

THURSDAY, 1 JUNE 2000

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

FLYING OF ABORIGINAL FLAG AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have received the following letter from the honourable member for Western Downs. It reads—

"Dear Mr Speaker

It has come to my attention that you have instructed that the Aboriginal Flag is to be flown from the flagpoles within the precincts of Parliament House. I can only presume you believe this gesture will assist reconciliation.

I write to express my fear that this decision may, in fact, be counterproductive.

I firmly believe many people support reconciliation, but their support is in danger of being replaced by resentment—a resentment of actions they find offensive and/or unacceptable. I believe your decision to fly the Aboriginal Flag at Parliament House is just such an action.

I respectfully request you reconsider your decision."

I therefore bring to the attention of the House correspondence forwarded to my office from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet headed "National Reconciliation Week—27 May 2000 to 3 June 2000". In part that correspondence reads—

"For the past two years it has been the practice to mark National Reconciliation Week through the flying of the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag.

... agencies are advised that the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag may be flown with the Australian national flag to acknowledge National Reconciliation Week."

This accompanied advice from the Queensland Government's Protocol Branch instructing that the flags be flown in accordance with the NAIDOC Week policy. That advice reads in part—

"... the Aboriginal Flag may be flown ... in combination with the Australian and Queensland Flags. However, where there

are fewer than three flagpoles, it should not replace either of these flags."

I trust that this answers the honourable member and others who object to the flying of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Police and Corrective Services Portfolio

From **Mrs Liz Cunningham** (270 petitioners) requesting the House to separate the Government Ministries of Police and Corrective Services

David Low Way

From **Mr Davidson** (372 petitioners) requesting the House to instruct the Minister for Transport to reduce the speed limit along David Low Way through South Peregian Beach from the present 80 km/h to the 60 km/h limit which already applies north through Peregian Beach and Marcus Beach..

Inspector M. Churchill; Sergeant C. Sidey

From **Dr Kingston** (1,183 petitioners) requesting the House to strongly oppose the forced transfers of Inspector Mal Churchill and Sergeant Chris Sidey for the alleged lack of professionalism.

Petitions received.

PAPER

MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following paper was tabled—

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

Ministerial response to Report No. 19, dated 19 March 2000, of the Legal Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee entitled "Implications of the new Commonwealth enrolment requirements".

SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.34 a.m.): I move—

"That the House notes Report No. 41 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and resolves—

- (a) that Mr Shaun Nelson MLA, member for Tablelands and Mrs Dorothy Pratt MLA, member for Barambah committed a contempt of the Parliament by engaging in disorderly and disrespectful conduct in the precincts of the Parliament while it was in session and behaving in a manner not befitting members of Parliament;
- (b) that both members be suspended from the services and the precincts of the House for 28 days; and
- (c) that the House discharge Mr Shaun Nelson MLA, Member for Tablelands from membership of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee."

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (9.34 a.m.): I formally second the motion moved by the Leader of the House.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (9.35 a.m.): I will take a moment to speak to this motion. I would like to explain a few things. When I wake up in the morning and look out my bedroom window, I look straight out on to a dairy farm and a dairy shed. I was born here in Brisbane but very soon afterwards moved out into rural Queensland. I lived in towns such as Chinchilla and Malanda.

Another member of this Parliament also lived on the Atherton Tableland. He lived in the town of Atherton and he would certainly know the town of Malanda quite well. I am sure that deep down, in his heart of hearts, that other member of this Parliament, regardless of his politics, would understand exactly why I did what I did yesterday. I am sure that he knows exactly what is on the main street of Malanda—a gigantic milk factory. That milk factory is the centre of the town and it provides employment for about 135 people. It provides an outlet for about 196 dairy farmers.

I have been a member of Parliament for only two years, but I have been interested in politics for quite some time. One of the reasons I got into politics was to try to make a change, to try to do something good and try to represent people who, as far as I am concerned, had gone without representation for quite some time—including me.

I understand why some members of the House do not want to hear what I have to say, and that is fair enough. Ultimately, I do not really care what happens to me. That is not my concern. My concern is about what will happen to the 60-odd people I sat down and had tea and coffee with not more than a few months

ago. They said to me, "Shaun, we accept that there are global markets. We accept that there is change. We accept that we are not a part of the rationale any more. We accept that National Competition Policy is happening."

Recently in Mareeba I attended a meeting which the Deputy Prime Minister also attended. He came up and tried to speak to growers in Mareeba. I think I was the only member of this Parliament at that meeting. About 600 growers attended to vent their anger at the Deputy Prime Minister. The speech made by the member for Crows Nest last night was in direct and stark contrast to the speech made by the Deputy Prime Minister in Mareeba. It was like listening to people from two separate parties. It is absolutely amazing. It shows me at least one thing—I suppose I have learned this in the last couple of months more than ever before—and that is that politics is not so much about what you do; it is about what you say. A lot of members of this House will do one thing and say another.

Regardless of what happens here today, regardless of what has been said in the media and regardless of what will be said in the media, it is my profound wish that every other member of this Parliament would do exactly the same thing for their constituents if the need arose. Other members of this Parliament have done similar things—maybe not exactly the same thing. I have the utmost respect for any members of Parliament who are willing to put their heads on the chopping block for their constituents. It should probably happen a lot more, regardless of the manner in which it is done. Yes, as the Leader of the Opposition said, we are elected to this House to debate the issue, but when the issue is beyond debate, when the issue is sunk and finished, we must do whatever we possibly can to get the message across.

When that protest was under way at the front of Parliament House, the Premier refused point blank to come out and speak to the protesters. Yes, he accepted a delegation, but there were a thousand-odd people out there who had come a long way to see the Premier. They would have given him a hearing. They were quiet when other members of Parliament got up and spoke. They would have let the Premier speak. It hurt me personally to think that the Leader of this State—he has said on numerous occasions in this Chamber that he is the leader for all Queenslanders—would not come out and speak to the protesters. That is all they wanted. They wanted to hear from the Premier. They know that deregulation is inevitable. They know that Queensland is probably very ill-equipped to stand up against

the Victorians and stand up against the Federal Parliament, and they realise that we live in a federation and that we cannot stop cross-border trade. But at the very least, the Premier of this State—the Leader of this State—could have gone out and spoken to them. The main reason I did what I did the other day was because that was not going to happen, and I knew that was not going to happen. I thought that the very least I could do was to take it on my shoulders, as a person who represents a large number of dairy farmers, to do something.

I spent a little bit of time last night reading through the Hansards from 1988, 1989 and 1990. I read the speeches made at that time by a few members who are now sitting in ministerial positions. I heard some of the frustration and anger in their speeches at that time. They knew that what was happening was wrong. They knew that they were in a position where they had to wait for the next election for something to happen. I read some of the speeches made by members who are now sitting on the Government benches. I also looked back through a few records and I discovered people who, at one stage in their lives, understood exactly what I did the other day. They may say differently and think differently now, but back in those days there were a few members of this Parliament who perhaps had a little bit less responsibility and they could actually fight the good fight.

The problem in Parliaments—not just this Parliament, not just in the Federal Parliament and not just in Australia—is that a lot of people have forgotten to fight. They have forgotten what the fight is about. I do not know whether any members saw young Ian Thorpe on the TV this morning, but he said it quite clearly: it is not about whether you win or lose; it is how you fight. I will admit straightaway—and I have not tried to do anything else—that what I did was unparliamentary. A parliamentary thing to do would have been to make a speech in this place. But what would that speech have achieved? Would it have changed the vote of any single Government member?

Mr Bredhauer: What did you achieve?

Mr NELSON: I will tell the Minister what I achieved and I will tell him what will be happening in Malanda when I go home tonight. I have received around 200 messages of support from people at home, and they have all said, "Shaun, you probably went a bit too far, but at least you did it. At least you had a go. At least you fought." These people realise they are up against bigger things, they realise that the fight is probably lost, but they

respect the fact that you have a go—no matter what, that you have a go.

