposite have complicity; an industrial relations system stripped to the bone; cuts to education, child care and employment programs; and a growing divide between the poor and those who are well off. Mr Howard has dumped on States such as Queensland. He has dumped us with the burden of meeting the responsibilities that his Government is rapidly retreating from. State funded employment programs in my area at Nyanda State High School and the Acacia Ridge Community Centre are doing a great job

helping long-term unemployed people. But without more targeted and effective Federal support, many thousands of Queenslanders will remain living below the poverty line. The people whom I represent deserve a much better deal from the Federal Government.

Retractable Needles

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.03 a.m.): Babies being born with hepatitis C are doomed to a life of disease and stigma, and it is happening here in Queensland. Up to 16% of babies born to a hepatitis C positive mother will contract the disease. It is not their fault that their drug injecting mother shared a dirty needle. The horror of liver failure, cirrhosis of the liver, liver cancer and death that can result from hepatitis C, a disease more contagious than HIV/AIDS, is one of the main reasons that we support the needle availability program to provide clean needles to IV drug users.

I wish to table a letter from the President of the Toowoomba and Darling Downs Local Medical Association, Dr John Cox, who calls for retractable needles to be introduced to stop needle sharing. This is coalition policy, and we are calling on the Government to follow. Dr Cox says—

"From a community point of view, the social costs and the ongoing uses of medical facilities as a result of being Hepatitis C positive is enormous. They grossly outweigh any cost that may be associated by having a more expensive delivery system, which is safe and not able to be transferred between people."

He also talks about the stigma of a child being born with hepatitis C. That is why I am so horrified that the Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, refused to consider retractable needles when talking on 4BC radio last week because she said that it would increase the number of needles used as people would not be able to share needles any more. I table that radio transcript. Her admission that 25% of people on needle programs share needles is an indictment. The Government's target should be 100% no reuse, as that is the point of the program. The Minister said—

"... there's another problem with retractable needles and why it would lead to a huge increase in the number of needles being distributed, is we know, unfortunately, that and we would try to avoid this, but unfortunately about twenty-five per cent of users still share needles."

With a retractable needle that would mean they couldn't and therefore while there was a safety benefit on it, the number of needles distributed going out would have to increase by twenty-five per cent ..."

I say to the Minister that that is the whole point: she should be introducing a system which has zero reuse. That is the recommendation of the World Health Organisation.

Time expired.

Bundamba and Woodridge By-election Results

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.05 a.m.): Saturday, 5 February this year, marked an important watershed for a number of participants in the Queensland political process. The day marked a victory by brilliant local candidates in the Bundamba and Woodridge by-elections. Bringing home results universally recognised by all political commentators as resounding votes of confidence in the Beattie Labor Government, Jo-Ann Miller and Mike Kaiser showed that traditional Labor policies, sheer hard work and getting out there and talking to locals is what really counts.

But what about the results for our political opponents? In Bundamba, the Liberal candidate, Michele Cole, scored 14.85% of the primary vote. What a disgrace! But, as they say, it gets worse. In Woodridge, a decent local candidate Irene Allan was left floundering by a pathetically planned and executed Liberal Party campaign, seeing the Liberal's vote plummet to the astonishingly low figure of 8.91%. The Liberals first contested parliamentary elections in Queensland in 1949. The average coalition vote in by-elections since that time has been 44.93%. Both the Bundamba and the Woodridge results are the worst results achieved by a coalition in a Queensland by-election in the last 50 years, and I table those results.

The best that "temporary" Liberal Leader, David Watson, and "Mr Nasty", Rob Borbidge, could do in an outer metropolitan seat in a by-election against a sitting Government was to have one in 11 voters vote for them. Keep up the good work, Rob and David; Santo and Mike are just around the corner. But if we need to have a final word on an analysis of the by-election, then who better to go to than Liberal Party President, Con Galtos. His analysis of the reason for the crashing coalition defeats was, according to the Courier-Mail—

"In both areas people were told that if they didn't vote for Labor, then they would be facing government under Rob Borbidge."

No wonder Labor got such a strong result! In 1998 the people threw the coalition Government out after only 18 months—the shortest Government in modern political history. The results of 5 February show that it will not be coming back to Government for a long time.

Police Service Budget

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (10.07 a.m.): The appalling Budget brought down by the Beattie Labor Government in relation to the Queensland Police Service is now having some disastrous and soul destroying effects. We are now seeing constant media reports surfacing about how police are being instructed to make as many arrests as possible in the first half of their shifts because if they make arrests in the second half they will flow on—

Mr BARTON: I rise to a point of order. No such instructions are in existence. I find that comment offensive. I ask it to be withdrawn.

Mr HORAN: There is no point of order, Mr Speaker. As these stories surface we are seeing places—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Did the member withdraw the remark?

Mr HORAN: He did not ask me to.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member did.

Mr HORAN: I will withdraw whatever he wishes me to. I was going to call him a big sook, but I will not.

What we are seeing is computers in regions not being replaced. In the Central Region 23 computers are out of order. We are seeing the budget impact on watch-house rosters in places such as Rockhampton, where only two people are rostered on duty per shift on the weekend when there should be three. We are seeing the operational side of police, particularly the scientific squad, juvenile aid, the dog squad and the CIB going through a massive process to ascertain whether or not they are actually called out to a scene of crime. There is nil amount of professional management in that. As these budget problems eat in throughout this financial year, we are seeing these sorts of things occurring more and more in relation to police. We are seeing petty little things such as no provision of name tags for those officers who are acting

in a position. Police houses are no longer receiving the required maintenance.

We are seeing the effects of the worst Budget since the early days of the Goss Government. The police deserve better. I have called for a mid-year review for extra funds to be allocated to the Police Service so that police officers can be given a decent level of equipment and have a decent way of operating so that they can attack crime in a professional and managed way, not a scrimping way. We are seeing the results now in the way that the morale is plummeting.

Time expired.

Townsville Migrant Resource Centre

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (10.10 a.m.): I rise to speak about something pleasant. Last week I was fortunate enough to take part in the launch of a new service for migrant women operating from the Townsville Migrant Resource Centre. The recently formed International Women's Group is set to expand opportunities for migrant women at many levels, both personally and in the wider community. Under the leadership of Fereshteh Dooskhah, who is a well known and excellent international role model for migrant women in Townsville, the group aims to build on women's self-concept and self-esteem by engaging in a number of activities which will extend as far as Charters Towers, Ingham, Cardwell and Bowen. Women will be able to come together and do what they do best—share and engage with each other by swapping stories and skills, thus making a fresh start in a new country less isolating and problematic.

The launch at the Migrant Resource Centre was packed with women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, a fraternity of women who share an international bond in sisterhood. The support for each other was overwhelming. This must pave the way for continued encouragement and empowerment at every level of communication. Fakvadin Daliri, the Migrant Resource Centre director, spoke of the aims of the new group, including providing women with a voice in policy making. The difficulties that migrant women face in this area are doubly disadvantageous with their linguistic and cultural barriers. The new women's group aims to address these barriers and will have a close association with the Office of Women's Policy and community leaders who will provide policy advice, information and referral services in a wide range of areas concerning women. The Office of Women's Policy is also committed to

furthering its work with multicultural women and has a designated policy officer who works on multicultural issues and with multicultural women's groups such as the new Townsville migrant women's group.

I was delighted to take part in this event and can see that by managing our cultural diversity this way Queensland stands to benefit enormously. It is through organisations like this one that barriers between people are broken down and a strong community spirit is fostered. This, of course, leads to better community relations and a more cohesive society.

Disability Services Budget

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (10.11 a.m.): One of the recurrent themes when people contact my office is the desperate need for services for the direct care of people with a disability and respite services for them and their carers. The Beattie Labor Government came to office with a rash of promises to provide the world for Queenslanders with a disability. What have they done? How many promises have they kept? How much disillusionment and anger has been generated?

The members opposite promised a number of priorities in their first year of Government, yet what have we found? The centrepiece of their policy was to provide an additional \$30m per year to address the unmet lifestyle and family support needs of people with a disability. To a normal honest person, an additional \$30m per year means that the budget has \$30m added to it in year one, which becomes part of the base for the future, and then a further \$30m added in year two and likewise in year three and so on. That is certainly what the disability community expected. It is what any reasonable person reading Labor's policy expected. What has been the reality? The argument now is that \$30m, having been added to the base once, is therefore a continuing addition of \$30m for each succeeding year. Talk about doing it with smoke and mirrors!

In their first year in Government, Labor spent only \$10.4m of their budgeted \$15m. The \$30m, the so-called promise, was not fulfilled. As I say, only \$10.4m of the promised \$30m was spent in the first year. The disability community want to see the \$30m spent. They want to see the \$30m from the first year, which was a shortfall of expenditure, and no more excuses. Instead, what we have is a situation where the Labor Party have gotten themselves into the position of having to tell the disability

community that they have in fact been sold a pup, because that is what has happened. Labor has sold them a pup as far as the disability services of this State are concerned. We do not find the Government fulfilling those election promises that they made so much of.

Community Jobs Plan Projects

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.13 a.m.): I rise to praise the efforts of regional councils and community organisations that have put in place many worthwhile Community Jobs Plan projects in Queensland. On Friday of last week I visited a number of these projects in Hervey Bay, Rockhampton and Mount Morgan with the Honourable Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Paul Braddy. As a member of the Minister's legislative committee, I was interested in how these projects were started, the outcomes in terms of skills acquired, future employment prospects of participants and the overall benefit to the local community.

The project in Hervey Bay was to construct a landscape walk connecting Fixter Park, shops, playground, barbecue area and amenities block as well as a boardwalk across Martins Creek to Toogum Beach. After speaking with the site foreman, I learnt that the 10 participants working on the project had gained valuable skills and the motivation to complete the task. Some had never used basic carpentry skills or tools before the commencement of the project but were quite competent at the time of our visit. Two of the people employed on the project had already gained other long-term employment during the project as a result of their training.

The Australian Beef Cattle Exposition Association project at the Rockhampton showgrounds was well under way at the time of our visit. The project employs 20 workers who have gained skills in repairing railings, installing irrigation and basic building repairs, and is well supported by the member for Rockhampton. The Mount Morgan Shire Council obtained a Centenary of Federation grant which contributed to project funds for restoration of the historic Mount Morgan Railway Station, the Mount Morgan Cemetery and the redevelopment of Anzac Park. The benefit to the local community will be to increase employment and economic opportunities through the promotion of the tourist industry. The member for Fitzroy is well aware of the needs of the local community and strongly supports these initiatives utilising unemployed people in his electorate.

Lack of motivation is a common characteristic of the long-term unemployed who lose hope when they find difficulty in obtaining worthwhile employment. Having the opportunity to go to a job every day, particularly one that they enjoy, raises their self-esteem.

Time expired.

Organ Donation

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (10.15 a.m.): Robyn Gillies approached me because she was in desperate need of a kidney transplant. My organ donor Bill was introduced in Parliament 15 months ago to help save the lives of people like Robyn. When people indicate their willingness to be a donor on their driver's licence, they believe the information gets to the right people. Unfortunately, it does not give Queensland Transport consent to pass the information on, so it sits on their database and is of no use to anybody. In their report on my Bill, LCARC recommended that immediate steps be taken by Queensland Transport to make amendments to the Traffic Act to enable the donor information from their database to be available to hospital staff.

The Minister for Transport and the Minister for Health stated in their response that there is no need for amendments to the Traffic Act as this can be simply addressed with a consent statement on the driver's licence application; something extremely simple—a form printed and distributed to the Queensland Transport customer service centres. I suggest that an information kit be made available at the Queensland Transport customer service centres. The committee also recommended this. At the Australian Health Ministers conference last year, it was agreed to support the central recording of organ donor status on the Transport Department database to be accessible on a 24-hour basis.

Where are we 15 months down the track? One of my staff went to the counter of our local Queensland Transport customer service centre to inquire about becoming an organ donor. She was told that ticking her driver's licence would not be legally binding and that she would have to seek out some other way of making her desires known. She asked about any information regarding organ donation and was handed a brochure from the Australian Kidney Foundation.

Nothing has been put in place that was recommended to be done by Government. As time is the most important thing to the lives of

people on waiting lists, why are such simple procedures taking so long? After LCARC's excellent investigations and recommendations, this Government has the opportunity to produce the world's best organ donor system. I call on the Premier to take charge and ensure that there are no further delays.

Multicultural Assistance Program

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (10.17 a.m.): I inform honourable members of the Multicultural Assistance Program, which was finalised in December of last year. Under this program, the Government allocates grants totalling \$2.15m to projects and strategies which strengthen community relations and increase social harmony and cohesion through the promotion of multiculturalism. The bulk of these funds went to the second stage of the Local Area Multicultural Partnership Program, better known as LAMP. Last financial year, six councils were funded to employ a worker whose task it is to develop community relations initiatives in the local area of the council. This year, a further eight such grants were allocated. A total of 14 councils across the whole of Queensland will be able to conduct such community relations programs in partnership with the State Government. As a result, it is hoped that there will be a better recognition and more productive use of our State's cultural diversity.

Other grants distributed among 67 projects include the following components: \$130,000 for community development projects, for example, projects that support the activities of community organisations; \$300,000 for community relations projects to support multicultural events such as festivals, seminars, workshops, conferences and other events that promote and advance multiculturalism in Queensland; and \$150,000 for initiatives flowing from the Year of Older Persons that address the needs of older people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

I emphasise that a total of 237 applications were received worth approximately \$2.5m. A committee was established to assess the grant applications in order to ensure the absolute fairness and transparency of grant applications. Clearly, more applications are unsuccessful than those which are funded. I am sorry for the disappointment that this may cause. However, it is important to recognise the effort of all those who submit projects, thereby demonstrating their commitment to multiculturalism.

Time expired.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (10.19 a.m.): I am sure the public are sick and tired of hearing the Labor Party's disgraceful bleating about the GST. The reality is that an election was fought on the issue, the Government was returned, and it is now I-a-w, law. In those circumstances, it is now up to Labor to get behind it and make it work rather than being hypocritical political opportunists by trying to inflame those who do not understand it and fear change.

The facts are that the Federal colleagues of Government members do not have a credible tax policy of their own, and many of their thinking members secretly recognise the benefits of the GST for the Australian economy. Why would Howard put his political career and that of his Government on the line if he was not convinced of its benefits for the Australian economy? Why was former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating—the world's greatest Treasurer—such a strong advocate of it? Why have other Governments around the world introduced it? Why did the New Zealand Labour Government, with the support of the Opposition, introduce it? Surely they are not political masochists who wanted to blast their economies into oblivion and were unconcerned about their people's welfare. Come on! Commonsense says otherwise, and for the Premier yesterday to be crying foul and claiming that the GST was going to ruin his 5% unemployment target is ludicrous. This is the very Premier who forever sings the value of exports and their job-creation potential.

Surely the Premier knows as well as we all do that the GST is a major plus for exporters in that it does not apply to exports and it is the vehicle by which the hidden taxes that currently apply—some \$4.5 billion worth—will be removed. The Premier should know that exporters will be refunded all GST paid on their inputs. In other words, it will allow our exports to be more competitive in the international marketplace, and for a State which relies so much on exports, that surely must mean the potential for more jobs, not fewer. It would help companies such as EDI—and if the Government is worried about EDI; it should be positive about it—which has just retrenched 230 workers. Naturally, business—

Time expired.

Goods and Services Tax

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.21 a.m.): The justification presented to the community by the Liberal/National coalition is

that the GST is a simple, efficient tax system, a system that is good for us all. I cannot believe the timing of members opposite. They defend the GST as fair and responsible, but the GST they support applies on donations to charitable institutions. What is fair and responsible about that?

This is a terrible, mean-spirited application of the tax. Its application was brought to my attention by a constituent who had made a donation to the Queensland Police Citizens Youth Welfare Association and, in particular, the Blue Light Business Supporters Club. His \$100 donation was reduced to \$94.70 with a GST component of \$5.30 removed.

The primary purpose of the club is to fund youth crime prevention strategies in Queensland communities and to assist disadvantaged young people to access PCYC facilities. My constituent was outraged that GST was removed from the donation as it applied after 30 June 2000, so that the amount received by the PCYC movement was reduced. What a mean-spirited tax the GST is. It takes money away from programs conducted for disadvantaged youth in our community.

Donations for worthy causes were never taxable. In one swipe, the Federal coalition—supported by the Democrats, and we all remember that they were outpolled by a character called Nigel Freemarijuana in Woodridge—has made the operations of charities in Australia more difficult. What is more, this action is completely supported, as we have heard this morning, by the National/Liberal coalition in Queensland. They support this mean-spirited tax on charitable organisations whereby their source of funds to undertake good and needy causes is taxed. Previously, donations to charities were completely available to fund needy causes—

Time expired.

Australian Olympic Swim Team Training, Caloundra

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (10.23 a.m.): The Caloundra pool complex is to host the entire official Australian Olympic swim team for two weeks in June. Lessee and well-known trainer John Wallace negotiated hard and long to get the team to Caloundra. In all, there will be a contingent of 45 swimmers and attendant physios, doctors, coaches and other persons. This will be a great window of opportunity for Caloundra—with its wonderful climate, beautiful natural resources and excellent sporting facilities—to be showcased

by the media, especially the TV, nationally and internationally. It is a real coup to get the entire Australian Olympic swim team up there.

The team will stay at good facilities in Caloundra. As well, the official Swiss and Slovenian swim teams, both of which have had previous training camps in Caloundra, will do their pre-Olympic training there. On a number of previous occasions Caloundra has hosted the Australian High Performance Breaststroke Camp, the Australian Institute of Sport swim team and the Queensland Academy of Sport swim team. Attracting the Australian Olympic swim team to Caloundra is another plus for the area. It shows that Queensland, with its climate and facilities, can host teams for pre-Olympics training. We need more and more of them. I am aware that we have already attracted a number of teams, but the Sunshine Coast in particular has the facilities, the climate and places for people to stay. The fact that we have been able to attract the full Olympic swim team to Caloundra is a great coup.

Mines Rescue Team, Blackwater

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): I rise to express my disappointment and real concern about reports that BHP is intending to phase out its underground rescue team from its open-cut mine operations at Blackwater. Mine management is saying that its open-cut operations should not be in the business of maintaining an underground mines rescue team in addition to its two open-cut teams and is using budget constraints as a reason to phase out a rescue team that is an important link in the region's underground incident response network.

It makes a mockery of BHP's ongoing rhetoric about its commitment to maintaining and enhancing workplace health and safety. Unfortunately, history shows that in recent years BHP has the worst record for mine deaths in Queensland. With such an appalling record, the coal industry and the Queensland public would expect BHP to encourage and maintain support for a team of highly skilled and committed volunteers that has the ability to respond to a serious incident that could mean saving the lives of mineworkers.

The team currently has seven members, although eight is considered the optimum number for a team. The team has been told by BHP management that if it loses one more member it will be shut down, but even if the team maintains its numbers it will be phased out within five years. The team has a great record for an underground rescue team that

works in an open-cut environment. It has won two out of the last three zone competitions, has placed second in the State competition and has represented the area in the past three national competitions. It is a team of which BHP should be proud and one that the company should be using as a means of promoting its commitment to mine safety instead of closing it down. The cost of lives and the loss of a mine far outweighs the \$50,000 a year maximum required to maintain an eight-member underground rescue team.

The safety of mineworkers cannot and must not ever be a consideration in cutting costs. I call on BHP to give an unequivocal commitment to maintaining the presence of an underground rescue team at the Blackwater open-cut mine.

High School, Beaudesert

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (10.27 a.m.): Yesterday residents of the northern part of Beaudesert Shire rallied outside this Parliament. There were two reasons why those people rallied outside the Parliament. The first was the fact that they believe that when a Minister makes a promise or a commitment to this Parliament, that promise and commitment should be kept. So they were delighted last year when the Minister for Education announced that there would be a new high school in the northern part of Beaudesert Shire to start in the year 2001. This statement was made in answers to questions, and a considerable media presence was gathered to hear that announcement.

The people in that region were therefore disgusted at an act by the Minister for Education at the end of last year. On the very last day of Parliament last year, on the Friday at the end of a long session in Parliament, the Minister for Education made a private appointment with a journalist from the Beaudesert Times. At that meeting in this Parliament, half an hour after question time, the Minister announced to that journalist that the Government would not carry out its commitment to build this high school. That fact was announced in the Beaudesert Times the following Wednesday. By that method, the Minister tried to escape any criticism and any questioning in this House. People in the Beaudesert Shire are absolutely disgusted that the Minister would make such an announcement, unbeknown to me, at a very private meeting half an hour after question time on the very last day of a long session of Parliament simply to escape criticism from this Parliament.

The second issue of concern for these people is the fact that students are now allowed to stand on buses which travel in 100 km/h zones. We know that under the new weight limitation legislation, sometimes students are allowed to stand on buses as they travel home, but to me it is absolutely disgusting to allow students to stand on buses that are travelling on open highways in 100 km/h zones. These concerned citizens are calling on the Minister for Transport and the Transport Department to rescind this legislation.

Time expired.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Unemployment

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): I direct a question to the Minister for Employment. I refer to his claims, and the Premier's claims, that their 5% unemployment election promise is probably unachievable—allegedly because of the GST—and I ask: was GST a factor in the decision by Evans Deakin Industries to shut down two Brisbane plants, putting 230 workers out of a job, or do those closures and those job losses relate to this Government's failure to ensure a fair go for Queensland workers and Queensland industry?

Mr BRADY: In terms of what has occurred in relation to policy, it is quite amazing that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, who has been in the Parliament for too many years and, unfortunately, was Premier for two years and four months—we were counting—did not put in place any policy in relation to local content. When Callide C was being built—and this is one of the areas that is being referred to—the Leader of the Opposition let that contract overseas. Overseas people gained that contract because the Leader of the Opposition had no policy.

The Labor Government has developed a policy that the Leader of the Opposition never had. The Opposition's great economic rationalist relied totally on the market. He had no labour market programs for employees and he had no policy to encourage local content for employers in the construction industry. This Government has introduced a local content policy.

The Deputy Premier and his Department of State Development is working with my department in relation to that matter. The biggest indication of the Leader of the Opposition's lack of policy was Callide C. The

member for Surfers Paradise spurned any involvement with the marketplace, whether it be on behalf of employers or employees.

The Leader of the Opposition blames this Government. Ron Paul, the Chairman of EDI, said this—

"The Queensland Government has done its best or done a lot towards helping but it just can't place orders for draglines, it's not in that business," Mr Paul said."

The Leader of the Opposition had no policy whatsoever in relation to encouraging business and manufacturing in this State. The Leader of the Opposition had no local content policy. This Government has such a policy and we have taken it to Cabinet. We will be about the business of making sure that in the future people receive a better go from the Queensland Government than they received when the Leader of the Opposition was Premier. At that time, the Leader of the Opposition did not have an Employment Minister and he did not have a local content policy.

Rail Freights

Mr BORBIDGE: It is always someone else's fault. My second question is directed to the Minister for Transport. I refer to the impending deal between a Queensland coalmine and a State Government owned power corporation with the New South Wales Government's rail freight company which will mean the loss of millions of dollars in work for Queensland Rail, and I ask: can he guarantee, in the wake of the Murgon meatworks closure and the loss of jobs at Evans Deakin, that there will be no Queensland Rail job losses associated with this National Competition Policy third-party access related development?

Mr BREDHAUER: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition, given that it was the member for Surfers Paradise, when he was Premier, who made Queensland Rail third-party accessible. The man who stands up in Parliament and accuses everyone else of blaming other people—the master of the half-truth who came in here last night and wanted to reinvent himself in respect of National Competition Policy—was the person who made Queensland third-party accessible.

Let us not forget that it was when the member for Surfers Paradise was Premier that the rail corporatisation review was undertaken. The Leader of the Opposition was proposing to further corporatise QR. The Leader of the

Opposition sat on the report prior to the last State election. We took the report to Cabinet and we squashed it because we did not want to see QR move further down the corporatisation path.

Let me tell honourable members a little bit about the arrangements. Queensland Rail is still negotiating—

Mr Johnson: Who protected QR?

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

Mr BREDHAUER: The answer is: us. The answer is: the Beattie Government. The member for Gregory's rail corporatisation review sat in his bottom drawer—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory! This is my final warning.

Mr BREDHAUER:—and he hid it prior to the last election because he knew that he was taking it down the path to privatisation, just as he was doing with—

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. The Minister for Transport is misleading the House. I find the statement that he made in relation to the Opposition taking QR down the path of privatisation misleading and I ask him to withdraw it.

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

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am dealing with the member for Gregory at the moment. I have warned the member for Gregory on about three occasions with regard to interjecting. I now warn the honourable member under Standing Order 123A.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am speaking to the member for Gregory.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I find the remarks of the Minister for Transport offensive and misleading and I ask that he withdraw them.

Mr SPEAKER: But he has not made the remarks to you.

Mr JOHNSON: He did.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will withdraw.

Mr BREDHAUER: If it helps the member for Gregory, I will withdraw. Those opposite were the people who undertook the rail corporatisation review which would have taken QR further down the path towards privatisation—just as the Opposition did with

the electricity industry. It is all very well for the member for Surfers Paradise to stand up here and posture, but he knows that this Government is stuck with his bad decisions in Government. This Government took the rail corporatisation review and we put it in place so that the people of Queensland could rely on QR remaining in public ownership whilst ever there was a Labor Government in this State.

Let me tell honourable members about the issues in relation to—

Mr Horan interjected.

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

Mr Borbidge interjected.

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

Mr BREDHAUER: Let me tell honourable members about Ensham Resources, Jellinbah Resources and Stanwell Power Corporation. QR is negotiating directly with those companies. QR decided not to participate in the expression of interest process that was initiated by Stanwell—

Time expired.

Interruption.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Bundaberg, I ask members to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a former Premier of Victoria, the Honourable Joan Kirner, AM.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Bundaberg 2000

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade. Can the Minister inform the House of the progress of the Bundaberg 2000 proposal following his recent visit to Taiwan and China?

Mr ELDER: I thank the honourable member for the question because she, as the member for Bundaberg, has had a very strong interest in what will be a good project for Bundaberg if the project can come to fruition either through its environmental impact arrangements or with financing. I have been holding discussions with the major proponents of the proposal, namely Multiplex and Bundaberg Sugar. The member for Bundaberg and I have been conducting these discussions for several months. It is an exciting

project. Whilst it is still in its early days, it has shown that there is interest from the private sector in these types of large projects in regional Queensland.

This is a billion-dollar project and it is based on a bagasse pulp mill which includes a co-generation plant and a synthetic rutile plant. As the member for Bundaberg knows, those types of projects would be a significant boost for the Bundaberg region. The project team will now spend some nine months investigating the proposal and will move through to detailed environmental impact studies.

It has been estimated that, should the project go ahead, in investment terms we are talking about activity in the region of more than \$200m. It will create 300 jobs during the construction phase and, at the bagasse plant alone, 150 permanent jobs. Multiplex and Bundaberg Sugar are enthusiastic about the project. On my recent visit to Taiwan, I had an opportunity to meet with the Cheng Loong group, who are also now interested in the project. That is an important partner. Due to that representation and their interest in the project, the executives to whom I spoke in Taipei last week are now considering visiting Bundaberg in the not too distant future to view the site and look at the proposal in more detail.

The site is about nine kilometres north of Bundaberg near the existing Bundaberg Sugar Fairymead mill. Cheng Loong is one of Taiwan's largest companies. It is in the top 60 manufacturers. Its total sales are around US\$430m. So we are talking about a large contributor to the Taiwanese economy in particular. Its product lines include corrugated containers, display corrugated cartons and paper boxes, tissue paper and household products. It has 10 plants in Taiwan and employs 2,600 people. So we are talking about a company that has expertise in the area of bagasse conversion into corrugated paper and cardboard.

As I said, this is an exciting project for Bundaberg. I thank the member for Bundaberg for her support and the involvement that she has had to date. If we can bring this project to fruition, it will have significant flow-on benefits for the economy in central Queensland. As I outlined earlier, the employment prospects alone are substantial for the region.

Unemployment

Mr SANTORO: I refer the Minister for Employment to claims made by him and other

Ministers within his Government that the imminent introduction of the GST, which his Premier supported, is responsible for the January 8% unemployment rate in Queensland—3% higher than his Government's mythical 5% target. I ask the Minister: if the GST has had such an effect on the Queensland unemployment rate, why is this not the case in New South Wales, where the unemployment rate during the past 12 months has decreased from 6.9% to 5.9%; Victoria, 7.4% to 6.7%; and South Australia, 9.5% to 7.7%? Why is it different from the rest of Australia, where the trend for the relevant time and the relevant figure is 7.5% to 6.8%?

Mr BRADDY: It must be through the transfer of the honourable member for Clayfield from the front of the front bench to his proximity to the former Premier, the Opposition Leader, that he is now adopting the same half-truth policy that we have become so accustomed to in relation to the member for Surfers Paradise.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I find the comments by the honourable member that I have indulged in a half-truths offensive and I ask that he withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: The member asks that it be withdrawn.

Mr BRADDY: Mr Speaker, I withdraw. However, the reality is that the member for Clayfield and the member for Surfers Paradise are now on the same policy/parliamentary wavelength.

The Premier did not say what the member for Clayfield said he said, and I certainly did not say anything remotely resembling it. The member was either not listening or, as the Opposition does, is deliberately setting about saying something that he knows is not correct. The Premier said that, whilst we do not resile from our 5% unemployment strategy and target over a five-year period, with the imminent coming of the GST the confidence level in the community is already falling alarmingly. The Premier made no claims whatsoever that the current unemployment rate related to the GST, and I certainly did not. We are saying that, over this five-year period—starting from when we were elected in June of 1998—for a major portion of that period the GST will play a very significant role. We know already from surveys—and the member for Clayfield knows that this is true—about the lack of confidence that has been building, particularly in the small business sector, and the GST has not even started yet. So the member is recognising the reality that

this has occurred. We also know that the labour force statistics in Queensland and the participation rate in Queensland vary markedly from those of the other States.

Mr Santoro: That's not true.

Mr BRADDY: Of course it is true. We are saying that we have continued to grow jobs here. Whether the member likes to admit it or not—and, of course, he does not—since Labor came to Government the unemployment rate in Queensland has fallen significantly, and it will continue to fall. This State needs a long-term Labor Government that is interested in working with industry and is interested in working with the union movement in creating jobs with confidence rather than a do-nothing coalition group of people who are interested only in market forces and economic rationalist behaviour.

Australian Business Numbers

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Treasurer to reports that many small businesses are still to obtain Australian business numbers ahead of the GST, and I ask: has the Treasurer received any advice regarding the preparedness of the Australian Taxation Office for the goods and services tax?

Mr HAMILL: Already this morning the Minister for Employment has told the House of the despondency that exists in the small business sector in this State and, indeed, the nation with respect to the advent of the goods and services tax in July this year. Yesterday in this House, I discussed the findings of the Yellow Pages Small Business Index, which showed quite clearly that small businesses, particularly in Queensland in the services sector and in rural and regional areas, were absolutely appalled at the prospect of the compliance issues that they face with respect to the goods and services tax. I stated that, at this time, only some 15% of small businesses throughout the country have actually applied for Australian business numbers.

If we do a bit of basic arithmetic, we find that the Australian Taxation Office is going to have to burn the candle day and night simply to try to process applications from businesses if they are to receive their ABNs before 1 July this year. What happens if they do not? What happens to the almost two and a quarter million small businesses that are yet to apply if they do not have their ABN numbers? Is this another case of Treasurer Costello and the ATO lining their pockets because small businesses have not complied with obtaining ABN numbers? Is this the windfall that is in the

GST—a windfall of fines for non-compliance by small businesses?

However, there is worse. We have been seeking rulings from the Commonwealth in relation to a whole host of very important issues facing the community. To give but one example—one that has been of grave concern to me and also to my colleague the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care—I refer to the welfare sector, the not-for-profit sector. We have been asking the Commonwealth to define for us the meaning of "charities". However, no charity comes from the Commonwealth, and no definition comes from the Commonwealth. Yet a whole range of community organisations that provide services as fundamental as Meals on Wheels or domiciliary nursing care do not know whether they are going to be hit for six with a GST—

A Government member: And sporting clubs.

Mr HAMILL: And sporting clubs. It is an absolute disgrace. In relation to educational courses, grants made to organisations, the position of charities, financial supplies to charities and so on, there is a deafening silence from the Commonwealth and a deafening silence from the ATO. Yet this goods and services tax cure-all is only a few months away. The time lines are appalling. The information flow is non-existent. It is little wonder that small businesses are despondent, it is little wonder why the community at large, particularly the welfare sector, are wringing their hands at the sort of obligations that have been placed on them, with no support and no help from the ATO and the Federal Government.

Community Housing Units, Salisbury

Mr LAMING: I refer the Minister for Housing to the community housing units nearing completion at Salisbury, and I ask: do the dwellings comply with local government zoning and town planning requirements for the Salisbury location and, if not, why has the Minister allowed his community housing program to ignore the longstanding practice of ensuring that State Government funded housing projects gain approval from the local government authority?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for his question. In passing, I express my sympathy for him, because he is the only Liberal who has never had the jersey of either a deputy or leader of the Liberal Party. He should not worry, because it will not be long. There are only four others plus himself and

then he is up. I do not think he could do any worse than "Developer Dave". We have a lot in common, I guess, in that—

Mr LAMING: I rise to a point of order. I find that remark offensive and ask that he withdraw.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I was going to say that we have a lot in common, but I will change that. We have not got a lot in common at all because the reality is that I would never ask a stupid question like that if I were sitting over there.

In answer to the honourable member's question, I did not expect someone of his stature to come in here and knock a women's refuge, which is what he is in the business of doing. He is joining the throng of those trying to stop this very worthwhile project going ahead. Even more despicable than that, he is undermining the security of that provision. That is what he is doing. Everybody knows that that institution has gone there for a very good reason. I would have thought the honourable member would have supported it. As I say, I thought we had something in common in that—

Mr LAMING: I rise to a point of order. My question referred to town planning provisions. It had nothing to do with the use of the building. It was not me that brought this up; it is the Minister.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The honourable member will resume his seat.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Those opposite are undermining yet again this Government's policy of providing decent, affordable, well placed public housing. As soon as we mention public housing, the Tories get into a lather. Every single time we want to provide decent accommodation for people who are less fortunate than that mob of parasites over there, what do they do? They buck about it every single time. When we want to build public housing in an area, they say that we need to put a greenbelt in there. They say that we do not need to put this sort of accommodation in the suburbs. "Developer Dave" says that we should build in Mango Hill. I wonder what he will put in the development that he wants at Kenmore. I bet there will not be any public housing there.

Ms Spence: You should buy it.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I do not want to buy it from him. That is his idea of housing in the west. That is as close as he will ever get to it.

Time expired.

Building and Construction Industry

Mrs MILLER: I refer the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to the fact that the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations recently hosted a construction industry conference, and I ask: could the Minister outline to the House the initiatives that the Beattie Government has introduced which have benefited the building and construction industry?

Mr BRADY: I would like to thank the honourable member for her question, particularly because, as I think the more prescient people here have noted, it is the first occasion she has asked a question in the House. I am very proud to be the first Minister to answer a question from her and to welcome her to the House. She will undoubtedly be a very constructive member of this Parliament. She is very interested in employment and training issues. It should be noted that this question relates to work in the building and construction industry. It is also of some interest to note that the honourable member was a former employee in the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and contributed well in her capacity as a public servant. I am sure her contribution will be even greater as a member of this House.