I realise that the Dairy Deregulation Implementation Bill will be debated while I am not here, and I realise that the punishment was set to fit that, but the simple fact is that I have made my stand. I have said more with my protest than I could say in a thousand words in a debate. At least the member for Barambah and I were willing to put our necks on the line, knowing full well that we would get into trouble for doing so, but at least we had a go. At least we went out there and fought the good fight, did the utmost that we could possibly do to send a message not just to this Parliament but to the Federal Parliament and to the Victorians. Members may have noticed that, the very next day, there were protests outside the Parliament in New South Wales, and there is—rightfully so—a protest out the front of this place. It seems to me that people are queuing up to protest in Queensland. They have to book space on George Street to come and protest!

Mr Bredhauer: That's because we made it legal.

Mr NELSON: Exactly. As I said, I read the speeches in which Government members were fighting to make it legal. I know the history of that time quite well. I was in Grade 12 when it was all happening.

Government members interjected.

Mr NELSON: I finished Grade 12 in 1990. I was reading the speeches of that time, and I know that many Government members did fight a hell of a lot harder back then. I know the politics of this situation now, and what has to be done has to be done, and I accept that. That is politics. It is part of the reason I do not like politics, and the sooner we get the politicians out of politics, the better.

To return to my point—I live in a small town that many members have visited. It has about 196 dairy farmers plotted all around it. Dairy farming has been the major source of income in that town for almost a century. Unfortunately, no matter what is said in this Parliament, no matter what is said in the Federal Parliament, no matter what the soothsayers who postulate National Competition Policy say, it is a town that will suffer dramatically from the effects of dairy industry deregulation. On my best estimates and on the best estimates of people who know a little bit more about economics than I do, it is a town that will lose around 60 dairy farmers from its base industry, and that will be utterly devastating for my home town, the town that I want to live in, the town that I want to be

buried in eventually, 60 or 70 years from now, after you guys are long gone.

The simple fact is that it is a small town, and it will feel the flow-on effect of those 60 lost dairy farmers. There have already been jobs lost from the Malanda milk factory.

Mr Reynolds: Was this not just a publicity stunt on your part?

Mr NELSON: The member for Townsville asked me whether this was a publicity stunt. This is the difference between me and him. He forgets that he supported a north Queensland State 12 years ago but now does not.

Honourable members: Ha, ha!

Mr NELSON: Members should read the Townsville Bulletin. It is there. I know; I read the Townsville Bulletin. Unlike the member for Townsville, I am not blatantly money hungry and seeking re-election. I am not chasing party pre-selection all the time. If I do not get elected at the next election, that is the will of the people, and I accept that and that is fine. If I do get elected at the next election, I will continue to do what I do and fight the best fight I can fight. That is up to the people. I accept democracy, unlike other people in this Chamber. Unlike the member for Townsville, no, it was not a publicity stunt. I did what I did because the farmers out there voted for me to do it. They said, "Shaun, if that is what is going to happen, then do it", and I did it.

Mr Speaker, I will tell you quite clearly: I am sorry that I was not parliamentary in my behaviour when I did it. I am very sorry for that. It was a very unparliamentary thing to do. But I do not regret what I did, and I certainly would do it again, simply because I will never, ever rest until the message of these people is heard. The message may not be acted upon, but at least it will be heard, and that is the point ultimately. The words in this House are not always heard. I will give newcomers a bit of a hint: not everyone in Malanda reads Hansard. Not everyone in Malanda has a copy of Hansard delivered to their front door every night. A lot of the words that are said in this place do not get heard outside. Those two things down the end are the main way people get their news, believe it or not, and a lot of people do not sit down and read every word that is printed in Hansard. As I said, I have received a ton of support over the last couple of nights saying, "Good on you, Shaun, for what you have done", and every single one of the people who has said that has also said, "At least you fought. It doesn't matter what happens from here. Okay, you are going to get kicked out for a little while, but at least you

said what you had to say by doing that. At least the protest was made."

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr NELSON: The member for Callide should be very quiet. I have not attacked his boys yet, but I certainly could. I will not do so. The member for Callide was out the front there—

A Government member interjected.

Mr NELSON: Well, no, because I have a little bit more respect than that and I will not say a word more on that.

The simple fact is that the small town I come from will suffer really badly as a result of this. I have to walk up and down the main street of Malanda. I do so on the weekend to go and get a loaf of bread or just to go and see some people or to go and get a video from the shop. I can walk down that street tonight and for the next couple of weeks with my head held high and very, very proud because of the reaction I have received from that town. I know that, in 40 or 50 years' time, when I am talking to my grandchildren—if I ever manage to find myself a girlfriend—

A City Country Alliance member interjected.

Mr NELSON: And keep her. In 40 years' time, when I am talking to my grandchildren, I will be able to say that I fought the good fight; I did what I could; I did not go quietly; I did not roll over like a mouse and play silly games. I fought the way every other Australian would fight in that situation, the way I know that many other members of this Parliament would have liked to have fought if they were not shackled to a party that told them they could not.

Ultimately, in my heart, I know that when I am sitting in my rocking chair on the veranda in 40 or 50 years' time, remembering the many faces that have passed on since then, I will be able to say to my grandchildren, "When I had my time to have a say, I did it loudly and strongly. I did not shy away from the fight when I had to fight." I know that there are a couple of members opposite who would have done exactly the same thing if coalminers were going to be put out of work, or if a member of a railway union was going to be tossed out of his job. I know that there are members of the National Party who would have done exactly the same thing as I did. There are also a couple of guys up the back here who would do the same thing.

In closing, I did what I did because I come from a little tiny dairy town—a town that is going to lose a lot of jobs. That town will lose a

lot of people. A lot of faces will change. Another member of this Parliament comes from Atherton and he would know exactly what I am talking about when I say that there are a lot of good people in that area. Regardless of their politics, they are good and decent people. I am only a young fellow, and they have sat me down and said, "Shaun, listen! This is what is going to happen to me. This is the end product." It is really sad, because not only are they characters who will be lost to Malanda and Queensland; they also belong to a generation that will be lost to this country.

This country used to be great. It used to be an incredible place which turned out people who could do incredible things. I will admit that I do not understand what has happened in the last 10 or 15 years. One could say that it is all because of National Competition Policy. One could say that it is because of one thing or another. I do not blame the Labor Party. I do not blame the National Party. I do not know who to blame. I do not know who did this thing to us.

Maybe we did it ourselves. Maybe it was the Australians who were talking to me who did it. The simple fact is that I have had my say and I have done my bit. I fought as well as I could. I did my duty to the best of my ability. The people at home know that and I have gained their support. No matter what is said in this place, there is only one poll that counts, and that is the one at the next election. I will accept the decision of my electorate. However, I do not accept the right of the Brisbane media to say whatever it wants to say. I do not accept the right of people in this city to say whatever they want to say.

There are only 30,000-odd people that I care about, and they are the people who live on the Atherton Tableland. Before I sit down to face my day, I issue this dire warning to all the people who live in and around the Brisbane City area: when they are paying \$3 or \$4 a litre for milk in the next five or six years, they should not come whingeing to me.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (9.53 a.m.): I move the following amendment to the motion—

"In (b) omit '28 days' and insert '14 days'."

This issue has been blown out of all proportion and is now a political witch-hunt, in much the same way as my City Country Alliance colleague the member for Ipswich West was falsely accused and pilloried on trumped-up charges and an erroneous conclusion by this same committee.

It is quite obvious that the Labor/Liberal alliance and the Nationals do not want any other party or Independent to rock the boat and upset their cosy little arrangement. Their cosy little arrangement has allowed them to pursue their own agenda in this place for some time whilst ignoring the wishes of their constituents, as the member for Tablelands has outlined. They cannot handle it when someone listens to the people and supports them.

The City Country Alliance would not have taken the action that the two members have taken. We are very aware of the need to uphold the sanctity of this place. However, this incident was merely a token gesture. No damage was done. The inconvenience caused was minimal, there was virtually no financial cost involved and no person was injured.

Mr Nelson interjected.

Mr FELDMAN: As the member for Tablelands said, the two Independent members offered to pay for any inconvenience that was caused.

This incident pales into insignificance when compared with the case of a Cabinet Minister being involved in a drunken brawl and committing a criminal assault and causing bodily harm whilst using a crushed beer can as a weapon. This incident pales into insignificance when compared with a Labor backbencher being arrested on a picket line and actually taking on the police.

The Premier is practising hypocrisy on a grand scale when he talks about maintaining standards of decorum in this place. His Labor colleagues have ensured that his Government will be remembered as an uncouth rabble. It is a bit rich for this Government, with its record of drunken violence, shady Internet deals and members being charged with child sex offences, to suddenly stand up and try to take the moral high ground. This Government is also guilty of shredding evidence.

Queenslanders who are going to have their lives changed forever are honouring the member for Tablelands and the member for Barambah. City Country Alliance members have the independence to vote as they will. I cannot speak for the member for Ipswich West who sits beside me. He may find it a little difficult to support the member for Tablelands in light of the vindictiveness that he suffered on a previous occasion. I will certainly be voting for the amended motion because I believe that the motion moved by the Government is unfair. I feel strongly about the tragic plight of our dairy farmers, and I suspect that most of my colleagues feel the same.

In the light of all this, I know that both Dorothy and Shaun knew that they were going to have to pay a price for their actions. They are not stepping away from the fact that they know that what they did was unparliamentary. We believe that the severity of the sentence that has been dished out to them is a little rich.

I know that they acted rather than seeing Shane Paulger, the dairy farmer from Kenilworth who was on the back of the truck, enter the grounds of Parliament House and take on the police. Mr Paulger wanted to ensure that his protest was heard loud and long. Mr Paulger is one of our constituents, one of those people who battle for us, and one of those people whose industry is under such pressure. He does not want to see his farm destroyed. He does not want to see his way of life destroyed. Neither of these two members of Parliament wanted to see Mr Paulger paying the price of being arrested, being humiliated and being taken to the watch-house. They did not want to see one of their own—a dairy farmer—being treated in that way. They took it upon themselves to take this action, knowing full well that they would pay a penalty. The City Country Alliance believes that the penalty is a bit too rich.

We know the politics behind the imposition of that penalty. A suspension of 28 days means that those members will be absent from the Parliament when the dairy industry legislation is debated. That is the hypocrisy behind this. We are losing two votes. I hope that members of the National Party and the Liberal Party are listening because, when it comes to the vote, we need the numbers on this side of the House. We want Queenslanders to see that the numbers will come down to one member on this side—maybe even you, Mr Speaker, casting your vote against us.

We want these two members on the floor of the House. We want these two members back here when it comes time to vote. We do not want the finger of blame pointed at these two members who stood up for the dairy industry. They stood up to be counted. I am looking at members of the National Party and the Liberal Party and I say to them, "Think about how you are going to vote on this motion. Think about what will happen when a division is called." We are going to push this matter because we do not want to see these two members leaving this Chamber without a fight. We want them back in this House and casting their vote for the industry for which they stood up the other day. We do not want to see them sent away as a result of pure politicking.

While we are discussing politicking, let us look at some of the penalties that have been dished out over the years. I have some information here from the year 1976 which I obtained from the Parliamentary Library. Kevie Hooper—a nice man, a great man, a man I spent some time with—was kicked out of this place on two occasions for terms of five days and 14 days. Gibbsey was kicked out of here twice; he received seven days and 14 days.

Let us talk about mandatory sentencing. Let us talk about the "three strikes and you are out" rule. Let us take a look at the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge. On 14 March 1991 he was thrown out for seven days. On 31 October 1991 he was thrown out for 14 days. Thank goodness we do not have mandatory sentencing in this place, because the Leader of the Opposition was again thrown out of this House on 13 May 1993 for seven days. If the "three strikes and you are out" rule was in, he would not be here today.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I might have become a bit boisterous in here from time to time but I never vandalised the precincts of the Parliament.

Mr FELDMAN: None of those members like to be reminded of when they stood up for issues. I have never seen penalties dished out in this place such as those that have been dished out to the Independent members and the members of the smaller parties. The members of the larger parties try to tell Queenslanders that that is not politicking. The people know the difference between crap and clay. They know what they are being fed, and it certainly is not clay.

Mr Nelson: People from Malanda will hear what Mr Borbidge just said.

Mr FELDMAN: People from Malanda will hear what Mr Borbidge said. They will know what is happening in this place and, when it comes to the vote, they will know who is standing up for the dairy industry. They will know who is trying to push this issue to the penultimate in this place. That is why I am directing my comments to the members of the National Party and the Liberal Party. When it comes time to vote on this motion, they should think about where they are sitting. Those members spoke about the sanctity and decorum of Parliament. Yes, it should be upheld. The members for Barambah and Tablelands knew very well that they were committing an offence, but they did not think that it was going to cost them the right to speak about the industry that they love, that I know the members of the National Party love, and that we in the City Country Alliance love as

well. We want to stand up and protect the rights of these farmers if we can, and removing these two fine members of Parliament from the debate is not the way to go.

I will close by saying to members to think about how they will vote. Let us stand up for the dairy industry. The other day I heard coalition members speak to those farmers. Let us see what their vote is going to be. Is it going to be for the two members who stood up and fought for their dairy farmers and paid a price, or is it going to be with the Labor Party, which is destroying the industry? Let us not sentence those members to 28 days; let us sentence them to 14 days and have them back in this place voting with us, putting their vote where it counts, which is on this side of Parliament.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (10.01 a.m.): I rise to second the amendment to the motion moved by the member for Caboolture. There is no doubt that the members for Barambah and Tablelands should be judged on their unparliamentary behaviour. I fully expect that they realise that they have to be judged on the actions that they took last Tuesday to highlight the plight of the dairy industry. However, all they were doing was trying to protect honest dairy farmers who came here to protest and highlight the plight of their industry. Those honest dairy farmers were trying to get the Minister for Primary Industries and the Premier to come out and talk to them. Those dairy farmers were going to tip that can of milk. They told us that they would. Unfortunately, the police were there and basically they told them that if they tipped that milk onto the gates of Parliament, they would be arrested. The members were trying to protect those people.

How can this House take away those members' right to speak on behalf of their constituents in the upcoming dairy deregulation debate, which will probably be held this afternoon and during the next sittings of Parliament? How can we stop them from speaking for their constituents who are so passionate about their industry and who are so afraid of what the future holds for their industry?

How would the member for Surfers Paradise, the Leader of the Opposition, have reacted if the dairy farmers tipped the can of milk over the gates of Parliament and were arrested for spilling that milk? Would he have slammed the farmers in the press, as he has done today in terms of the actions of those two members of Parliament? I suspect not. He would have spoken up in favour of what they

had done. With those few words, I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (10.03 a.m.): I rise to speak in support of the amendment. I certainly cannot condone the behaviour that we are debating this morning, but we are really debating spilt milk on the tiled steps of Parliament House. More importantly, I believe that in coming months we will see more tears spilt in Queensland than the drops of milk which were spilt on Parliament House on Tuesday. I wonder whether the members of this House will throw out the politicians who caused those tears to be shed, because their constituents in their electorates are going to be forced to walk off their farms and go bankrupt. The schools will close because there are no longer any students in the schools. Whole communities will suffer and bear the brunt of this decision.

I ask the members of this House to seriously consider the 28-day penalty. I believe that it is very unreasonable, although I certainly cannot condone the actions that we are debating. Finally, I urge members to support the amendment.

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—CCAQ) (10.04 a.m.): I rise to support the amendment to the motion moved by the member for Caboolture. I have been in this Chamber for nearly two years and during that time I have witnessed very unparliamentary acts in this Chamber. I would not mention those acts if I did not think that what could happen to these two members sitting beside me was unjust. I have witnessed certain members of the Government being dragged out of this Parliament by their colleagues in a state of drunkenness. That has gone unnoticed by this Chamber; it has gone unnoticed by the media. They have not paid any attention to this.

On several occasions a number of members in this Chamber have witnessed certain Ministers of the Crown being drunk, being dragged out of this House and pulled into this House to vote. Those offences that those members have committed have gone unnoticed. Yet the penalty that has been given to the members for Barambah and Tablelands over a bit of spilt milk—the suspension from this Chamber for 28 days—does not compare with the acts that I have seen in this Parliament. I do not want to point fingers and I am not trying to score any political points; I am stating a fact. Those actions are going unnoticed deliberately. I think that it is time that the behaviour of members in this Chamber starts being noticed not only by the media but also by the Premier.