There was a very successful construction industry conference on 21 February this year, with over 150 representatives from the construction industry, employer groups, departments and union groups in attendance. In fact, the honourable member for Clayfield, the shadow Minister, was invited but he indicated he was unable to attend on that occasion. That is a pity, because he would have seen how effective our construction industry is. There is a good rapport and partnership between the employers, the Government and the trade union movement.

This conference was a follow-up on something which we did in Opposition—something that those opposite would never do. We had a practical policy in relation to the construction industry which the then Opposition Leader and now Premier Peter Beattie launched in 1997. We delivered on those commitments. We delivered on an issue which the Opposition when in Government refused to deliver on, despite pleas from the construction industry to set up a building and construction industry training fund administered by the industry. We did it in 1998 shortly after coming to Government. In its first six months, that fund helped create more than 300 jobs and training opportunities. This

financial year the target is 900. The building and construction industry is overjoyed that it has a Government which listens and which does something.

Since the introduction of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative, we have also employed more than 200 additional building and construction apprentices and trainees in the public sector. We have fostered thousands of approvals in the private sector as well.

Time expired.

Dairy Industry

Mr NELSON: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities: can he outline his position with regard to the restructure package being offered to the dairy industry by the Federal Government? Will he do what is necessary to see it passed on to Queensland farmers?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I thank the honourable member for his question. I understand that he asked that question on behalf of the dairy farmers on the Atherton Tableland, who are in the same position as other dairy farmers throughout Queensland who are expressing their concerns about the state of the industry after the Victorian Government decided to deregulate the industry last year.

Let me reassure the House that when I go to the ARMCANZ meeting tomorrow I will be making what I believe is the right decision for our Queensland dairy farmers and also for Queensland. The Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation has made it very, very clear to me that they want me as the Minister to go down and support the Federal Government's deregulation plan so that our dairy farmers can access that package.

As honourable members know, this package can only be implemented if all the States agree to remove the regulation on their own dairy industries. Until now, Victoria is the only State that has said it would deregulate its dairy industry. I believe the situation is quite fluid, and I will wait for tomorrow's meeting to gauge the position of all the States before committing Queensland to anything. I believe that is the position that our dairy farmers would want their Minister, as a responsible Minister, to take when attending the agricultural Ministers meeting.

As honourable members would know, I have consistently pushed the Federal Government to consider the wider impacts of dairy industry deregulation. In particular, I have raised the plight of the 800 dairy workers who are indirectly involved with the dairy industry. I

can confirm that this morning I secured the support of Australian Democrats Queensland Senator John Woodley to push for a broader package.

As the package stands, the Federal Government will impose a levy on consumers of 11c per litre over eight years to raise \$1.74 billion. Out of that, only \$1.25 billion will be available to the dairy farmers. The Federal Government is going to have a \$500m windfall as a result of this dairy deregulation. The Federal Government is not contributing one cent to its restructure package. When I go to ARMCANZ, I am going to ask the Federal Minister Mr Warren Truss where that \$500m is going to go and what it is going to be used for. I will also ask why some of that money cannot be used to help some of those dairy industry workers who would be displaced as a result of this dairy deregulation scheme.

Time expired.

Cyclone Steve

Ms BOYLE: I refer the Minister for Fair Trading to the fact that my electorate office has been told that a number of unscrupulous traders are preying on the victims of Cyclone Steve by charging exorbitant prices for the removal of debris and quoting outrageous figures to repair roofs damaged by the cyclone, and I ask: could the Minister inform the House of the steps that the Office of Fair Trading has taken and is taking to protect consumers from these con artists and low-lives?

Ms SPENCE: I am sure that I speak for all honourable members when I express my sympathy and support for the people of north Queensland who have suffered losses as a result of Cyclone Steve. Unfortunately, in times of emergency such as this, con artists move in along with emergency crews and insurance assessors. Itinerant traders usually move to emergency areas, because local traders cannot cope with the volume of work. The problem with these traders is that they are either taking too much money up front, are not necessarily finishing the work that they promise to perform or are leaving defective work.

It is a sad fact of life that people left in vulnerable situations after emergencies will be prey to these sorts of con artists. In order to help them, the BSA has launched a disaster pack, which will help home owners pick up the pieces and rebuild their lives. It provides some very important advice to home owners. For example, in times of emergency it is possible to waive the 10-day cooling off period in the

door to door sales provisions of the Fair Trading Act. Home owners who choose to waive that 10-day cooling off period should do a number of things. They should check the price being offered and the bona fides of the person offering to do the work. They should get a written contract and they should not put down too great a deposit. Home owners should also ensure that, if major structural work is required, the builder is licensed with the BSA. They should check the builder's BSA card. If they are unsure about anything, they should write down the licence number and ring the BSA to make sure that that person is a legitimate builder. If the builder is licensed by the BSA and the work is defective, we can order the builder to correct that work. If people engage an unlicensed builder, they have very few options open to them if the work is not satisfactory.

We have heard some reports from Cairns. For example, an 85 year old lady rang and said that someone had offered to take away an avocado tree for \$1,000. Another itinerant trader offered to clean up her backyard for \$5,000. These are the sorts of people who are, unfortunately, preying on north Queensland victims. I thank the member for Cairns and applaud the work that she is doing in alerting her constituents and assisting them to find their way through this time of hardship. In the past, the BSA has undertaken a number of successful prosecutions of itinerant traders, particularly roof repairers and painters. We wish to hear from consumers with stories such as these.

State Government Advertising

Mr QUINN: I refer the Treasurer to Labor's policy costings documented by KPMG for the 1998 election campaign. More specifically, I refer him to Labor's commitment to slash the cost of Government advertising by \$48m over four years as a key element of its program to pay for the ALP's election promises, and I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House why the Government has not kept this promise? Can he inform the House also of the impact that this failure has had on Government services, such as health, police and education?

Mr HAMILL: I am intrigued by the keen interest of the member for Merrimac in our election platform. I am also delighted to be able to inform him that, in respect of the Budget that we brought down upon assuming office, we were able to implement in every particular the commitments that we made to the people of Queensland at the 1998 election. Importantly, we have not only done

that; we have also been able to enhance service delivery across a range of portfolios in the Budget round since then. We are now working not only to continue the third-year implementation of our program but also to look at further service enhancements in various areas of the Government.

Prominent among the policies that we announced in 1998 has been our very successful Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program, which has led to unprecedented levels of apprenticeship training taking place in Queensland. That is very significant, because it was part of the far-reaching policy platform that has given us the ability to develop Queensland as the Smart State. It is about providing employment opportunities to young people. It is about the focus that we have brought to bear by way of our educational institutions through our fostering of sunrise industries in areas such as biotechnology and information technology.

All of those are initiatives that have grown out of the very document that has so fascinated the member for Merrimac—the program that we stated quite clearly was an affordable program and one that could be delivered within the economic parameters facing Queensland at the time. That was not just our view; that was also the view of the independent audit undertaken by KPMG—an independent audit for which we paid and which was done very thoroughly. I take the opportunity to compliment KPMG for the effort that it put into running the ruler over those costings. It was not a very easy process. I know that the members opposite have never subjected themselves in Opposition to the sort of rigour which Labor did in Opposition in relation to our election program—a very good program endorsed by and delivering results for the people of Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Woodridge, I acknowledge in the public gallery students, parents and teachers of The Southport School.

Community and Urban Renewal Projects, Woodridge Electorate

Mr KAISER: I refer the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to the community and urban renewal projects operating in the Woodridge electorate, and I ask: can he outline the benefits of such renewal projects in the area and in particular any employment spin-offs that they generate?

Mr SCHWARTEN: At the outset, I acknowledge that this is the member's first

contribution to the Parliament, and I note that it is on public housing—something that we would never get from members opposite. Also, I might add that the first contact I had with the honourable member was on the Monday after the election when he rang up about an 85 year old lady in his electorate who had problems with security screens. That shows Government members' commitment to and understanding of the worth of community and urban renewal projects.

An amount in the vicinity of \$2.7m was recently approved in the honourable member's electorate, which will directly create 40 jobs. The money will be used to upgrade the existing public housing facilities in that area, which is long overdue, as all Government members interested in this subject would know. It is regrettable that only 40 jobs can be created to generate income in that local area. I would like to see 400 jobs created and \$30m spent in that area. That amount could certainly be spent on these projects. I welcome the fact that both new honourable members have taken a strong interest in community and urban redevelopment.

The reality is, as Mr Speaker and other Government members know, that we in Queensland are being expected to do more with less. We will lose \$90m under the CSHA. I have been desperately trying to generate some enthusiasm from members opposite for mounting a campaign to ensure that Queensland's funding is restored to a reasonable level so that we can continue to do projects such as those in Woodridge and Kingston. The reality is that we cannot do more with less. We have an ageing stock. I do not know what drugs they are on in Canberra. Everybody knows that they do not care about the poor and that they are not committed to public housing. However, one would think that they would be committed to the building industry. When the GST arrives on 1 July, the building industry will be struck dead.

Mr Borbidge: \$1.4 billion dollars more.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I note the lack of interest from the Leader of the Opposition and his idiotic comments yet again. Whenever we mention this subject, that is all we ever get. There is never any support to take on Canberra so that we can grow jobs in the building industry in Queensland. We all know that the members opposite hate public housing tenants, so we can understand why they will not support us in that regard. However, I cannot understand why they will not support us in trying to grow jobs in the building industry in Queensland. Yet again they are

silent. The fact of the matter is that we cannot do more with less. We will lose \$90m out of the building industry in Queensland in the next three years, and the Leader of the Opposition laughs about it.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Let the record show that the Leader of the Opposition laughed about the loss of jobs in the building industry in Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Moggill, I also recognise in the public gallery students, parents and teachers from the Mitchelton State School.

State Government Advertising

Dr WATSON: I ask the Treasurer: can he confirm that the actual expenditure on Government advertising last financial year topped \$77m, an all-time record; can he further confirm that the Government plans to spend at least \$308m on Government advertising over the next four years; and can he explain how this Government can waste taxpayers' dollars on petty, self-serving interstate bragging about the Premier's success in seducing a Virgin when our hospitals, schools and police stations are crying out for additional funding?

Mr HAMILL: I do not know the source of the figures that are being claimed by the Leader of the Liberal Party. What I do know—

Dr WATSON: I rise to a point of order. I will help the Treasurer out. It is an invitation to offer by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet issued on 23 February 2000, offer No. DPC 1013/2000.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr HAMILL: I listened to the interjection from the honourable member. However, I believe that in relation to the information that he has been waving around, it is a matter that quite properly should be directed to the Premier in relation to the Premier's Department. Having said this, however, I find it interesting to see the Leader of the Liberal Party wishing to dissociate himself from the Queensland Government's success in attracting Virgin Airlines to Queensland. I note how the Leader of the Liberal Party dissociates himself from the endeavours of the Queensland Government to attract further business to Queensland by demonstrating quite clearly through display advertising that Queensland is, in fact, a great place to grow jobs, a great place to invest.

I know that it is very galling for the coalition to have to swallow the success that the Queensland Government has had in attracting an international company such as Virgin to our State. Why can its members not be gracious about it? Why do they not join us in promoting the State to attract more investment and to promote jobs growth?

Mr Elder: Bipartisanship.

Mr HAMILL: As the Deputy Premier says, why do they not show a bit of bipartisanship for a change, rather than trying to denigrate the successes of this Government in achieving the very thing that this Government set out to achieve: growing jobs in Queensland?

Goods and Services Tax

Mrs LAVARCH: I refer the Minister for Tourism and Racing to the comments of the Opposition Tourism spokesman, the member for Toowoomba North, in this House on Tuesday when he accused the Minister of adopting scare tactics over the Federal Government's GST, and I ask: can she give any example of recent concern being expressed by the tourism industry over the likely impact of what is becoming an even less palatable new tax?

Mrs ROSE: I thank the member for the question because I think it is important that I do put on record in this place some concerns that have been expressed by the tourism industry about the impact of the GST. I made some statements last week about the impact of the GST on the tourism industry, which is this State's second biggest industry. On Tuesday the shadow Minister, the member for Toowoomba North, then accused me of being in fantasy land and also accused the Government of using scare tactics in relation to the impact of the GST. So I would like to relay to the House some of the comments that have been made by a very well respected and reputable gentleman, Daniel Gschwind, who is the Queensland general manager of the Tourism Council Australia. In an article in Tourism Queensland's new industry publication he said —

"Only three months separate us from the introduction date of the GST. Few industries face a greater challenge from the new tax system than tourism.

With only small offsets for tourism businesses from the removal of wholesale sales taxes, it is expected prices in most tourism sectors will have to rise by between four and nine per cent"—

I repeat: between 4% and 9%—

"significantly more than the average price rises predicted by the Commonwealth."

There it is, straight from the mouth of one of Australia's peak tourism bodies: there will be price rises of between 4% and 9%, thanks to the GST. And the member for Toowoomba North says that we are adopting scare tactics! As much as it would love to, the Opposition cannot duck the reality that the GST will hurt the Queensland tourism industry. The member refuses to listen to those who know best, and they warn of the likely impact of the GST.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mrs ROSE: I have met him and he is a very fine gentleman.

On this occasion the warning comes from none other than the Queensland head of a Federal Government funded body which has just been given \$2.3m by the Howard Government to educate the tourism industry. Again, I quote from Mr Gschwind. He said—

"Although consumers have been promised more disposable income after the income tax cuts, tourism businesses will have to work hard to maintain their share of domestic expenditure. Overseas destinations will not be affected by domestic price rises and will become more price-competitive compared with our destinations."

Time expired.

Pacific Motorway

Mr VEIVERS: I ask the Minister for Transport: with the completion of the Pacific Motorway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast imminent and the expected influx of foreign tourists, many of them from Europe and the United States, for the Sydney Olympics who will be residing both in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast and who are used to high speed autobahns and freeways, will he consider raising the speed limit on the new motorway to 120 km/h so that the traffic can be kept moving and the travelling time between the two centres can be shortened significantly?

Mr BREDHAUER: The answer is: no. The reason is obvious. It is for safety reasons and particularly because those people—I see the member for Gregory over there nodding his head—are from overseas and many of them would be unfamiliar with driving conditions here in Queensland and in other parts of Australia.

I might take the opportunity to advise members of the House, including the member for Southport, that as part of our Road Safety Action Plan for the year 2000, Queensland Transport has been working very hard on developing strategies to deal with the influx of interstate and overseas visitors who we expect will be coming to Queensland either prior to or immediately after the Olympics, including, of course, those who are visiting Queensland for the Olympic soccer match which will be held at the Gabba in September. We do expect that the additional people who will potentially be on our roads during this time, especially people who are unfamiliar with driving conditions in Queensland and throughout the rest of Australia, could present particular road safety challenges for the people of Queensland. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for us to consider raising the speed limit on the Pacific Motorway or any other road in Queensland.

Mr Schwarten: Especially when you have Mr Grice sitting behind you.

Mr BREDHAUER: Especially when you have a revhead such as the member for Broadwater or, I guess, the member for Caloundra, although she is driving herself now so maybe her foot is not so heavy, on the road.

The point is that, for road safety reasons, we will not consider raising the speed limit to 120 km/h. However, I would like to assure all members of the House that Queensland Transport, in conjunction with other key agencies such as the Queensland Police Service, will be working on specifically designed road safety strategies. Last year I launched a national driving video, which we have made available to car rental agencies, major hotel outlets and other accommodation and service providers for inbound tourists, which was designed to teach people about the kinds of precautions they should take if they undertake trips on Queensland roads which could in many instances involve long distances over roads with which those international visitors might be unfamiliar.

The answer to the honourable member for Southport is: no, we will not be raising the speed limit. I am pleased to say that last week I announced that the speed limit on the Pacific Motorway would be increased from 80 km/h to 90 km/h. As we progress with the completion of that project, it will progressively be raised to 100 km/h and, along many sections of the road, to 110 km/h. However, that is the maximum speed limit that will apply to Queensland's first smart road.

Juvenile Offenders

Ms NELSON-CARR: My question is to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services and I refer to the fact that the Townsville area has a high number of young people on court orders as a result of breaking the law. Can the Minister please outline what measures are being taken to ensure these young people are paying back their debt to the community?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for her question and for her ongoing interest in this very difficult and complex area of Government activity in her local area. I am very pleased today to be able to inform the House that, as part of our election campaign in 1998, we made a proposal to radically begin to change our response to youth offending. The major part of that is to put in place three very significant pilot programs in Townsville, Logan and Ipswich called youth justice services, which are about tackling the causes of crime at the very early stages and giving young people the opportunity to address the causes of their offending whilst at the same time ensuring that they are held accountable for the crimes they have committed.

These services have a chance of real success only where they are embraced by the local community and where other organisations can offer work to ensure that work is there to be done so that young people can fulfil the community service orders required by the courts. I am very pleased to congratulate both the Thuringowa City Council and the Townsville City Council for the partnership approach they have shown in the development of these services. Thuringowa City Council has put in place an Adopt a Road program where young offenders are required to adopt a major road in the Townsville area and, as part of their court orders, are supervised to clean up the litter on that road on a regular basis. The Townsville City Council has shown a very innovative approach and put in place a graffiti busters team. Young people on court orders are required to attend that team in order to clean up graffiti in and around the Townsville City area. These are just some examples of how these services are requiring young people to pay back their debt to those communities.

Some other examples that are very encouraging in the early stages of this pilot are the capacity of the services to address the causes behind these young people's offending behaviour. The Ipswich service has had a very high success rate to date in re-enrolling young people who have fallen out of the school

system. The Townsville City service has already had an outstanding success in conjunction with the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations in putting young people into jobs. After six months, 13 young offenders from the Townsville service are now in paid employment. In my view, these are 13 young people who we can be confident are not going to reoffend in the Townsville area. I congratulate the service for this work.

I have to say that this service stands in stark contrast to the efforts of our predecessors in the area of youth justice. Who can forget that their entire program and policy measures were a billboard campaign. Many people in this House would never have seen it because they did not live in the south-east corner. But the member for Mundingburra would, because she is in a marginal seat. The billboards went up only in marginal seats. And they come in here this morning and talk about Government advertising! Their entire youth justice program was a billboard campaign. We are about doing the tough stuff. We are about real programs for real people helping real families. The member for Mundingburra is a great supporter of it.

Adulterated Fuel

Dr PRENZLER: My question is to the Minister for Fair Trading. In light of the enormous concerns in New South Wales over adulterated fuels, can the Minister advise whether any testing has been done in Queensland to establish whether the problem exists here. What can the general public do if they suspect any adulteration? What measures are in place to ensure similar instances do not occur in Queensland now or in the future? What action can we expect from the Minister's department against any operators who do adulterate fuels?

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for the question. I received a briefing this morning which tells me that the Office of Fair Trading has established a special task force to investigate whether the problems experienced interstate in relation to the adulteration of petroleum products are in fact an issue in Queensland. The task force will involve a partnership with key stakeholders including the department, the ACCC, the Australian Taxation Office, Customs and the MTAQ. The committee is planning to meet in the next few days to agree to a strategy to best deal with this issue.

We are also undertaking a small random program of proactive sampling to give us a

snapshot of the extent of the problem, or to ascertain if indeed there is a problem in Queensland. Frankly, we have not been made aware that there is a problem in Queensland at this stage. The samples are at present being collected and analysis is being arranged to provide us with this data. We are also liaising with the Office of Fair Trading in New South Wales to learn about their experiences so far. In relation to other possible actions, if we find that fuel is being adulterated in this State, we will establish a hotline for complaints and we will attempt to monitor the regional trends and any commonality in brands or product sources.

It is important to note that, given difficulties in unambiguously proving how and where any adulteration has occurred, prosecutions may be difficult to initiate. OFT and other regulators will take appropriate prosecution actions in due course, but the initial focus is on establishing if there is a problem and how industry can best deal with it in concert with the regulators. There will potentially be a need to also include and involve the oil companies at this time. I am sure I speak on behalf of all Queensland consumers to say that this is a dreadful thing to have occurred to motorists in other States whose motor vehicles have been ruined by using this adulterated fuel. I hope to report some positive outcomes in that in fact this fuel has not made its way to Queensland.

State School Funding

Mr LUCAS: I ask the Minister for Education: is it true that John Howard has ripped another \$7.8m out of the State school system in Queensland?

Mr WELLS: The answer is yes, it is. The State school system numbers increased by 5,000 between 1998 and 1999. In response to this, the Commonwealth Government has ripped that sum of money out of the State school system. This odious, treacherous and perfidious clawback arrangement works like this.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WELLS: Members can look it up in the dictionary when they go home. The proportion of students in the Government sector dropped from 72.62% to 72.19% over that period—a fractional decline, a fraction of a per cent. At the same time, although the fraction of a per cent went down, the total numbers went up. The Commonwealth Government's enrolment benchmark adjustment arrangement says that

we are going to fund the States on the basis of the percentages. Consequently, that sum of money gets ripped out of the system even though we have increased the numbers in the State school system. Using the enrolment benchmark adjustment, we estimate that \$7.8m will come out this year, bringing to more than \$17.5m the amount ripped out of public education in Queensland since 1996.

Current estimates from my department show that, by the year 2003, the unbuffered enrolment impact could be as high as \$30.75m. If the current buffer arrangements remain in place, this impact would be reduced to \$28m. That is \$28m less for the State school system, despite an increase in numbers. I invite Liberal members and coalition members opposite to do something about this. This is something in respect of which they would have some influence in Canberra. It is not in the interests of the State school system that this system should continue, neither is it in the interests of the private school system that this system should continue. The Catholic education system has written to Canberra expressing their concern with the funding methodology, but the Opposition has done absolutely—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr WELLS: I thought I said it clearly enough the first time. The number of students goes up and Commonwealth Government funding goes down. If the member thinks that is right, then perhaps the member could talk to the Federal shadow Minister for Education, but I urge the member to try to get it into his head that if the numbers go up we should get more money from Canberra, not less. The member should take it up with his colleagues in Canberra. Surely he has some influence with those people.

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

MR SPEAKER'S RULING

Motion of Dissent

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (11.30 a.m.): I move—

"That Mr Speaker's ruling that the amendment to the motion moved by the Premier was relevant to the subject matter of Mr Borbidge's motion be dissented from."

In rising to speak to this motion, I firstly refer to Standing Order No. 246, which states quite clearly—

"Amendments to be relevant"

Any other Amendment may be proposed to such Question provided that the Amendment is strictly relevant to the Bill."

The other evening a motion was moved by the member for Surfers Paradise, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, which referred specifically to tree clearing, that is, the Vegetation Management Act. If one examines the amendment then moved by the Premier, the member for Brisbane Central, one finds that that amendment referred firstly to regional forest agreements—that is, the south-east Queensland forest agreements—and then went on to add some words about the Vegetation Management Act. The point is that the amendment related to regional forest agreements.

Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice 20th Edition sets out, under the section titled "Amendments to be relevant", the following matter—

"The fundamental rule that debate must be relevant to a question ... also means that every amendment must be relevant to the question to which it is proposed.

Stated generally, no matter ought to be raised in debate on a question which would be irrelevant if moved as an amendment, and no amendment should be used for importing arguments which would be irrelevant to the main question."

Of course, that is the issue. Clearly, the amendment moved by the Premier, the member for Brisbane Central, was irrelevant to the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Of course, the Government always has the ability to defeat motions and questions before the Parliament. Clearly, if one considers that evening, the Government would have easily had the numbers to defeat the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Instead of doing that, the Government wanted to put in place an irrelevant amendment, and that is what occurred.

There are a number of past examples of this type of matter. On 22 September 1955, Acting Speaker Clark ruled—

"I have had an opportunity of studying the amendment moved by the hon. member for Fassifern, and I point out that the motion moved by the hon. member for Somerset deals with the abolition of the subsidy on tea and the reduction of the subsidy on butter. The

amendment moved by the hon. member for Fassifern deals with a quota for margarine, and I am of the opinion that his amendment is not relevant to the motion of the hon. member for Somerset. I therefore rule the amendment out of order."

The debate goes on from there, with Mr Morris saying—

"... I should like to tell you that I have considered the amendment closely and I think your ruling is not a correct one. I advise you that I will have no alternative but to move at the appropriate time that your ruling be disagreed to."

The point is that that amendment was ruled out of order as irrelevant because, in that case, the motion related to the abolition of the subsidy on tea and the reduction of the subsidy on butter, and the amendment moved by the member for Fassifern dealt with a quota for margarine. That is a very simple and straightforward example of the matter under consideration today. It is a good example. Mr Speaker may smile, but it is his ruling that is being sought to be dissented from, and it is to his shame that this situation has been allowed to erupt. This was a very clear and precise motion.

For the benefit of Mr Speaker I will cite another past example of this type of matter, because I think that he needs to refer to them. They are relevant to this debate.

Mr Springborg: They're not taking it seriously.

Mr BEANLAND: The Government takes nothing seriously because it has the numbers.

Mr Springborg: They're treating this Parliament with contempt again.

Mr BEANLAND: The Government certainly does treat this Parliament with contempt.

On 27 February 1951 a matter arose concerning a police investigation into the Bulimba elections tribunal case, a very relevant and important case at the time.

Mr Springborg: A Labor Party dirty tricks campaign—another one.

Mr BEANLAND: This was very much a Labor Party exercise. On that occasion, the Clerk of the Parliament was requested in a motion to produce to the Inspector of Police ballot papers and a range of other documents. An amendment was moved to that motion by Mr Nicklin, who was the then Leader of the Opposition, to appoint a royal commission of inquiry into the election, of which the Elections

Judge was to be the chairman, to investigate malpractices and corrupt practices at the last State election. That amendment was ruled out of order by Speaker Mann because, again, it was irrelevant to the original motion. That is a very good second example of this type of matter.

I will cite a third example. This one goes right back to 1923. Speaker Bertram ruled an amendment out of order as it was a direct negative of the original motion. So a number of cases, within this Parliament and elsewhere, indicate quite clearly that amendments moved to the original motion must be relevant, that is, they must be pertinent to the matter in hand. I submit that the amendment moved on this occasion was certainly not pertinent to the original motion. The motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition related to tree clearing. It had nothing at all to do with south-east Queensland forest agreements. Clearly, the Government wanted to improve its lot because it is copping a lacing from the timberworkers and timber millers of this State. I can understand why the Government wanted to incorporate this amendment—

Mr Speaker: It's all trees.

Mr BEANLAND:—but the fact is that it was irrelevant to the original motion. The motion clearly dealt with one matter, and Mr Speaker allowed an irrelevant amendment to be moved to that motion. Not only are there plenty of precedents on this matter within this Parliament but also the position is outlined quite clearly in the Standing Orders and Erskine May.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (11.37 a.m.): I second the motion of dissent against Mr Speaker's ruling. Erskine May states that amendments superseding a question—for instance, to substitute an alternative proposition—must be relevant to the subject of the question. Erskine May also states that every amendment proposed to be made, either to a question or to a proposed amendment, should be so framed that, if agreed to by the House, the question or amendment, as amended, would be intelligible or internally consistent. So it has to be consistent.

A while ago, Mr Speaker interjected and said, "It's all trees." Let me explain to him the difference between forestry trees and scrub trees. The motion clearly details mandatory tree-clearing guidelines on freehold land, often referred to as scrub pulling. There was extensive debate on tree clearing during the consideration of the vegetation management legislation. That was the Bill that Mr Speaker

gagged in December. We were held back and had an extra day of sitting, and that is the debate that Mr Speaker gagged.

The vegetation management legislation deals with tree clearing on pastoral and farming land, known as freehold and GHPLs, grazing homestead perpetual leases. Those who watched TV at the relevant time would have seen Cabinet members in attendance at Winton and all the Ministers looking pretty embarrassed. That was all about tree clearing, vegetation management. It was about that legislation.

The other day the Premier was waving around one of my flyers which concerned Roma. This matter concerns the vegetation management legislation, namely tree clearing and scrub clearing. The Minister for Natural Resources has a ministerial roadshow. He is travelling all through the State dealing with this separate issue, not the RFA.

Mr Springborg: Not very well, though.

Mr HOBBS: He is not doing a good job, but he is doing it. If one reads the Country Life one can see the Minister's itinerary. It is easy to discover which towns the Minister is visiting. This matter has nothing to do with the RFA.

The RFA is a separate proposal which concerns the logging of forests. It is the South-East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement. The vegetation management legislation concerns the State of Queensland. The two measures are vastly different. The RFA concerns the development of national forest reserve criteria to guide the establishment of a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system. It has been endorsed by two ministerial councils. It has nothing at all to do with the vegetation management legislation.

The RFA concerns sustainable wood production and wood product industries based on value-adding opportunities and the efficient use of wood resources. It is about plantations and a high-quality wood resource for industry. It is about employment, work force education and training. It is also about the social and economic values of the forest. Honourable members will recall that in December the Premier rejected a Department of Primary Industries impact assessment on vegetation management. These two measures are completely different.

Earlier today, Mr Speaker, you said that they are all trees. They are not all trees. What we have here are two separate pieces of legislation. The Premier is deliberately trying to muddy the waters to gain the city vote. The Premier can twist and turn, speak half-truths

and put on the political spin, but the people of rural Queensland did not travel to Winton simply to stand up in the heat amongst the flies because of the RFA. The people went to Winton because of the vegetation management plan.

The people are rising because they are not receiving a fair go. Your decision, Mr Speaker, does not enhance your high position. The matter has now been explained to you. I can, perhaps, understand your statement that they are all trees. We have to try to get the message across that the Premier indulged in a cheap, political stunt because he did not have the answers.

The Premier was embarrassed by the number of people who turned up at Winton. Honourable members should have seen the Premier's face when the old fellow took off his hat and jumped on it. The Premier's eyes were as big as dinner plates. This sort of thing will happen again in the future—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! May I remind the honourable member that this is a motion of dissent against a ruling; it is not another opportunity to debate the issue.

Mr HOBBS: I appreciate that. However, it is important that we explain the difference. You stated, Mr Speaker, that my interjections were not clear. Forest trees are the big long ones which are logged; scrub trees are shorter and smaller and are run over with bulldozers. The farmers plant grass in the pastoral regions of the State and run stock on that land. Logging is completely different and is a totally new industry.

The amendment is clearly inconsistent with the motion. If we ignore the Standing Orders, if we ignore Erskine May and if the rule of law is replaced by half-smart stunts, it will be a very sad day for this Parliament and for the State of Queensland.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (11.45 a.m.): I rise to support your ruling, Mr Speaker. I was interested to hear the arguments of the previous speaker and I will deal with them in a moment.

The Standing Order that was used to move against your ruling, Mr Speaker, was No. 246. It states—

"Any other Amendment may be proposed to such Question provided that the Amendment is strictly relevant to the Bill."

We were not debating a Bill; we were debating a motion of the House.

Amendments to motions are covered in Standing Order 57, which states—

"When an Amendment has been proposed to a Motion, the original Motion shall not be withdrawn"—

as was the case here; it was not withdrawn—

"until the Amendment has been withdrawn or negatived."

In other words, the amendment has to be debated.

Under the Standing Orders, we moved an amendment to that motion, not an amendment to the Bill. The Standing Order used by the member for Indooroopilly is irrelevant in regard to this particular issue. It was an amendment to a motion. We are entitled to move those amendments, debate the amendment and then return to the original motion. That is what occurred the other evening.

In terms of the Speaker's ruling, and in terms of the Standing Orders of the House, it is pretty clear where we stand on Bills and where we stand on motions. There may have been some spite in the Opposition moving dissent against your ruling, Mr Speaker, and maybe some disappointment. I do not know the reasons behind the action that was taken. However, in terms of the Standing Orders, it was irrelevant.

Let us go the amendment itself. The amendment dealt with the substantive part of the motion which concerned the Vegetation Management Act. In that amendment we also commended the Government on the regional forest outcome. I am pleased that the member for Warrego outlined for the edification of honourable members—for your edification too, no doubt, Mr Speaker, but I assume you already knew the situation and that you were just humouring him—the difference between scrub land and forest land.

I am pleased that the honourable member for Warrego rose in the Parliament and explained the difference because he knows the difference, as do other National and Liberal Party members of this Parliament. If those opposite know the difference, why is it that they go through rural and regional Queensland and mislead the owners of private forests by telling them that the Vegetation Management Act will apply to their forests when, quite clearly, the Vegetation Management Act does not apply to private forests?

My question is this: if those opposite are so pure and they know the difference, why do they mislead the people? It is up to us, as a

Government, to state in this House time and time again, as we have done—

Mr Seeney interjected.

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

Mr ELDER: We have corrected the record. Those opposite cannot continue to mislead the people of Queensland. Sooner or later the people are going to see through the guise that those opposite adopt. By raising these issues in the Parliament, by amending the Opposition's motions and by clarifying the difference between RFAs and the Vegetation Management Act, we are indicating the true position to the people of Queensland.

It is folly to move against the Speaker in this way. The Standing Orders clearly say that we can move an amendment, debate the amendment—regardless of the content of the amendment—and then move on to the motion. That is what we do in every debate in this House.

Mr Seeney: Why don't you talk about the GST?

Mr ELDER: I will talk about the GST, if the honourable member wishes. He should not give me time to talk about the GST, because that is a millstone—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego!

Mr ELDER: I will have to take the interjection, Mr Speaker, because he asked me to talk about the GST. On this occasion I will take the interjection. When all the landowners were in Winton, in the heat and amongst the flies, we listened to them in regard to vegetation management and we have changed our position. However, in Winton, the one issue which received the biggest cheer and the biggest clap for the Premier of Queensland was when he turned to the National Party supporters—and there were not too many of them there—and the landholders, and said, "And while you are down there talking to John Howard about vegetation management and land clearing, get him to remove the GST. Talk about the GST, Mr Borbidge, when you are down there." I would have to say that that probably received the biggest cheer and the biggest clap all night. If it did not, it was very close to it. So if the members opposite want to talk about the GST, time and time again I would be happy to talk about it in their electorates for the next 18 months leading up to the next State election.

I think that the real truth is that when we focus in this Chamber on that continual misleading of people in the bush over the RFA by the National and Liberal Party politicians, it hurts them. The members opposite do not like us examining the matters on which they are misleading Queenslanders. They do not like the fact that Government members continually have to come into this place and correct the record. If members opposite mislead Queenslanders in relation to land management and move motions in this House, time and time again Government members are going to correct them so that the truth is out there, so that the people understand the difference. Today in this House members opposite acknowledged that they know the difference, so why do they mislead the people?

Mr Speaker, the issue is not your ruling; it is political. If the basis of this dissent motion was not political, why is the Opposition advertising to get every National Party member to the Government's Community Cabinet meeting in Roma this week to politicise it? That illustrates the lie that members opposite have put time and time again to the people of Queensland. The members opposite wish to make the issue political.

Mr Seeney: What's wrong with that?

Mr ELDER: The point is that Community Cabinet meetings are about giving everyone an opportunity to attend, not just for National Party members to go there to run a political agenda. Members opposite should be raising the issues for National Party members. This issue is all about politics, as is the motion of dissent from Mr Speaker's ruling.