I ask members to take my comments into account when we vote on this motion.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (10.06 a.m.): In rising to support the amendment, I would have to say that, as a newer member of this Chamber, I failed to understand the concern of many in the House about the action of tipping the milk on the steps. It was not paint; it was not something that would be very difficult to remove. However, someone with more experience in this place explained to me that the concern was that if an individual committed the same act, they would be arrested by the police and dealt with by the courts. That put the incident in some perspective for me, and I thank the member for that. On that basis, I can understand the need for the actions of the two members who are the subject of this motion to be dealt with in a manner that at least replicates the treatment that would be meted out to a member of the public if they did the same thing.

However, I would have to concur with the comments that have been made previously about the extent of the expulsion that is proposed. The suspension of 28 days for the actions that were taken by these two members is excessive. Rather than raise particular incidents that have happened in the past and compare the severity of the suspensions placed on those members at that time, I say that in the past motions have been moved in this Chamber to support or not support members who have acted in the best interests of representing their constituency. There have been divisions called on those motions, and I have supported the rights of the members to take actions that support and represent the people for whom they are supposed to work. That is exactly what the member for Barambah and the member for Tablelands have done.

I believe that they deserve the right to be able to debate the dairying Bill. However, it is not for that reason that I support the amendment. I support the amendment because it better represents equity in terms of the suspension for the action that was taken. On that basis, I, too, encourage members of this House to support the reduction of the suspension from 28 days to 14 days.

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (10.09 a.m.): I have listened to the contributions made in this debate. The member for Tablelands is right; I do come from Atherton. In common with him, I have enormous regard for the people in that community. They are decent and hardworking people, but they are also people who respect

the law and appropriate behaviour. I grew up with those people. I love them. Those people would expect members of Parliament to set an example. That is what this is about. This is about leadership from every one of us in this House. It is a privilege to come into this House. We get benefits that by and large the rest of the community do not get. But with those benefits and privileges comes responsibility. That responsibility means that we have to set an example. What sort of example is set when elected representatives of the people pour milk in the grounds—on the building—of Parliament, the people's house?

Mr Nelson: On a driveway.

Mr BEATTIE: The member had his say. I listened to him in silence. I expect the same courtesy.

We are elected by the people and we are expected to set an example. We can imagine what every schoolchild in this State saw on the news that night—two elected representatives pouring a large can of milk on Parliament. What do children think of Parliament? One of the biggest problems we as members of Parliament have in the community is trying to restore some confidence in this institution. It is hard to do that. We all have a responsibility to do it. In my view, picking up a can of milk and setting such a poor example to children is unacceptable behaviour from a member of Parliament. The member should think about this.

Mr Nelson: Is it unacceptable for a member of Parliament to punch someone in the face?

Mr BEATTIE: One of the things that I learnt growing up in Atherton was good manners, and that is something the people from the tablelands always expect.

What example does this set for schoolchildren? Does it mean that schoolchildren can go to school and, if they do not like what the teacher has done, take a whole can of milk and pour it down the stairs or outside the principal's office? Of course that is not acceptable behaviour. It is not acceptable behaviour from schoolchildren and it is not acceptable from members of this Parliament.

Let us talk about the severity of the 28-day suspension. The first thing that has to be accepted is that this is a recommendation of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. That committee has been established to examine the behaviour of honourable members. That committee met and reached a unanimous decision. As I understand it, there were Labor members, a

National, a Liberal and an Independent member on that parliamentary committee, which came forward with a recommendation. It has been suggested that there is some political agenda. If that political agenda covers Independent, National, Liberal and Labor members, it is a conspiracy that only some can see. I do not see it. I was totally unaware of that parliamentary committee's deliberations until its chairman came into the House and told us what its recommendations were. No-one on my side of the House exerted any influence. We did not know what its deliberations were. I have a track record in this Parliament—and, in fact, I paid a considerable personal penalty for this—of supporting the integrity of parliamentary committees when I was Chairman of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. I stood by the parliamentary committee process then and I stand by it today.

Let us look at the recommendation for a 28-day suspension. If we accept the amendment, it would mean simply that the two members concerned would go home today; they would have the rest of the day off. They would not miss another day of Parliament. That is no penalty at all—none at all. This Parliament has to send a clear message to the community that we can run our own House and we can run it in an appropriate and proper way. The community is crying out for politicians to behave themselves and to set an example.

I have a very clear view about this. I see this as a clear act of vandalism. I am concerned that members—and some of them sit in the back corner—who from time to time lecture my Government about law and order and vandalism are in this House today supporting a soft position in relation to inappropriate behaviour and in essence are supporting a soft approach when it comes to vandalism. I do not accept that position. It is more important that we set an example for our children and for all Queenslanders. Out of this today we send a clear message that all honourable members—and I know not all will—are working in a determined way to lift our standards and to lift our behaviour so that we win the respect of the community.

Briefly, I wish to say a couple of things about the dairy farmers issue, which is a complicated and difficult one. I know that farmers are hurting. The member for Tablelands suggested that he did this because I would not go out and speak to the farmers. I will not personalise this; I will deal with the issue. The fact is this: I met two delegations of farmers. I met them with the Minister for Primary Industries. Why did I meet two

delegations of farmers? That is because farmers are divided on this issue. A large section of farmers wants to accept the Federal Government's package. That is what one group I met told me. They know that, because of the way the Federal Government is implementing this package, it is all in or all out. Unless all States accept this by the end of this month, the \$220m package—

Mr Palaszczuk: For Queensland.

Mr BEATTIE:—for Queensland goes out the door. I would have preferred to have stood with the National Party, the Liberal Party and all other members and protected the farm gate price and to have had no deregulation at all. But they know that the oversupply of milk out of Victoria will be dumped on this nation whether there is a Federal rescue package or not. If this package falls over by the end of June, the Victorians will dump milk on the Queensland market whether we like it or not. I happen not to like it. The National Party happens not to like it. The same goes for the Liberals and other honourable members. I do not like it, but the bottom line is: are we going to sit by and see Victorians dump milk on this State with not one cent to Queensland farmers? The answer is no. If it means that this Government can get somewhere in the vicinity of \$135,000 on average for Queensland farmers as opposed to nothing, we will take the \$220m to help farmers. I do not like it, but the fact of the matter is that, if we did not take that money, the Victorians would still dump here, anyway.

I am not prepared to be an ostrich on this issue. Members should not talk to me about dairy farmers. I have family members who are dairy farmers. I grew up in a dairy farming area. I know exactly how they feel. Family and friends have rung me to speak about this. I know exactly what this issue is about. But unlike the member for Tablelands I do not go out and enunciate that at every opportunity. I know the hurt that is being felt by dairy farmers. But the choice here is very simple: we either take the average \$135,000 per farm or we let them go out the door and down the drain totally. Henry Palaszczuk argued for an extra \$12m to be put into these communities for restructuring.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: This is not about politics. The Federal Government agreed to it, and I give it credit for agreeing to the extra \$12m. Henry argued for it. The Federal Government—Anderson, one of the coalition's blokes—and everyone else agreed to it. I am not being political on this issue. It was a sound

outcome. The point I am simply trying to make is that this is not a nice state of affairs, but we are making the best of a difficult situation for farmers. Let us come back to the point. This member's behaviour is not about helping farmers, this is about a political stunt by the member for Tablelands to try to enhance his profile in his electorate. It had nothing to do with helping farmers.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. That is untrue. I find it offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to withdraw it, but let me say this: as someone who grew up in Atherton, I know that everyone in Atherton will share the exact view that I expressed, and so will the people in Malanda. While, yes, they want their members of Parliament to stand up for them, they do not want their members of Parliament to embarrass them. What this member has done has embarrassed the people on the Atherton Tableland. As someone whose heart and soul will always remain in Atherton and the Atherton Tableland, I tell the member that he does not represent the people I grew up with and the people who live there now, because they do not want their member of Parliament to embarrass them. Yes, they want their member of Parliament to fight, but they do not want their member of Parliament to be a mug. That is the difference.

Mr Nelson: Are you going to come up and run against me?

Mr BEATTIE: Don't tempt me. Nothing would give me greater pleasure.

Let me conclude my remarks—and I did not intend to speak on this motion—by saying this. The farmers to whom I spoke in the delegations that came to see me were decent people. They were decent Queenslanders who were hurting. They were decent Queenslanders who wanted to put their case, and they did. They are people for whom I have respect. They are people who behave like Queenslanders should—in a decent way. They are the people I respect.