The fact of life is that if members opposite were really truthful with their constituencies in relation to the issue that led to this debate, they would at least be honest with them in terms of Senator Hill's proposals. If the people do not accept what the Government has done, members opposite should at least be honest enough to tell them that, prior to the election, they had some proposal in their drawers, because they offered up controls on clearing. We have never seen what Opposition members had on offer, because they lost the election. The members opposite are probably breathing a sigh of relief that they did, because now they do not have to implement that policy in their rural constituencies. However, if the members were honest with their constituencies, they would say to them that Senator Hill has not changed his path.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr ELDER: No, I hate to correct the member, but Senator Hill has stated that. It is fact. The Courier-Mail article did not outline what it believed Senator Hill said; it detailed the following exact quote. After we had been to see John Howard, after we had agreed with the task force, after we had moved back to now looking at only endangered species rather than species of concern, Senator Hill went beyond Howard's proposition to say—

"We will be looking at Queensland's obligation to protect endangered"—

and we said "endangered", but he goes on—

"and vulnerable habitats and assurances we can get in both regulation and administration to avoid overclearing."

In other words, Senator Hill is back to talking about areas of concern straight after we had had an agreement with Howard that it would be dealt with in the task force. So when members opposite are speaking with their constituencies, they should at least be honest with them and, when they come into this place, they should at least be honest enough to represent the case, not misrepresent the case and not use Mr Speaker's ruling as a way of demonstrating in some shape or form that they are hurt by the fact that the Government has caught them out fibbing to the bush.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (11.53 p.m.): I rise to speak to this dissent motion moved by the Opposition. Earlier, the member for Indooroopilly referred to Standing Order 246. We are talking about a motion that was moved on Tuesday by the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Warrego has illustrated clearly that this motion is not about what Government members think, it is about what the people of Queensland think. As the member for Warrego said also, what the people of Queensland think was illustrated clearly at Winton a couple of Sundays ago. No doubt it will again be illustrated clearly in Roma next Sunday and Monday, when I believe masses of people will again demonstrate exactly what they think of the Government's vegetation management legislation.

Last night, no mention whatsoever was made of the Leader of the Opposition putting in place an RFA component in the motion in question. That was the Government's decision and the Government's decision alone. Mr Speaker, one of your rulings last night dismembered the Leader of the Opposition's motion, which I believe is very unfortunate. We are members of this House, elected by the people to speak for the people on issues about which they are concerned, whether those people live in rural Queensland, urban

Queensland, or any other part of Queensland. This vegetation management legislation is hurting many people. It will virtually send many people to the wall. People do not demonstrate needlessly; they demonstrate when something of concern to them is hurting them. This legislation is a contentious issue that is creating debate throughout the community and has to be addressed.

Mr Speaker, I refer to some of the rulings that you made yesterday in this place, particularly in relation to my behaviour. Mr Speaker, I for one have nothing but the utmost respect for the Chair and whoever sits in that chair. Yesterday morning, you gave me a final warning when I had not previously been warned. Mr Speaker, this is a contentious issue and I bring to your attention—

Mr SPEAKER: Could I just remind the member that it is my job to keep order in the House.

Mr JOHNSON: Absolutely, Mr Speaker, and I respect that. However, I draw to the attention of the House that, yesterday, there were 46 interjections from the Government benches, but no warnings at all were given to Government members. I find that very difficult to comprehend. How is it that last night in this House for some minutes the member for Logan interjected seven times without receiving a warning? Last night, the Treasurer interjected nine times without warning. Members of this House have a right to expect at least a concession to equity and a semblance of justice from the Chair. I simply suggest that respect for the Chair will be enhanced if the Speaker is able to demonstrate the qualities of equity and justice that I have mentioned.

In returning to this dissent motion, I say that this issue is hurting and burning the hearts and minds of many Queenslanders.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Mansfield may laugh, but I say to him that, as a member of this House, that is an irresponsible gesture. You can grin all you like, but there are people out there—

Mr Mickel: Why don't you say it through the Chair.

Mr JOHNSON: I am speaking through the Chair. Here we go again. The member for Logan is interjecting from other than his correct seat. That is exactly what I am referring to—the unfairness and inequity in this place. If members, who are elected by the people to raise their concerns and demonstrate their feelings and desires in this place, cannot be

heard fairly and squarely on the issues that they raise, we may as well all pack up and go home.

Queensland has a unique democracy in the world, because we can have a robust debate in this place, demonstrate our feelings against each other, yet walk out through that doorway and leave them in here or talk about them in some other place. Mr Speaker, as the custodian of this House and somebody who should take a bipartisan approach to both sides of the debate in this House, I urge you to in future make absolutely certain that you fulfil that obligation to both sides of the House.

We are talking about a motion that was moved by the Leader of the Opposition that is of concern to the general public. In Winton, the Premier himself said that he is going to listen to the people. Today, I say to everybody in this Chamber that we have to have a bipartisan approach to the legislation. We have to have a responsible revisitation of that legislation, put in place the correct procedures in relation to responsible vegetation management practices on the properties in question, and demonstrate that those procedures are going to be beneficial to the community. There are people who have lived on these places for some 160-odd years. They have never raped or pillaged that land. They are the ones who have provided the food and the sustenance for country and city people, and they will continue to do it for time immemorial.

The point I am making today is that we should all have a fair go. Let us be heard. Whether it is Standing Order 246 or Standing Order 57, to which the Deputy Premier has made reference today, the issue the Premier raised in the House yesterday was that of vegetation legislation and the plight of rural people. I urge Government members to revisit that legislation and do the right thing by the majority of Queenslanders. In closing, Mr Speaker, I say that we want equity. We want to be heard fairly. I think in saying that I speak for all and sundry in this Chamber.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (12.02 p.m.): I am pleased to take part in this debate on the dissent motion. An amendment can either insert certain words or omit certain words and/or substitute other words. It is permissible to move to delete all the words of the motion after the initial "that" and make the motion an alternative but relevant proposition.

Mr Seeney: Do you know what "relevant" means?

Mr FOURAS: If the honourable member would listen to me, he would hear my

arguments. My view is that this dissent motion is not about wrong precedents or a Speaker's ruling impacting negatively on parliamentary processes; it is a reaction to the Opposition's inability to make any impact in this House. If one looks at the motion Mr Borbidge moved on Tuesday, one sees that it supported tree-clearing rules. If one looks at the amendment moved by Mr Beattie, one sees a paragraph which stated—

"... this Parliament supports the State Government's plan to proclaim those sections of the Vegetation Management Act that protect areas containing endangered vegetation types on freehold land ..."

Nobody can argue that that paragraph of the amendment is not relevant.

It seems to me that the broadening of the debate to include RFAs is what has annoyed members opposite. In my view, they are being unbelievably precious about this. The member for Indooroopilly and the member for Gregory referred to Standing Order 246, which strictly defines relevance to Bills, not motions. The new words, in my view, are relevant and propose an alternative proposition. A direct negative is what is prohibited. Mr Beattie's amendment was definitely not a direct negative.

Opposition members were able to debate their motion on land clearing. Mr Beattie's amendment did not impact on that. If the Parliament wished to support Mr Borbidge's tree-clearing motion, it would have done so. It would have negated the amendment and then passed Mr Borbidge's motion. Mr Hobbs said that if we ignore Erskine May it will be a sad day for this Parliament. As the Deputy Premier stated earlier, Standing Order 57 guarantees that the original motion is not withdrawn but is debated. Standing Order 57 is the relevant Standing Order.

This House did debate the Opposition's motion on Tuesday night. The Opposition lost nothing. The member for Gregory was very passionate today. He did not talk about Standing Orders; he talked about what he believed in. I applaud him for that. He spoke passionately about tree clearing. He was not denied that right last night. What we should be asking is whether a member was denied that right. Was something done in this institution to deny fundamental rights to members?

The Standing Orders are very clear. Under Standing Order 57, when an amendment has been proposed to a motion, an honourable member cannot withdraw the original motion. That is why when it comes to amendments

and motions the Parliament says that every word after "that" can be deleted and replaced with another proposition. It is fine for those opposite to be passionate about tree clearing, but that is not what the issue is about. It is about whether the Speaker, in accepting the amendment, denied any honourable member the right to debate what he wanted to debate. He was not. He could do as he pleased. Parliament voted as it wanted to.

I am scared. I am worried that, because the Opposition finds it difficult to score points on the floor of this House, it will attack the authority of the Chair and try to do things differently. Nobody was denied his or her right to say anything last night. Standing Order 57 guarantees honourable members the right to debate the original motion. That happened last night. The rules of debate allow an alternative proposition to be put forward. Both propositions were debated. The Parliament chose the Government's alternative. There is no cause at all for any member here who understands the Standing Orders to support this dissent motion.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.05 p.m.): I have been in this Parliament for just over 10 years now, and this is the first time I have risen to participate in a motion of dissent against the Speaker. It is not without some degree of consideration and reluctance that I do this, because I think most members of this Parliament hold the position of Speaker in very high esteem and regard. It is a position that has been an important part of our Westminster process for centuries now, certainly since the time our modern democracy was established in this country.

My great concern at your ruling the other night, Mr Speaker, was that it broadens the conventions of this Parliament. It creates a new precedent. It virtually treats the Parliament with contempt. I am going to explain why that is. We heard a very good contribution from the honourable member for Indooroopilly, who pointed out the precedents and some very strong conventions which have been upheld and preserved in this place ever since we have had a Parliament in Queensland. The honourable member for Warrego in his contribution talked about the difference between the intent of the original motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and that of the amendment moved by the Premier and seconded by the Deputy Premier.

The honourable member for Indooroopilly referred to an incident that occurred in this Parliament in 1955, when a motion was

moved by a member which sought to abolish the subsidy available for tea and to reduce the subsidy available for butter. Another honourable member moved an amendment to bring in a quota system for margarine. There was much mirth, smiling, chortling and carrying on from the intellectual elitists on the other side about some sort of differentiation between those items that they were able to establish in their own minds.

If we use the logic expressed in the utterances of members on the other side when talking about the differences between RFAs and vegetation management, I would say in this case that butter and margarine are what you spread on your toast, so they are virtually the same. We heard honourable members opposite say, "The issue of RFAs and vegetation management on freehold land is all about trees." That is a bit like debating a motion on the sugar industry and having an honourable member wanting to add some words about llama farming and then arguing that it is all about primary industry.

We have to have specific debates on specific motions in this place. It is like the Opposition expressing concern about the lack of an operating theatre in the Chamber and the Government wanting to pat itself on the back about Lang Park. The Government could say that it is all about buildings. That is an absolute nonsense. The amendment clearly should be relevant to the motion originally moved. The first part of the Premier's amendment was not relevant to the original motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Hamill: The first part.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The first part was not relevant.

Mr Hamill: So the amendment was not relevant.

Mr SPRINGBORG: No, the first part of the amendment was not relevant to the motion which was moved by the Leader of the Opposition. The second part, in which the Government sought to pat itself on the back with regard to vegetation management in the State, was very much relevant. I do not have a problem with that, but I do have a problem with the first part.

Let us look at the precedents in this place. I would have thought that the member for Ipswich, who spent so much time at Oxford, in the country from where our democracy came, would have had some respect for precedent and the conventions of Parliament established so long ago on the fields with King

John. However, he does not. He treats this Parliament with the same contempt that we see from other honourable members opposite. The honourable member, a Rhodes scholar, pretends to be an intellectual.

We have demonstrated some very good points today and, as I said, we do not have any problem with the second part of the amendment. The first part of the amendment is the issue. We were able to debate the substantive motion, but we are concerned about the preservation of Standing Orders and the conventions of this place laid down by Erskine May. In his ruling, the Speaker moved substantially away from those. As I said, a number of examples were given in this place by the honourable member for Indooroopilly in respect of both the form of motions moved previously in this Parliament and sought to be amended and also legislation. They are very relevant. It is very easy to scoff and say, "It's all trees", but at the end of the day this ruling degrades the very important conventions that have been in place in this Parliament for a long time.

We know what happens when a wrong ruling is made and upheld in this place. Unfortunately, it is then used as a precedent by a future Government. Rightly, Speakers can establish precedent and, in many cases, it is right. However, when a wrong precedent is established it can be used by a future Government in this State. This will encumber the Parliament for a long time—perhaps even 50 or 100 years. Earlier the Deputy Premier broadened this debate by referring to some of the other issues that the Parliament debated the other day. He said that we were deliberately misleading the land-holders of this State by saying that it applied to farm forestry.

When we are talking about farm forestry, we are talking about areas of vegetation—that is, trees, whether softwood or hardwood—which are naturally occurring on their property and which they have thinned and managed for the purpose of accruing some sort of financial advantage at a future time. That is fair enough. He said that we were being misleading by saying that this legislation was not applicable to that. The legislation passed by this Parliament in December last year was very applicable to those sorts of situations. It stated that a code of practice had to be developed for the commercial harvesting of timber on freehold land.

Mr Seeney: At the Minister's discretion.

Mr SPRINGBORG: As the honourable member for Callide said, that is at the Minister's discretion.

The Deputy Premier accuses us of half-truths. I suggest that, if he wishes to find the master of half-truths, he should look in the mirror the next time he combs his hair in his office.

Mr Sullivan: This is about the motion, is it?

Mr SPRINGBORG: This has as much to do with the motion as that which he raised in his contribution. He was speaking about the opportunity for Country Cabinet to address these issues. I wish to quote a letter from the Premier printed in Queensland Country Life. The letter makes the same points raised by the Deputy Premier. The letter refers to the same sort of thing the Deputy Premier was speaking about. In his letter - prepared at taxpayers' expense—the Premier stated that regrowth vegetation, except in areas declared by the Minister to be of high nature conservation value, is permitted; in other words, it is ridgy-didge. That is not true. It is another half-truth. He knows full well that the legislation states that, if it is over 75% of its original height or 50% of its original canopy cover, it is covered. For six or seven minutes of his contribution he accused us of telling untruths, yet he and the Premier, who is supposed to be upholding the principles of honesty and integrity in this State, are writing letters such as this one which contradicts the legislation, which includes among its various provisions a section stating that not only ministerial discretion prohibits the clearing of regrowth; under the legislation it is proscribed once it meets a certain set of criteria.

Our motion dealt specifically with the repeal of legislation. The Government said that it would not be proclaimed in its entirety—only the parts that the Government chose to have proclaimed. It was not about RFAs; the debate concerned repealing it, because an automatic proclamation clause comes into place a year and one day after assent. If the Government seeks to delay it, it can be two years and one day. That was the basic concern that we raised. There is a difference.

As I said at the outset, the first part of the amendment was bad; the second part was fine. One related to vegetation management, and we were happy to have that debate, knowing full well that we would lose. However, the first part of the amendment sought to obscure the issue of regional forest agreements with vegetation management. They are two totally separate issues. One had its genesis in the establishment of a world-class reserve system, with aspirations and principles agreed to by Goss and Keating back

to the early part of the 1990s and carried through by the Borbidge Government and this Government. However, the vegetation management issue is totally the prerogative of this Government. These two separate issues have been tied together. There is enough confusion in the community. The Government's only defence in respect of vegetation management is to confuse these two issues. Even interviewers are confused and are speaking about RFAs and vegetation management on freehold land in the same breath. Because the Government cannot justify its position on vegetation management on freehold land, it has sought to confuse the two issues.

Time expired.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.15 p.m.): It always worries me when the National Party decides to recount history and the history of the Parliament to try to justify what would otherwise be a case which has no justification whatsoever. It was with some pity that I learnt from the Deputy Leader of the National Party that the great tradition which he was seeking to uphold today was that of King John and his Parliament. Not wishing to be too much of a student of history, I remind the honourable member that, if that is the substance of his argument in relation to the history of Parliament, the substance of his argument in relation to the debate on the Standing Orders is probably equally weighty. My recollection of history is somewhat at variance to that of the honourable member for Warwick. I do not recall King John actually having a Parliament to worry about. He had a group of barons who forced him to reluctantly sign a document to ensure that those barons had their rights respected.

Mr Foley: More Runnymede than Westminster.

Mr HAMILL: I think he was just running away with the truth. In fact, the not-so-learned member might care to brush up on his parliamentary history and spend some worthwhile time in the Parliamentary Library. I suggest recourse to the name De Montfort might be useful in enabling the honourable member for Warwick to broaden his understanding of parliamentary tradition and origins. But perhaps I digress just a little.

The debate is one of sham and grandstanding rather than substance. I have been a member of this House since 1983.

Mr Hobbs: You should know better.

Mr HAMILL: I do know better. The honourable member has been here only since

1986. Unfortunately, he has learnt nothing in the time that he has been here in respect of the Standing Orders of the Parliament.

If one has recourse to the Standing Order relied upon by the member for Indooroopilly in moving his dissent motion, one discovers the whole fragile basis on which the Opposition bases its case. The Standing Order in question—Standing Order 246—states—

"Any other Amendment may be proposed to such Question provided that the Amendment is strictly relevant to the Bill."

There surely are two warning lights that even the dimwitted members sitting opposite may well have noticed if they had cared to read the Standing Order. One was the last word in that Standing Order—"Bill". Perhaps it may have caused them to reflect that that Standing Order relates to questions pertaining to the passage of Bills in the Chamber. The second warning light may well have been seen by honourable members opposite when they saw the words "to such Question". To what question was this Standing Order referring? It is the question referred to in Standing Order 244, that is, the question for the second reading of the Bill. The honourable members opposite are relying upon a Standing Order which is part of Chapter 17 of the Standing Orders dealing with procedures for public Bills.

Mr Sullivan: Not notices of motion.

Mr HAMILL: Not notices of motion before the House. If the honourable member wishes to deny that, I suggest that he obtain a copy of the appropriate Standing Orders.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr HAMILL: Is the member opposite still the shadow Attorney-General? I do not know. I hope that he does know the difference between annotations, amendments and such. I hope that he understands what annotations are if he is going to be citing matters in relation to the Criminal Code some time in the future when we debate those types of matters in the House.

I do suggest that the honourable member and other honourable members opposite further consult the Standing Orders and, in this case, the relevant Standing Orders. The relevant Standing Orders in this matter are those to be found from Standing Order 38 through to Standing Order 57 which deal with the proper procedures for dealing with motions in the House. Those Standing Orders provide for amendments to be proffered in relation to those motions, not questions that are being put to the House—questions such as "That the

Bill be now read a second time" or "That the Bill be read a first time"—but rather motions before the House, motions which have been put forward for debate, not public Bills.

The other area which I suggest the member for Indooroopilly and his ill-read colleagues might like to have reference to, of course, is Standing Orders 88 through to 103. I would have thought that the Opposition may well have liked to consult those areas of the Standing Orders because they are the ones that actually refer to amendments. As anyone who has sat in this House for any length of time would know, amendments in relation to motions before the House can be quite extensive.

Indeed, I recall that on many an occasion when members opposite were in Government they put forward amendments to motions which were moved by me and others when we were in Opposition. Those amendments that were put forward by the National and Liberal Parties in Government would often seek to delete all words after "that" and turn a motion of criticism into one of plaudits for the Government of the day. Never was there a suggestion from honourable members opposite that such an activity was, in fact, something which was contrary to the Standing Orders of the House. No-one from this side of the House questioned their right to move such amendments. In fact, if one has recourse to the record of debate in respect of the motion in question, one finds that the amendment that was, in fact, moved by the Premier not only embraced the particular subject matter of the original motion but included other relevant material in the same way that we have seen similar amendments moved by members such as the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Indooroopilly and others when they were in Government.

What we have here is a classic case of "don't do as I do, do as I say" or, should I say, "don't do as we have done, let us change the rules now when the situation does not suit us, when we know that the force of our argument will be found wanting when the vote is taken." Frankly, I think that the Opposition should go back to Standing Order 101 and brush up on its parliamentary procedure and try to conduct debates in a rational and proper way, rather than trying to bend the rules and disrupt the proper business of the Parliament by bringing on such frivolous motions of dissent from the Speaker's ruling as we are currently entertaining here today.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (12.24 p.m.): I rise to support this motion of dissent that is

before the Parliament today. It is an attempt to have a fair go brought about concerning the Vegetation Management Bill. By anybody's interpretation, the passage of this particular legislation through this Parliament cannot be considered to have been fair, and the people who are most affected by it cannot be considered to have had a fair go—absolutely not. This legislation was forced through this Parliament before Christmas without debate—with no debate at all, with no real consultation with the land-holders. Every time we have tried to raise this issue for debate again, we have seen a strategy of confusion, we have seen a strategy of obstruction, we have seen a strategy from the Government to try to get out of debating the essential points of the legislation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is a dissent motion. This is not the motion regarding tree clearing or vegetation management.

Mr SEENEY: Absolutely! This is the dissent motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will address the motion.

Mr SEENEY: The Government's strategy of hiding from debate on this particular legislation has been aided and abetted by a series of rulings from you, Mr Speaker, and it is those rulings that have led to this motion of dissent.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is an adverse reflection on the Chair.

Mr SEENEY: This motion of dissent—

Mr SPEAKER: There is a limit to how far a member should go when speaking to a motion of dissent. The member can dissent from my ruling but, in doing so, he should not reflect adversely on the Chair. I ask him to have some regard for that. He is a new member here; I appreciate that he does not understand the conventions of the House, but he should not reflect adversely on the Chair when speaking to a motion of dissent.

Mr SEENEY: I am a new member here. In the short time that I have been here I have found it very difficult to understand the level of unfairness that is reflected in the rulings from the Chair. That has not been more evident than in this particular instance in relation to which a motion of dissent from the Speaker's ruling has been moved. The unfairness which has been demonstrated over a long period and which has culminated in this motion of dissent has been used by the Government to avoid legitimate debate on a legitimate issue that has a huge impact on a large area of Queensland.

Mr Sullivan: You're a disgrace.

Mr SEENEY: Members on this side of the House are restricted when speaking during debates when the behaviour of Government members, such as that being exhibited by the Government Whip at the moment, goes unnoticed by you, Mr Speaker, over and over again. I and other members on this side of the House have been warned numerous times. I refer honourable members to the Hansard record to try to find similar warnings that have been issued to members on the Government side. That in itself is an indication of the unfairness with which the Speaker's position has been used to prevent debate, to prevent exposure of a whole range of issues, and it has culminated in the way that this particular piece of legislation was passed.

This legislation is critically important to a large number of my constituents and is critically important to a large number of people throughout rural and regional Queensland, yet every time we try to debate it, every time we try to have some discussion here in this Parliament, those attempts are denied and thwarted by rulings from the Chair, and that has led to this motion of dissent quite properly today. This Parliament should carry this motion of dissent.

The role of this Parliament, as I understand it, is to bring the Government to account. The Government can go out there and play its silly tricks in the media; the Premier and the Deputy Premier can go out there and tell their untruths and cast their misinformation about, but here in this Parliament they are to be called to account. My role as an Opposition member is to represent the people who are going to be affected by their untruths and by their dishonesty. This is my opportunity to call the Government to account. That is my role as well as the role of the other Opposition members. Our opportunity to call the Government to account on this particular issue has been thwarted and denied by a ruling from the Speaker. It is that ruling that is being dissented from here today, and it is being dissented from quite properly because that ruling is the culmination of a long period of unfairness in the administration of this place—an unfairness that is leading to the very role of this Parliament being thwarted and denied.

I have enormous respect for the institution of Parliament. I have enormous respect for the position of the Chair. I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that that same respect has not been demonstrated in the actions of the Government collectively or in the actions of

individual Government members. It is a measure of their embarrassment—

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for debate on this motion has expired.

Question—That Mr Beanland's motion of dissent be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 40—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalglish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Resolved in the **negative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Gladstone, I recognise in the public gallery students of Our Lady of the Rosary School from Caloundra.

OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Report of Expenses

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (12.35 p.m.): I wish to resubmit my report of expenses for the Independent member for Gladstone for the period ended 31 December 1999 with all signatures attached.

MR SPEAKER'S RULING

Motion of Dissent

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (12.36 p.m.): I move—

"That Mr Speaker's ruling that the amendment to the second reading of the Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Repeal Bill moved by Mr Borbidge was out of order be dissented from."

Last evening in this place the member for Surfers Paradise, the Leader of the Opposition, moved an amendment to legislation under debate. That amendment was to the motion for the second reading of that legislation. The Leader of the Opposition moved a motion to delete all words after Bill and insert—

"... be referred to an All Party Select Committee to consider and report on the conduct, impact and future of National Competition Policy in Queensland.

The Select Committee to comprise four members nominated by the Government, three nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and one nominated by and from among the Independents.

And to report to the House by 1 September 2000."

That amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition was accepted by the Deputy Speaker.

Some time after the Leader of the Opposition had finished his speech, the deputy leader of the coalition, the member for Moggill, the Leader of the Liberal Party, rose to second the amendment to the Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Repeal Bill that was then under debate in the Parliament. When the deputy leader of the coalition finished his speech, Mr Speaker came into this Chamber and informed the House that—

"Before anybody else speaks on this, I am going to make a ruling on this matter. I have just come into the House. I have conferred with the Clerk and I have also brought my own decisions into this. I rule now that this motion is out of order."

Some time after this amendment had been accepted to the Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Repeal Bill in the second reading debate, Mr Speaker ruled that the amendment was out of order. From the comments that were then made, I understand that the Speaker indicated to the Parliament that the reason for that decision was that Standing Order 248 states—

"A Bill, having been read the Second time, shall be ordered to a Committee of the Whole House, either then or at a future time, or it may first be referred to a Select Committee."

Mr Speaker indicated that there was no select committee to which the member had referred the matter, that no select committee had been appointed. My point is that the member for Surfers Paradise, the Leader of the Opposition, indicated in his amendment the establishment of a select committee. The amendment stated quite clearly—

"The Select Committee to comprise of four members nominated by the Government, three nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and one

nominated by and from among the Independents."

The amendment also gave the date the committee was to report. That is quite clear. I contend very clearly that that is in fact in order when Bills are being amended in relation to Standing Order 245, which allows members to amend the second reading. The facts are that Mr Borbidge's amendment sought to establish a select committee. The Standing Orders do not go anywhere near saying that amendments have to spell out who is going to be on that select committee.

Chapter XIII of the Standing Orders, Appointment and Conduct of Committees, states very clearly what the rules are in relation to committees. Those committees include select committees, as well as committees of the House. For example, rule 182 states—

"A Committee shall consist of no more than 8 Members."

What was proposed by the Leader of the Opposition was a select committee of no more than eight members.

The actual appointment of members can occur at some later time, as was envisaged by the Leader of the Opposition. It is quite clear from his amendment that the Government has to appoint four members, the Opposition three and that an Independent be appointed. Time has to be given in order for the parties to be able to do that. It is quite clear that the amendment was in fact proper and correct in terms of the Standing Orders. After all, there are many committees established in this place where the appointment of committee members occurs at some other point in time.

On a number of occasions last year the Parliament referred matters to standing committees. I recollect that the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee was the recipient of two matters last year. One of those matters related to the Transplantation and Anatomy Act Amendment Bill on 1 April 1999. The member for Maroochydore moved an amendment to the second reading of that Bill that the matter be referred to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee for consideration and report back to the House on 1 August 1999. That amendment was accepted and duly passed by the Parliament. The second occasion related to the Electoral Amendment Bill, on 1 December 1999. Likewise, on that occasion the member for Warwick, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, moved an amendment to the Electoral Amendment Bill to refer it to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review

Committee. In due course, that amendment was also carried on the second reading. There can be no contention that it is not covered under Standing Order 245, because clearly it is, and it has been covered by this Parliament during this session on at least two occasions and perhaps others.

As to the point made by Mr Speaker that no select committee was first established—the select committee was sought to be established by this motion. I accept that, if the motion had not included reference to a select committee, Mr Speaker would have been correct and his ruling would have been in order. But I contend that it was not in order, because that select committee is covered by the amendment. Of course, the amendment had been accepted by the Deputy Speaker. No doubt he had considered these matters in the first instance.

I noticed that it was not until some minutes after the amendment had been moved that the Treasurer became very agitated indeed. I paid great attention to the Treasurer's agitation. I was in the Chamber at that time. He started to race around the Chamber and talk to various people. He left the Chamber a couple of times and came back in. The Treasurer can become as agitated as he likes about this amendment, but the fact is that it was in its proper form when it was moved. Regardless of whether or not the Treasurer wants to have to debate it, he can vote against it. He can do as he pleases. He may even vote for it, as I thought he might have, to bring this matter before a select committee of the Parliament. For his own reasons, he did not want to do that. But he did not even want to vote against it, as the Government had the option to do.

I believe it is incorrect to say that the amendment is not in its correct form and is not covered by the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders contain a chapter on the appointment and conduct of parliamentary and select committees. There is nothing under that chapter which indicates that this amendment is not covered by it. In fact, far from it; the reverse is the case.

The Opposition clearly believes that this amendment is in order and is an appropriate course of action to take. We hear so much huff and puff from this Government about competition policy. Suddenly it does not want these matters to be aired. What does it have to hide, or is it all just huff and puff? Why does the Government not want a select committee appointed before which various Federal officials can debate this matter? There is obviously a bit more to it, and it is evident from

the Treasurer's agitation that he is trying to hide something. I strongly urge all members to support this motion of dissent.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (12.44 p.m.): I rise to support and second the motion moved by the member for Indooroopilly.

It is important to re-establish the sequence of events that occurred yesterday in evaluating whether or not Mr Speaker acted properly last night when he ruled the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition out of order. The sequence of events went like this: the Leader of the Opposition discussed the proposed amendment with the Premier earlier that day. The Leader of the Opposition gave the Government time to consider the proposal. Secondly, the amendment had been discussed with the Clerk of the Parliament, and the Leader of the Opposition had received certain advice. Thirdly—and this is pretty important—at the beginning of Mr Borbidge's speech yesterday, he foreshadowed the following motion—

"That this House establish an all-party select committee to consider and report on the conduct, impact and future of National Competition Policy in Queensland ..."

He then went on to explain what the select committee should be comprised of, in terms of it being four members from the Government, three from the Opposition and one from the Independents.

The important point is that that motion was then tabled in this Parliament. Then the Clerk, together with the Deputy Speaker, the member for Ashgrove—a person who has been here a considerable period, has served the community in two different electorates and who was the Speaker of this House for six and a half years—sat and discussed that motion. Then, in handwriting, I believe it was the Clerk—maybe it was the Deputy Speaker—who altered the motion, and that motion came back to the Leader of the Opposition to be formally moved. Later in his speech, Mr Borbidge formally moved the motion that had been written out.

That sequence of events is important. The Opposition was being advised by the Clerk. The Opposition was being advised after discussions between the Clerk and the Deputy Speaker, a former Speaker of this House, somebody who has a reasonable amount of experience, I would proffer; somebody for whom I have the greatest respect. He was the one who then recognised the motion proposed

by the Leader of the Opposition. At no time during that whole process was there any question at all about this motion not being in a proper form. There was never any suggestion that this motion was not consistent with the Standing Orders.

Then you came in, Mr Speaker, without having been in the Chamber, without the benefit of knowing what went on. You said—

"Before anyone speaks, I am going to make a ruling on this matter. I have just come into the House. I have conferred with the Clerk. I have also brought my own decisions into this. I now rule this motion out of order."

I want to emphasise those words—

"I have conferred with the Clerk. I have also brought my own decisions into this."

Did the Clerk of the Parliament give different information to the Leader of the Opposition? When the Clerk was discussing the issue and advising the Deputy Speaker, did he provide different advice to the Deputy Speaker than he provided to you, Mr Speaker? I cannot answer that; I was not a party to those discussions. But I would find it remarkable if that is the case.

The Leader of the Opposition tabled the original motion. Based upon advice, he amended what he was originally putting forward. The Deputy Speaker of the Parliament—the former Speaker for six and a half years—accepted the advice of the Clerk. We then have you, Mr Speaker, making a different decision. I think your decision was wrong. I think your decision was not consistent with the information with which we were provided. It is not consistent with the decision made by the former Speaker—the current Deputy Speaker.

The decision was not even supported by Standing Order 248 to which you alerted the House, Mr Speaker. Standing Order 248 reads—

"A Bill, having been read the Second time, shall be ordered to be committed to a Committee of the Whole House, either then or at a future time, or it may first be referred to a Select Committee."

Nowhere in that Standing Order does it say that a select committee has to exist. Your premise, Mr Speaker, is that the select committee has to exist before this House can refer a Bill to a select committee. The fact of the matter is that the motion contained the necessary elements. It was an integral part of the motion.

We are all aware that this House is the master of its own destiny. That is why, despite the Standing Orders, a member—and this is often done by the Leader of the House—can come into this place and move a motion, notwithstanding the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders act as a guide to conducting the business of this place, but they are not the be-all and end-all of everything that goes on in the House. The Standing Orders cannot necessarily anticipate every aspect. One has to interpret the Standing Orders in a way which allows reasonable debate.

There is nothing in the Standing Orders which precludes the House from establishing a select committee at the same time as it is referring a Bill to a select committee. There is nothing in *Erskine May* that prohibits that. There is nothing in the House of Representatives Practice that prohibits that. The House is the master of its own destiny and has the right to refer a Bill to a select committee. It also has the right to establish a select committee at that time. If that is not the case, the Standing Orders should state specifically that Bills can only be referred to committees which have already been established. In that event, we would have to move suspension of that Standing Order. But that is not the case here.

Mr Speaker, you have interpreted this particular Standing Order in a way which is not supported by the advice that we were given by the Deputy Speaker. This matter was not brought to the attention of any honourable member. It was a decision that you made, Mr Speaker, despite the advice given to honourable members. It was a decision which ignored the ability of this House to be master of its own destiny. The decision was made in order to protect the Treasurer who, for some reason, decided that he did not like the motion.

Mr Hamill: I wasn't seeking protection from anybody.

Dr WATSON: You should have been seeking protection last night. The decision was made despite the fact that the Leader of the Opposition had discussed the situation earlier with the Premier. The Premier indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that he was prepared to look at it and discuss it with the Leader of the House. There was nothing in your ruling, Mr Speaker, which indicated that you discussed this matter with the Leader of the House or the Premier.

This is a very narrow interpretation of this particular Standing Order. Mr Speaker, your interpretation was narrow and it is not

supported by any of the information that was available to me. Quite frankly, it is a decision which should not be supported by this House.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.55 p.m.): Mr Speaker, I find the remarks made by the Leader of the Liberal Party to be really quite extraordinary. To be suggesting that, somehow or other, the ruling was made to try to protect the Treasurer during debate on the Bill before the House is a departure into fantasy land by the honourable member for Moggill. If I recall the debate last night, the member for Moggill agreed with me on quite a number of occasions on very substantive points as to why the Bill in question was so flawed. If the member for Moggill is suggesting that I need protection when he agrees with me, all I can say to him is that he should not agree with me. I do not need his protection and I do not need his support.

I come to the matter at hand. I believe that there was a good degree of confusion on the part of the Opposition, which resulted in some confusion in the House, as to what exactly the Leader of the Opposition was attempting to do with the motion that he sought to move. When he rose initially he talked about a procedural motion that he was going to pursue in relation to the Bill that was before the House. He discussed this procedural motion. Later on the procedural motion became a motion—an amendment to the question which was before the House. The question before the House, of course, was that the Bill be read a second time.

The Leader of the Opposition was clearly confused as to the import of the words that he was seeking to move—whether it would be a formula of words which would require, as is the case with procedural motions, the immediate consideration of the House of the procedural motion, or whether it was an amendment to the question—the question being that the Bill be read a second time.

It is important to have recourse to the particular Standing Orders to which the member for Indooroopilly had recourse in arguing his case as to why Mr Speaker's ruling should be dissented from. To understand Standing Order 248—which was the Standing Order to which the honourable member for Indooroopilly referred—I think it is important that we also have recourse to the Standing Orders which immediately precede it. With regard to the business of the House at the time when the ruling was made, the House was proceeding to debate a Bill which had been introduced by the member for

Caboolture under Standing Order 244, which reads—

"The Order of the Day for the resumption of the second reading of a Bill being read, and Debate concluded, the Question shall be put, 'That the Bill be now read a Second Time.'"

The debate was proceeding under that Standing Order.

There is, of course, provision in Standing Order 245 for amendments to the timing at which the question "That the Bill be now read a second time" may be put. The Standing Orders give a number of illustrations as to how that timing may be amended. Specifically, it mentions "on this day Three months," "on this day Six months," by deleting the word "now", or at any other time.

We have just had a debate about the significance of Standing Order 246, which states that amendments to questions must be relevant to the Bill. We then come to Standing Order 248, and I believe that this is where the confusion has arisen—confusion which stemmed firstly from the question of whether it was a procedural motion or an amendment. The Opposition now argues that it was not a procedural motion but, rather, an amendment.

Standing Order 248 deals with the referral of Bills to committees. In dealing with Standing Order 248, let us carefully consider the words as they appear in the Standing Order. The Standing Order reads—

"A Bill, having been read the Second time, shall be ordered to be committed to a Committee of the Whole House, either then or at a future time, or it may first be referred to a Select Committee."

The Opposition purports to say that its amendment was seeking the committal of the Bill to a select committee, but the Opposition has ignored an important part of the provisions set down in Standing Order 248. It states—

"A Bill, having been read the Second time ..."

Standing Order 248 refers to a committal of a Bill following the vote being taken on the second-reading. I suggest that it would have been quite competent for the Leader of the Opposition to move that the Bill be referred to a select committee following the vote on the second reading, following the decision of the House as to whether the Bill will be read the second time, not before. It is also relevant to consider the other question as to whether there was a select committee available to receive the Bill had it been so referred.

However, I will perhaps develop that point after the House rises for the luncheon adjournment.

Sitting suspended from 1.01 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr HAMILL: Before the House rose for the luncheon adjournment, I was discussing the import of Standing Order 248, which, of course, is the Standing Order upon which the Opposition relied and is relying in respect of this dissent motion. I will just remind honourable members of the substance of Standing Order 248, which, of course, was the Standing Order that was being invoked by the member for Indooroopilly in his moving of this dissent motion. It states—

"A Bill, having been read the Second time, shall be ordered to be committed to a Committee of the Whole House, either then or at a future time, or it may first be referred to a Select Committee."

The point I was making was that, in relation to that Standing Order, the Bill must have already been read the second time. In other words, the second-reading debate would have been concluded and the question that the Bill be read a second time would, in fact, have been put to the House, and the House would have expressed its view in respect of that question. Then and only then would it have been appropriate for the Leader of the Opposition, or whoever, to move that the question—or in this case, the Bill—be committed to the attention of a select committee of the House as an alternative to the Bill proceeding to the Committee of the Whole House.

Mr Beanland: Look up 245.

Mr HAMILL: If the member had been paying attention to what I said before lunch, he would know that I dealt with Standing Order 245 quite comprehensively. In relation to Standing Order 248, which is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition was trying to do last night, there was neither a select committee in place to which the Bill could be referred, nor was it the appropriate time to invoke the course of action that Standing Order 248 contemplates. Had the Leader of the Opposition sought to establish a select committee and then, following the consideration by the House of the question that the Bill be now read a second time he might then have sought to move for the referral of the Bill to a select committee, I submit that that would have been not only in order but also it would have been a proper matter upon which the House could then have exercised its judgment.

We have a problem of timing. As the Opposition knows very well, it has a major problem with timing across a whole range of matters. The Liberal Party has a major problem with timing. The time is not right for the Liberal Party. The time is not right for the aspirations of the likes of the member for Clayfield. Likewise, it was not the right timing that the Opposition was indulging in in trying to move for this select committee consideration of the Bill.

In relation to this legislation, I make the further point that it was introduced into the House in April last year. There would have been ample opportunity for the Opposition to suggest to have select committees and so on and so forth in the intervening months. But, no, no, no, they do not do anything like that. Even though they know full well—in fact, I took an interjection from the Leader of the Opposition on this matter last night—that the whole question of the competition principles agreement is currently under review and that the Commonwealth has a timetable in April this year, that is next month, to undertake that review, suddenly it is felt desirous to refer to a select committee a Bill which has been sitting around for 10 months and on which that committee is not going to report back until September. What real sincerity is there in this attempt by the Leader of the Opposition to establish a select committee? The same degree of sincerity that we have come to expect from him: no sincerity whatsoever! It is a sham, it is grandstanding, it was there for no effect other than just to try to have a platform for the Leader of the Opposition upon which he could make a big man of himself.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (2.34 p.m.): I join other Opposition members in rising to speak in support of this dissent motion. At the outset, I would like to go over the events that occurred last night. I was sitting in my office listening to the debate. Mr Speaker, with respect to you, I was amazed when you came in and advised the House that the amendment was out of order. Prior to that, there had been a very substantial speech by the Leader of the Opposition, in which he had moved this amendment. Then we had the full speech by the Leader of the Liberal Party in seconding that amendment. Mr Speaker, it was only at the conclusion of all of that that you then came in and advised of your decision.

Mr Speaker, it also concerns me that you mentioned that you had conferred with the Clerk. We from this side had conferred with the Clerk and had undergone all the due processes in good faith to ensure that what we

were doing was correct and accurate. Mr Speaker, you said that you conferred with the Clerk and your words were, "and I have also brought my own decisions into this." So Mr Speaker, with due respect, what we are really debating today is that it would appear that your decision has differed from the professional advice that the Opposition received and you received. Much has been said about Standing Orders 248, 245 and 246. Standing Order 248 states —

"A Bill, having been read the Second time, shall be ordered to be committed to a Committee of the Whole House, either then or at a future time, or it may first be referred to a Select Committee."

So that is quite clear: the Bill may be referred to a select committee. I make the point that we have only two established select committees. So it would be important that, in the motion that was moved by the Leader of the Opposition, it states that a select committee be established—because, obviously, we have the Travelsafe select committee and another select committee on parliamentary entitlements, neither of which are suitable in any way for a discussion on National Competition Policy.

The previous speaker, the Treasurer, made much of the words—

"A Bill, having been read the Second time, shall be ordered to be committed to a Committee of the Whole House, either then or at a future time, or it may first be referred to a Select Committee."

So I think that it is quite clear: we can either do one or the other. Mr Speaker, that really brings me to the point that you made last night. You said that there is no such entity, no such select committee. I am saying that I believe that you are wrong, because the amendment was establishing a select committee. However, I refer also to Standing Order 246, which states—

"Any other Amendment may be proposed to such Question provided that the Amendment is strictly relevant to the Bill."

The amendment that was moved by the Opposition fills all of those criteria. It was strictly relevant to the Bill.

Mr Speaker, in relation to your point that there is no such entity, I ask: how are we ever going to have an entity if you do not allow us to correctly move that that entity be established? The motion that was moved by the Leader of the Opposition, on the advice of the Table Office staff, was quite clear. It stated

that all words after "Bill" be deleted and insert—

"Be referred to an all-party select committee"—

a select committee—

"to consider and report on the conduct, impact and future of National Competition Policy in Queensland."

The select committee to comprise four members nominated by the Government, three nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and one nominated by and from among the Independents.

And to report to the House by 1 September 2000."

It is very similar to the amendment moved by the member for Maroochydore during a debate on a private member's Bill last year regarding organ transplants. The amendment was that all words after "Bill" be omitted and the following be inserted—that it "be referred to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee for consideration and report back to the House by 1 August 1999". As I said, there are only two select committees, neither of which are suitable for National Competition Policy investigation and discussion. Therefore, a committee had to be established in the amendment. That was the advice that we were given.

Mr Sullivan: It could have been established months ago.

Mr HORAN: No, it could not. We were being denied the right to put to this House that a new select committee be established specifically for this purpose and that that be incorporated into the amendment. We did not even get the chance to have that voted on in this House.

I feel quite strongly that all members should be given a fair go and a chance, provided that what we are doing is in accordance with the Standing Orders. We moved the amendment in accordance with Standing Orders 245, 246 and 248. It fitted all the criteria of those three relevant Standing Orders. Because there is not a suitable select committee, the one thing we neglected to nominate in that amendment was the select committee that we required.

For this side of the House to do things correctly and then be knocked out of the ring before we could conclude the debate on that particular amendment is a travesty of our rights. I would ask honourable members to think very deeply and clearly about this matter.

This was an opportunity to look at the National Competition Policy. One night last year in a debate at 6 o'clock there was bipartisan support for the National Competition Policy reverting to the control or oversight of COAG, the States and the Federal Government. We all agreed that the bureaucrats who were dominating the National Competition Policy and trespassing on our rights, the rights of the people that we represent, should be taken out of the picture and that the final decisions should be made by elected members of Parliament through their Governments. We all agreed on that.

The mood in this Parliament has been that there are some problems with the National Competition Policy. We can argue until the cows come home as to who brought it in; the Keating Government brought it in. We can argue until the cows came home that we were forced to implement the follow-on legislation when we took over Government in 1996. We can argue until the cows come home about all the amounts of money supposedly paid to the States as a result of the National Competition Policy and whether that money is new money or whether it is simply blackmail money received as a result of the Federal Government saying, "If you don't toe the line, you don't get it." But overall we all agreed that there was a problem that needed to be addressed.

Here is the chance to set up a select committee to specifically address the National Competition Policy consisting of four members of the Government, three members of the Opposition and one Independent, no doubt with the chairman being from the Government to provide the Government with its rightful position on that particular committee. With all that bipartisan support for the National Competition Policy, we have had this pedantic argument last night and again today about whether or not this committee existed.

Mr Mickel: What are the rules for?

Mr HORAN: We have gone by the rules—Standing Orders 245, 246 and 248. The member should have a look at them and read them.

Mr Mickel: I've read them; you haven't. You don't understand them.

Mr HORAN: I will not refer to the bloke who wanted to milk sheep last night!

This is the problem: we had an opportunity to vote on the establishment of a select committee. We were not allowed to do that in this House. That is our complaint; that is our gripe. That is what we are asking this

House to consider in this motion today. In the past, particularly under Standing Order 246, amendments have been made to particular Bills at the second-reading stage.

Mr Speaker, you keep saying, as do members on the Government side, that there was no such committee. We were trying to establish a committee. If this motion fails today, we will not be allowed to establish a select committee. Labor Party members do not want a select committee because they are frightened that their hypocrisy will be exposed. National Competition Policy and its problems have stemmed from Labor ideology and Labor policy, and it has been forced upon succeeding Federal and State Governments.

Time expired.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (2.46 p.m.): I am pleased to take part in this debate. Last night during the second-reading debate the question was that the Bill be read a second time. That question is quite quaint. In days gone by, when people could not read and there were no papers around, the Clerk would read the Bill so that members could understand it. That is why we had three readings of the Bill in days gone by—so that it could be read to members in order for them to understand what the legislation was about.

Last night this momentous Bill was being read a second time. The Bill has two clauses. I find it amazing that the Opposition would get so excited about a Bill with two clauses which is basically about abolishing Queensland competition policy. I wondered why Mr Borbidge was running around expending a lot of energy trying to find out how he could get away with not having a second-reading vote. The question was before the House. He decided that he would do that.

During the debate I remember the Treasurer telling the Parliament that the removal of this legislation would remove power from the Queensland Government to protect vital rural industries from absolutely dispassionate operation of the free market. The professional advice of the Treasurer was that it would be very stupid to support this legislation because it would remove certain protections that we had from free market forces. This is an attempt to set a precedent.

The member for Toowoomba South said that there was an attempt to deny the Opposition the right to set up a select committee. There is a procedure for setting up select committees.

Mr Borbidge: You accepted the motion.

Mr FOURAS: I accepted the motion, but I also asked the Speaker to see me because I had concerns about precedents being set. He came to see me because I had concerns about precedents being set. Originally, I did not accept the motion.

Mr Borbidge: That was after David Hamill got onto you.

Mr FOURAS: No. What I received from the Leader of the Opposition was a motion. I told the Clerk that that was not proper, that I could not accept a motion. Mr Borbidge talked about a motion all night long. He decided belatedly to move an amendment to the motion. There was a question before the House. Mr Borbidge tried to move a motion without an amendment to the question before the House.

There are many opportunities for setting up a select committee. Why is it necessary to refer this Bill to a select committee? The amendment before the Parliament was that the Bill—

"... be referred to an all-party select committee to consider and report on the conduct, impact and future of National Competition Policy in Queensland."

It may be that the committee may have recommended that that legislation be thrown out the window, but I do not think so for one minute. I do not see the relevance of the Bill being revisited by that committee. It is totally irrelevant. It appears to me that the Opposition was absolutely petrified of having to vote against One Nation. Recently we have had speeches from the member for Logan and the member for Lytton saying that the tail is wagging the dog in this Chamber, the tail being the people at the other end of the Chamber. It appears that some people are desperately looking to find a mechanism.

I spoke to the Speaker because I was concerned that this was not the way to do something like this. Standing Order 245 is the relevant Standing Order for second-reading debates and was referred to by the member for Toowoomba South. He says, "Look at that one." A member can always move that the question be put in three months' time or six months' time or another time or that the Bill be withdrawn. That is permissible under the Standing Orders. There is nothing about committing a Bill to a committee. The only Standing Order stating that a Bill can be committed is Standing Order 248. As Government members have pointed out, a Bill can be committed only after having been read a second time. Some Legislatures have

legislation committees to which Bills can be referred. We do not have such a process.

I expressed my concern to the Speaker last night when he came to see me. It was my view that a dangerous precedent was being set. When I was in the chair I was wondering what to do. For example, should I have allowed the Treasurer to speak again? We were in the second-reading debate and an amendment was being moved. The Treasurer had already taken an hour of the House's time. If that amendment had been accepted, I think the Treasurer would have wished to speak again. To me, that would have been a dangerous precedent. Just imagine the time it would take to have two debates on one Bill.

There are procedures for setting up select committees. I support an examination of National Competition Policy. However, that is not what this debate is about. I spoke in the debate in which unanimous support was expressed to voice our concern about the impacts of competition at any price and without any concern being shown for the citizens in society. I am concerned that there is no trickle down of the benefits resulting from competition policy. If the benefits go only to the top end of town, that creates inequality and social schisms. That is not what this debate is about. Ultimately, this debate is about whether we allow a precedent for a process such as this, which would disrupt second-reading debates. I think this is unprecedented. I asked the Speaker to see me so that I could tell him my concerns about this matter.

The Opposition is given time to hold debates on two nights a week, at which time it may move a motion that a select committee be introduced. Perhaps the Government would look at that proposal. Under the Standing Orders, a notice of motion could be debated and the proper processes followed. Honourable members should not express dismay at the fact that the Leader of the Opposition may have to vote against the former members of One Nation. To do otherwise would be to sell down the drain the people whom he is supposed to represent—for example, people in rural industries. As the Attorney-General said last night, that is the only protection they have.

Mr Borbidge: How are you going to vote?

Mr FOURAS: The honourable member should read my speech from 1996. The Opposition Leader should revisit it. In that speech I was very critical of the impact that National Competition Policy would have on society.

Mr Borbidge: You were a member of the Government that signed us up to it.

Mr FOURAS: I was a member of the Government and I expressed serious concerns at that time. I have taken up enough time in this debate. I suggest that we get on with the real business of running this Parliament. Let there be no pretence that members opposite are not getting a fair go in this Chamber.

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (2.53 p.m.): In this debate I will make no particular comments about the National Competition Policy, because that is not what we are debating. It was unfortunate that the honourable member for Ashgrove, a previous Speaker, said that we should get on with business. I suppose we would be getting on with business had not the ruling been made that the amendment was out of order. However, that ruling was made and a decision was taken to dissent from that ruling. That is a very important function of this House.

In my contribution I will go through the elements as clinically as possible and ask the following questions. The first question is: can an amendment be moved? Section 88 of our Standing Orders indicates that amendments are in order. The next question is: are some amendments out of order? Since it has been ruled that this amendment is out of order, one should perhaps look at the instances when amendments are out of order. Page 491 of Erskine May lists what sorts of amendments are out of order. One can assume that, in respect of any amendments not contained in the extensive list of about nine different ways in which an amendment can be out of order, the requirement is on the honourable member claiming that the amendment is out of order to convince the House that it is indeed out of order. Of the nine instances cited, the first is that the amendment is irrelevant. Clearly, this amendment was not irrelevant to the subject. The second instance cited is an amendment that has already been negatived. Clearly, that does not apply. The third instance is where an amendment is inconsistent or contrary to the Bill.

Government members interjected.

Mr LAMING: I am glad Government members are listening. I am only up to No. 4; there are five to go.

Fourth, an amendment is inadmissible if it is intelligible without subsequent amendments or Schedules. That does not apply. The fifth instance is where it reverses the principle of the motion. It did not do that. Sixthly, it is not in order to leave out a clause. That does not relate to the amendment. Seventh, the

amendment cannot be unintelligible, ungrammatical, incoherent or inconsistent. That certainly does not apply. Eight, the amendment cannot be vague, trifling or hold the spirit of the motion in mockery. That does not apply. Nine, the amendment cannot be in the wrong place. That is certainly not the case, although Government members have suggested that it might have been—a claim that I will put to bed shortly. The amendment does not fit into any of those categories. Therefore, I contend that the amendment was in order. It was accepted by an experienced former Speaker of the House. It was formally seconded by the member for Moggill. The amendment was accepted by the House, because 24 minutes of debate elapsed before the amendment was challenged by the Chair. Members opposite either spoke to the amendment or interjected during the debate. The members for Ipswich, Chermiside, Capalaba and Townsville joined the debate.

Why was it subsequently ruled out of order? Mr Speaker referred to Standing Order 248, which has been read a few times today, and I will not go through it again. Basically, it states that a Bill may be referred to a committee after being read a second time. The Treasurer relied very heavily on this. But this Standing Order does not say that a Bill must be read a second time before it can be sent to a committee. It states that it may be referred to a committee after being voted on at the second-reading stage. This procedure is available only to a Minister or a member who has carriage of the Bill. It is not available to another member. There are other potential problems if the Bill passes a second-reading and the Committee recommends amendments that are contrary to the principles already agreed to. Our Standing Orders are wisely constructed and offer Standing Orders 245 and 246 for just this purpose, which refer specifically to amendments to Bills. Standing Order 246 states—

"Any other Amendment may be proposed to such Question provided that the Amendment is strictly relevant to the Bill."

It certainly fulfilled that criterion. Mr Speaker went on to say in his ruling that "there is no select committee to which the member has referred it". That is the central issue of the ruling. I must dissent from this statement also, because the establishment of the relevant committee is covered in the amendment itself. If the amendment were passed, the committee would therefore be established. How often do we pass legislation in this place that creates committees and boards upon

which the very same legislation relies? All the time! All the necessary components of just such a select committee were clearly outlined in the amendment. Some debate from the Government suggested that a select committee cannot be set up in this way. I dissent from this also, and I refer members to pages 612 and 613 of Erskine May.

Mr Hamill: Which edition?

Mr LAMING: It is the 21st edition. It states—

"Committees have also been appointed by the passing of an amendment to a question, and following the agreement of the House to a motion moved by a private Member."

Question—That Mr Beanland's motion of dissent be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 41—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dagleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 41—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

INCLUSION OF AREAS IN BRISBANE FOREST PARK

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP)
(Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (3.06 p.m.): I move—

"(1) That this House agrees that the Proposal by the Governor in Council to include in Brisbane Forest Park areas totalling about 1,778 hectares being—

about 1,348 hectares of State forest 809; and

about 430 hectares of the D'Aguilar National Park

be carried out; and

(2) That Mr Speaker convey a copy of this resolution to the Minister for

submission to His Excellency the Governor in Council."

This proposal makes provision for about 1,400 hectares of State Forest 809 in the parish of Dundas and the whole of Lot 17 on Plan SL11108 to be included in Brisbane Forest Park. I would mention that these amendments to the park came before the House in 1988 and were approved by the Parliament of the day. However, the statutory instrument to give effect to the resolution has never been processed. This action will formalise management arrangements which have been in place for some time.

Our Government is committed to the ecologically sustainable management of Queensland's forests to ensure the preservation and protection of biological diversity whilst maximising the benefits available to the community both now and in the future from all of the values associated with the land. There could be no better practical example of this philosophy than Brisbane Forest Park. The park currently comprises some 25,000 hectares of bushland on Brisbane's western doorstep. It has significant flora and fauna protection values and provides nature based recreational opportunities for over two million visitors each year. It should be noted that the land proposed for inclusion in the park forms part of the catchment for the Wivenhoe Dam, which provides water to Brisbane and surrounding areas. It is commonsense, therefore, to protect the land from more intensive development which could impact on water quality.

The area of State Forest 809 proposed for addition to the park includes land acquired by the Crown during construction of the Wivenhoe Dam. It extends from part of the existing north-western boundary of the park to the top of the D'Aguilar Range and west to the State forest boundary. The Northbrook Parkway has been constructed through the area to provide better access from Brisbane to Lake Wivenhoe. Towards the western end of the parkway, the Brisbane Forest Park Authority has established picnic facilities at Cedar Flats. Lot 17 on plan SL11108 forms part of D'Aguilar National Park and adjoins part of the western boundary of Brisbane Forest Park. It comprises some 430 hectares of open country and is under the administrative control of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

This action will have no effect on the current State forest and national park status attaching to the land. However, the whole of State Forest 809 has been identified through the regional forest assessment process as a

public forest area that should be managed primarily for environmental protection purposes. A localised management planning exercise that includes stakeholder consultation and negotiation with other forest users is expected to assist in determining the most appropriate future tenure for this land.

South-east Queensland is the fastest growing region in Australia, with a projected 50% population increase to three million by the year 2011. As growth continues and competition for land increases, the secure reservation of a viable network of regionally significant open-space areas becomes more critical and more valuable to the south-east Queensland community. Natural forest areas in close proximity to Brisbane will continue to increase in value as flora and fauna habitats and for the protection of biodiversity, public recreation and ecotourism purposes. It is estimated that almost one and a half million locals and over half a million tourists visit Brisbane Forest Park each year. There is no doubt that the park is an important recreational asset for the people of south-east Queensland.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service also supports the inclusion in the park of that part of the D'Aguilar National Park described as Lot 17 on Plan SL11108, and the Department of Natural Resources has recommended that the affected area of State Forest 809 should also be included in Brisbane Forest Park. As the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources, I commend the motion to the House for approval.

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (3.11 p.m.): I rise to second the motion.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (3.11 p.m.): It is estimated that almost one and a half million locals and over half a million tourists visit the Brisbane Forest Park each year. The park is indeed an important recreational asset for the people of south-east Queensland. Now, of course, that is going to be increased.

The Minister is well aware that a rally was held on 4 July last year. That rally was attended by a lot of people, including the Minister and me. The people at the rally expressed considerable concern that the access they have had to these parks may no longer be available. In relation to reserves, a spokesman for the Minister said that the State Government would endeavour to ensure that all future recreational areas would be considered in consultation with forest users. The spokesman also said that the

Government is considering a new form of tenure with fewer restrictions on recreational use than national parks as an option for the new reserves.

A lot of people use four-wheel drives or go horse riding in these parks. People at the rally I referred to talked about riding and driving routes in parks in Queensland, including Brisbane Forest Park and the D'Aguilar Ranges, Bellthorpe and Kenilworth State Forests. Anne Barlow from Environmental Access for Recreationalists, a group formed in response to the forestry negotiations, wants to raise awareness of the threat. That is why this rally was held. While we obviously support the inclusion of this additional land in this park, we are aware that it puts into place something that was happening anyway. I would be interested to know how we are going to make sure that people have access to these areas in the future. Other than that, we support the inclusion.

Motion agreed to.

DRUG REHABILITATION (COURT DIVERSION) BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 1 March (see p. 148).

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (3.15 p.m.), continuing: In continuing my remarks on the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill, I turn to the other end of the equation relating to people on the streets enforcing our laws and bringing addicts before the courts, that is, the police. I and many police officers are very dismayed about the current situation regarding the treatment of police by the CJC. In relation to this Bill, I put this to honourable members: if given the opportunity, if their 16 year old daughter came home with an absolute fool and there was the ability to check out who that fool was and where he was from, I guarantee that most members would try to find out whatever they could.

Police officers are sent out to enforce the laws—to catch drug offenders. That is their job, yet they are being absolutely persecuted. Standards have to be upheld. There are different categories of wrongdoing. The persecution of police is something that has been going on for many years, not just in this Parliament but in many other Parliaments. I believe it is unfair. As I said, they are the people we put on the streets to enforce the laws passed by this House. They work under incredibly tough situations for long hours. They get very little reward. As far as I am concerned,

police officers do not do the job for reward; they do it mainly out of a sense of duty.

I was angered by a recent incident involving the police and Gracie Smallwood, who has a shocking attitude towards the police that is abhorrent to me. I know many police officers in far-north Queensland extremely well.

Mr FOLEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I understand that that matter is before the courts. Accordingly, it is a sub judice matter which should not be discussed here.

Mr NELSON: Fair enough. I will withdraw in deference to that explanation.

I now turn to the current attitude towards the police that is permeating among certain members of the community in Townsville when police go about their duties. I guarantee members that at 2 o'clock in the morning the police do not want to be looking for drug offenders or other criminals committing offences in the main street of Townsville. That is not what they live their lives for. A lot of cases, especially those relating to drug offenders and people under the influence of intoxicating liquor—in my opinion, liquor is a drug as much as marijuana—can become quite abusive of officers and use offensive language, which is, as far as I am concerned, an offence. Irresponsible people in the community can then try to lay the blame back squarely at the feet of police officers who are simply going about their duties. That is quite unfair. This situation has caused no end of disrespect for certain members of the community in Townsville, especially from their fellow citizens.

Mr Lucas: Are you going to speak to the Bill?

Mr NELSON: I certainly am.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! I ask the member to stick to the point of drug rehabilitation.

Mr NELSON: I am addressing the concept of drug abuse and how it affects—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Drug rehabilitation.

Mr NELSON: Drug abuse is part of drug rehabilitation, Madam Deputy Speaker. One has to be an abuser before one can be rehabilitated.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member to stick to the topic. The member seems to be speaking about police issues.

Mr NELSON: I fail to see how I am not sticking to the topic, Madam Deputy Speaker. Other members can ramble on about schools

during debate on the Land Court Bill, yet I am being pulled up for talking about offenders in debate on the drug rehabilitation Bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That is extremely disrespectful to the Chair. The Bill is about drug courts. I ask the member to stick to the topic.

Mr NELSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, just so I am clear, I am only allowed to talk about drug courts?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is to talk to the Bill.

Mr NELSON: So I am allowed to talk on drug offenders? From my personal experience, I class alcohol as much the same kind of drug as marijuana and so on and so forth. As I said, people under the influence can, from time to time, become very abusive towards officers trying to carry out their duties.

Sometimes when a police officer—and, again, we are talking about human beings—acts like a human being, he or she ends up before the CJC. If a police officer does something that certain Leftist members of the community feel is not right, then he or she is a monster. Police officers are really caught between a rock and a hard place, especially when trying to enforce laws that would eventuate in a person's appearance before a drug court. Many police officers in my electorate have stated to me that at present everything seems to be going the offenders' way. We seem to be looking after the offenders, yet police continue to be persecuted and subjected to this iron oppression, even though we acknowledge that their role is incredibly difficult. It is a tough, hard life that they choose, and they do not choose it for wealth or recompense; they choose it because they are honourable, decent citizens who want to uphold the laws of Queensland.

The recent statement by the member for Townsville regarding offenders did not help the position. He stated that the police had shamed Townsville and put it in the national spotlight. That is the last thing a member of Parliament should be saying about his local constabulary. I know for a fact that the police officers in Townsville have taken his statement to heart. Many of them live in the electorate of Townsville and the electorate of Mundingburra, and they are certainly not very happy with the attitude being adopted by the local member.

It is all about support. Drug courts give support to offenders. I am talking about giving support to those who are out there dealing with the offenders, those who actually have to

drag the offenders off the streets and put them before the courts. It goes both ways. The Government cannot look after one side and not the other. If we really want to start getting tough on offenders, if we really want to start fighting crime and drug abuse on the streets, how about giving our police officers the appropriate tools? As I said, I support the drug court proposal. It is a step in the right direction. It will offer police another avenue. But from my point of view, the best approach is to once again make the police an effective deterrent.

At the very start of my speech yesterday, I said that many former drug users whom I know do not find going before a court a deterrent at all. They never have and never will. I have seen many cases where they end up before a court and they get a light slap on the wrist. I am a fairly liberal-minded person, but decriminalising or legalising drugs is certainly not the way to go. I hold a very deep fear that, in the near future, this Government may consider legalising or decriminalising marijuana in Queensland. I place on public record now that I will be strongly opposing that measure. This is the same sort of argument I used during the debate on the Prostitution Bill. When we decriminalise or legalise a certain activity, we are setting a standard in the community. Everyone in this Chamber is a leader in their community. By making such changes, we are saying to the community, "This activity is no longer perceived to be such a serious criminal offence."

I do not argue that we should return to the 1800s when women had to wear ankle-length skirts and men had to wear top hats everywhere. I merely believe that there are a few barriers in society which should not be crashed through in a mad pursuit of making everyone free and happy, because that just sends the wrong message to the younger generation that these sorts of activities are acceptable. When the legislation before the House was being discussed, one of the attitudes expressed to me by young people in my electorate was, "Does that mean you do not actually have to go to court any more?" Again, that illustrates a lack of understanding. Under this legislation, offenders do have to go to court.

Mr Lucas: It would pretty funny if you called it a drug court and you didn't have to go to court.

Mr NELSON: But that is the whole point. We stand up in this ivory tower and make these wonderful laws and disseminate them to the people, but 9 out of 10 people do not have a full grasp of how the laws operate. I am

sure the honourable member's constituents are no exception. I am certainly no expert on the way our judicial system works, and some people perceive this as a new approach which does not involve a court and involves less serious penalties. That is the sort of perception we must address in the implementation phase through an education program. As the member for Warwick said, we have to inform people that this is not a soft option. This measure will not let offenders off scot-free. This measure will not let offenders get away with their crimes; it is certainly still an avenue for correction.

Mr Lucas: Are you referring to Comrade Lawrence?

Mr NELSON: Comrade Springborg.

I support the Bill. As I said at the commencement of my speech, any step in any direction is the right step, because until now very limited action has been taken on drugs in this country.

The Federal Labor Party completely astounded me by proposing the idea—not that it is a new idea—of a coastguard. That is a fantastic idea and a measure that this country desperately needs, especially in the Torres Strait. But I am very fearful that Mr Beazley is a little bit loose with his figures, because he is intending to remove patrol boats from the Navy and deploy them into a coastguard. So he is not actually increasing anything; he is just moving some boats around. To actually fight the drug problem at its base source—the point of the importation of hard drugs from overseas—we need a strong and effective coastguard, a lot like the American one, but not merely a removal of patrol boats from the Royal Australian Navy to a coastguard service. That is the level at which we really have to start getting tough on drugs.

When we intercept people bringing large amounts of illicit substances into this country, we should put them in jail and never release them. As far as I am concerned, those sorts of people are worse than murderers. They are peddlers in misery and horror, and I think all members share those sentiments. If Governments really wanted to start getting tough on crime, they would send a message to the people who peddle this sort of stuff, the people who grow this stuff for commercial use, to say, "If you get caught, you will never see the outside of a prison cell again". In that way we would start attacking the base cause of the drug misuse in our community.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (3.27 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise to support the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill.

This legislation is a very important development in this Government's strategy to address not only crime but also its causes. In that sense, it is a very important move because it recognises one of the fundamental elements of this particular form of crime: people commit drug-related crimes due to a combination of an illness—a sickness—and criminality. Some people become involved in a very unfortunate addiction to drugs and then enter a cycle which leads them to various other forms of criminality, especially property crime. Indeed, the main focus of this legislation is property-related crime rather than more serious assault or sexual offences.

This is a very important issue for the community. The community is now very conscious of this cycle. Through Neighbourhood Watch schemes and the various citizens groups in our communities, people are conscious that a very stark connection exists between the property crimes affecting our citizens and the illness that is drug addiction. Drug addicts find themselves trapped in this very unfortunate spiral.

This legislation is about breaking the cycle. We must go much further afield in our attempts to break the cycle. I commend the very good work of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services in his efforts to try to break the cycle in our prisons. We must ensure that we sever the connection between criminality and drug addiction. We have situations where people with a drug habit are sent to prison. These people run up an expense account while they are in prison in order to feed their habit. They are released from prison and they commit further crimes in order to pay off the debt which they have incurred. This is a cycle which must be severed. The drug court will have a large part to play in breaking the cycle.

The drug problem has caused an enormous amount of frustration in the community. We are almost helpless when it comes to dealing with this growing problem. The problem is almost overwhelming. Members of this Parliament find ourselves frustrated and shaking our heads when we look at the drug problem. Yesterday, I was advised by the Minister for Health that there has been a 30% per annum increase in the use of disposable syringes. It is expected that these figures will continue to increase.

We wonder what we are missing. Is there something that we need to do that we have missed? In this Parliament we have often debated the prospect of increasing penalties, but one wonders whether such action would be effective. We look at what is occurring in

other countries, we do our research and we end up becoming increasingly frustrated.

The community frustration is boiling over into palpable anger because of the way in which drug users are treating our local communities. The people of my electorate have asked me to express that anger in this place because they are sick and tired of going to their local parks and having to tell their children to be careful about walking on syringes. I have spoken to many parents, including people involved with the P & C, and my constituents have had enough of this problem. We must try to get the message through to drug users that we have had enough of this. This problem is affecting our personal lives and the lives of our children. I know there has been some debate about retractable syringes, but it is time that society as a whole took stock of what is a horrid blight on our community.

We live in fear that our children will go to the park and stub their toes on a syringe. It is not sufficient for us to be informed that no-one has contracted a disease as a result of such contact with a syringe. That is not going to satisfy the parents in my electorate. I do not want my daughter to be the first person to be injured in this way. We want to be able to walk in the park with our kids and feel confident about our safety.

This is a matter for our whole society. We must start turning our attention to this voracious problem. It is something that has occurred in our own generation; it was not evident when we were children. The problem is increasing at an unnerving rate.

We must adopt a bipartisan approach to solving this problem. The whole community must become involved. Treatment and care are important aspects with regard to handling this problem. We must treat the people who have already entered the cycle, and we must also care for people who may be about to enter the cycle. The reason why people enter the cycle can often be traced to one particular cause, and that is alienation. We find that kids are not able to find work. They are not able to find a meaning in their lives. They do not appear to have a spiritual essence in their lives. We must re-focus on the problems that are arising in the community.