The irony of all of this is that the member for Tablelands argued that I should have gone out and spoken to them, but never did he write to me. I have checked with my office and there was not one phone call.

Mr Nelson: Oh please!

Mr BEATTIE: The member opposite cannot have it both ways. This confirms my view that he was involved in a stunt. He did not write to me, he did not ask me, he did not ring me. Not once did he make a personal

representation to me. If he was genuine about his view, then he would have contacted me. In my mind, that confirms that this is nothing but a despicable stunt that brought this House into—

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. I find that personally offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn. The Premier said that it was a despicable stunt. I do not do despicable things. I find it personally offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn. It is a reflection upon me and my character and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

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

Mr NELSON: I find that statement personally offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr NELSON: Every other member gets the right to have something withdrawn if he finds it offensive.

Mr BEATTIE: I will withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It has been withdrawn. The member will resume his seat.

Mr BEATTIE: I will withdraw that remark for the very simple reason that what we are seeing today is a continuing performance by this member as part of an ongoing stunt.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. That is untrue and offensive, and I ask for it to be withdrawn. The Premier keeps referring to it as a stunt; it was not. It was not premeditated, as he suggests. It was not a stunt. I ask for that comment to be withdrawn. I find it personally offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not going to accept that point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr NELSON: I find the fact that it was being referred to—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr NELSON:—as a stunt personally offensive—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr NELSON:—and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I now warn the member.

Mr NELSON: It is my right, just as it is the right of every other member of this House.

Mr BEATTIE: I will withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has withdrawn.

Mr NELSON: Mr Speaker, you cannot have two sets of rules.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr NELSON: One set of rules for everyone.

Mr BEATTIE: I have withdrawn it.

The point remains that not once did the honourable member seek to contact my office. We sit in this Chamber on a daily basis. I talk regularly to members of the Opposition, as I did with Russell Cooper the other day on a matter. I am quite happy to talk to any member. That opportunity is there. The member opposite had that opportunity and he did not take it. The bottom line is that those farmers were allowed onto these grounds because it was an appropriate time for us to listen to them. This member's behaviour is an abuse of the Parliament. We have to send a clear message to everyone in this State that the members of this House are prepared to behave in an appropriate way.

Mr Davidson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I remember the member's little performance leaving this Chamber one night, so I would be a bit cautious if I were him.

The important thing is that this House needs to lift its standards. We cannot allow acts of vandalism, and we will stand by this motion.

Mr Davidson interjected.

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

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.22 a.m.): There is an important principle at stake here today, and that is that however just the cause, however strong the argument, however valid a point of view must be put, there must also be rules. Where we have a parliamentary democracy, we must operate within those rules because if we do not operate within those rules, we have anarchy; we have a situation in which the system breaks down and it simply does not work.

This is not a debate, as some honourable members have said, about the deregulation of the dairy industry; that is a debate still to come. This is a debate today about the rules of this Parliament and about the precedents that have been established by successive parliamentary privileges committees over the years. If this amendment were to be accepted by the House, it would fly in the

face of how successive Governments from both sides of the House have treated the recommendations—the unanimous recommendations—of the all-party Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

I know that certain people down the back of the Chamber will use this as an act of political opportunism; we have seen it already. We have heard the speech from the member for Caboolture targeting the National Party, as he always does, and targeting the Liberal Party. I concede that, if we were going to be opportunistic, we could go along with his amendment. But the principle at stake is bigger than that and it goes to the heart of having a respect for the institution of Parliament and the committees of this place.

I want to talk about some previous rulings of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. I can remember during the previous Parliament when the Deputy Premier of the day, the member for Caloundra, was referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, and it handed down a recommendation. That recommendation said that the Deputy Premier had inadvertently misled the House. The Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee resolved that the Deputy Premier should apologise to the House. We did not try to amend the motion. We accepted the verdict, and the Deputy Premier apologised.

I also make mention of a circumstance that arose when the current Premier, whilst Leader of the Opposition, was referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. The committee determined that the Leader of the Opposition of the day, the current Premier, had misled the House. Again, it ruled that it was an inadvertent misleading of members of Parliament. But did anyone try to amend the recommendation of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee? Did anyone try to argue with the umpire on that occasion? No! The then Leader of the Opposition did the right thing and apologised to the House, as requested by the committee.

I suspected the other day that we might see some tomfoolery from the "Children of One Nation" on this particular exercise and when—

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. That is a personal reflection on me. I find it offensive and I ask for it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr NELSON: I ask for it to be withdrawn. It is quite obvious that that is a reflection upon me. I find it offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the member is going to continue raising frivolous points of order, I will warn him—

Mr NELSON: I find it offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr NELSON: Sorry, there are two sets of rules. No worries.

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

Mr BORBIDGE: We have a situation in which the member for Tablelands could not serve on the committee because he was subject to the committee's deliberations. I took the view that, whilst the Opposition could legitimately claim that position on that committee, we would not because we would then be accused of ganging up on the honourable members concerned. So the honourable member for Maryborough agreed to accept the responsibility of serving on that particular committee for those particular deliberations.

What we have is a unanimous decision of a committee of this Parliament comprising Labor, National and Liberal members and an Independent member of Parliament. The recommendation was unanimous. I just make the point again that during my time in this House we do not amend the recommendations of parliamentary committees; we accept their recommendations, particularly when those recommendations are unanimous.

I also want to say something about fighting. There is going to be a fight in respect of the dairy industry legislation. However, the fight will be in this Chamber, and because of their actions a couple of the people who obviously feel very strongly about this issue will not be in the ring. I think that is unfortunate and I think it is sad, because I do not question their commitment to the cause.

The honourable member for Tablelands talked about fighting and about him being a fighter. However, I do not think that he fights too well when he manages to get himself disqualified from the bout. There are several ways that we can fight. We can fight on the stump; we can fight an election campaign; and we can have our differences of opinion in this Parliament, which today is still proudly one of the most robust Parliaments anywhere in

Australia and probably anywhere in the Western World.

The honourable member talks about fighting. He suggests that he is the only one who is prepared to fight right down to the wire. I think that he should not assume that other members of this House are less committed to a cause simply because we are not prepared to fight outside the rules, outside the standards and outside the parameters of parliamentary behaviour. The member suggests that he is a fighter and we are not, that I am not a fighter because I will not back him. I say this to the honourable member: maybe when he has had a few death threats, maybe when he knows that his wife and kids have been threatened, and maybe when he has faced the full force of a royal commission for eight months he might damn well know what a fight is. With a little experience he might know what it means to really fight and to fight within the rules and not make a big issue of it at the time but do it because it is the responsibility of a political leader, it is the responsibility as a member of Parliament and it is the responsibility to the people who elect us. The honourable member can talk about fighting; from some of his comments this morning, I think he still has to learn the definition of the word.

Mr Nelson interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I will look at the member, and I will come up during the election campaign and campaign against him. People can say that this does not matter. I heard one of the radio stations this morning say, "This doesn't matter. This is just a bit of spilt milk." I wonder what the radio station would say if someone burst into their studio and tipped milk all over the console. I wonder what they would say then. What about the parliamentary staff in this place who had to go outside and clean it up? What about the parliamentary staff? In fact, in retrospect, one aspect of this debate that has been overlooked is that Mr Speaker should have left the milk there and the House should have directed the honourable members who made the mess be forced to clean it up.

There are differences of opinion in this place. As the member for Caboolture said, I have departed this Chamber on numerous occasions, but I have done so perhaps through being passionate about parliamentary debate. I do not think any member of Parliament does their cause any good whatsoever when they allow themselves to be open to the charge of effective vandalism of the precincts of the Parliament. There might be some short-term political gain in what these

honourable members have done for themselves, but I do not think that they did the cause of the people who were protesting any good at all in the mind of the community. I think a lot of people said, "Isn't it a shame that the actions of a couple of politicians took the emphasis away from the cause of those dairy farmers protesting peacefully outside", an emphasis that was being responsibly put forward by those protesters.

I want to say something else. I think that the member for Lockyer made an absolutely disgraceful comment this morning when he accused me of criticising the dairy farmers. I have not criticised the dairy farmers. I went out and spoke to them.

Dr PRENZLER: I rise to a point of order. I did not say that at all. I said, "Would he have criticised the dairy farmers?"