I welcome the debate that will be taking place tonight in relation to the issue of retractable syringes. This question is symbolic of the need to adopt a bipartisan approach. I call upon the Health Minister to keep an open mind with regard to this issue and to adopt an open approach. We must ensure that all

options are canvassed. We must work with communities in Australia and in other areas of the world in an attempt to find a technical solution to this problem. Unfortunately, it is still part of the sickness. Ultimately we must go back to the fundamental cause of this problem which, as I said, is alienation.

I recently inspected the Parramatta drug court with my colleagues and the Honourable the Attorney-General, Matt Foley. This was a valuable experience which allowed us to see how important this legislation will be for Queensland. One of the most important things we discovered was that criminality is intertwined with sickness. These matters were dealt with in a cohesive team approach. We were informed by the judge that part of the process involved court conferences where the relevant authorities and experts were able to deal with each case individually.

It was a process that fell slightly outside what might be expected in the normal formal interlocutory and court processes. However, in this case, in which the intention is to provide assistance, a cure and rehabilitation, the need for a recognition of legal precision and complexities was not necessarily the order of the day. It is focused very much on assisting these people to go through the processes.

The next revelation for us was our ability to stand in front of the court and converse directly with the clients on that day. After speaking to those people individually and asking them what was important about the treatment that they were receiving through that court, what were they getting out of it and why it was successful, two main themes emerged. Firstly, the people said that they received an awareness of the repercussions of their actions. I think that is a very salient point, because people going through rehabilitation from serious drug dependency, especially opiate-based drug dependency, have a very long road to travel. It is a road that is marked by people who have lost their way, fallen by the wayside and returned to their addiction. If people develop an awareness of the repercussions of their actions, they then know that if they start taking any banned substances, that will show up very quickly in their urine tests. If they go off the rails the full extent of their sentence—whether that be two, three or more years—will be reinstated and they will be back in prison and on a very different track altogether.

The repercussions of the actions of these people are also very direct and immediate in that drug court, because they can see that they are supported. All of the way through that

process there is positive reinforcement. People are able to see through the success of their fellow clients that, if they do well, they can stitch their lives back together—they can have a job, or they can end up employing people.

It was very interesting to watch those people who were successfully undergoing the process day by day, week by week becoming models for the people who were struggling to go through the process. It was also very interesting to see, albeit unfortunately for those people who were falling off just a little bit from that process, that they would leave via the side door of the court, perhaps with the penalty of staying back until 10 o'clock at night in the watch-house, or leaving court to be imprisoned for two or three days. They were very, very immediate repercussions. The repercussions also extended to those who received less forceful penalties. For example, we saw one client who was required to come into the court to read out an essay about the value of that court and the direction in which they were trying to take in their rehabilitation. So that flexibility, that sensitivity, to an individual's particular condition was certainly apparent in that the clients were aware of the repercussions of their actions.

The second theme that emerged was the support that the clients received from the drug court. Given that, basically, those people would receive the same sort of rehabilitation from a rehabilitation program outside the court process, it was interesting to note that that support came from the court itself. That was very apparent in the very caring attitude of the judge at that court and the support provided by the entire court process—the staff and the experts who were marshalled within that court. Although there was a very caring and supporting atmosphere, it was very much a two-edged sword: on the one side, very positive and caring but, on other side, the blade of justice hung very sharply and very near to those people going through that court process.

The drug court is a very valuable, new venture for Queensland. Because it is such a radically different court, it will be difficult for it to settle down. It will require a great deal of cooperation between the various agencies and a new outlook towards supporting these drug-addicted people. It will also require everybody in the community to recognise the value of this drug rehabilitation court as a new step in trying to break the drug-dependency cycle. I call upon the members in this Parliament and people in the community to come together in a bipartisan way and support this court.

The media might wish to sensationalise some innovative aspects of this court, such as giving these kids a ticket to the football if they do really well. People in the community might regard that as something to be sensationalised. However, that is a creative move in terms of being positive and giving these kids a reward for getting through the process. People should not sensationalise the drug court. Instead, as a community, we should adopt a cooperative approach and support it.

I hope that we can adopt the same approach in relation to matters such as reusable needles. It is an important issue to all of us; it is a problem for the whole community and, I hope, one upon which we can adopt a bipartisan and community-wide approach.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (3.47 p.m.): I rise to support the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill, a concept first mooted by the coalition and my colleague Lawrence Springborg and now to be trialled by Government. The concept is being trialled because we are all aware of the strong link between crime and drug use, and there is bipartisan support to see that linkage broken.

Approximately 60% of prisoners have a drug dependency. Queensland also has a high rate of imprisonment compared with the national average. I support the concept of drug courts. In fact, I believe that the Sunshine Coast and Cairns areas, with perhaps another regional Queensland community, should have been included in a fair dinkum drug court trial. These areas are also battling significant drug-related crime problems and should share in any real additional funding to establish appropriate treatment services.

As noted in the Attorney-General's second-reaching speech, Queensland Health will provide the bulk of the treatment and follow-up services to drug-related offenders who are diverted by the court system into treatment to break their drug habit. However, today I must highlight to this Parliament my grave concerns that this trial will fail if it does not have appropriate funding per offender and clear performance standards. I am concerned that there has been little publicly available information about the additional funding that the Health Department will have to deliver the outcomes that the community and the Parliament expects of this program.

I will be calling on the Minister who has carriage of this legislation and the Health Minister to outline to the Parliament how much additional funding has been allocated for treatment. I would also like to know who will

receive this funding, the mix of treatment options to be provided and the approximate throughput through these various options and the performance standard of providers.

The rumours are that the Government has only provided about \$700,000 over 30 months to the Health Department to provide rehabilitation and detoxification services when the Health Department has requested closer to a million dollars per year. If this is true, that will not significantly reduce the level of drug dependency in the community, which is a key aim stated in the Explanatory Notes of the legislation. It may, however, shift more of the drug-using population temporarily to a drug replacement program, such as methadone maintenance, because it is cheaper than proper detoxification and rehabilitation programs.

I would sincerely ask the Minister to clarify this matter and to provide documentary evidence of the funding available, especially the funding to detoxification and rehabilitation programs. Methadone maintenance should play only one part in an alcohol and drug strategy. It is dangerous for Governments of all persuasions to rely on it as a palliative approach to the drug problem. While I believe it has a role to play, at the end of the day, there would still be a drug dependent user, albeit one who is more stabilised while on a methadone program and one who is less likely to engage in criminal activity in order to satisfy the intense cravings for heroin.

I pose the question: is this an acceptable outcome for the drug court trial, that is, a higher throughput through a methadone program but with an offender who at the end of a 12-month sentence will almost certainly be dependent on methadone or another addictive drug? I think that would be a less than optimal mark of success. The next question is: what happens after the maximum 12-month diversionary sentence is finished? Is the community aware of the high turnover rate in methadone maintenance programs with people cycling in and out of the program? I believe retention rates run at about an average of one year and that people who cease methadone maintenance programs have a high rate of relapse to heroin.

I am not saying that we should dump methadone maintenance programs. I am saying that we should honestly review the program along with other treatment options and examine policies to set higher performance targets of these programs, such as better retention rates in methadone maintenance programs where the target is still

absence from illicit drug reliance with a view to appropriate counselling to assist people to that illicit drug free status.

Let us be very honest about the treatment options being offered to people under this legislation. Once again, in the interests of public accountability, I would ask the Minister to provide a projected estimate of the throughput of offenders through the various treatment options and tell us what his targets are for those treatments. If the Government has realistically funded the treatment options, then the Government will have a projected breakdown on estimated costs for the various services. I do not want to see a lack of funding for treatment options resulting in drug offenders who want to get clean and who are suitable for more intensive detoxification and rehabilitation programs being offered another addiction under Government sanction because of underfunding.

The next issue about which I would seek the Minister's clarification is: who will make the assessment as to what treatment option an offender will access? Will the judge require the treatment provider to take part in the initial assessment of the offender, or will the treatment provider receive referred offenders without prior consultation about the specific case? It is important that the people with the expertise in drug rehabilitation and the particular provider be involved at the stage of sentencing if the program is to be effective. Obviously, in tailoring a program for maximum success, those with the expertise in service delivery need to be involved early in the process.

There are also issues of program mixtures and possible delivery by several service providers which require some further explanation. For example, if some current residential rehabilitation programs run for about three months, and a person has a 12-month treatment order involving initial residential placement, I ask the Minister: what are the outreach and follow-up support options to be provided after three months? Would this be provided by different providers?

This also raises the question of the role of the Department of Corrective Services, which the Attorney-General said—

"... will provide the offenders program planning and supervision and, as a component of the order, some of the treatment including substance abuse educational programs, ending offending programs and substance abuse relapse prevention programs."

I realise this means that there could be some crossover between the Health Department funded delivery of programs and that of the Corrective Services Department. I would like the Minister to explain how this is to be worked and to provide the funding split between the departments. I would also like a guarantee from the Government that no non-offending drug user who is seeking a place in a Government-funded treatment program will be displaced or disadvantaged because of a lack of adequate funding for the court program.

When we are talking about the wider policy issues, it is true that Governments need to fund prevention, early intervention and treatment programs with serious money. However, we also need to know as policy makers that the very valuable public purse is being spent effectively and that we set targets that the public can measure. It is coalition policy to review the overall delivery of alcohol and drug services in Queensland and to establish those performance targets. We have already released our policy in regard to the needle supply program, which is to phase in retractable needles in keeping with the World Health Organisation's recommendation. I will be talking further about that in a motion before the House. We believe the wider public health issues of discarded needles in public need to be addressed, as do the problems of infection from needle sharing. However, the aim should be to provide a network of rehabilitation services particularly targeting young people throughout the State.

I reiterate to the Attorney-General that we all want to see this court trial succeed. In the evaluation process, we need to know more about the specific targets rather than the broad and undefined aspirational policies. I believe this need for measurable and accountable targets is also true of an effective drug and alcohol strategy in general and not only treatment provided under this drug court model.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.56 p.m.): I rise in support of the Attorney-General's Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill. During the latter half of last year, I agreed to provide work experience for an enthusiastic QUT student intern. There were a number of issues I was interested in receiving a report on in the electorate. I asked this student to carry out a research project on drug and substance abuse among young people in the Mount Ommaney electorate. The specific target group was 12 to 20 year olds living in the electorate.

This problem has been of great concern to me for some time. Since becoming the local member, I have frequently been alerted to the discovery of syringes in various parks, schools and secluded spots throughout the suburbs. A shop owner in Sherwood recently reported sighting young people shooting up behind her store in broad daylight. This was the first time I had heard of someone actually being seen committing such an offence.

As a member of two community corrections committees for Moreton A and B and Sir David Longland prisons, I am well aware of the influence drug abuse has on crime. The media are always highlighting the prevalence of new drugs on the market and the use of drugs in schools. Consequently, I wanted to know the extent of drug abuse in the electorate of Mount Ommaney.

The QUT student went about interviewing various members of the community, school principals, the local police and ambulance as well as other interested community help organisations which deal with drug issues on a regular basis. It was interesting to note that the outreach programs of Drug Arm and Teen Challenge do not operate on an ongoing basis in this area.

The study found the following interesting information. The unemployment rate was nearly 60% lower than State figures. From this one could assume that there are fewer people with a lot of time on their hands looking to indulge in criminal activities in the area. The median household income also is consistently higher than the Queensland median. The local police felt that drug use was not a major problem in the area. However, offences such as break and enters were prevalent and are assumed to be tied to the use of drugs.

A somewhat different perspective was provided by the Queensland Ambulance Service, which indicated that the "alcohol overdose" calls were more common than "IV drug use". Prescription drugs and paracetamol were seen as more of a problem than intravenous drug use in this community. Intravenous drug use was found not to be an issue within the school community, although discarded syringes were reported to be found on school properties after weekends.

We have sighted the evidence—the syringes and bongs dotted around the electorate. Yet the perception by local community services is that Mount Ommaney is a "nice" area, with drug users attempting to maintain a normal facade. Someone commented that the area is "upmarket" and that "people appear to have more time and

money and therefore the drug use problem is hidden".

There are many possible solutions to the problem in this electorate, including setting up a support group, providing a youth drop-in centre which functions as an information centre or simply providing better education in our schools and clubs. But the main focus must be on rehabilitation of drug users. The drug problem is expensive. People end up deeply in debt. They may die of an overdose. It is a major cause of crime.

Drug courts will make rehabilitation an option for users. This is a way in which people can make a clean break and start over again. We are trying to keep people out of our jails where possible, as jail may have a detrimental effect on minor offenders. Minor offenders may become major offenders after an extended time in jail. It is astonishing to note that approximately 60% of incoming prisoners have a drug dependency. This supports anecdotal evidence that offences are committed to feed drug habits.

As at 30 June 1998, Queensland's imprisonment rate was more than 40% above the national rate. All of the schools in my area maintain an integrated curriculum based drug awareness program run along departmental guidelines. There are some one-off programs run by outside agencies, such as Drug Arm and Teen Challenge. Experienced counsellors believe that the number of young people experimenting with drugs is increasing. They also state that alcohol and tobacco are the primary instigators of drug use. Marijuana remains the primary illicit drug, and it seems that young users begin as experimental users but soon move on to recreational use. Unemployment and peer pressure could quickly lead to more regular use and drug dependency. Unemployment and boredom appear to be major contributors to escalating patterns of use. Prison is not always the answer for minor offenders with a drug problem. In fact, being jailed may exacerbate the problem or increase the need. Intensive drug rehabilitation is the only answer. We need to get rid of the problem, which is to a large degree the cause of crime in our suburbs.

Eligibility for entry into the program will be restricted to offenders who are adults, dependent on illicit drugs, charged with an offence which does not involve physical violence or sexual violence against any person, have no offences involving physical violence or sexual assault pending before a court anywhere, plead guilty to the offence, are genuinely facing a sentence of

imprisonment and are willing to participate in the program.

The court's role will also be to decide whether the drug dependency was a major contributing cause or factor in the offending behaviour. Imprisonment will be suspended for the duration of the order and the sentence will be reviewed if the treatment program is terminated. This Government's election commitment was to be tough on crime and the causes of crime. There is no doubt that drug abuse is a major contributor to crime. This means that the legislation will help to address the concerns of victims of housebreaking, car theft and other crimes committed to pay for drugs. It also addresses the concerns of parents of drug addicted offenders and may save the life of their son or daughter, and its success will be toasted.

The Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill 1999 aims not only to reduce the level of drug dependency in the community but also as a consequence to reduce the level of criminal activity. It frees up the courts and the prison system through a reduction in the drug offence workloads and will lessen the health risks associated with drug dependency in the community. The success of drug courts has been proven. Clinton introduced the drug courts system in Miami in 1994 and it has since grown to the point at which there are 275 drug courts in 48 States and another 155 in the planning stages. Last year Bill Clinton said that drug courts cut crime. More importantly, drug courts save lives. They help people rid themselves of their addictions that kill.

The cost of drug court programs is far less than what it costs the Government to incarcerate somebody for the same period. The alternative is to fill up our prisons with addicts whose addictions are never treated and who eventually get out of jail, go back on to drugs and reoffend—in other words, cycling in and out of the system, never losing the habit. That would be the soft approach in attempting to tackle the problem. Introducing drug courts and rehabilitation is being tough on crime and dealing with the causes of crime. We have no option if we are serious about confronting the ever-increasing problem of drug induced crime. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (4.04 p.m.): I looked forward to taking part in the debate on the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill, because this is a very positive initiative that appears to have strong bipartisan support. All speakers have said that we should keep politics out of this issue. However, were it

not for politics and the efforts of the shadow Attorney-General, who introduced a private member's Bill last year and raised in the media the concept of drug courts, we would not be debating this legislation today. The genuine efforts by my colleague to introduce drug courts have been rewarded. In some ways, the member for Warwick has put the Attorney-General onto the loading ramp, applied the electric jigger and loaded him onto the truck. Hopefully, we are now on the way towards seeing a trial of this initiative.

The drug courts concept is something for which the community has been looking for some time. The drug scene is an absolute tragedy. Over the years, society has been able to combat diseases such as polio, measles, mumps and other scourges of society, yet the human induced scourge of drugs is ravaging our youth in particular and is causing enormous problems indirectly through crime linked to drugs in just about every sector of our society.

We have all heard tragic stories from people in our electorates. In recent months, I spoke to a wonderful family touched by the scourge of drugs. Sometimes when parents notice aberrant behaviour in one of their children they might put it down to the fact that they are just teenagers growing up. They might not realise that they might have been experimenting with marijuana. Often that leads to other tragic consequences. Once they start taking harder drugs, the consequences are serious and devastating to everybody. Previous generations may have experimented by having a smoke at the end-of-school fete or something like that; however, the dangers facing young people today are almost too frightening to contemplate.

We have to attack this problem not only through a specific initiative such as this one; we also have to look broadly at the areas of education, investigation and justice. The people who fall through the cracks and get caught up in the drug scene should be treated with some compassion. When speaking about drugs, I continually say that I think the people who peddle drugs are worse than murderers; they are responsible for destroying hundreds of lives. The network for peddling drugs in society is extremely complex. Although some groups may be readily identifiable, there are all sorts of hidden underground networks—for example, couriers, messengers, launderers and different strata of dealing. That makes this a very difficult problem for the police or the Queensland Crime Commission to deal with. I commend both of those organisations for their efforts.

This Bill is not necessarily looking at attacking the Mr Bigs or other low-lives whom we want to catch and take out of society by locking them up so that they cannot do any more damage on the outside to our young people. This is about those people who have committed less serious crimes. It is about giving them the chance to rehabilitate, to maintain their confidence and inner strength, to keep off drugs and to understand the peer and social pressures that could get them back into the drug scene. In that way, they will keep off drugs and we can dry up the supply. One of the problems is that many of the people who commit lesser offences are drug dependent. They are the ones who are often coerced into that bottom strata out there peddling drugs on behalf of the Mr Mediums and the Mr Bigs who contaminate our society.

I think there is a very genuine will in this place for this Bill to lead to some success in drug rehabilitation. In order to achieve that success, it is going to be very important that this system and this particular trial be properly funded. Whilst it is a trial in, I understand, three centres, I think it is essential that the Government provides the absolute maximum level of funding required. If this trial fails, it will be a tragedy. We have to give it every possible chance so that every aspect of it—in the court system, the rehabilitation system, the supervision, the monitoring of results, the whole thing—is done 100%. If that is done and if it is going to work, it must get the chance to work and get the chance to prove itself. Then we can move on from there and establish more drug courts. In common with the previous speaker from this side of the House, I am concerned. I have heard that the level of funding sought was not able to be provided. I hope that that is wrong. I think that this is the one time when the full amount should be provided. Let us give it a fair go.

There are some other aspects of rehabilitation that I want to speak on, in particular methadone and the issue of needles. All of us at times struggle with the issue of methadone and the question: does it really work? When I was Health Minister, I was advised regularly that its use has something in the order of a 40% success rate. I took the view that, if it is 40% successful, then at least it is achieving something for those people. How else would they get off heroin?

However, when honourable members visit some of the little country hospitals—I remember one little hospital where 28 people were on the methadone program—they will start to wonder if it is just replacing heroin with something else that satisfies only a portion of

their craving. Is it working or is it just providing a substitute? That will be an important side issue in determining how the rehabilitation program will be structured. Later in my contribution I will turn to a couple of places that I have seen that impressed me in the way they provide rehabilitation.

The other issue, of course, is needles. Literally millions of free needles are given out under the needle exchange scheme. The reason and rationale behind that is to prevent the sharing of needles and, in turn, the spread of hepatitis C, which in places such as America is becoming an absolute epidemic, with enormous waiting lists of people needing liver transplants. Hepatitis C is a hidden health time bomb. It often does not surface until about 20 years after people have experimented with particular drugs. So it is a problem about which those of us around now have to be aware in an endeavour to combat it for the benefit of future generations.

I have visited places such as Mirikai and Logan House. I was very keenly impressed not only with the commitment of the staff but also the success they had with rehabilitation in what is an extremely difficult area. It is not like fixing a broken leg where the doctor puts a plaster cast on the leg and takes it off in eight weeks' time and the leg is healed; this is a very difficult, grey area in which to bring about rehabilitation. Very often there are young people in places such as Mirikai. That particular program, which is on the Gold Coast, has a system that is not based on methadone, but on withdrawal from the particular drug. Very often the young people there have such a history or legacy of abuse—of physical abuse, of sexual abuse and of unhappy family life. It makes us realise how fortunate in life some people are and how badly the cards fall for others. So rehabilitation will not be a quick fix.

I am reminded of a recent visit to Link-Up at Kingston, which is run by the Marist fraternity through BoysTown. For some of those young people, the rehabilitation takes up to three years. It has to be done in a steady and staged process. So horrendous are their backgrounds and the experiences that they have been through it is just not possible to provide them with the rehabilitation that they need in half a dozen weeks.

Associated, of course, with drug rehabilitation is the issue of these people themselves. Some may live in fortunate circumstances and may have a home to go to and possibly a job or career or university and TAFE opportunities; others do not have that to

return to. That will be another telling factor in determining the detail of this drug rehabilitation program and system so that after the initial stages have been completed, these people can find a way into a successful and enjoyable life through assistance with housing, employment or a social structure where they can feel they are part of an organisation or a club and have friends around them.

I do want to voice strongly the concern that none of us wants to see this trial fail; we want to see it succeed. It needs the wherewithal and the funding. It also needs to be very carefully thought out so that the whole system of rehabilitation, ongoing monitoring and follow up is one that will work, that testing for drugs occurs at least three times a week, that an individual's progress is monitored once a week for the magistrate and, finally, that its effect on reducing crime is documented.

Other members have spoken about the level of drug-related crime in our society, so I will not repeat it. We all know about it. As a ballpark figure the police often tell me that something in the order of 80% of the crime that they deal with is property crime and up to 90% of that property crime is drug related. If we look at the latest trends from the Australian Bureau of Criminology in Canberra, which show that the incidence of armed robbery is increasing right across Australia and that the vast bulk of it is directly drug related, we can see the sheer size and dimension of the problem that we are dealing with.

We all like to talk about our electorates but, sadly, none of our electorates are free of the scourge of drugs. We all like to think of our electorates as good places, but they all have a similar problem. Members can go into any town or city in Queensland and the people there will tell them that they have this particular problem of drugs. Because of the horrendous nature and size of the battle against drugs—and I believe strongly in this—we need to give our primary and secondary schoolchildren the education, wherewithal and the knowledge so that they have every possible intellectual tool at their advantage to make the decision to say no if they come up against drugs. Ultimately, that is the best way to go. Honourable members can see the difficulty of the drug courts, of catching criminals and of rehabilitation.

Ultimately, the best way is to get as many kids as possible to know and fully understand the issue so that they can say no and to be aware that their drinks could be spiked or to be aware of the other circumstances in which they could be coerced or fall into the pattern of drug

usage. I have seen young girls in my electorate who associate with a fellow who is a no-hoper, who is on methadone or other drugs. The next thing we know, they are dragged into this area of hard drugs with tragic results. I think we could all tell similar stories.

I would like to join with my colleagues on this side of the House in supporting these trials and in supporting this Bill. I ask the Minister to ensure that the full amount of funding required is provided. This is a watershed in the attack on drugs. We are making significant advancements and improvements in the battle against drugs. It is essential that the funding and every single organisational management matter be 100% right so that we can give these three trials the best possible chance to work.

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (4.19 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak this afternoon in support of the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill 1999. As any member of this House would know from visiting their Neighbourhood Watch committees throughout their electorates, the Neighbourhood Watch system is a good vehicle by which to get a very clear insight into the concerns of people within the local community about community safety, policing matters and in particular, and in a growing way, the concern of the local community about the impact of drugs—not just illicit drugs but drug misuse generally. The Neighbourhood Watch system is a wonderful initiative. We need to do everything we can to build it up.

This Bill is a classic example of a well thought out initiative to try to find imaginative ways of addressing one part of a very complex problem, that is, the drug culture and the impact of drugs within our community. The Bill provides for the conduct of a pilot program in selected Magistrates Courts—Southport, Ipswich and Beenleigh—where drug dependent offenders will be diverted from imprisonment to treatment by ordering the person to attend for assessment, planning a treatment program and making an intensive drug rehabilitation order.

The rehabilitation option will not be a soft option. That is to be underlined. Eligibility for entry into the program will be restricted to offenders who satisfy the following criteria: they are adults, they are dependent on illicit drugs, they are charged with an offence which does not involve physical violence or sexual violence against any person, they have no offences involving physical violence or sexual assault pending before a court anywhere, they plead guilty to the offence, they are genuinely facing

a sentence of imprisonment and they are willing to participate in the drug rehabilitation pilot program. The court will also be required to consider whether the dependency was a major contributing cause or factor in the offending behaviour which has brought the offender before the courts. Imprisonment will be suspended for the duration of the order and the sentence will be reviewed if the treatment program is terminated.

When the Beattie Labor Government was elected, we said that we would be tough not only on crime but also on the causes of crime. The drug rehabilitation program is proof of the Government delivering on its promise in this area. The legislation does not just meet the needs of drug addicted offenders; it helps address the concerns of victims of house breaks, car theft and other crimes committed to feed the hunger for more drugs.

As a previous member of this House said this afternoon, so many of the crimes committed in our communities are property related offences. So many of those offences are associated with the drug scene in that addicts need to obtain large amounts of ready cash to help them continue to meet their drug addiction. This program also addresses the concerns of ordinary Queenslanders such as the parents of drug addicted offenders who deserve more than just lip-service to this major and complex issue in our community. If this trial can save the life of just one of their sons or daughters, they will call it a success.

I said earlier that the issue of drugs in our community is of great concern to virtually every person one comes across—and not just at high schools but also at primary schools—parents at schools when they discuss this issue at P & C meetings, members of the community who talk about finding syringes in their gardens when gardening on the weekend and people mentioning the neighbour who has so many frequent visitors on a Thursday night, perhaps up to 30 cars in the space of several hours. Those visitors happen to visit for only an amazingly short time of 5 or 10 minutes, so popular is this venue. Also, police talk about difficulties in apprehending dealers, and people in the community talk about the problem of syringes left lying in parks and the local vandalism that seems to go hand in hand with the drug culture.

Overall, there is a growing, heightened level of general community frustration and anger about the insidious, corrosive impact of drugs, particularly on young people in our society. Those who are vulnerable to the influences of older people are drawn into the

vortex of the drug culture for a whole range of reasons relating to the pressures on young people in today's day and age. In my local community there have been a number of meetings in the last 18 months or so—there are going to be more in the future—trying to raise people's awareness in relation to the indicators of drug use in an attempt to discover if their own children are involved in the drug scene. There was an excellent meeting about 12 months ago at the Ferny Grove Bowls Club. It was very sobering to hear people stand up and say from their own experience how they did not know or it was too late before they discovered that their son or daughter was addicted to heroin or involved in other drug taking. There have been meetings at other places as well.

I go back to a point I made at the beginning of my contribution on this debate—that is, this is a multi-faceted problem. What distresses and disappoints me is that often the public debate around this issue is by people who have a somewhat closed mind who are so terribly convinced by their own particular view of a single solution to what is a complex problem with many parts. It is very difficult to have a sensible, moderate, non-alarmist debate in the community about how to address this problem. Some time ago I attended the first commemorative service on the Gold Coast—from recollection, it was on behalf of the Premier—conducted by a group of people wanting to commemorate the deaths that occur each year as a result of heroin or other hard drug addiction.

No-one attending that ceremony could walk away unaffected by the grief that these parents experience or by the gravity of the drug problem in our community. If that awareness was more widely shared throughout the community, maybe those people we hear on talkback radio or the journalists whose stories we read in the newspapers—who so readily and, in my view, glibly promote a single-view approach to solving the drug problem—would be a bit more circumspect and accept that this is a multi-faceted problem. We need to save the lives of those who are already addicted, and the solution to that aspect of the problem may have nothing to do with what we do to make sure that young people, particularly junior high school and senior primary school kids, are aware of the dangers of drugs.

Another part of the problem is attacking the dealers, particularly the economic gains made by them. Yet another part of the problem is addressing the transmission of diseases that takes place through the sharing

of needles. The solution to that problem may require a different attitude and approach from that adopted when addressing the problem of saving the lives of those already addicted. As I have said, another vitally important area is raising the awareness of young people and their parents of the consequences of drug misuse. Beyond even all of those things, as this Government has always said in its approach to crime generally and in particular to drug-related crime, we must attack not only the crime itself but also its causes, which leads us into our policies addressing job creation, skilling and training, continuous education and assisting the unemployed in whatever way we can.

I think this is a brilliant initiative of the Government, and I am delighted that it is receiving bipartisan support. Admittedly, it is a pilot, but it is at least an initiative that we are going to experiment with. If we discover that a need exists for changes to the initiative then, on review, we should seriously consider adopting the changes necessary to make sure that the core and the essence of this initiative is continued in some way. I am looking forward to the success of the pilot, and I am also looking forward, beyond that time, to this program perhaps being made available for juvenile offenders, because a new generation of drug-dependent people is being raised every day.

I recall some statistics that I came across late last year. Recent Australian surveys show high rates of drug use, particularly among 20 to 29-year-old people. A 1996 survey of Queensland school students reported that between 10% and 12% of Year 7 students had sniffed intoxicants in the week prior to the survey being conducted. Given that the number of young people aged between 15 and 24 years living in the north-western suburbs—some of which fall within my electorate—is noticeably higher than the Brisbane average, those figures concerned me. I am pleased to say that throughout the north-western suburbs there are a range of organisations, both Government and non-Government, but especially in the non-Government sector, which have been willing to come together in the last 12 months to develop local strategies to try to provide local community solutions to the problems being experienced by young people, in particular those related to the drug culture and drug addiction.

A youth forum convened last year through the Hills District PCYC, the Piccabeen Community Centre at Mitchelton, the Ferny Grove State High School, the Mitchelton State

High School and myself saw over 95 people—mainly local people—in attendance, representing 50 local government and non-Government agencies in some way working with youth. I was delighted that the Minister for Families was able to attend that youth forum and be the guest speaker. Out of that forum came a range of initiatives. It considered the mental and emotional health of young people, their exposure to drug and alcohol addiction and also cultural and sexual identity issues. An interim report has been circulated, and local community groups, together with a steering committee, are working on local initiatives to try to progress positive activities that will help us address the problems of young people whom we describe as on the edge. In fact, the forum was named the On the Edge project, and we hope it will continue with some success.

One practical initiative to come from the forum is a community service directory which will be made available to teachers, police and youth workers in the local area. It will help them guide young people whom they come across who need to be connected with both Government and non-Government support agencies to assist them with the social and economic crises that are happening in their lives, including the problems of attraction to the drug culture and drug addiction. It happens fortuitously that a Department of Health initiative on the north side of Brisbane was already working on producing such a community services directory for the support of young people, and it is that directory which we are now making available to local teachers, primary and high schools, and police.

The local community has in other ways taken the initiative in raising the awareness of people to the drug problem. A group has been established called the Samford Drug Awareness Group, which will conduct two seminars in a couple of months' time in the Samford Valley, one directed towards parents and the other directed towards young people. Following up on that initiative, the chaplain at the Ferny Grove State High School who is involved in that initiative has indicated that he is happy to work with me and others to set up a similar exercise for Ferny Grove and Ferny Hills. That awareness program stems from a similar program run at The Gap State High School late last year, which was highly commended by the Ferny Grove police division.

We are trying to link together other initiatives in the area. There is the SWAG initiative of Education Queensland at Mitchelton State High School. Students With a Goal is the full name of the program. It works

with young kids who need a different approach to education and the crisis issues they are facing in their lives. On the initiative of Inspector Ross Gorrie of the Ferny Grove police division and Senior Sergeant Don Amos of the Juvenile Aid Bureau, a youth coordinator has been appointed to the Hills PCYC to work with young people. This year we are commencing the construction and opening of the North Point TAFE annexe at the Ferny Grove tramway museum to train young people in electrical and mechanical skills for the Brisbane Light Rail project. Many other initiatives are also taking place.

This Government has been and will continue to be tough on crime itself, and it will be even tougher on the causes of crime, not just at a Statewide level but also at the grassroots level in our local communities. We have been working and will continue to work with people and organisations who already have a proven commitment to working in this area, many of whom, I might add and emphasise, are volunteers who give freely of their time and money to work with young people in need.

As I said earlier, I am delighted to be able to support this initiative. In the next six months I look forward to this Government bringing forth further initiatives to help us attack the whole issue of community safety and the drug industry and culture in our communities.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (4.40 p.m.): In speaking to the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill, I want to congratulate the Attorney-General and the Labor Government on this initiative. I also congratulate the former Attorney-General, the member for Warwick, and the coalition because this initiative has been the result of a single goal.

A week ago I was speaking with a former Brisbane lawyer who has now relocated. This lawyer was referring to the drug problem in the south-east corner of the State. He had worked in this area of the law and he said that he could get any drug offender off because all he had to do was tell some tragic story. He pointed to me and said, "Those of you who are in politics need to do something about that." I responded and said, "What do you suggest?" He said, "I don't have any ideas."

I believe that this Bill goes some way towards trying to identify one interventionary program. Another matter which I believe bears mentioning—and it may have already been mentioned—concerns the work performed by chaplains in schools. The chaplains attempt early intervention by having contact with young

people who are prepared to discuss their problems—not only home problems but problems of drug dependency. The chaplains have noticed a growth in confidence between students and themselves. They have been able to tender advice and support in an endeavour to combat the problem of drugs. Certainly, early intervention is the best way to tackle the problem.

I have a couple of questions I want to ask the Minister in regard to the Bill. I note that the three trial areas are in the south-east corner of the State. At the risk of carping on the fact that there are a lot more areas in this State, I wondered whether there were practical problems that prevented us having a trial in an area apart from the south-east corner. I refer in particular to central Queensland or north Queensland. I acknowledge that it is not a matter of the problem changing in another district, but that access to services is different in the regions.

Only four months ago a mother came to see me in my office. This woman's son, who was only 16 years of age, had an established drug habit. The boy had finally arrived at the stage at which he wanted to break the habit. We tried for more than a week to get the boy placed in a detox centre. There is nowhere in Gladstone, and nowhere in close proximity to Gladstone, where the boy could be placed. I have called for a detox centre to be established outside the south-east corner of the State.

All the detox centres in the south-east corner of the State that we contacted had no beds available. Perhaps it was the case that the boy did not belong to the target group. A number of detox centres have target groups for indigenous youth; others have target groups for either male or female patients. There are detox centres which concentrate solely on alcohol. There are a few that are poly-drug centres. Many of the centres are targeted at a particular type of abuse.

To my knowledge, that young family has still not been able to find a live-in rehabilitation centre where that boy could be voluntarily admitted to have himself dried out. The time to strike was then because the boy wanted to do it himself. This action was not being forced upon the boy. He was not being compelled; he was prepared to voluntarily enter a rehabilitation centre. However, we could not find a place for him.

The second area of concern relates to a clarification of the provisions that have been made to ensure that this program can work. I know that previous speakers have commented

on this aspect, so I will endeavour to keep my remarks fairly short. There are a number of Government and private detox centres. Many of them consist of one or two beds in a general hospital. I refer in particular to Townsville, Toowoomba, the Sunshine Coast and Prince Charles Hospital. There are quite a lot in the south-east corner of the State. There are private facilities on the Gold Coast.

Most of those centres with which I have had contact are full and have waiting lists. This is not a criticism of the program. Together with all previous speakers in this debate, I fully support this initiative. If a court is going to require a person to enter rehabilitation facilities, those facilities will have to be available at that time. I realise that the Bill speaks of a 14-day holding period, but given the history of detox facilities in this State and the high demand on them—this is ignoring the criminal side of things and simply dealing with general medical referrals and family referrals—there are very few beds available.

Will it be the case that some of those private facilities will be given assistance to expand their capacity? In what practical way is the Government going to address the availability of facilities? I noted in the briefing notes that this initiative is going to be jointly funded by the Department of Justice and the Health Department. That is appropriate, but I wonder what Budget allocations have been made.

This is a very good initiative. The honourable member who has just completed his contribution pointed out that the success or failure of this trial will depend upon the adequate funding of the trial. That is fundamental. It would be a tragedy to see something that has the potential to save young lives fail because it was inadequately resourced.

My questions to the Minister are as follows. How have the places been identified? Will places be available should the court order that a young person enter rehabilitation? How can one be assured that a place will be available even within the 14-day period? If there are deficiencies in the number of places available, how will those deficiencies be addressed? Does the Government have a contingency plan to build extra facilities and to make extra hospital beds available, given that many of the beds are already in psychiatric wards? Is it intended to allocate more beds to drug and rehabilitation patients in the general hospital system? The hospitals are already stressed, as far as their resources are concerned, with medical issues. I would seek

an answer from the Minister as to how that particular resourcing issue will be addressed. What contingencies are in place?

If an initiative such as this saves one person's life it will be worth while. I believe that this Parliament can feel very confident, with the support of the legal profession and health practitioners, that there will be a great desire to see the trial succeed. However, I would reinforce to the Minister that that can only occur if adequate facilities are made available for these referrals to be made.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (4.48 p.m.): In rising to make a contribution in relation to the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill, I would like to endorse the sentiments of most previous speakers regarding the need to take the drug problem that we face in Queensland and Australia very seriously. It is a national problem and it is reaching epidemic proportions. The effects of this problem are felt in every community throughout the country.

Problems of drug addiction have touched almost every person in every community—the user, the user's family and friends, and those who are innocent bystanders in relation to their involvement with drug users. I believe that the establishment of the drug court is a very positive step in the move to intervene at an early stage before the drug users get into the system and become recidivist criminals. Unfortunately, too many of these people are filling our jails in this country.

Similar trials commenced in the United States in 1994 and a little later in the United Kingdom. Those trials, of course, are still in their early stages. The trials are being conducted in quite a number of jurisdictions. The statistical information coming from the United States of America and the United Kingdom indicates that the use of drugs by the criminal population involves some 70% of offenders.

New South Wales, which is undertaking some statistical studies, has also found a very similar level of offenders using drugs. At this point, I do not think that we have done much in Queensland in relation to defining the percentage of offenders who have drug problems but, as has been mentioned by one or two other speakers, I think that property crime would certainly have to rank high on the list of being perpetrated by drug offenders in order to fund their habit.

The effects on State and Federal coffers in addressing drug problems need not be elaborated. Not many people would dispute that drug problems impose a huge cost on the

community in the area of law and order, the area of health and on the Department of Families, because a drug user usually causes a family to become dysfunctional. Schools are also affected by drug problems. The school system—and not just high schools—is rife with drug peddling to students if the correct precautions are not taken and remedial measures are not put in place to protect children who are at a very vulnerable age.

The Life Education program, which was an initiative of the previous coalition Government, attracted quite good support from the P & C associations. I know that at the P & C meetings that I attend in my electorate people were very upset that the funding for that program was not continued this year. It required a very small amount of funding—about \$400,000 per annum—but the effect of the program was that 154,000 students were given some exposure to the drug problems that they might face. I am not talking necessarily about hard drugs; the Life Education program was very good in that it covered a range of drugs, including tobacco and alcohol. However, that program, which cost a very small amount of money in terms of the overall budget, was discontinued. It was argued by the Minister and his director-general that the program had very little effect. I do not think that the effect of that program could have been quantified. Every step we take to try to shield the youth of this State from the effects of drugs is very important.

I would like to touch upon the cost of the drug problem to local communities and local councils. Most shire and city councils have to expend a considerable amount of ratepayers' money on keeping their cities and towns clean of large numbers of discarded syringes. The Redland Shire Council, which is mostly within my electorate, has a daily patrol that goes to all the parks in the shire. The officers of that patrol have to go through all the sandpits to ensure that there are no discarded syringes that could be stepped on, particularly by a young child who could then contract hepatitis C or HIV and end up with liver disease and ultimately die. The drug problem costs this State alone many millions and millions of dollars.

We have to be very proactive in all areas of drug prevention and rehabilitation, including drug courts. We must try to encourage offenders to opt for a rehabilitation program in lieu of an imposed sentence. I endorse the Bill. It is another drug prevention initiative—a very important one—and I commend the Government for taking it forward.

I would like to conclude by referring to a group of businessmen in the Redland Shire who operate Teen Challenge, a drug prevention and rehabilitation program. A few months ago, Major Brian Watters from the Salvation Army attended their breakfast function. Tomorrow the Reverend Tim Costello, who is interested in drug rehabilitation programs, is their guest speaker. I am delighted to be able to attend and support that function tomorrow morning. We must all try to keep up the fight against drug use. I commend the Bill.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (4.54 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate. This Government has a policy of being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. This initiative is an important component of the strategic approach that the Government has adopted.

The legislation creating the trial drug courts is a manifestation of the need for courts to change and adapt. The feedback manifested through the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration's report last year to the effect that courts were out of touch with the needs of the community requires an intelligent response by the Legislature, by the Executive and by the judiciary. This is part of that response.

This Bill changes the way in which a court can operate. It does so in accordance with age-old principles that the law is there not merely to punish and to deter but also to help in appropriate cases. It does so in order to come to terms with a great historic challenge, namely, the challenge of drugs. The drug problem is changing the nature of the criminal justice system by creating a force that leads to repeated break and enters and other property offences. If we are to combat that force, we must do so by attacking it at its cause, namely, the addiction that drives the offenders. This trial is an attempt to come to terms with those factors.

May I say that this initiative is not merely a change in the wording of a Bill to go through this House; it reflects a serious and practical commitment in budgetary terms on the part of the Government. As outlined in the Budget Speech of the 1999-2000 Budget, provision has been made for this trial project to be conducted over the next three years to divert drug offenders at the court level from prison to intensive rehabilitation. This will be a cooperative project across several agencies at a cost of \$3.2m over three years.

I welcome the support of the Opposition and I welcome the bipartisan approach that has been adopted. Contrary to the assertions of the Opposition, this initiative was, in fact, floated and proposed originally by the Government. Behind the initial gloss of bipartisanship, we have heard much of an attempt on the part of the Opposition to claim credit for this initiative. I welcome their bipartisan support, but let the record show this: when they were in Government, did they spend money on drug courts? No! They spent millions and millions of dollars out of the Justice Department budget on the Connolly/Ryan inquiry and they spent millions of dollars on political advertising. We have spent the money where it needs to be spent, namely, in tackling crime and tackling the causes of crime. We did so not in an isolated way, but as part of a comprehensive strategy. If the honourable members opposite care to read the discussion paper on crime prevention, which the Government put out as part of this comprehensive strategy, they would see that we floated that proposition from the very start.

In any event, I welcome the support of all honourable members and thank them for their contributions to the debate. I thank particularly the members for Archerfield, Bulimba and Greenslopes, who several weeks ago accompanied me on a visit to the drug court at Parramatta in Sydney in order to see how it operates in practice. I also thank the members for Mount Ommaney and Ferny Grove for their contributions.

Let me deal with a number of matters raised by contributors to the debate. I turn to the contribution of the member for Warwick. I thank him for his support of the Bill. The starting date for this program is expected to be late April/early May. An implementation program has commenced. Training programs will run from 6 March to 31 March. The regulations, forms and software are all being written in consultation with the many stakeholders. Queensland Health is funding the building of a unit with dedicated beds for detoxification purposes so that people on the drug court program will not be queue jumping. Each of the stakeholders is employing relevant personnel. An evaluation program is being developed so that the review required under this Bill can commence from day one of the operation of the drug court.

There will be no balloting of offenders for eligibility. In New South Wales, those people for whom there is no facility available at the time they appear before the drug court miss out on a treatment program and become a

mere control group for evaluation purposes. We will be able to treat all or almost all people who qualify in the pilot areas, because our aim is to achieve equity amongst those eligible persons in a given community. That is why the three locations were chosen. They were chosen because, on an estimate of the statistics, it was considered that they would produce about the 300 cases that were necessary in order to make a proper evaluation. Over the period of two and a half years, there would be some 600 cases in all. So the reason that those three were chosen, in part, was in order to get that number.

I note the contributions of the honourable member for Gladstone and the honourable member for Maroochydore, who would like to see the centres in other places. I can understand their concern. This is a pilot project. If it works, it will be rolled out throughout the State. But it was important to place the centres in demographically diverse areas. Southport, Beenleigh and Ipswich each represent different communities. What works in Southport may or may not work in Ipswich and vice versa.

As to the question of the frequency of reporting to the court, that will be at the discretion of the magistrate to decide on a case by case basis. The magistrate will have the benefit of recommendations and a treatment plan put together by professional health and corrections assessors. The person will be able to be ordered back to court at any time. Likewise, the frequency of drug testing will be assessed on a case by case basis and will depend on the extent of the person's drug dependency and the type of drug to which he or she is addicted. The Bill also makes provision for random drug testing.

I turn to the question of conditional assumption of jurisdiction from the Supreme Court. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in two successive annual reports has urged the Parliament to change the law so as to divert from the Supreme Court certain minor drug matters. This Bill is, in part, a response to that. It makes provision that, if an offender is charged with a prescribed drug offence, the magistrate must explain (a) that the offender would normally be dealt with in a Supreme Court for the offence; (b) the magistrate is dealing with the offender on the condition that the offender successfully complete the rehabilitation program; and (c) if the offender does not successfully complete the rehabilitation program, the offender will be dealt with in the Supreme Court for the offence.

This means that, if the offender succeeds, everyone is happy. However, if the offender's program is terminated for breaching conditions, for example, the offender will go back to the Supreme Court for trial or sentence, meaning that nothing is lost but a bit of time and effort trying to help a drug-dependent person break the habit.

Offences committed by dealers, for example, trafficking and supply, will not be prescribed for the purposes of this pilot. I give that assurance to the House in response to the concerns raised by the honourable member. I had already instructed my department to that effect some time ago. Certain supply charges are already within the Magistrates Court jurisdiction, and this will not change. However, the more serious supply matters now dealt with by the Supreme Court will not be prescribed offences for the drug court.

The honourable member asked the question: why not a District Court jurisdiction? In New South Wales the District Court jurisdiction was chosen because it has jurisdiction over drug offenders. In Queensland the District Court has no such jurisdiction over any drug offences. In Queensland all drug offences are dealt with only by the Supreme Court or the Magistrates Court. By putting the drug court in the Magistrates Court, we will be able to treat people much sooner, and time is of the essence in this intervention. There will be an incentive in our approach to avoid lengthy and expensive committal proceedings. This will achieve cost savings to the courts, legal aid defendants and others.

I turn to the contribution of the member for Indooroopilly. The source of the funding is coming from Queensland taxpayers. I wish I could say it was coming from the Commonwealth, but sadly the Commonwealth's National Illicit Drug Strategy, at the insistence of the Commonwealth, is directed towards police diversionary programs, that is, minor and often first-time drug users. The drug court program is State funded and targets people who are seriously drug dependent and recidivist offenders who would otherwise face imprisonment.

I hope that all honourable members from both sides of the House do what they can with the Commonwealth to see whether they can make some of those funds available directly or through the community agencies. It is all very well to deal with diverting minor drug offenders, but dealing with people who are at serious risk of going to prison for committing offences, which is the class of persons that this

legislation will deal with, is a much tougher task. Frankly, it would be good to see the Commonwealth make a contribution.

The honourable member raised questions about guidelines. The pilot program magistrate will not be able to be directed by guidelines issued by the Government or by any Minister. There is no authority to do so. The magistrate will be exercising a normal judicial sentencing discretion. The Government will not interfere with that.

A thorough evaluation of the program and review of the Act by me as required in the Act will identify any practices or other teething problems that need to be addressed to make any future rollout feasible. We want this to be able to be done at Biloela, Mount Isa and Cairns, but we need to have something in place that will work in a geographically diverse place such as Queensland.

The Bill does, however, provide for guidelines to be prescribed by regulation for the limited purpose of determining allocation to an offender of facilities to supervise and control the offender's participation in the rehabilitation programs. These guidelines are being developed by senior officers from the relevant departments in consultation with the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate.

I turn to the contribution of the member for Caboolture. He asked how we would keep dealers out. I repeat the assurance I gave earlier that trafficking and supply offences will not be prescribed drug offences within the meaning of this legislation. Only those drug offences which can already be dealt with summarily under section 13 of the Drugs Misuse Act and drug offences prescribed by regulation, for example, possession, will be relevant.

Before being eligible to receive an intensive drug rehabilitation order, the person will be referred for assessment by professional drug and alcohol counsellors. Their task will be to determine (a) whether the person is drug dependent and suitable for treatment and, if so, to recommend a treatment plan for that person; and (b) whether the drug dependency contributed to the person committing the offence before the court.

The honourable member asked whether there would be drug testing by force. A basic principle of this program is cooperation and an expressed willingness to participate. If a person is ordered to provide a blood or urine specimen and refuses, the magistrate can either sanction the offender—for example, by putting him or her in prison for a couple of days—or terminate the program. It is that

simple. Drug tests can be randomised. If the authorities find a urine sample to be contaminated by drugs, then they can direct the person to appear in court the very next day.

The honourable member for Burleigh raised questions about the Mirikai Drug Rehabilitation Centre, as set out in her letter to me dated 2 February. Earlier today I delivered a reply by way of letter to the honourable member. In the contribution of the member for Gladstone, she asked whether there were practical problems to having the trial elsewhere in Queensland. The answer is that it makes sense to have it in south-east Queensland because we can have three different spots. Hopefully that will give us the volume of cases necessary to make an effective evaluation and will also give us the diversity necessary to make comparisons. But the whole object is to get something that will apply throughout the State.

Let me turn to some technical matters. The Explanatory Notes need correction. The proof sent to Goprint was correct, but a glitch in the printing process—the printer's devil gets blamed for a lot in this place—has resulted in the ends of some sentences being left off. Goprint will, by relying on this statement, correct the final print before publication in the annual volume. This procedure is being adopted on the advice of the Clerk of the Parliament and the Table Office. The corrections are 10 in number, and I table them rather than reading them into the record.

I foreshadow to the House that I will be moving two amendments in Committee. One deals with the availability of this program to people convicted of prostitution. The Bill excludes offences of a sexual nature, but we clarify that people who are working as prostitutes and convicted of prostitution will not be excluded by virtue of that from the program. There will also be an amendment providing for the issue of arrest warrants for people who, for example, abscond while undertaking treatment.

I thank all honourable members for their contributions to this debate. It is an important initiative. It is important for the courts and all of the families in this diverse State who have experienced the tragedy of having a member of their family drug dependent and the many people in this State who have experienced the loss coming from being the victim of a crime committed by drug dependent offenders. I commend the Bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr SPRINGBORG (5.12 p.m.): I note that the Attorney-General sought to give me some assurances in respect of this clause during his reply. I am raising the issue of what constitutes a disqualifying offence. Yesterday I had a discussion about this with the Attorney-General. Today he indicated his desire not to have a situation such that the prescribed 20-year offences would be able to be considered for rehabilitation purposes under this drug courts legislation. I will indicate to the Attorney-General what caused my concern and illustrate why it is not just a case of our jumping at shadows. In his second-reading speech, the Attorney-General stated—

"For instance, at present it is only those drug offences under the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 which attract a maximum of 15 years' imprisonment that may be dealt with summarily in the Magistrates Court."

We are comfortable with that. However, on page 5 of his speech he indicated—

"... the pilot program magistrate will have discretion to conditionally assume jurisdiction over drug offences for which the maximum penalty is 20 years."

The condition will be that the person be eligible for rehabilitation and successfully complete the program. Although I understand that possession and some smaller cases of supply might fall into the 15 years' imprisonment category that magistrates have the capacity to deal with summarily, I have taken the opportunity to look at the Drugs Misuse Act, the Dictionary in the Schedule to which stated that "prescribed drug offence" means an offence under the Drugs Misuse Act 1996 for which the maximum penalty is 20 years' imprisonment and which is prescribed under a regulation. Upon checking the Drugs Misuse Act, it was clear that that applied to supply and trafficking offences in respect of certain drugs—certainly not heroin and cocaine but amphetamines and a whole range of other drugs and designer drugs that are of significant concern to the community.

Although I appreciate the desire of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to delegate down some of that responsibility to free up the Supreme Court, I am not so sure that my support extends to the area of drug

trafficking in particular. I am not so sure that a lot of people in the community would be enthusiastic about that, either. However, there probably are general areas concerning drugs in the Supreme Court jurisdiction that could be delegated down. But for the purposes of this drug court legislation it is important that it is confined to offences attracting 15 years' imprisonment that they have the capacity to deal with summarily. Once again, based on what I read of the second-reading speech and also my interpretation of the Bill itself and the Dictionary, I seek the assurance of the Attorney-General that it will not apply to supply and trafficking offences which carry a jail term of up to 20 years.

Mr FOLEY: I repeat the assurance I gave earlier: trafficking and supply offences will not be prescribed drug offences. Only those drug offences which can already be dealt with summarily under section 13 of the Drugs Misuse Act and drug offences prescribed by regulation—for example, possession—will be the relevant ones. I appreciate the honourable member's concern. It is a concern I share.

Mr SPRINGBORG: In light of the assurances given by the Attorney-General, I will not proceed to circulate the amendments I had intended to move.

Mr FOLEY: I move the following amendment—

"At page 8, after line 20—

insert—

'(3) For subsection (1), an offence of a sexual nature does not include an offence by a prostitute in providing prostitution, or in offering or accepting an offer to provide prostitution.'."

This amendment enables prostitutes to have the benefit of the program if they come before the courts such that they will not be excluded by the general exclusion applying to sexual offences.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I assure the Committee and the Attorney-General that the Opposition supports this amendment. We think it is a sensible one. We are not dealing with a violent sexual offence or a physical offence for which there is a general disqualification under this Bill. We think it is sensible to enable people convicted of prostitution charges, which are so often related to a drug dependency, to access the program. We support the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mr SPRINGBORG (5.17 p.m.): In relation to the pilot program for courts and magistrates, I have read the letter written by the Attorney-General to the member for Burleigh and I think it outlines a lot of issues—it was a very comprehensive letter—with respect to the establishment of the drug courts, how they will operate and also the rehabilitation services and so on that will be available. With respect to the Governor in Council and the declaration of certain Magistrates Courts to be pilot program courts, does the Attorney-General envisage that before the final assessment process is concluded in two and a half or three years' time—whenever it may be—there will be additional pilot program Magistrates Courts around the State of Queensland?

Mr FOLEY: I do not have plans to do so at this stage. I have a budget and I have the legislation. The budget and the whole planning and programming has been with these three programs in mind. I appreciate the sentiments of honourable members. I thank them for their interest. I have had letters from people throughout the State who would like to see a drug court trialled in their community. I welcome their interest and support. But we have to start somewhere. We have to start with a trial and give it a proper evaluation. That is what we are doing. It makes sense to trial them in the south-east corner, because it has places with different demographic make-ups. That is what we are doing.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—

Mr SPRINGBORG (5.19 p.m.): Very briefly, with regards to Functions, additional jurisdiction and powers of pilot program magistrates on page 10, clause 11(5) states—

"In a proceeding under this Act, the pilot program magistrate is not bound by the rules of evidence, but may inform himself or herself in any way the magistrate considers appropriate."

Whilst not being absolutely sure of the rules of evidence that would normally apply to magistrates in dealing with such matters, I assume that this is an application of an inquisitorial principle to the pilot program magistrate and the court, where they are able to quickly get to the nub of the issue and ensure a judicious dispatch of the business before the court.

Mr FOLEY: Yes, the honourable member assumes correctly. It is novel to make provision that courts exercising criminal jurisdiction are

not bound by the rules of evidence. On the other hand, we have to do something; we have to attack this problem and we have to do so in a way that enables the court to inform itself properly and to deal with people on a frequent basis. This, of course, has to be read and will be read by courts as subject to the principles of natural justice that govern the liberty of the subject. This facilitatory provision ensures that the court is not hamstrung by technical rules of evidence in circumstances where the justice of the case requires it to proceed promptly.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 12 to 22 as read, agreed to.

Clause 23—

Mr SPRINGBORG (5.21 p.m.): I wish to raise two points with regard to Additional requirements of order. Clause 23(1) states—

"The intensive drug rehabilitation order may also contain requirements that the offender—

(a) make restitution, or pay compensation ..."

I would take it that that is the furtherment of the principle of restorative justice with regard to the responsibility of the offender to the victim. As to subclause (b), which provides for the performance of community service, one of the issues that we are finding very much—and the Attorney is probably hearing this—is probably more in the area of his colleague the Honourable Minister for Police and Corrective Services. It is the problem of keeping tabs on people who are doing community service and having the resources to do that and to ensure some enforcement in that area. I would take it from that that there has been some interaction between the Attorney and the Minister for Police and Corrective Services in overcoming some of those issues as well.

Mr FOLEY: I thank the honourable member. Dealing with the last point first, central to this exercise is the concept of team. If this is going to work, it is going to require a team approach of the police; the corrective services authorities; the court itself; to some extent, legal aid; the health authorities and so on. This does require the active involvement of the corrective services authorities. There has been an implementation team working together to make this happen along similar lines to the one that occurs in Parramatta. I am grateful to my ministerial colleagues for their cooperation and, indeed, grateful to the officers of those various other agencies for their cooperation. Certainly, that includes the corrective services authorities.

As to clause 23(1)(a), the making of restitution and the payment of compensation, that clause makes it clear that those provisions are available. I point out, of course, that this is not criminal injury compensation in the meaning of the Criminal Offence Victims Act. That applies, of course, to offences against the person. We are not dealing with violence here, but it does make it clear that the court has power to award restitutional compensation by way of restorative justice in appropriate cases.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The Minister mentioned the fact that it is going to be a team approach, and I acknowledge that. However, one of the things that was raised in the second-reading debate was the practical availability of places in detox facilities. What planning has been done and what arrangements have been made with private detox facilities or public facilities, and what contingency measures do you have if those places are not available at the time they are needed?

Mr FOLEY: There has been extensive work done, as I say, with the corrective services authorities, with the Health Department, with police and so on in order to have these facilities available and in place. Part of the team approach is that there is close cooperation between the court and these authorities so that the courts are well aware of the availability of those resources in the making of the orders and is proceeding on that basis.

Clause 23, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 24 to 30, as read, agreed to.

Clause 31—

Mr SPRINGBORG (5.25 p.m.): This is the final point which I will be raising before the Committee of the Whole. Before doing so, I would just like to say that, once this Bill is passed, I think it is going to be a very significant piece of law reform which will stand this State in good stead for the future. With regard to the ability of a pilot program magistrate to revoke certain stated privileges or to be able to provide sanctions for a person who does not live up to the expectations that they undertook when they entered into the drug court program, subclause (1)(b) of clause 31, Rewards, says that there may be—

"(b) a decrease in the amount of any monetary penalty payable, but not yet paid, by the offender under section 32 ..."

I would just like to seek an assurance from the Attorney-General that that does not apply in

the area of restitution or compensation and applies in the area of monetary fines that might have to be made to the State.

Mr FOLEY: I can give that assurance. It does not apply to restitution. In fact, if one reads section 31(1)(b), one sees that it makes it plain that it refers to a decrease in the amount of any monetary penalty payable but not yet paid by the offender under section 32. If the honourable member goes to section 32, he will see in 32(1)(b) the reference to the imposition of a monetary penalty payable to the clerk. That means that, if people breach their conditions, then they get sanctioned. That can mean a couple of days in prison. It can mean the imposition of a fine. This says that, by way of reward—let us say that a person has been given an \$80 fine for some breach, for example, not keeping in proper contact with their case supervisor. If the person behaves, then it gives the magistrate power to say, "You do not have to pay the \$80. You only have to pay \$40." We can decrease that penalty, but it does not affect restoration or compensation.

Clause 31, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 32 to 46, as read, agreed to.

Clause 47—

Mr FOLEY (5.28 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 29, after line 25—

insert—

'(2) Despite the expiry of this Act under subsection (1), a warrant issued under section 40(1), but not executed before the expiry, remains in force and may be executed after the expiry as if it authorised the police officer arresting the offender to bring the offender before any magistrate to be dealt with according to law.

'(3) It is declared that subsection (2) is a law to which the Acts Interpretation Act 1954, section 20A applies.'"

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 47, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Mr FOLEY (5.29 p.m.): I place on record my gratitude and appreciation for the hard work done by officers of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, particularly Mr John Costanzo, and my ministerial staff, in particular Mr Peter Clarke, in doing a lot of hard work. I extend also that thanks to the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, who has contributed along with officers of the Police

Service, the Health Department and Corrective Services authorities to make this possible.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 25 August 1999 (see p. 3486).

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (5.30 p.m.): It is a familiar sight to see the newly appointed Chairman of Committees back in the chair once more. I congratulate Mr Deputy Speaker on his elevation to the role of Chairman of Committees in this House. I rise to speak to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 1999, which proposes a number of changes to the existing legislation in the State of Queensland. As the Minister indicated in his second-reading speech, much of the legislation we have before us is machinery in nature in that the amendments are minor and correct anomalies that have come to our attention following the testing of various pieces of transport legislation before the courts.

The first amendment is to the Traffic Act and shifts provisions dealing with matters of fare evasion and related offences regarding the use of public transport from the Traffic Act, where it has historically resided, to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act, which is considered the appropriate legislation to deal with public transport matters. This amendment is appreciated and supported by the coalition. This section of the legislation is paramount, especially in the taxi industry, in which we have seen fare evasion in the past.

Whether it be the railways or the buses, there is always somebody out there who will try to evade fares. We know full well the cost of running public transport in this State. It is absolutely paramount that we have people from all quarters respecting and upholding the law in relation to this. As a Minister for two years and four months in this State, I know precisely what the Government is trying to address, and the Opposition supports it totally. This is an issue that people have been getting away with for too long. I trust that with this amendment we are going to see a change, and a change for the better.

The Bill also provides significant amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act. New objectives are proposed to be incorporated in the Act dealing with air services, including access to air services, regional development and air transport infrastructure. I say at the outset that this was certainly an initiative of the Borbidge Government and one I am proud to have been the steward of at the time. I congratulate the Minister for carrying on with this policy and legislation. The Minister, like myself, represents a large remote electorate that is dislocated by distance and which suffers from remoteness and isolation.

I will speak more on that issue later, but similar objectives are to be inserted regarding the management of public marine facilities. The coalition supports the inclusion of these objectives. I emphasise the importance again of the part of this legislation relating to the development of airport infrastructure. As I said, during my time as Minister I paid particular attention to the provision of airport infrastructure because I believe this type of infrastructure has tremendous potential to impact upon regional development and to revolutionise the economic opportunities in some regional and remote areas of our State.

I know that this issue is one that the Minister agrees with me on. I know he appreciated the upgrade to a number of airports in the Cook electorate. I acknowledge that the Minister has carried on this important initiative. More importantly, it gives a chance to business in these regions to develop whereas in the past there might not have been that opportunity to develop. In relation to the aviation facilities we are talking about today, people might think that we are pork-barrelling our own electorates or pork-barrelling the communities in question. I know the Minister agrees with me that that is not the case. I used to use Emerald in my electorate as an example. The development of Emerald came about as a part of the program under my stewardship and it is one that the Minister finished when Labor came to office. I congratulate him and thank him for that.

Mr Bredhauer: I even came out to open it for you.

Mr JOHNSON: That is right. Again, this is an initiative where we saw growth and increased employment, especially with the export of grapes and those types of products that need to reach markets in very quick time.

Mr Davidson: And tourism.

Mr JOHNSON: I take the point from my colleague, the former Minister for Tourism,

Small Business and Industry and member for Noosa. That is an important factor, one on which both this Government and the Borbidge Government placed great emphasis. Tourism is certainly going to be advantaged by these upgrades. We have seen what has happened in Longreach and Emerald. We are now seeing what the important upgrade of the Cloncurry airstrip has done for mining and the development of that region, and we know full well that Mount Isa is only 120 kilometres up the road. At the same time, it is paramount that we recognise the significance of these airport upgrades so that we can get people in and out of there not only for tourism but also for the generation of business in those regions. That has been well demonstrated by the use of many of the airstrips in question.

I know the importance that the airstrip at Bamaga in the Minister's electorate of Cook has to the people of that region and to those settlements in far-north Queensland, especially in the wet season. I know that the Minister has just visited north Queensland. I put on record today the Opposition's compassion and understanding for those people in the far north who have suffered as a result of Cyclone Steve. I do not know whether the Minister paid the penalty for having that name, but—

Mr Bredhauer: I've told the SES we've got to review their cyclone naming policy and not name them after local members!

Mr JOHNSON: Fair comment.

Mr Reynolds: Cyclone Vaughan sounds good.

Mr JOHNSON: It would be a pretty wild one, wouldn't it? But I do say to the Minister that the Opposition joins with the Government in paying respects to those people in the far north and the people in my own area who have been devastated in recent weeks by flooding and hope that we can have a result that will bring normality back into their lives in the not too distant future. I know full well the cost of infrastructure in far-north Queensland. The TV footage in recent days has illustrated fairly clearly and precisely the cost burden of the maintenance bill the Government will face in order to fix those areas after the floods.

I will return to the legislation. I do not think that emphasis enough can be put on the importance of these airstrips. When we talk about remote airstrips, we talk about the growth of business and the growth in local communities that comes about from the access to air services that go to many parts of the State. The other important factor is medical needs. Again, I refer to remote services and remote airstrips. The Minister and

I share common ground in relation to the importance of getting flying doctors and aerial medical services into these places at all hours of the day and night. We all know that none of us can put a price on human life. But, at the end of the day, it is absolutely paramount that this infrastructure be upgraded so that we can provide this type of service to the many people who live in the dislocated areas of the State, whether it be the far north, the far west or the north-west. I and the Minister believe the people living in those areas should be entitled to the same quality of service that those in the bigger coastal and metropolitan electorates enjoy.

The other matter I want to touch on is marine facilities. Clause 9 of this Bill removes reference to the boards—

Mr Bredhauer: Not many maritime facilities in the Gregory electorate.

Mr JOHNSON: Not usually, but there have been in the last few days. I will turn to that in a minute. Clause 9 of the Bill removes reference to the boards of Queensland Rail and each port authority to ensure that the construction, operation and maintenance of all Government infrastructure are designed to achieve efficiency, affordable quality and cost effectiveness. I think we would all agree with that. The effect of this amendment is to remove these obligations from the boards of Government owned corporations, but they remain with the chief executives of these authorities.

As members may be aware, I raised this very matter with the Minister in the Estimates hearings in relation to the proposed efficiency of the Beattie billion-dollar tilt-train project. I was advised that, because this project was an election promise and was to be funded as a specific project, neither the board of Queensland Rail nor the chief executive was accountable for the efficiency of it. I ask the Minister in his reply to indicate whether or not, as a result of this amendment, the chief executive did then, and does now, remain accountable for the efficiency of the project. If this obligation in these respects upon the board will be removed only if this amendment is agreed to, was the board of Queensland Rail responsible for the efficiency of the project, for which it has let contracts without public tenders being called? I ask the Minister in his reply to specifically respond to this matter in the light of the answer he gave during the Estimates hearings.

I note that the Explanatory Notes regarding this amendment state—

"Independent of this legislation, these transport GOC boards still have an organisational responsibility to achieve outcomes of efficiency, affordable quality and cost effectiveness as part of their commercial charter."

Accordingly, I ask the Minister to confirm whether the QR board will remain accountable for the efficiency of the Cairns tilt-train proposal.

I would also like to remind the Minister of the Public Works Committee report into the initial tilt-train project, which recommended that "no major transport infrastructure project proceed without carrying out economic and financial evaluations". Can the Minister now advise whether any economic evaluation of the Cairns tilt-train project has been undertaken by the QR board so that it acts in accordance with its obligations?

One of the major initiatives of this legislation is to make amendments to Department of Main Roads powers in respect to controlling access to some State-controlled roads. I note that these revised arrangements provide for merit appeals and that the Judicial Review Act also applies to the decisions of the chief executive. I noted during the briefing session—for which I thank the Minister and also Michael Brown, Martin Hawthorne and Gary Mahon, along with Terry Wood, who were in attendance—last Tuesday morning that an amendment is proposed at the Committee stage to extend the definition of access "from" a property and not just "to" a property, as the Bill currently provides.

The proposed amendments include the preservation of the existing compensation mechanism, which is expanded to allow for compensation to apply where a property is isolated by a road development. Previously compensation would not apply in such cases. I am aware of situations in which some properties have been disadvantaged by road construction. We have witnessed that many times recently around the State, particularly with the Pacific Motorway. I also note that we are not talking about a situation in which a community is deprived of direct access to a particular traffic stream, in a case such as a bypass away from a town.

I know that former Governments have constructed bypasses which have been the death knell of many towns. Augathella in western Queensland is a classic example of that. That goes back a number of years to when the Landsborough Highway bypassed the town. It certainly made it a satellite settlement of Charleville. I am pleased that the

Minister is paying attention to my comments on this matter. Many businesses in those towns die overnight when the towns are bypassed. We certainly cannot tolerate those types of bypasses, and we are not being responsible legislators if we allow that type of measure to creep into our policies. I am pleased that the access issue has been addressed. I thank the gentleman who gave us that briefing on Tuesday, because we did have some concerns about it. In this type of example, the community still has access to the road; what has been altered is the traffic stream, not the access.

I want to impress upon the Minister the importance of proper planning and consultation in regard to bypass planning. I just cited the example of Augathella. We have seen many similar examples. In New South Wales, if one travels the Newell Highway through to Victoria, one sees numerous examples of bypasses that are killing off towns in central New South Wales. Whether it means road construction works or not, at the end of the day we cannot tolerate bypasses that kill smaller towns. I know that we cannot have main roads passing through the centre of most of the CBDs, but they can certainly skirt many of our towns. I cite the example of Mount Isa and Cloncurry, where Mayors Rod McCullough and Noel Robinson respectively are seeking bypasses. I want to be constructive in my comments on this issue. Although it is of paramount importance that we have commercial bypasses, I believe that many of them should be designated as heavy vehicle bypasses rather than town bypasses, because much of the light traffic can still pass through the centre of town so that people might pull up and have a meal at the roadhouse or stay overnight at a motel. We must be very careful about how the signage is done and how we promote this in the future, because we are aiming to promote the businesses and other assets these small centres have to offer.

As the Minister is well aware, in a number of current cases alternative bypass routes are being considered. I commend the Main Roads Department for the consultation that it is undertaking. The two examples I just cited are two classics.

Mr Bredhauer: Tell De-Anne Kelly that.

Mr JOHNSON: While the Minister is on De-Anne Kelly, if I could just mention—

Mr Bredhauer: She is forever tipping buckets on Main Roads for their consultation.