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: As each day goes on, the true colours of certain people down the back of this Chamber are being seen for what they are. The choice today is easy. If we want to, we can be expedient. We can go along with the amendment moved by the member for Caboolture in order to make ourselves appear as good blokes and good ladies. But, if we do that, we will be overturning all the precedents of successive parliamentary privileges committees under conservative Governments and under Labor Governments. We will be sending a message that there are two sets of rules. If a member of the public did what these members of Parliament did on Tuesday, they probably would have been charged, yet what we are being asked to do is to turn a blind eye.

The great strength of this place is that we can come in here from our different backgrounds, we can argue the case, we can call each other names and we can engage in robust and strong parliamentary debate. But we do so within certain rules and under an oath that we take as members of Parliament when we are sworn in and under an obligation to treat this place—the institution—with the respect that it deserves. We have privileges in this place that people outside do not have. We have the ultimate expression of freedom of speech, a privilege that does not exist outside this place in terms of the freedom to say anything without fear, favour or affection. We have those privileges. But, if we start to operate outside the rules, then we undermine the importance and the sanctity of the Parliament itself.

In summary, we can be opportunistic or we can be principled. That is the vote today. This is not a vote about the deregulation of the

dairy industry. The debate on the deregulation of the dairy industry is still to come in this place. It might not even be over by the time the honourable members return, because I suspect it will be a long and passionate debate. They may well be back in time to express their particular point of view. But to try to say that an all-party parliamentary committee involving a respected Independent member of this House was involved in some sort of conspiracy so that the Government had the numbers to get the legislation through is just an absolute nonsense and an insult not only to the integrity of every member of that committee but also to the entire committee system of this Parliament.

I believe that it is important today that the Parliament acts on principle. As I said, I do not doubt the sincerity of the honourable members concerned, the passion of their cause or the justness of their cause. But one does not further that cause or champion that cause by operating outside the rules that are absolutely essential if the parliamentary system we have in this State and nation is to work anywhere near where it should in terms of doing our job and meeting our responsibilities to the people whom we have the privilege to represent and who send us to this Parliament.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.38 a.m.): I rise to speak briefly in this debate. I also rise to speak in the debate as somebody who spent six or seven years on the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and its predecessor, the Privileges Committee, of this place. I say to the honourable members that I have served on those committees with members opposite such as the Deputy Speaker, the member for Ashgrove, and the Attorney-General. I served on the Privileges Committee when the vast majority of its members were current Government members. I can say categorically that, throughout that process, it was always my experience—despite the difficult decisions that had to be made at the time, and some of them reflected on my colleagues on this side of the House—that members strived to be fair, to judge the issues on their merits and to make sure that so-called political alliances were not part of the final decision. It takes a lot of guts to do that on a privileges committee. Membership of that committee is not something members take on lightly, because they are judging their colleagues in this place. The things they determine will sometimes have detrimental effects.

As previous speakers have said, this debate is not about a few litres of spilt milk or

about the dairying industry. It is not even about a couple of members wanting to get their faces on television. Today's debate is about the value we place on democracy. Today's debate is about whether or not we think it is appropriate to defile the single most important institution in this State.

This House is the embodiment of democracy in Queensland. It stands for freedom of speech. It does not stand for freedom of stunts. It stands for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in our diverse society. It is not about inflammatory histrionics or some cynical self-promotion. It is about the way we approach the resolving of conflicts in our society. It is about the way we approach the ideal of democracy. Every member in this place has an obligation to strive for those ideals. As the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have said, members of Parliament are the section of the community that has the greatest responsibility with respect to that.

The Parliament does not always work in the way we would like it to, and when it does not it is our fault. If the principles of democracy in this place are not always upheld in the way we would like, it is our fault. None of us is without blemish, but we all believe in the role of the Parliament. We believe in a democracy that is embodied in the bricks and mortar of this place. This debate is about two members who spat on those ideals. It is about two members who defiled the seat of our democracy.

The question is whether those two members took this action out of ignorance or with intent. The answer will be given by the speed and sincerity with which they give their apology—not to us as members of this place but to Queenslanders who still believe in democracy and who believe that we as elected representatives ought to stand up for it and respect it the way they do.

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (10.42 a.m.): Just a few minutes ago the Opposition Leader spoke about principle. I believe in principle very strongly. The principle of representing my community and its desires is one I hold very, very dear. I also believe in the ideal of this Parliament and what it hopes to achieve for the people in the long term.

I have listened to the debate in this House this morning. I must admit that I am not very impressed. I also feel that the debate was not necessary. I took an action and I am prepared to suffer the consequences of that action, whether or not I feel they are excessive. I do believe that the penalty is excessive. In 30 years nobody else has been

expelled from the Parliament for the period that is proposed. I am not ashamed of representing my community in the way that I did, and I would do it again at any time in the future if it were asked of me.

I may very well be excluded from fighting on this Bill. Obviously, that was the aim of seeking to exclude us from Parliament for the period that is proposed. In 30-odd years nobody has been expelled from Parliament for this length of time. I have researched only the last 30 years, so it could be even longer. Even a member of Parliament who dumped a bag full of manure on the Speaker's chair was not punished this severely.

This morning I have been called many things—all members are entitled to their opinions—but no members have actually asked me why I made the decision that I did. I did it for reasons which at the time I felt were reasonable. As I said, I have been called many things, but an anarchist with a glass of milk is a little too much. That is what members have labelled me—an anarchist with a glass of milk.

I accept the ruling of the committee. I do not ask that the severity of the sentence be lessened. I take full responsibility for my action. The House will do what it will.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (10.45 a.m.): I will not take up too much of the time of the House, but I feel I need to make some comments, given that I was outside the gates of the Parliament when this incident took place. I have listened to the debate this morning and I have been somewhat appalled at the way the two members who are the subject of the motion have tried to put across what happened.

I was out there with the dairy farmers who were protesting in a quite responsible way. My electorate is as much affected by the problems in the dairying industry as any other electorate. I and many other members in this House will participate fully and vigorously in the debate that is to come about how this Parliament should respond to those problems.

The two members who were outside the House on the day of the protest took an opportunity to stage a stunt for the TV cameras. It was a cheap stunt. It was an opportune stunt that was designed, in my opinion, to attract attention to themselves rather than to add anything to the very just cause of the dairy farmers. In that respect, much of what has been said this morning has been hollow, false and sickening to those of us who were out there with a very genuine concern for the dairy farmers, the dairy industry

and the issues that they were highlighting at the time.

I came into this House at the same time as the members who are the subject of this motion. I have enormous respect for the institution of Parliament. I have enormous respect for this historic precinct. No-one has participated in the debate in this House more vigorously and more robustly than I have. I think the action taken by these two members in defiling and defacing this House should indicate to their electorates and to the rest of Queensland that they have not been able to cut the mustard. They have not been able to participate properly and fully in the institution of Parliament. They have not been able to represent their electorates effectively and properly, in the way I believe I have represented my electorate. Instead, they resorted to a cheap stunt because the TV cameras and the media were assembled and there was nothing else happening at that moment. They thought, "Here is our opportunity to big-note ourselves."

Let us have no more of this rubbish about martyrdom, fighting to the end and so on. That is absolute rubbish. Anybody who was out the front of this Parliament on the day of the protest would know that it is rubbish. It is sickening and it is an insult to the dairy farmers who came down here very genuinely—for a very genuine cause and with a very genuine issue. It is an insult to all other members of this House who will very genuinely take up that cause and who will very genuinely address the real problems that the dairy industry faces. In my opinion, both of these members have embarrassed this Parliament, and they have also embarrassed the dairy farmers, of whom they took advantage and whose cause they did no good at all.

I rise to speak against the amendment, and I commend the recommendations of the committee to the Parliament.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 11—E. Cunningham, Dalglish, Feldman, Knuth, Nelson, Pratt, Prenzler, Turner, Wellington
Tellers: Black, Paff

NOES, 74—Attwood, Barton, Beanland, Beattie, Bligh, Borbidge, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, Connor, Cooper, J. Cunningham, Davidson, Edmond, Elder, Elliott, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gamin, Hamill, Hayward, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kaiser, Kingston, Laming, Lavarch, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Lucas, Mackenroth, Malone, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mitchell, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Purcell, Quinn, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts,

Robertson, Rose, Rowell, Santoro, Schwarten, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Spence, Springborg, Stephan, Struthers, Veivers, Watson, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Baumann

Resolved in the **negative**.