Mr JOHNSON: I like to give credit where credit is due. I want to refer to the bypass in the Burdekin. When I was Minister, I made

what I believe was a very responsible decision in regard to the corridors in question. I decided to utilise the corridor in question and hug towns such as Ayr and Home Hill as closely as possible so that we do not have to run road infrastructure through prime agricultural land. As the Minister is well aware as a representative of the far-northern part of Queensland, roads of that magnitude are certainly not constructed for \$200,000 a kilometre; in many cases they cost over a million dollars a kilometre. With the wet season experienced in that part of the world, there are only limited times at which roads can be constructed. We must exercise responsibility on this issue, especially in the Burdekin, although it is no different from anywhere else. I know as well as the Minister does how hard it is to extract money out of Treasury when it comes to road building.

Mr Bredhauer: They're a cinch compared with Canberra, I can tell you.

Mr JOHNSON: The Minister has a good point there. At present, large amounts of money are required to construct upgraded sugar and fruit roads in northern Queensland. Trucks using single-lane bridges and single-lane dirt roads certainly do not mix with mums in cars and school buses going to and from some of the small country schools. The Minister will not have a problem with me on this issue; I am just trying to see the money secured to undertake that upgrade.

Clause 21 of this Bill provides for the payment of a levy by a railway manager. This levy is in fact defined as a rail safety accreditation fee and is to apply to rail managers and rail operators. This amendment makes a specific provision on legal advice for the rail accreditation fees which have been in place for some time.

Another major provision of this Bill is for the management of waterways and, in particular, the management of public marine facilities. I support the concept of the area-based waterways transport management plan and I have no doubt that the Gold Coast will be the litmus test of the application of these management plans.

Whilst we are dealing with the amendments to the Transport Operation (Marine Pollution) Act, I must say that I realise that they are designed to ensure that the department has appropriate remedy and cost recovery mechanisms where the department has incurred expenses in preventing pollution actually taking place. I also note that the Minister will be taking the opportunity at the Committee stage to move a further

amendment to the sewerage provisions of the Act. This will be a retrospective amendment to the Act which will defer the application of the legislation requiring toilets and holding tanks on vessels greater than 10 metres until 1 January 2002.

Whilst I appreciate that the discharge provisions are now in place, I am concerned that the situation in crowded waterways such as the Broadwater will get worse in the next two years. I suggest to the Minister that it may be necessary to look at financial incentives for pump-out facilities at marinas, and perhaps facilities at other popular mooring areas such as South Stradbroke Island, the Whitsundays and other areas along the coast—perhaps even in his own area of Cairns.

The member for Noosa referred to tourism in relation to airstrips and airports which were being upgraded around Queensland. I think this current matter is also applicable to tourists. Whether tourists are coming from overseas, from interstate, or elsewhere in Queensland, we have to ensure that conditions are as comfortable as possible and that their access to these facilities is as easy as possible. If we have these types of facilities I believe that we will be the toast of many other marine operators in this country.

This Bill includes a number of amendments to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act, many of which are machinery amendments. However, some amendments warrant specific mention. The coalition has reservations about the restricted driver authorisation provisions, which I believe will apply to drivers of courtesy and community coaches. From discussions with the bus industry and the department, I understand that it is proposed that, by regulation, the operators of these services will be able to issue restricted driver authorisations to their own drivers.

Compare this with commercial bus operators whose drivers are required to go through their training programs, health checks and criminal history checks. The idea of the proposed amendments is, for example, to allow the operator of a so-called courtesy coach to employ an overseas backpacker to drive the bus in question. I ask the Minister whether he can confirm that such a driver will be required to undergo the same necessary health checks and criminal history checks as a Queensland driver. I trust that the Minister can give us that assurance when he sums up.

There are very good and genuine courtesy coach operators who provide an essential service to the tourist industry in this State. However, I am concerned that there are

some operators who use the courtesy coach provisions to compete unfairly with commercial, tourist and charter operators who are required to meet the quite stringent provisions of the State legislation which applies to their industry.

I do not say this lightly because I know when I was Minister that I was subjected to a fair bit of criticism and a fair bit of scrutiny by people in this industry across the length and breadth of this State. International hotels have courtesy coaches and provide this service to their patrons. We are well aware that foreign people come to this country and leave after six months when their visas expire. We are not sure whether they are licensed operators. This is a matter of great concern to me, as shadow Minister, and to the Opposition in general. It is also of concern to many of our commercial operators in this State.

We must endeavour to give all operators a fair deal. If the rules are to be made flexible to enable these types of operators to employ such people to do their driving, that will give these operators an unfair advantage. Such flexibility will be to the disadvantage of our commercial operators who have to abide by the rules and regulations of the State legislation which is applicable to their industry. The Opposition does not make that point lightly. We will be looking for a response from the Minister on this matter. In the past, this has proven to be a very difficult area for the department to enforce. However, I can assure the Minister that he will have the assistance of the Opposition if he intends to be fair dinkum.

I seek the Minister's assurance that the proposed regulations under this section will allow for the ready identification of these drivers and that there will be significant penalties for breaches of these provisions. We also need an assurance that Queensland Transport will have sufficient resources to carry out effective enforcement of these provisions. We already have many enforcement provisions in other areas of transport throughout the State, so I do not think it will be too much of a burden to these people to run their eyes over these types of operations.

Included in this legislation is an amendment to the application of the Act to school bus service contracts. The purpose of these amendments is to simplify the issuing of contracts which apply to the provision of school transport services. I have been assured by the Minister's officers that these amendments will not have any adverse impact on the existing entitlements of school transport operators. I would appreciate the Minister's confirmation of that.

This legislation also provides for the adoption of the terminology of "registered operator" in relation to the entity responsible for the operation of a motor vehicle. I understand that the adoption of this terminology is to accord with national legislation in relation to national vehicle registration reforms. For some time, Queensland has been very particular in recognising the validity of joint names in relation to motor vehicle registration. I know that one of the matters that the department is keen to clarify is that the registration of a motor vehicle does not equate to legal ownership of the vehicle. This is something that concerns us all. I urge the Minister to refer to this matter in his summing-up.

These days, leases and other forms of financial obligations often mean that the registered owner of a motor vehicle may not be the legal owner of the title to the property. I fully appreciate that particular concern, but I would like to be assured that the ability of a couple to register a motor vehicle in their joint names will continue under this change to the legislation.

I am also informed that the Government proposes to take the opportunity to amend the legislation dealing with eligibility for work licences following drink-driving convictions. This is an issue which received some media attention recently and highlights the danger in trying to encompass national legislation into a State framework. Whilst the Opposition will be supporting these amendments, I fear that we are opening a Pandora's box. I realise that we have seen different outcomes from different courts in relation to this matter. I believe it is something that the Minister for Justice could keep an eye on. Some operators are having their licences returned to them for very unsatisfactory reasons. Other people have not had their licences returned to them. I do not believe that the flexibility of this provision has been good enough. At the same time, it is something that we should look at. The law is the law. If one breaks the law for drink-driving, one is committing a very serious offence. I realise that drink-driving is responsible for one-third of the deaths on our roads each year. On the other hand, we have people who travel thousands of kilometres every year and, because of an accumulation of points, they cannot receive a work licence.

I look forward to the Minister addressing the specific matters that I have raised so that the coalition may determine which aspects of this Bill are not to be supported. I ask particularly that the Minister looks at the

situation in relation to those courtesy coach drivers. The Opposition has grave concerns about them. Again, the important factor is that we have to look at the country of origin of their drivers and whether or not they are as accustomed as we are to driving on the left-hand side of the road. At the same time, we have to make absolutely certain that we have the right procedures in place so that we are not penalising our commercial operators.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

RETRACTABLE NEEDLES

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA)
(6.04 p.m.): I move—

"That, given the growing community concern about needle-stick injury from needles discarded by IV drug users in public places and possible fatal infection of innocent people, the Parliament calls on the State Government to introduce retractable needles into the State's needle exchange program."

It seems that no community is too small or too isolated to escape the problems associated with improperly discarded syringes. The risk of needle-stick injury and the potential spread of HIV and hepatitis C threatens the freedoms associated with our Australian way of life. There is a way to reclaim the safety of our beautiful beaches, family parks and riverside walkways. Retractable needles automatically recoil into a self-contained unit after use, offering complete protection for the unsuspecting barefoot or curious toddler. As this type of syringe can be used only once, it has the added bonus of protecting the user from the dangerous practice of needle reuse or needle sharing.

Health care costs associated with the growing spread of communicable diseases through needle sharing must be factored into the real cost of maintaining the existing State Government needle availability program. The cost of providing safes, or specialised needle disposal bins, throughout Queensland also should be added to the cost of keeping these unsafe reusable needles.

Unfortunately, the Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, has rejected the coalition's bid to introduce retractable needles. In rejecting this constructive policy, she is disregarding the support of agencies such as the Alcohol and Drug Foundation and the recommendations of the World Health Organisation. More significantly, the Minister is ignoring the wishes of ordinary Queenslanders who want the right

to walk safely on their public beaches and to allow their children to play safely.

It is time that the rest of the public had their safety guaranteed. Retractable needles will protect the non-IV drug user from this deadly litter in children's sandboxes and on their football fields. It would also address the problem of the reuse of needles, which the Health Minister herself has estimated is practised by about 25% of the users, because retractables cannot be reused.

When one sees grown men with the mental toughness to undertake the ironman event such as Jonathon Crowe distressed by a needle-stick injury due to a careless IV drug user, one doubts that he would have received much comfort from the Queensland Health Minister's assertion that no-one had contracted HIV or hep C from a discarded needle in a public setting. He still had to undertake a battery of costly tests and initial treatment and has to wait months to know if he can resume a normal life. The anguished mother of a central Queensland boy who recently suffered a needle-stick injury at Coolumb would also find little comfort from the Minister's claim, nor would the father of a Mount Isa boy who suffered a similar fate. People are increasingly speaking out against this public nuisance, because they want something to be done to protect their safety.

The cost of testing and initially treating someone after a needle-stick injury is approximately \$4,000 and can be higher. As the return of needles is poor and thousands are disposed of improperly, the Government must consider not only its moral obligation to protect the public from these discarded needles but also its legal duty of care. Thus far, the State has shifted the cost of the clean-up bill of these needles to local governments.

Retractable needles will not remove the problem of litter, but they will remove the problem of the danger that they present to the public and council workers. I believe that there needs to be serious consideration given to introducing retractable needles not only for the needle availability programs for IV drug users but also for health professionals who are at risk of needle-stick injury in the course of their work. There is also a strong case of not only phasing in retractable needles in Government programs but also banning the old reusable syringe, which is also supplied through pharmacies and non-Government funded organisations to IV drug users.

On many fronts, I have been very disappointed by the Health Minister's response to this positive policy for retractable needles,

mainly because of the Government's deceit about costs, which I will talk about in a moment, and also because of the public health implications. I was appalled by Health Minister Edmond's rejection of retractable syringes, because she said live on radio that they would need more needles, because people would not be able to share them any more. I thought that was the whole point of having this program—to stop people sharing needles. We should have a target in these programs of 100% non-reuse of these needles.

The Health Minister also claimed that only 1% of needles were disposed of improperly. If that claim were true, on a distribution of 4.3 million needles a year, that would amount of 43,000 potentially lethal objects lying around in public. When the Minister made that claim, the Brisbane City Council told one media outlet that they collected 100,000 discarded syringes a year. I am sure that local governments, which are bearing the cost of the clean-up around the State at the risk to their own workers, would dispute this 1% claim. However, even if that claim were true, it is still posing an unacceptable risk to the general public.

I have mentioned that the Alcohol and Drug Foundation and World Health Organisation have recommended retractable needles. The Alcohol and Drug Foundation newsletter states—

"Auto-disabling syringes were developed more than 10 years ago in the US but have not enjoyed widespread use across developing nations because of the cost—previously more than twice a conventional disposable syringe. However prices are expected to drop to be similar to the existing disposable syringes in coming years."

The cost has already come down. However, the State Health Minister decided to reject the idea before doing her homework. It may even be possible to produce retractable needles in Australia even cheaper than the 70c to 76c that is currently being quoted.

I refer to how the Minister fudged the cost issue. Before the State coalition released its policy, on 12 January this year in an article in the Courier-Mail, a spokesperson for the Health Department said that retractable needles had been considered but they would be double the cost of regular syringes. However, when the coalition released its policy last week, the Health Minister did not say that costs would double, but claimed that costs would blow out six times. That is very interesting arithmetic. The cost for retractable

needles is not double, nor is it six times the cost of ordinary syringes. The Minister has been caught out on her costing.

When the real costs of the Minister's existing program are taken into account, one would get very little more than the metal needle for 14c—not the complete plastic syringe plunger attached to it, and certainly not the sharps container. The real cost difference between current retractable syringe technology and the department's syringes is closer to about 26c each, and that could be improved considerably in a competitive market.

While on the subject of costs, I have talked about the distress that people suffer from stepping on discarded syringes and the cost of their initial testing and treatment. However, what about the cost of treating a hepatitis C sufferer or an HIV sufferer? The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health 1998 volume 22 No. 3 states—

"For every 1,000 injecting drug users newly infected with hepatitis C in a given year, there is an implied \$14.32 million in health care spending over the years. That is about \$14,000 per person."

If the House did not catch what I said, I repeat that that is over \$14m for every 1,000 newly infected drug users. That is an astounding figure. Currently, the cost of treating an HIV-infected individual is between \$12,000 and \$18,000. There are about 200,000 hepatitis C sufferers in Australia, and the number is growing. This morning, I tabled a letter concerning a doctor who is treating the mothers of babies who have been born infected with hepatitis C.

This disease and the pain it causes affect not just one generation. It is becoming a disease that is affecting generations. Children who never chose to share a dirty needle are paying the price of these terrible diseases. So the community is concerned about this issue for very good factual reasons. They want the Government to do more than bag the Opposition, put out fudged costs and at the end of the day tell whoppers about the benefits of a system which will remove the hazard that is currently littering our beaches and parks and causing incredible distress to many people.

I know it is affecting every electorate in this State. It is affecting every State of Australia. As people are searching for better answers to the alcohol and drug problem, they want to make sure that those people who have chosen not to take drugs are protected from this scourge and do not have to put up with these dangerous needles being littered

throughout their parks and the sandboxes of their children. I call on the Government to get its facts right about the real costs of this program and look at the recommendations of reputable organisations.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.11 p.m.): I second the motion proposed by my colleague the shadow Minister for Health. I think the Government's position on this issue is indefensible. What has been proposed is consistent with the position of the World Health Organisation, of Unicef and of other international agencies which have set up a three-year deadline to phase out reusable syringes in an attempt to reduce the spread of disease through contaminated needles.

The Minister's first response in ridiculing this very responsible proposal of the Opposition was to attack its cost. She issued a press statement saying that syringes used by Queensland Health cost only 14c each, but she forgot to factor in the needle and the disposal kit. As the night wore on, she backtracked and told journalists that all up the syringe kit cost somewhere between 40c and 50c. How about 49c, the precise figure quoted by the Opposition that afternoon?

The next day when she was on 4BC, in what must go down as the world's most interesting radio interview, the figure had shrunk to 14c. What she did not tell journalists was that her cost of \$1 per retractable syringe was also way out. I tabled a letter from the suppliers. The costing is based on the following criteria: less than 100 or one carton, \$1 per syringe; bulk price 76c. I tabled for the information of honourable members a fax that was sent to the Queensland Health Department by Scientific Educational Supplies on 29 February 2000 which proves that the Minister's assertions in respect of the cost of the program were substantially out.

It will be interesting to see whether the member for Ferny Grove enters this particular debate, because earlier this afternoon he spoke in this place about the difficulties which his constituents were experiencing. They have had numerous needles thrown over their fences and into their gardens. He spoke about P & Cs in his electorate who had made representations about the dangers of needles found in their school playgrounds.

I say to the honourable member for Ferny Grove that this is his opportunity. He has legitimately expressed the view of many people across the State of Queensland. We now have evidence from the suppliers on the cost of the retractable syringe. We know that

the Minister was caught out in respect of the cost of the program as it is presently administered. She has simply parroted the claptrap that has been fed to her by her department.

Then we had some spokesman for the department saying that it is only 1% of needles that get discarded each year and that that is not a problem. 1% equals 43,000 "landmines" a year. That is according to the Government's statistics. How does one explain the fact that in Brisbane alone the city council has confirmed about 100,000 of these "landmines" in this city alone?

In the extraordinary interview by the Minister for Health on 4BC, she said—

"... about twenty-five per cent of users still share needles ... the number of needles distributed going out would have to increase by 25 per cent ... that would mean 25 per cent increase in the numbers presumably that could be left lying around."

Chris Adams, who was the interviewer, asked—

"But aren't we supposed to be discouraging people from sharing needles?"

The Minister replied, "Sorry?" Mr Adams repeated—

"Aren't we supposed to be discouraging people from sharing needles?"

The Minister said—

"Chris, I'm sorry, I'm on the way to Toowoomba, so I'm having problems with the phone."

What a way to get out of an interview when the acid is put on! "Oops, my mobile is out of range. Sorry I cannot answer that question because I did not like it and I cannot answer it." That is what the Minister did. She copped out. The Minister has been discredited in her efforts to discredit the cost of this program. She has been caught out in respect of her administration of the program.

Time expired.

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (6.15 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Add the words 'at such time as their safety and effectiveness is established by the National Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs and the National Intergovernmental Committee on Hepatitis C and AIDS Related Diseases

which includes Queensland Health representation and this Parliament recognises the Needle Availability and Support Program' role in reducing infection and endorses its continuation."

I recognise the anxiety faced by anyone who suffers a needle-stick injury. Of course there is trauma involved. But I want to reassure them that there is no documented case of a person contracting HIV or hepatitis C in a community setting from unsafely disposed of injecting equipment anywhere. The Opposition's solution is not a solution at all. The Opposition's idea is a simplistic and opportunistic knee-jerk reaction. The Opposition's suggestion is downright dangerous, because the retractable syringes currently available in this country at whatever cost have the potential to offer a false sense of security. I will explain this in detail. I am happy to take as long as necessary to explain how they work here and now.

These needles are not foolproof. They rely on the user wanting to use them as they are intended, as retractable needles. The people most likely to use them properly are the same people who are already putting needles in safe disposing places and doing the right thing. Some models like this one I have here are totally unsatisfactory. The first thing a kid would do with that is stick his or her finger onto an exposed needle, for heaven's sake. With others, such as this one, you would have to be a whiz in technology to be able to hook it on. Cold, hard sober I would not bother trying.

There is only one brand of retractable syringe readily available in Queensland that is recognised as useful and is used in emergency situations by health professionals. They comprise a spring-loaded syringe which retracts the needle if the plunger is fully depressed. This retractable action is not automatic. It is not foolproof. This needle can be reused and shared as many times as a person likes, as long as one does not take the extra effort and push hard the last little bit. If the plunger is not fully depressed, it can be reused.

What is even more disturbing is that, if one does not fully depress it, a little bit of blood is left behind. That is a hell of a lot more dangerous than leaving an empty syringe. It does not happen automatically. This would create a much greater risk than the current syringes. For the benefit of the Opposition, I point out that the needle and the syringe come in one piece. That blows its story.

Even when these syringes are used correctly, they can be easily manipulated so

they are reusable. But they can also be opened and reused. If one tries to then use them, one can end up with this, as I am demonstrating. One of my staff just flicked this with her fingernail, got it to reopen and ended up with the needle being left stuck out. Imagine that lying around the beaches of Redcliffe.

Some people say that needles do not need to be put into sharps bins. The problem with that is that, when one of my staff trod on this needle, it broke. That means needles lying on the ground can be very easily smashed by somebody simply walking on them. The public may be duped into thinking that they are safe when they could still get a needle-stick injury from treading on a broken retractable needle.

This Government is about protecting the community, not endangering it with silly ideas. This Government is about safety. That is why we have a proper plan and process. No Australian needle availability program currently provides retractable syringes. The reality is that there is no quick and easy fix. Retractable syringes have been looked at before. They were probably looked at under Mr Horan, if he bothered. They will be looked at again as technology improves.

Miss Simpson interjected.

Mrs EDMOND: If the honourable member shuts up for a while, she might learn something. That is a novel approach, but the honourable member should try it for once.

They are on the agenda of the joint working group made up of members of the National Intergovernment Committee on Drugs. They were discussed at the meeting in February and they are on the agenda for the next meeting. Queensland Health has representatives on both of those committees. As I said, the issue of retractable syringes was raised at the joint working group meeting last month. The joint working group agreed that a national standard that ensures safety and reliability has to be established for retractable syringes. Even after a national standard is established, there will need to be more work. I offered to work with the previous Minister in a bipartisan way on this difficult issue. Just for a change, I would welcome the same approach from the member for Maroochydore.

Time expired.

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I second the Minister's amendment, which seeks to achieve a measured and responsible approach to what is an issue of genuine and

widespread public concern. Unfortunately, the Opposition has displayed yet again its willingness to jump on a contentious issue and exploit community concern in a shameless political manner. If the shadow Minister had done her homework, she would have known that the National Intergovernment Committee on Drugs was already examining this question. She would know that at its May meeting it will be considering a standard for a safe and effective retractable syringe, and that is what is under active consideration and needs to be pursued.

Mr Sullivan: Maybe she did know and still went ahead with her statements.

Dr CLARK: It had occurred to me that perhaps the honourable member did know that this was already on the agenda and had deliberately tried to pre-empt the deliberations of the committee to gain publicity for herself. But I hope that is not the case. In any event, it makes no sense at all for Queensland to go alone on retractable needles prior to the responsible national committee concluding its deliberations on this issue. It makes no sense at all for Queensland to be doing something separate and independent from what is occurring in other States. This is not a State problem, it is a national problem and it needs a uniform national response. I sincerely hope that commonsense will prevail and the Opposition will support the Government's amendment so that we can have a bipartisan approach on this difficult and contentious issue. There is no one simple solution. There is also no doubt that the community is looking to us, as leaders, to work together on this problem and adopt a bipartisan approach. That will engender confidence in the community that we are acting responsibly.

In my contribution to this debate, I wish to put this issue into the broader context of drug and alcohol abuse, because there is far more to this problem than just the provision of needles, whether they are retractable or not. It is important that this debate also canvasses some other aspects of these broader issues and acknowledges some of the positive work being done by health workers in both the Government and non-Government areas.

In recent years, a wide variety of strategies has been developed to address these vexing issues. These strategies include health promotion initiatives, early prevention programs, treatment and rehabilitation services, community development initiatives, a school nurses program and, as we heard today in this place, the introduction of drug courts.

Queensland Health has recently completed an inventory of specialist drug and alcohol services operating in Queensland. The results should be of great interest to all honourable members and, accordingly, I table this report of the inventory carried out last year. The inventory identified a total of 253 specialist agencies operating in Queensland. Of these, 130 are Government, 105 are non-Government and 18 are private. What is particularly interesting about this latest inventory of services are the changes that have occurred during the past three years since the last audit was carried out. I wish to run through some of the key changes since the last inventory in 1996, because I think they demonstrate a strong level of both Government and community commitment to addressing drug and alcohol issues.

Acute walk-in crisis services provide immediate and short-term crisis care, and in total there are 33 of those services in Queensland. There are nine sobering up facilities—an increase of five since 1996. There has also been an increase of 17, or 35%, in the number of comprehensive assessment and referral services, bringing the total to 39. An additional four agencies are providing residential withdrawal services—up from the 19 reported in 1996. The number of non-residential withdrawal services has increased by 16, or 84%, which brings the total number to 35. The number of agencies offering non-residential counselling therapy services has increased by 14, or 20%, bringing the total number to 85. There are 29 more needle availability and support programs than in 1996, representing an increase of 39%. That demonstrates that, yes, there is a reason—

Time expired.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.25 p.m.) Tonight I rise to support the motion of the member for Maroochydore. Interestingly, we have heard another excuse from the Minister for Health. Previously, the excuses seem to have focused on the cost involved in moving to retractable syringes. Tonight she demonstrated the various types of syringes. The Minister should be looking at what the international agencies are saying about this. The World Health Organisation, UNICEF, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent have all signed an agreement to move to retractable syringes over the next three years. They believe that what is currently available fits the bill. Yet the Queensland Minister for Health is going in the opposite direction. She has another excuse every day. Tomorrow she will give us another reason why we cannot do this.

I wanted to contribute to this debate because people have come to my office and sat opposite me as they outlined their story of how they became victims of needle-stick injuries. There is a needle exchange program in my electorate. A father told me that, when his young daughter was playing in a park near the needle exchange, she accidentally put her hand on a needle and suffered a needle-stick injury. Over the three to six months that followed that incident, the family experienced trauma while wondering what the future held for their daughter. That would be the worst experience that any parent could go through. That family shattered under the strain of that three to six-month wait. Unfortunately, they ended up being divorced. Another person came into my office and told me that, while walking along the beach, he stood on a discarded syringe. He experienced similar trauma and his family almost suffered the same fate as the family I just mentioned.

This is not simply about dollars and cents. This issue strikes at the hearts of families in a very real way. I wish to read a section of a letter sent to one of my constituents who suffered a needle-stick injury. A similar letter is sent to all people who complain about discarded syringes in the community. The second paragraph states—

"The unsafe disposal of used syringes in public places is a great concern. I was alarmed to read about needle stick injuries recently sustained by a young child as well as yourself at Miami Beach."

If we are alarmed, we ought to be doing something about it. We ought not allow this situation to continue. Cost ought not come into it. The most appalling thing we heard in this debate was the Minister's statement that a certain type of syringe costs 14c and others cost 50c, 60c or a dollar. I do not care how much they cost. If they work, they should be brought in.

Ms Struthers: Do they work?

Mr QUINN: Strangely, international agencies say they work. If it can be done in other parts of world, it can be done here. It is not about dollars and cents, it is about protecting families and keeping them together. Until the Minister realises this, she will always fall back on the old complaint about there not being enough dollars and cents. This is a department with a budget of billions of dollars. Surely it can find an extra \$10m to do this properly. If the Government is going to have needle exchange programs, it should do it properly because if this problem continues

support for needle exchange programs will ebb away very quickly as it is in my electorate now. It is hard to find people in the Nobby Beach area, where the needle exchange is located, who, because of this factor, support the needle exchange. If the Government thinks that needle exchanges are a way of reducing communicable diseases among intravenous drug users and it wants to go down that path of harm minimisation, then it should put in place measures that will protect innocent people. The vast majority of people cannot understand why their life is being shattered by an activity which is illegal, and they are becoming the innocent victims of it. So there is one group of people indulging in illegal activities and forcing other groups of people to bear the cost, and the cost is too high. We need to move on this as quickly as possible. We ought not be worried about dollars and cents and we ought not be—

Time expired.

This is a department with a budget of billions of dollars. Surely it can find an extra \$10m to do this properly. If the Government is going to have needle exchange programs, it should do it properly because if this continues support for needle exchange programs will ebb away very quickly as they are doing in my electorate now. It is hard to find people in the Nobby Beach area, where the needle exchange is located, who support the needle exchange because of this factor. If the Government thinks that needle exchanges are a way of reducing communicable diseases among those intravenous drug users and it wants to go down that path of harm minimisation, then it should put in place measures that will protect innocent people. The vast majority of people cannot understand why their life is being shattered by an activity which is illegal, and they are becoming the innocent victims of this. So there is one group of people indulging in illegal activities, forcing other groups of people to bear the cost, and the cost is too high. We need to move on this as quickly as possible. We ought not be worried about dollars and cents and we ought not be—

Time expired.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): I have much pleasure in supporting the amendment moved by the Minister for Health. I ask all honourable members to read the amended motion as it stands now. I will be amazed if anyone comes in here tonight and votes against this amended motion. The Opposition is right: the cost is irrelevant. However, it is important to

make sure that the syringes are safe and effective.

We have all seen stories or come across people who have suffered the horrific upheaval in their family life when a member is pricked by a needle. Just recently we saw that Jonathon Crowe, the sportsperson, had stepped on a syringe in Melbourne. We all saw the heartbreak and concern expressed by him and members of his family, and he is still yet to find out if he has contracted anything.

There is no use adopting a knee-jerk reaction if that reaction is not safe and effective. Cost is irrelevant in this issue; the Opposition is 100% correct. However, it is important to ensure that the alternatives are safe and effective. Every member of this House should really read the amended motion before they vote on it because it says that, yes, we do support the introduction of retractable needles into the needle exchange program if they are safe and effective. It is simple. It is not just the Queensland Health Department who will make that decision, it is all of the health authorities in Australia and the national intergovernmental committee on drugs, who are the experts on drugs in Australia. They will work out—not on cost—whether the retractable needle that they come up with is safe and effective, and surely that is the issue.

Tonight I would also like to talk about the other initiatives, especially youth initiatives. As a society and as legislators, we cannot just sit back and accept that we have rapidly increasing numbers of young people using and abusing drugs—and we heard a lot of stories about that in the debate on the drug rehabilitation Bill this afternoon—whether it is alcohol, tobacco, heroin or the growing area of amphetamines and steroid abuse. The question levelled at Governments here and around the world is: what are you going to do about drug problems?

From a health perspective, Queensland has a range of initiatives to build protective mechanisms for our young people. The aim is to prevent them using and abusing drugs and keep them out of the criminal justice system. Queensland Health has been a major sponsor of the 100% In Control Rock Eisteddfod challenge. In 1999, 44 Queensland schools from Cairns, Toowoomba, Townsville, Mackay, Brisbane and the coast took part. Children from the rural and remote indigenous communities take part in the 100% In Control Croc Eisteddfod (Weipa). The Health Minister has attended two of these festivals in Weipa and can attest to what a great experience it is

for the hundreds of indigenous and isolated youth who come together from the cape, the Torres Strait and the Atherton Tableland. Queensland Health also sponsors the peer mentor program and the Drink Smart program for TAFE and university students. A range of innovative projects target young people when and where they socialise, such as rave parties, schoolies week and student licensed events.

The Premier's recent youth drugs summit, which I attended, set out to establish what is good practice in preventing drug abuse for young people. Importantly, young people will be involved in creating local responses to the issues they face. Just as importantly, the Government is taking a holistic approach to the area of prevention and health promotion. We know factors associated with drug and alcohol abuse by young people include unemployment, poor esteem, peer pressure, family breakdown and a lack of appropriate role models. We have to be proactive.

The Beattie Labor Government has introduced programs that address the lifestyle issues and concerns for young people. These are the school nurse programs and the strengthening family initiatives. The Government's strengthening family strategy goes to the heart of our efforts to stop young people from falling into the trap of drug and alcohol abuse. The program aims to provide Queensland parents with support and skills to build strong family units.

Before I finish, I would like to remind members to read the amended motion. The amended motion is saying that we are supporting the introduction of retractable needles in the needle exchange program, but they have to be safe and effective and the experts in the field in Australia have to agree that they are safe and effective. There is no use adopting a knee-jerk reaction if we find out that that does not work. Then there would be even further problems. I ask all members to read this amended motion and support it.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (6.36 p.m.): It is interesting to join in this debate tonight on the very day on which we have been discussing drug rehabilitation courts, which received a substantial degree of cooperation from both sides of the House. I made some opening remarks in the drug rehabilitation debate about the way in which, once again, it was this Opposition through our shadow Attorney-General that came up with the idea of the drug courts. We made it an issue in the media. We introduced it into this House in the form of a private member's Bill. It was rejected, of course, by Government

members opposite. But, finally, it had to accede to Opposition pressure. I described in agricultural terms the way in which our shadow Minister had actually run the Attorney-General through the crush and up the loading ramp. He actually put him in the truck and made this thing happen.

What is happening tonight in relation to retractable needles is very similar. These sorts of needles have been used in many spheres of blood collecting for many, many years and have now got to a stage at which they are quite sophisticated. Members have only to go to Sullivan Nicolaides and other such firms who have been using these to see that. Their staff use them all the time when collecting blood.

I know that the people who are using them are professional and are well trained in how to use them. I thought it was quite sad to hear the Minister going to any extreme to try to describe how they would not work. If there is a standard syringe out there in the sand, in the park or whatever and a person stands on it, there is a 100% chance that they are going to get a needle prick injury. But with one of these retractable-type syringes, the chances of a needle stick injury are dramatically reduced—by 98%. That is what we are all on about. Everyone in this House realises the problems and the issues that we are facing.

The other issue we must consider when discussing making a genuine effort to bring in retractable syringes is this: as my colleague for Merrimac said, there is a lot of public disquiet about the needle exchange program. When I was Health Minister, I took the advice of what that system could do to prevent the time bomb, particularly of hepatitis C, in the future. A lot of people worry about the fact that syringes are given out in their millions for nothing but the people who get them for nothing can put into them the substances that cost them anywhere between \$40 and \$100 per syringe. So people wonder why on earth we are giving out these free syringes if they have the wherewithal—or they go and pinch the wherewithal—to stick the particular substances in them.

The reason for the needle exchange is to eliminate the sharing of needles. When we were in Government we brought about a number of changes, mainly about where they are dispensed. Now they can be given out only in health premises. Every attempt is made to have a health professional do it so that they can provide the drug addict with a pamphlet and with the opportunity for rehabilitation and to talk about their issues so that they are not just handing out the free needles but are

genuinely trying to get those people to stop their drug habit.

The real reason for the needle exchange is to endeavour to bring about rehabilitation and reduce the potential for the time bomb of hepatitis C and the liver transplants that will be required 20 years down the track as a result. Genuine, good people who are not involved in the drug trade are saying, "Why should we be giving out these needles?" People with diabetes are saying, "Why should the free needles be given out to drug addicts when we have such difficulty in accessing the needle system ourselves?" I urge the Minister and the Government to make a commitment tonight to not pass this issue off to some intergovernmental committee where it goes to a Health Minister's conference and is considered for five minutes at the end of the conference and no decision is made and therefore it goes to another committee. Make a decision to do it and make it happen, not just pass it off to an interstate committee in order to take the easy way out.

The Minister has blamed the cost. All the Minister's colleagues are saying that cost should not matter. The Minister has jammed herself into a corner and she is trying to find any tiny excuse she can not to do this in order to save face. This issue is far too important for that.

Time expired.

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (6.41 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Minister for Health. It is a pity the previous speaker has followed the example of a couple of his colleagues in not only misrepresenting what the Minister has said but also misrepresenting the situation. It is a shame that the former Health Minister, the member for Toowoomba South, calls the National Intergovernment Committee on Drugs some interstate group we are throwing issues off to when in fact the expertise developed right across Australia is what we should be looking at. As a responsible person within this community he should be advocating support for that. The member is joining the member for Maroochydore, the shadow Health Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition in their half truths in scaring people. I was disappointed to see the member for Merrimac join them in that vein.

Mr Seeney: Blame somebody else.

Mr SULLIVAN: It does not surprise me that the member for Callide is bleating as he always does. It is all hot air with nothing behind it. If we listen carefully to what the shadow Health Minister said today, at no stage did she

say there have been injuries from needles. She said that there is the possibility that this could occur, and then she developed the fear strategy. She knows the very rare occurrence of this happening, but she is prepared to engender the fear in parents to get to where she wants to go. She has learnt something from the member for Clayfield, who would climb over any dead or living body to get to a higher position. I did not think Miss Simpson would do the same, but it looks as if she has.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: The honourable member doubts that the member for Clayfield does it. Listen: the reason people take an instant dislike to the member for Clayfield is because it saves time. The shadow Minister is starting to follow in his footsteps.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: The member for Callide is simply the National Party's version of Mr Santoro in this House. This Government, on the other hand, does not in any way condone illicit drug use. No-one in this House tonight wishes the current drug epidemic—this horrible blight on our society—to exist in our society. But it does. This Government has no choice but to live in the real world and tackle the problem. We have to acknowledge that there will always be people who choose to use drugs, whether it be alcohol, tobacco or some other natural or man-made substance. Hopefully one day drug use will not occur to the alarming extent that it does in almost every society today. In order to protect the health of our community, Governments must constantly seek ways of minimising the harm experienced through the use of illegal drugs. Harm minimisation, therefore, has to be a key plank in the Government's drug strategy.

The Government is committed to programs such as the Queensland needle availability support program, which offers drug users access to sterile injecting equipment. The primary aim of providing sterile injecting equipment to injecting drug users is to reduce the spread of HIV within the injecting population. Injecting drug use is the most likely starting point for HIV in the general community.

Mr Seeney: What about the kids who stand on them?

Mr SULLIVAN: I take the interjection from the member for Callide. If the member asks the former Health Minister and the current shadow Minister, they will tell him that there is no recorded evidence anywhere in medical literature of HIV or hepatitis C coming from

needle-stick injury. You know that, or maybe you do not know that. If you do not know it, you are ignorant. If you do know it, you are dishonest.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Chermside will address his remarks through the Chair and the member for Callide will cease interjecting.

Mr SULLIVAN: What this Government is doing is ensuring that the rate of blood-borne diseases associated with injecting drugs remains low and trying to prevent the problem of needle-stick injuries by providing needle exchange programs. Queensland Health is conducting best practice with this in association with the Queensland Alcohol and Drug Research and Education Centre at the University of Queensland, probably a committee Mr Horan would again look down on as he does on the interstate group to which we refer issues in order to have a national approach to this international problem. The key thing to remember is that 99% of needles are disposed of safely. There is no documented case of a person contracting HIV or hepatitis C in a community setting from unsafely disposed of injecting equipment. The fear campaign that Miss Simpson, Mr Quinn and Mr Horan have engaged in is an absolute disgrace. There has been no case of HIV/AIDS from needle-stick injury. Their fear campaign has no basis.

Time expired.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (6.46 p.m.): I rise to support the original motion and oppose the Government's amendment. What the Minister for Health has asked us to do in relation to this is give her the opportunity of putting this whole issue on the never-never. There is no time frame whatsoever mentioned in her amendment. The Minister simply will not give an undertaking to the people of Queensland of positive action on retractable needles.

The big issue today is of drug addicts going to parks, beaches, schoolyards and churchyards for the purposes of injecting drugs. We have heard of a number of instances of that. The disposal of thousands of needles in those areas by drug users increases the possibility of needle-stick injury. It is easy for members opposite to say that there is no evidence of that, as the member for Chermside just did. But how would he feel if his child came home with a needle-stick injury? What would he have to say about the Government's callousness?

All we get from the Minister is intemperate language. The Minister gets into a fluster on

the whole issue, as she has done from day one when this matter was first raised. The Minister's original excuse, as reported on 4BC, was that—

"... there's another problem with retractable needles and why it would lead to a huge increase in the number of needles being distributed, is we know, unfortunately, that and we would try to avoid this, but unfortunately about twenty-five per cent of users still share needles."

Minister, I thought that that was what the needle exchange idea was all about, that is, to stop these people from sharing needles. If some 25% of drug users are still sharing needles, that is another good reason why this matter should be attended to and attended to urgently. All we have heard from this Minister, though, is to fob it off for another day. This is the can't do Labor Government. Time and time again Ministers come into this Chamber and blame the Federal Government—blame anybody, as long as they do not blame themselves. They have even tried to blame the previous Government, even though Labor has been in office for most of the 1990s. They have blamed everyone but themselves. This is the can't do Labor Government. Nowhere is it more evident than in this instance.

If we look at the facts put forward from this side of the Chamber, there is mounting evidence to show that there is a range of choices as far as retractable needles are concerned, and more are coming on to the market. No wonder there is concern in the community when the Minister herself admits that syringe use is going to almost double in the next 12 months to two years. We have heard from the Minister's own mouth that the number is going to double. That is what the Minister had to say when she was commenting on this issue in the daily press.

The Minister has used the issue of cost. She has already been shot out of the water in relation to that. The Minister knew that the cost issue would not stand up, and she has now moved on to something else. This is typical of what we get from this can't do Government. Mr Speaker, you know that that is the case because it is not doing your electorate of Redcliffe any good. People cannot walk on the beaches at Redcliffe without the fear of needle-stick injury. People cannot walk on the beaches anywhere in Queensland because of that fear. Those opposite should ask the parents out there. They will very rapidly tell members what the situation is. I get churchmen and a range of other people coming to me to complain about this issue

week in and week out. That is the fact of the matter. This Minister knows it, but she has not done anything about it.

The Minister simply is not up to tackling this matter and taking some positive action in regard to it. Of course the issue of cost is irrelevant at the end of the day, because no matter what it costs—and the costs are not through the roof—we ought to be tackling this issue head-on to ensure it is resolved so that people can once again enjoy the wonders of this great State of ours without having to put up with this risk.

The Federal Government has committed over \$500m to achieving a drug-free society. But the reason there are so many needles in the community is harm minimisation. It has failed. Instead of having the goal of a drug-free society, we have had harm minimisation. Long-term harm minimisation programs have been in place and are still operating in our community. Because of that policy, we are experiencing this huge growth in the number of syringes. Of course, if we were really getting people off drugs, the number of needles would not be escalating in this manner; nor would we have the very high level—25%—of users reusing needles. In a long-term sense the Government has failed in this regard. There is no point in going out there in the community—

Time expired.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.51 p.m.): I am pleased to join this debate, although I do so with mixed feelings about it and about the proceedings in the House today. On the one hand, I am pleased that the honourable members of this Parliament are dealing with issues of considerable community concern, and to that extent I commend the Opposition for raising in the public forum the issue of needle-stick injuries and retractable needles and whether now is the time when we can do more to protect the people of Queensland. That is indeed a worthy issue for us to discuss.

How disappointing, nonetheless, that members opposite have refused to discuss it in some detail and in light of the additional information that this Parliament has heard tonight and in light of the large pool of knowledge available from Queensland Health to members on both sides of the House. Australia and Queensland have policies that have been very successful in stopping the spread of HIV. We are innovators in the world of medicine, and have been for decades. Therefore, this is an important amendment. I encourage all Opposition members to consider whether it would be more worthy for them to look closely at the words rather than to take

the automatic, easy, simplistic and disappointing role of just saying "No" because we are the Government. In the first half of the motion, with credit to the Opposition spokesperson, the issue that is of community concern is presented for us. It is worded well, in fact, in terms of "possibly" fatal infection of innocent people, because we should keep in mind that nobody has contracted hepatitis C or HIV through a needle-stick injury.

The amendment proposed by the Government is important. It says, "Yes, we agree—at the appropriate time, when the standards that we have worked by so well as health professionals right across Australia mean that we know which is the best product, which is the retractable needle that will contribute to additional safety for the people of Queensland." As the Minister has well demonstrated to us, she and the department are well across this issue and are working on it, and not only within this State but also, quite appropriately, at the national level. How close are we to that point? Heaven knows how close, but we are not there yet. I encourage the member opposite—as I have noticed some members from the other side of the House have done—to examine with the Minister the specimens available. Of course, when the right product is available, yes, the cost will be a subsidiary factor. But we are yet to find a suitable retractable needle. We are yet to find the best product that really will work, particularly with drug addicts, who are so mindlessly involved in themselves and their drug addiction that they are prepared to discard needles in places where they can cause needle-stick injury and considerable anxiety to members of the public.

This is a matter that I know well. Prior to becoming a member of Parliament, I had a contract to provide counselling and support services to the Cairns City Council. From time to time workers, generally those who worked in keeping the city clean and those who worked in the parks and gardens area, suffered needle-stick injuries. It was as a matter of course that the council referred those workers for one counselling session, with the option of more. The anxiety that they experienced while waiting for the test results was real and dreadfully unpleasant for them and, of course, for the people who love them. But it is an anxiety and only an anxiety that was their problem. None became ill, and I remind the House again of the facts, which are that there is no documented case of a person anywhere in the world contracting HIV or hepatitis C from an unsafely disposed of syringe in a community setting. That is why this Parliament

can take the additional time, through the advice of Queensland Health, to find a retractable needle that will work and to introduce the program as part of national standards at the appropriate time.

All members of this House should join together and work on this issue. Members of the Opposition should bring us further information if they believe we are in fact not up to speed; although on the performance tonight of the Minister and her department, it is clear that we are.

I strongly encourage members to consider this amendment and how it will appear in their electorates if indeed they vote "No", when it is obviously an amendment that all members should endorse.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 44—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, E. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Feldman, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Kingston, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Paff, Prenzler, Reeves, Reynolds, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Turner, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 30—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Dalglish, Davidson, Elliott, Gamin, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Mitchell, Pratt, Quinn, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

GRIEVANCES

Pacific Motorway

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (7.02 p.m.): I rise in the House this evening in relation to yet another jobs debacle brought about by the Beattie Labor Government. When the Beattie Government inherited the Pacific Motorway from the coalition Government its only contribution to the road was to put up a sign saying how many jobs the Government had created on this project. Of course, this was absolute hypocrisy coming from a Government which said that it was impossible to widen the Pacific Highway to eight lanes.

Now, as this project which was designed, funded and commenced by the coalition in less than two years comes to fruition, where are the workers to go? With the two-year anniversary of the Beattie Labor Government all too quickly approaching, I ask the Minister

how he thinks that those workers who have toiled so hard to complete that magnificent road feel as they pass those signs each day.

The signs remind them that they have no new job to go to because of the inaction of the Labor Government. There is no new major road project ready for these workers to go to. Every day, contractors in this State say to me that this is an inactive Government in relation to capital works funding. The only new project on the books is the much needed port road which is presently being planned.

These workers from the Pacific Motorway could have moved to the Tugun bypass but, as the member for Currumbin and the Minister for Transport know only too well, this project has languished in the Minister's too-hard basket since Labor came to office. I suggest that those signs about the number of workers employed on the Pacific Motorway should remain there as a permanent memorial to the inaction of the Beattie Government as the workers now pack up and head south looking for employment.

I can assure honourable members that the workers and the contractors involved with the Pacific Motorway are waiting for the next election to see the return of a coalition Government so that we can once again see activity in the capital works programs in this State.

Time expired.

Boundary Street, Townsville

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (7.04 p.m.): Last week in Townsville I announced that a special community reference group would be set up to discuss traffic and safety issues in relation to Boundary Street, which has been declared as an access road to the port. I told residents, property owners and business operators at the meeting held last Thursday night that the community reference group would form part of the Department of Main Roads ongoing investigation of short-term measures aimed at improving the amenity of Boundary Street.

In December 1999, Transport Minister Steve Bredhauer announced that Boundary Street would act as a transport route to Townsville port after a range of transport options were investigated as part of the Townsville port access impact assessment study. In coming weeks, Main Roads will invite the Boundary Street community to nominate local residents or business operators to join the community reference group. It is important that Main Roads has this input from

representatives of the Boundary Street community.

Main Roads investigations are now under way on issues affecting the amenity of Boundary Street, particularly the impact of heavy vehicle movement. The District Director of Main Roads, Ian Rose, reported to residents at the meeting on the progress of these investigations which are focusing on the issues of noise, vibration, traffic speed and road safety. I told the meeting last Thursday night that the community reference group is a very important vehicle. I also said that I would continue to work hard on behalf of residents and property owners to ensure that suitable mitigation measures are aimed at improving the amenity of Boundary Street. I said that it was important that we identify these measures and put them in place.

The community reference group will comprise eight to 10 people who will represent a cross-section of the Boundary Street community. They will include residents, property owners and business operators. The community reference group will act as a sounding board for the Main Roads team which is working on improving the amenity of Boundary Street. The community reference group will receive regular briefings and updates and will be asked for its opinion on the Main Roads Department's suggestions. The group will be required to interact with other residents and assist in the general flow of information to and from the community. The reference group will be a great vehicle for that purpose.

Fuel Prices

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (7.06 p.m.): The matter I wish to bring to the attention of the House and the people of Queensland tonight is the effect that rising fuel prices are having on rural communities. I believe all honourable members are aware of the effect that this has on the everyday budget of a person who goes to work in the city. However, when one goes out to the bush this problem is magnified many times. Itinerant workers, including shearers, have to travel long distances to work. Those people are going to be greatly penalised.

I wish to address my comments to the Prime Minister because he gave us an assurance when we agreed to the GST that fuel prices in rural communities would be cheaper because the excise would be dropped. I feel very strongly that this matter should be above politics. We said that we would support the GST on the basis that fuel would be cheaper.

I understand that the spot price is going up; nonetheless, people have the right to expect that undertakings will be honoured. I expect the Prime Minister to honour his commitment. When we consider the disastrous conditions that rural communities are suffering at the moment, it is obvious that they do not need a further impost imposed upon them by way of increased fuel prices.

Cyclone Steve

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (7.08 p.m.): Cyclones are a regular feature of life in far-north Queensland. We expect them and we prepare for them. I have experienced Cyclones Winifred, Joy, Justin and Rona, but until Steve arrived in Cairns on Sunday night I have never personally experienced the real fear that comes from believing that one's roof is about to be ripped off or a tree will crash through one's house. As it was, our fears were not realised. We retained our roof and the huge tree which fell into our garden, bringing down power poles, inflicted only minor damage on my house and car.

However, daylight revealed the full impact of the fury of Cyclone Steve, when there was not a single large tree left standing in our previously beautiful small street, which was completely blocked by a tangled mass of vegetation and had no power and no water. I do not wish to dwell on my experience, because we were the lucky ones. Not so the many people in my electorate and the neighbouring electorates of Cairns and Tablelands, whose homes and businesses were destroyed. However, I believe that my experience has enabled me to better understand the emotional trauma that cyclone victims experience. They are not statistics, but real people with real lives that can be destroyed totally or changed forever by the savage fury of nature.

As always, the Cairns City Council, Ergon and Emergency Services swung into action and the clean-up is well under way. Power has been restored to almost all houses, and I look forward to going home to a hot shower tomorrow.

However, much more remains to be done to get life back to normal. For some, the personal and financial loss will take many years to overcome and put behind them. Notwithstanding that, I wish to place on record my thanks and the thanks of all of those victims of Cyclone Steve to all of the workers of the Cairns City Council, Ergon and the State Emergency Service volunteers who have and who still are working tirelessly on our behalf to

repair the damage inflicted on our community by Cyclone Steve.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (7.10 p.m.): Residents and business owners in Charters Towers are sick and tired of the continuous spate of break and enters and other crimes committed in the city by juveniles. I fear that it has reached the point at which those people are about to take matters into their own hands. They are saying, "Enough is enough." They feel that, for many years, they have been really let down by all Governments.

Only last Monday, a publican in Charters Towers was assaulted when he surprised a young Aboriginal person trying to pry open his doors with a crowbar, which he then used to knock the publican unconscious. This is only one of the many incidents that are happening every weekend in Charters Towers, and I know for a fact that other towns and suburbs throughout the State are faced with the same problem.

People and police are continuously being frustrated by the revolving door scenario of youth offenders being let off by the courts and back on the streets within hours of their arrest. That is not good enough. Offenders, whether they are adults or juveniles, need to know that if they are apprehended or caught they will be punished in some way, shape or form. That is why I was pleased to learn that the State Government has committed \$1m to the trial scheme Project Australia, in other words a boot camp, along with \$2m in funding by the Federal Government.

For many years, I have been a great advocate of such a scheme. When the coalition was in Government, I even looked at a few areas in the country where such camps could be set up. As we cannot lock the young offenders in jail and as the hopeless community service scheme is a huge failure, I am in favour of the establishment of the boot camp linked with mandatory sentencing as an alternative to jail sentences for juvenile offenders. These camps need to be positioned strategically throughout the State so that those juveniles who are admitted to the program would be able to offer their services to assist in clean-ups after natural disasters such as the ones we have witnessed in Queensland over the past few months. Actually, the WORC program is doing that type of work. I believe that is a great opportunity.

Time expired.

Job Creation

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (7.12 p.m.): The 1999 annual report of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations outlines the Government's significant achievements in job creation. The report highlights clearly a key difference between Labor and conservative Governments. It demonstrates that Labor Governments are willing to actively intervene in the economy where it is in the public interest—in this case, to stimulate and create employment opportunities. I contrast that approach with the hands-off approach of conservative Governments, which leave it all to the invisible hand of the free market.

The success of the Government's employment initiatives arise out of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle programs, which aim to create 24,500 apprenticeships, traineeships and employment opportunities in the private and the public sectors over the period of four years. In the last financial year, 2,878 additional apprenticeships and traineeships were created in the public sector—more than one third of the full year quota.

The \$2,000 private sector incentive for each new apprentice resulted in 4,117 additional apprentices and trainees being engaged in areas of identified skill shortages. A total of 2,145 private employers participated in that scheme.

Another success story is the Community Jobs Plan. Up to six months' employment has been generated for 1,371 people in 90 public works and community projects across the State. The Community Employment Assistance Program also helped 1,391 Queenslanders find a job. Last year, Queensland also set records with the largest growth in total apprenticeship numbers in Australia. A total of 11,721 apprenticeships were signed up as opposed to 8,079 the previous year. The Government's record on employment and training growth is worthy of praise.

Burdekin Electorate

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—IND) (7.14 p.m.): I rise to discuss the serious problems facing the town of Collinsville. With the recent sackings of more coalminers, the town is facing a bleak future. Collinsville is typical of many rural communities that are suffering under the weight of economic rationalism—a policy being pushed by all the major parties with uncompassionate, relentless effort.

Many members from both sides of the Chamber may say that we have little control over the private sector, and in some cases that may be true. However, we have control over the creation of new developments and the establishment of a new economic direction. As the local member, I am doing the best I can to push the expansion of the sugar industry in my electorate through the building of a new sugar mill. Essential to these proposals will be the expansion areas and irrigation channels. This means water, and water comes from three places: firstly, the sky; secondly, underground; and thirdly, catchment areas. The building of the Urannah dam will have to become a reality if the expansion of the Burdekin agriculture and horticulture becomes a reality. There is no time for politics and procrastination. This dam will have to be built. The people of Collinsville will benefit as will the people of Bowen.

This is where Governments can help by initiating a project that will flow on to benefit rural communities such as Collinsville. If the Labor and coalition Governments will not give the projects start-up capital, then they will spell doom for these small rural communities. It is all very well to spend large amounts of capital on projects in the major cities, but eventually the bush will die and so will our chance of receiving the cheap produce that Australians enjoy.

If these expansion areas of production go ahead, I want to know what commitment we will receive from the State Labor Government that it will outlay the capital for the Urannah dam project, or will the Beattie Government ignore the people of the Bowen/Collinsville region and allow these towns to miss out on developments similar to the Elliott irrigation channel. If these projects are given the green light, they will be the backbone of jobs and agricultural expansion for these people who currently are suffering and contemplating their futures.

Time expired.

Narangba Valley State High School

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (7.16 p.m.): Monday, 31 January was a great day for the growing communities of Narangba and Burpengary, because it was the day that the Narangba Valley State High School opened for the first time. For years, the residents of Narangba and Burpengary had lobbied with me to finally see the construction of this high school.

A high school for the district was first mooted in about 1992, as a population explosion had occurred in the area.

Unfortunately, that school was removed from the construction program when the Borbidge coalition Government came to power. Thankfully, the school was immediately restored to the program when the Beattie Government was elected.

I congratulate the Education Minister, Dean Wells, on having the determination and the foresight to get construction under way. The school is constructed in the Forest Ridge estate. I congratulate the developers of that estate, Heritage Properties, on its determination to negotiate with the relevant Government departments to ensure that the purchase of the land went ahead. I also congratulate the Education Department, particularly the new principal, Mr Ken Kennedy, who consulted with the community for about six months before the Narangba Valley State High School opened.

I attended and spoke at one of the public meetings when Mr Kennedy was introduced to the Narangba community and, of course, to parents of prospective students of the school. It was a great meeting, not just because the people were pleased to see a new high school for the district but also the expert and understanding way in which Education Department officials and Mr Kennedy answered questions and explained what the new school would be about. It was a revelation to those people who attended the meeting.

The Narangba Valley State High School has opened with over 300 Year 8 students, an excellent teaching staff and principal, with a great parents and citizens committee and, I think most importantly, the complete support of all members of the local communities of Narangba and Burpengary. This school will have a great future in the district.

Electronic Security Industry

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (7.18 p.m.): Similar to some other industry groups in Queensland that fail to perform to community expectations, I bring to the attention of the House, and in particular the Minister for Fair Trading, a situation in the electronic security industry that is now in need of attention.

Members of the Australian Security Installers Association Limited—ASIAL—have advised me that a number of operators are providing advice on electronic security equipment and installing equipment when they are not qualified to do so. Their involvement has resulted in bad workmanship and the provision of low-grade equipment, which in this

very vital industry has a very big impact if it does not work the way it should. The industry also advises that these operators, who provide no ongoing maintenance, are virtually cowboys in the industry. At present, anyone who has a set of tools can set themselves up as a security consultant or an installer.

Some other States in Australia require licensing for security contractors. The New South Wales and Western Australian Governments require security contractors to provide evidence of their suitability through a series of examinations and testing procedures which are ongoing during their period of work in the industry.

Having had a brief exposure to the security industry, I know that, while there are some large organisations that provide security throughout Australia, there are also many small operators working on the fringe. Those in business in tough times will always look to cost-cutting measures, even in this vital area of business and private security.

I am calling on the Minister to review the situation in other States, to provide a regulatory system here similar to that in New South Wales and Western Australia and to set up a situation under the BSA or some similar body where people can be vetted for their suitability and their appropriateness, including criminal backgrounds.

Time expired.

Police Citizens Youth Club

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (7.20 p.m.): I want to draw the attention of the House to the excellent work being done by the Hills District Police Citizens Youth Club in Arana Hills. The PCYC sits on the boundary between the electorates of Ferry Grove and Everton and is receiving growing community support from the suburbs in the north-west of Brisbane. The PCYC is under the leadership of a new and energetic committee of management chaired by Mr John Gordon.

Senior Sergeant Dave Moore has brought enormous stability, commonsense and a steady hand to the day-to-day management of the club, ably supported by a small staff, some of whom are volunteers. This committee is taking further the work that was initiated in the previous year by the committee of management chaired by Inspector Ross Gorrie of the Ferry Grove police division. The PCYC objective is to work with young people in the local community for their social and personal development, and to build positive relationships with police in the local area.

Recently I had the great pleasure of attending the annual PCYC awards night. The dinner was attended by about 100 people associated in different ways with the sporting and youth activities promoted by the club. Those in attendance included Mr Alan Honour, Assistant Commissioner for the Metropolitan North region, along with Inspector Ross Gorrie, whose excellent work with the PCYC I referred to earlier. Unfortunately, time does not permit me to mention everyone who received an award, but congratulations go to a range of people. I ask the leave of the House to incorporate the names and the awards in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Hills District PCYC Awards Night

Awards & Recipients

CITIZENSHIP AWARD

This award is in two categories being Junior and Senior.

This Award will be presented by Pine Rivers Shire Council Mayor Yvonne CHAPMAN

Nominees for this award will be Hills District PCYC Branch members who have contributed service to the community in a voluntary capacity and which service has been of benefit to others. The nominees will also have a high level of respect from other community members.

There were no nominations for the Junior section of this award.

There were three nominations for the Senior Award.

Recipient—Tim SHIPSTONE

Tim has been a member of the Branch for three years. In 1999 Tim was a member of the Pine Rivers Shire Council Youth Action Committee for the last two years and was elected chairperson in 1999. During this time he was instrumental in establishing the Youth Suicide Strategy in the Pine Rivers Shire.

Tim was also a representative on the Queensland Youth Parliament last year and debated topics that were presented to cabinet for discussion.

Achievers Award

This award is in two categories the young Achievers Award and the Achievers Award (Senior).

These awards will be presented by the Member for Ferry Grove Mr Geoff WILSON

Nominees for this award will be Hills District PCYC Branch members who have achieved "excellence" in their areas of personal pursuit. These areas are open and include sporting, recreational, musical, cultural and personal achievements.

There were 6 nominees in the Young Achiever Award.

Recipient—Tracey KELLIGHER

Tracey has been a member of the Tora Bushido Section of the Branch for over two years and was diagnosed with cancer in 1998. She underwent treatment including chemotherapy and some hospital stays. During all of this time Tracey continued her attendance at her classes in Tora Bushido and at school. Despite her setbacks and illness she maintained her marks at school and took part in gradings and was successful in attaining her level four in Tora Bushido.

Tracey is unable to be with us tonight as she is in Singapore with her family as this has been one of her wishes to visit her father and his family. The award is accepted on her behalf by Jean-Paul THORNTWAITE a fellow member of the Tora Bushido Section.

Achievers Award (Senior)

Recipient—Jean-Paul THORNTWAITE

Jean-Paul has been a member of the Branch for the last two years and began training with the Tora Bushido Section about 18 months ago. Early in 1999 Jean-Paul competed in the State Titles. He was successful and attained a Gold Medal in the points sparring and a Bronze Medal in the kata disciplines. Later he competed in the World Kickboxing Titles and Disciplines held at the Gold Coast and won bronze in points sparring and is now ranked number 3 in the world in his division.

Award of Excellence (Programme)

This award will be presented by the Assistant Commissioner (Operations Support) Mr ATKINSON.

The Award of Excellence (Programme) is presented to a Branch activity or other PCYC activity run in conjunction with another community group and operates in one of the following areas

- recreational program,
- cultural program, or
- community based innovative program,

And the activity/program has demonstrated value by fulfilling needs of young people within the local community.

There were 2 nominations for this award.

Recipient—Youth Development Program—(Senior Sergeant Don AMOS and Inspector Ross GORRIE Ferny Grove Police Division)

The Youth Development Program began in 1998 when local Juvenile Aid Bureau Officers were involved in a series of incidents involving local youth in racial incidents at local High Schools. Community consultation was held with parents teachers and youth and it was identified that there was a lack of trust and respect for

local Police amongst the young people and their families.

Detective Sergeant Don AMOS and other J.A.B. officers with the support of Inspector GORRIE organised a camp for these young people. This camp was followed with a series of other camps involving Police from City JAB, and other Police stations in the region, and a program of Buddy Days was started where Police and local youth were able to interact and develop friendships.

From these camps and Buddy Days it was identified that these young people had a number of welfare issues that needed to be addressed. In 1999 funding was obtained and a Youth Officer was employed to work on a one on one basis with local young people.

This program began with 22 local youth and has grown to the point where almost 100 young people, who have come to the notice of Ferny Grove Police, are involved in regular activities.

Of the original 22 young people all have become members of the PCYC, employment has been found for five, seven have started or completed TAFE courses and 8 others have returned to school to continue their education. Only 4 of the original 22 have reoffended.

The award will be accepted by Senior Sergeant Don AMOS and Inspector Ross GORRIE.

Community Support Award

This award will be presented by Pine Rivers Shire Council Division 3 Councillor Craig McCONNELL.

This award is given to a business, person, or group outside of the members of the Branch for extraordinary service or contribution, which has furthered the Aims and Objectives of the Queensland Police Citizens Youth Welfare Association (Hills District Branch).

Recipient: Arana Leagues Club

The Arana Leagues Club has had close association with this Branch since it opened its new premises. The Leagues club has financially assisted the Branch by being the Major Sponsor of our "Annual Fun Run". Each Wednesday the Arana Leagues Club provides space for the PCYC to run its Bingo Games free of charge, and often assists with small incidental matters such as milk for the cups of tea and coffee, biscuits, or staff. This "free rent" saves the branch more than \$7,500 each year.

In mid 1999 Ron CRUMP the General Manager invited the Branch to attend the local business leaders luncheons that the Leagues Club provided for local businesses to interact and network, this invitation opened up opportunities of networking that have led to increased income and exposure.

The award will be accepted by Mr Dan WHITE the Marketing and Promotions Manager at the Arana Leagues Club.

Club Contribution Award

These awards will be presented by the Branch Chairperson Mr John JORDAAN.

This award is presented to staff, volunteers and members who have given extraordinary service beneficial to the Branch over a period not less than 5 years.

Recipients: Kim TEAGUE

Kim, who is a solicitor by profession, has been a member of the Branch Management and Advisory Committees for 7 years and has served as the Deputy Chairperson in 1997 and 1998. He was elected as Treasurer in 1999. Kim has been involved in fundraising for the Branch since he first began with the Branch in 1993.

Carolyn HEALY

Carolyn, who works as a customer relations officer for Telstra, was one of the foundation members of the Branch when it was officially opened in 1990. Carolyn has served as a member of the Management and Advisory Committees for 10 years and is presently the Deputy Chairperson of the Branch. Carolyn is also presently serving on the Board of Directors of the Queensland Police Citizens Youth Welfare Association.

Kim SCOTT

Kim is presently one of our Kindy Climbers coaches and has been a volunteer worker since 1982. Kim has worked as a volunteer at Blue Light Discos, fundraising dinners, and the recently restarted Dance Parties. She assists every year with the telephone book deliveries and most other fundraisers or events that the Branch organises.

Marea BROOK

Marea is employed by the Branch as the Administrative Assistant. To this should be added the titles of problem solver, general handyman, cleaner and chief organiser. Prior to being employed in the administrative area, Marea coached Gymnastics, co-ordinated the Bicycle Education Classes, and did volunteer reception work.

Prior to the present Branch Manager's arrival several Relief Managers worked at the Branch, but for a period of time Marea was the only person working at the club and handled all of the day to day Branch business and decision making.

Perhaps for this award she should be presented with a watch, as she never seems to know when it is time to finish work and go home. Marea regularly works 7 to 8 hours a week as a volunteer on top of the time that she works as an employee.

In conclusion, the PCYC is a great club doing great things in the community. I wish it the very best for the future.

Fruit and Vegetable Industry

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA)

(7.24 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the fruit and vegetable growers of Queensland on their vision for the future. They have been putting this vision together over a period, and it has certainly been very well received. By 2003 the horticultural industry in Queensland will be a globally competitive, respected and cohesive industry driven by satisfying customer and market needs, resulting in improved profitability, sustainability and lifestyle for those growers. We can look back at the fruit and vegetable industry and recognise the work that many people have been doing in that industry over the years.

The key industries have certainly been to the fore, and it is good to see them driving forward all the time. There has been a significant improvement in their ability to deliver long lines of safe, consistent quality fruit and vegetables to national and international customers. State and Commonwealth growers will certainly benefit from the development of marketing arrangements that enhance commercial control and influence beyond the farm gate.

Time expired.

Wheat Breeding

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP)

(7.26 p.m.): I recently accompanied the Minister for Public Works and Housing, Mr Robert Schwarten, on a visit to Toowoomba to outline plans for an innovative design for a new research facility. I refer to an energy efficient design developed within the Department of Public Works for construction of a glasshouse for advanced wheat breeding at the Department of Primary Industries' Leslie Research Centre.

We were briefed on the plans for the new research facility by the Leslie Research Centre's senior plant breeder, Dr Phillip Banks, who is very innovative. To help plant breeding on the downs he had gone to Argentina off his own bat. The Leslie Research Centre of DPI's Farming Systems Institute specialises in breeding wheat for the export market, particularly Asia. This is a huge market, with Australia currently exporting \$6 billion worth of wheat each year.

The planned new glasshouse has been designed by staff from the Built Environment Research Unit within the Department of Public Works. It will enable Dr Banks and his team to significantly speed up their wheat breeding program. Wheat is a winter crop. The

challenge for the Built Environment Research Unit was to find ways of adapting energy efficient cooling technologies to allow wheat to be grown in the glasshouse during summer.

Until now, electricity was used for temperature control in glasshouses, but the aim of the new design is to maximise the use of natural light, solar energy and structural design to almost eliminate the need for artificial cooling or heating. Energy costs will be negligible due to the use of a combination of low maintenance cooling technologies—chimneys and various evaporative cooling units—powered by solar energy. Hail resistant polycarbonate double glazing also will be used instead of conventional glass. This material allows lighting to be maintained at a greater level and for longer periods and eliminates repair costs due to storm damage.

The new glasshouse will be used to cross breed maize onto wheat plants to produce a true breeding wheat in one generation, instead of having to wait five or six generations using traditional breeding systems. The true breeding lines can very efficiently be screened for disease resistance and other characteristics that are very important to the export market. It is significant that disease issues can be handled through environmentally friendly systems rather than using pesticides. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my remarks.

Leave granted.

The glasshouse concept that the Built Environment Research Unit has designed will make all of these benefits possible, mainly because of the temperature control it offers, allowing research to be conducted throughout most of the year.

The Department of Public Works supports these important research efforts by developing more energy-efficient and cost-effective glasshouse technology.

The new glasshouse at Toowoomba was a result of the success of a joint research project between the Built Environment Research Unit and another DPI facility, the Hermitage Research Station near Warwick.

A glasshouse that derives all its winter energy needs from solar renewable sources was built in 1996 at Hermitage with the aim of improving winter growing of sorghum through solar heating.

Its performance has been trialed against that of a conventional glasshouse. The growth rates and pollen production for sorghum in the energy-efficient glasshouse have been excellent.

The DPI then asked Built Environment Research Unit to take the next step and explore cheaper summer cooling of glasshouses, a problem that has world-wide implications for intensive horticulture in the tropics and sub-tropics.

The construction of the 160 square-metre glasshouse at the Leslie Research Centre was due to get under way in March and be completed by June.

Bus Stop, Beechmont

Mr CONNOR (Nerang—LP) (7.28 p.m.): Recently Queensland Transport decided to move a bus stop to North Road in lower Beechmont. The only trouble is that little or no consultation took place with members of the local community, who were extremely upset. They held on a major protest because they did not want their kids getting on a bus at an unsafe bus stop. The position of the bus stop was on a steep incline on a curve and close to an intersection with a busy road. It was totally unacceptable to the local community.

They asked me to intervene, and I managed to get the Department of Transport to postpone the completion of the bus stop subject to a public meeting. The public meeting occurred, and the local community unanimously opposed the proposed position of the bus stop. They want it to go back to Gretty Lane.

As a result of that public meeting, a series of resolutions was passed, one of which was that no associated works would be completed until the Department of Transport restored the stop to its original site. Today I became aware that not only has the Department of Transport signalled its intention to have the associated work completed; it has dropped the form work out to the site. This is totally against the wishes of the local community. It is totally unacceptable. The community is up in arms about it. I am sure we will end up with a major protest in the future if this is not rectified.

What I am saying to the Department of Transport and the Minister is: intervene and stop this. It is against the wishes of the local community. They pay our wages, the same as public servants, and they have a right to be listened to. They do not want to put their kids on a bus at an unsafe bus stop. It is unacceptable. All that will end up happening is that kids will be killed. The Minister has the responsibility to move that bus stop back to where it was originally and look after the community.

Time expired.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (7.29 p.m.): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 14 March 2000."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.29 p.m.