Motion agreed to.

Whereupon the honourable members for Barambah and Tablelands withdrew from the Chamber.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Queensland Police Service

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (10.58 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this House recognises the dedicated efforts of members of the Queensland Police Service, despite the lack of financial support from the Beattie Government, and calls on the Government for an immediate boost to police budgets to provide police with adequate resources to meet equipment, vehicle, overtime and operational needs."

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Olympic Torch Relay

Mr BORBIDGE (10.58 a.m.): I refer the Premier to community concerns that Queensland Police may evict charity groups and community groups from venues associated with the Olympic torch relay, and I ask: in view of the concerns that have been expressed by a large number of organisations, including the Local Government Association of Queensland and the Council of P & Cs, is the Premier prepared to intervene to resolve this potential misuse of police power?

Mr BEATTIE: This is an important question, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for it. There was a report in this morning's Courier-Mail in relation to this, and I think it is important for us to clearly set out the position.

The primary role of police during the Olympic torch relay is to provide security and keep the peace along the route. They have not received a request from SOCOG to intervene in merchandising disputes, and the Police Commissioner has assured me through the Minister that if they were approached, he would refuse the request. I think that is important and I will say it again: the Police Commissioner has indicated to the Government that if the police were approached, they would refuse such a request.

I agree with the Police Commissioner's assessment that it is not the role of police to intervene in commercial arrangements. They are there to keep the peace, and their role will simply be to keep the peace, as it would at any other gathering of Queenslanders. If there was a disturbance between vendors, then police would step in to maintain order, but they will not be enforcing commercial arrangements that SOCOG has made. It is a matter for SOCOG to enforce them. I am assured by the Police Commissioner through the Minister that police will not be moving on community groups, P & Cs, P & Fs or vendors along the Olympic torch relay route. The Queensland Police Service has been in touch with SOCOG this morning—this is important—and they advise that they agree with the position taken by the Queensland Police Service.

I think that clarifies the position. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question, because it was important for the Government to clearly state what the position was for all Queenslanders, which I have now done on behalf of the Government.

Can I just make this point, though: every Australian wants the Olympic Games to be a great success. I believe that they will be great for this nation and they will be great for Queensland. As the Deputy Premier indicated yesterday, there are contracts worth about \$100m now that have benefited Queensland business. The Minister for Sport has indicated that there are 147 teams training here from 27 different countries. The exposure to the world for Queensland out of this is significant and almost unprecedented.

I want to acknowledge the former Minister, Mick Veivers, who did some work—

Mr Veivers: Isn't it wonderful.

Mr BEATTIE: We have worked very hard. Mick Veivers has played a role in this. I have said that to him privately, and I am prepared to acknowledge it now on the parliamentary record.

The Olympic Games is important for us. I understand that when one has sponsors it is important to go out and support those sponsors. However, I simply say to SOCOG, "Have a heart." We are talking about P & Cs and P & Fs and scouts and girl guides and kindergarten associations. Those types of organisations are not going to send SOCOG broke. I ask them to be flexible with Queensland community groups.

Fuel Subsidy Scheme

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a further question to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's political

alliance with the major oil companies, which support his call for the abolition of Queensland's 8c a litre fuel subsidy, despite evidence produced by the RACQ that the subsidy is in fact working. I ask the Premier: why does he refuse to acknowledge the arguments of Queensland's peak motoring body, including the results of a survey taken every day in the first five months of this year, and why does he describe the position of the RACQ as "Statistics, statistics and, as we all know, damn lies"?

Mr BEATTIE: In regard to this matter, I think the RACQ, which has had a very proud record in this State, could be termed the RACB instead of the RACQ.

Dr Watson: Oh!

Mr BEATTIE: The "B" stands for Brisbane instead of Queensland. The RACQ is simply referring to continued comparisons between Brisbane and Sydney and not Queensland and New South Wales. It is "B" for Brisbane instead of Queensland.

Dr Watson: It sounded like the "V" in Victoria.

Mr BEATTIE: No. I am glad the member mentioned Victoria, because Informed Sources Australia Pty Ltd has done some averaging of unleaded petrol prices for the month of April 2000. This is a survey of average prices across the month. The result of the survey is as follows: Mount Isa, 87.6c; Bendigo in Victoria, where there is a petrol tax, 85.7c; Longreach, 91.9c; and Broken Hill, 90.6c. The average for Broken Hill in April is less than the average for Longreach, yet Broken Hill has a petrol tax. The figures continue: Emerald, 85.4c; Albury, 84.2c; Roma, 90.1c; Dubbo, 88.9c; Townsville, 82.4c; Wollongong, 84.9c; Charleville, 89.3c; Swan Hill in Victoria, 89.5c; Rockhampton, 84.5c; and Ballarat in Victoria, 82.3c.

When I meet the oil companies this afternoon with the Treasurer and the Minister for Fair Trading I am going to put a simple message to the companies—"Show me the money." It is very simple—"Show me the money." The prices in many Queensland centres are not just equal to those in southern regional centres; they are higher.

This morning I asked a member of my staff to make some telephone calls. The list included Longreach and Roma in Queensland. The price this morning was 94.9c per litre. That is exactly the same as Wagga Wagga in New South Wales; at Orange and Moree the price was just a cent higher. I have to say to the oil companies: "Show me the money."

Today the Courier-Mail published a list of prices in Queensland and New South Wales. The average difference in price between the two States is a mere 2.1c a litre. Where is the 8.3c subsidy going? This afternoon I am going to seek a guarantee from the oil companies. That guarantee will be that petrol prices at bowsters throughout Queensland will be 8c a litre cheaper than prices in New South Wales on a daily basis.

Fuel Subsidy Scheme

Mr SULLIVAN: My question is directed to the Premier. I, too, refer to recent claims that statistics show that there is not a problem with fuel prices in Queensland. Can the Premier more fully inform the House of any recent statistics on the average levels of prices in Queensland regional centres and comparable regional centres in southern States which do charge a fuel tax?

Mr BEATTIE: I might just point out that, in addition to some of the statistics I have already provided, Jim Pearce, the honourable member for Fitzroy, has just indicated to me that yesterday at Middlesbrough the price was 95.5c a litre. In large parts of this State we have petrol prices that are well into the 90s—almost a dollar—while in Brisbane we have prices well in the high 80s. Where is the benefit? As I said, this afternoon I will seek a guarantee from petrol companies that petrol prices at bowsters throughout Queensland will be 8c a litre cheaper than prices in New South Wales on a daily basis. I repeat: I will be seeking a very simple guarantee that prices will be 8c a litre cheaper at bowsters in Queensland compared with prices in New South Wales on a daily basis. That is the guarantee. If the oil companies can give me that guarantee, the subsidy will remain. We will have a brief meeting and we will all go and have a cup of tea. That is what I want—a clear guarantee. It is a simple request, and there should be a simple answer from the oil companies.

The State Government forgoes just over 8c a litre from the Federal Government under the Borbidge/Sheldon tax arrangements negotiated in 1997. This money goes to the oil companies so that Queensland motorists can buy their petrol 8c a litre cheaper than drivers in New South Wales—supposedly. However, that is not happening. It is no good saying that prices in one town or city in Queensland are 8c a litre cheaper than in one particular town or city in New South Wales.

I have repeatedly pointed out that we are a Government for all Queensland, and I want

all Queensland to benefit from this 8c a litre subsidy. I would have thought that, on any given day, the fluctuation in a company's wholesale fuel prices would be uniform across the country so that the differences in prices would remain uniform. Instead of fuel in Longreach and Dubbo being exactly the same price, as it was yesterday, it should be at least 8c a litre cheaper in Queensland.

The Leader of the Opposition asked me this question: what is the difference between when he was in Government and now? I will tell the Leader of the Opposition what the difference is. In 1998 the Federal Government deregulated the ACCC's power to set the wholesale price for the oil companies. Frankly, that is why the oil companies are now pocketing the difference.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I say to the Leader of the Opposition that they are pocketing the difference. This morning a caller on ABC Radio said, "If I get \$150 in my pocket in terms of reduced car registration, I am at least getting the money; it is not going to the oil companies." I think that is one way. We are determined that every cent that comes from the Commonwealth will go to motorists. That is our focus. The other concern that we have is that we have not yet seen the impact of the GST, which will start from 1 July.

Fuel Subsidy Scheme; Heavy Vehicle Registration Fees

Mr JOHNSON: I refer the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads to the proposed introduction of a fuel tax by the Beattie Labor Government, which represents yet another broken Beattie promise, and I ask: will not the abolition of the present 8c a litre subsidy mean that the price of fuel in regional Queensland will be in excess of \$1.03 a litre? Will the Premier's promise to reduce registration fees by half apply to the 78,000 trucks registered in Queensland? If so, does this mean an end to Queensland's commitment to the national heavy vehicle registration scheme?

Mr BREDHAUER: The heavy vehicle industry is going to get the diesel excise rebate, which will come into effect from 1 July and which will reduce substantially the price of diesel.

Mr Horan: What about the rego?

Mr BREDHAUER: I will answer the member's question. They get to ask the questions, I get to give the answers. The heavy vehicle industry will get \$177m worth of

diesel fuel excise rebate from 1 July. The members of that industry will also be able to claim their inputs for tax credits when the GST applies. We believe that they are reasonable conditions that will apply to the heavy vehicle industry.

The premise of the honourable member's question is wrong. We are seeing the fact that the Borbidge—

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. Yesterday in the House the Premier identified the cut by half in registration fees in Queensland. I am asking the question to the Minister for Transport in relation to heavy vehicle registration.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order

Mr BREDHAUER: The premise of the honourable member's question is wrong. He may think that it is right. In fact, I wish that the honourable member would occasionally think a little bit more. I know that it hurts, but he should practise a little more often and then he will get used to it. The premise of the honourable member's question is wrong. We are dealing with the BST—the Borbidge/Sheldon tax—which was the fuel tax which they introduced in 1997, and the fact that the benefits from the subsidy scheme—

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I find it offensive that the Minister said that the Borbidge/Sheldon Government introduced a tax. That is a slur on a Government of which I was a part, and I ask that it be withdrawn. Government members are the ones who are not delivering here, and we want the answer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member cannot do that. There is no point of order.

Mr BREDHAUER: I notice that the member seems to be a mite sensitive this morning. We are trying to make sure that the benefits of the subsidy scheme, which this year is valued at around \$500m but will reduce next year, goes to the motorists of Queensland. The only people who are agitating against it are "BP Bob" opposite, who wants to see the money continue to go into the pockets of the oil companies—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I find that remark offensive. BP is backing Beattie, not Bob.

Mr BREDHAUER: The only people in here who are defending the multinationals are the people on the other side of the Parliament, including "BP Bob".

We have said that the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Fair Trading will meet with the oil companies this afternoon and

they will seek a guarantee that the 8.3c a litre that we pay in subsidy flows to the motorists of Queensland which, as the Premier has clearly and amply demonstrated this morning, is not happening now.

Over the past two days, on a number of occasions now the Premier has given an indication of the petrol price figures for Longreach. In my electorate, people pay a damned sight more for fuel. We do not get any of the benefits. We want to make sure that the benefits go to the motorists of Queensland

Time expired.

Fuel Prices

Mr PURCELL: I refer the Treasurer to claims by the Federal Government that the price of fuel will not increase under the GST, and I ask: what will be the impact of the GST on fuel prices in Queensland?

Mr HAMILL: That is a very important question, because all the GST spells for fuel prices is a further round of increases. That is on top of the shemozzle that is going on now in terms of pricing in Queensland.

The Premier has compared petrol prices in country Queensland with those in country New South Wales and country Victoria. In fact, in Brisbane we see the same sort of charade from the fuel companies going on from one site to another. This morning, BP Pinelands Road, Sunnybank Hills was charging 76.3c a litre, yet in the very next suburb, BP at Mains Road was charging 84.9c a litre. That is 9c a litre difference from one suburb to the next. At Annerley, we saw that the price of fuel was 9c different from one side of the road to the other. With this sort of chicanery going on, pity the poor motorist.

There are some things that are certain and there are some things that are not. The things that are certain are these: it is certain that we are paying out every cent that we receive from the Commonwealth Government by way of fuel subsidy; it is certain that every cent we pay is going to the oil companies. However, it is not certain where the money goes from there.

This morning on radio, Mr Fites of the RACQ described petrol pricing in these terms—

"... the distortions which can take place within the supply chain, and bear in mind these companies are the people who take it out of the ground, refine it, ship it, put it in terminals and then wholesale it to the retailers, John. There's plenty of steps

along that chain where they can pick up a few cents a litre."

Too right they are picking up a few cents a litre! The ACCC says that they have no hope of monitoring fuel prices after 1 July when the Federal Government is trying to put a further subsidy in relation to country road users.

The Prime Minister says that he is going to guarantee that the price of petrol will not rise as a result of the GST. He said that on 2 April. I think that was an April Fools' Day joke one day late, because one thing that is certain—as certain as night follows day—is that fuel prices will rise because of the GST. They will rise in Brisbane, they will rise in country Queensland and, because of the GST, after 1 July Queenslanders will face paying \$1 a litre. That is the Prime Minister's promise. That is the certainty. Members should watch this space. After 1 July, owing to the GST, petrol prices will be \$1 a litre across Queensland. The GST is 10%. Members should watch the fuel prices go up.

Mackay Ambulance Service

Mr MALONE: I have a question without notice to the Minister for Emergency Services.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr MALONE: There is more to come. I refer the Minister to claims that an ambulance officer, who was working alone at the time, was found unconscious in the Queensland Ambulance Service communications centre at Mackay, and I ask: has the Minister been able to ascertain how long the officer had been in that condition before he was found? Can the Minister indicate the circumstances under which the officer was found? How many telephone or radio calls to that centre were missed while the officer was unconscious?

Mr ROBERTSON: The incident to which the honourable member referred has been brought to my attention. I am currently waiting for a detailed report from the QAS on this. I share the concerns that the honourable member has expressed. He can be assured that I will be looking into that matter in some depth, because a range of issues arises out of it, as the honourable member indicated. I assure the member that I will be taking every action to ensure that, should other instances occur again, the service offered to people right throughout Queensland will not suffer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Mansfield, I recognise in the public gallery the parents, teachers and students of the Rochedale South State School.

People's Walk for Reconciliation

Mr REEVES: That is an excellent school. I refer the Premier to his and this Labor Government's commitment to reconciliation, and I ask: does he plan to join me and many other members of the Government in the People's Walk for Reconciliation in Brisbane this Sunday?

Mr BEATTIE: The answer is: yes, I will be joining the People's Walk for Reconciliation across the William Jolly Bridge. Among other walkers will be—and I do not know whether this is an exhaustive list—Ministers Judy Spence, Steve Bredhauer, Matt Foley and Anna Bligh, and Paul Lucas, Karen Struthers, Linda Lavarch, Phil Reeves and Pat Purcell. Other honourable members have put up their hands. They will all be there. Perhaps Hansard can take down all of their names. That is the sort of commitment that I want to see to reconciliation. The walk across the bridge starts at 10.30 a.m. and will be followed by a free concert in King George Square. And I will not be singing; people can come along and feel relaxed and happy. We might get Steve Bredhauer to sing and get some of those "large black CDs" that his daughter talks about.

This part of Corroboree 2000 in Brisbane was organised by the Queensland State Reconciliation Committee. I urge everybody to walk on Sunday in support of reconciliation, regardless of their politics and their views on a range of other issues. I ask and urge Queenslanders to come together for reconciliation. I urge them all to walk. In fact, I urge the leaders of the National and Liberal Parties to join me at the head of the march. I extend an invitation to Rob Borbidge and David Watson to join me at the head of the march for reconciliation on Sunday. They will be treated with the courtesy that they are normally treated with by me. In 12 months' time, I do not want them to look back with deep regret because they were not part of the reconciliation process.

Mr Speaker, this morning I am a bit disappointed that the member for Western Downs wrote to you in the way he did. I think it is appropriate that we fly the Aboriginal flag during National Reconciliation Week. I am not trying to politicise this issue. I think we have a fine opportunity in a symbolic way—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I rise to a point of order. I suggest the Premier read the letter that I wrote, because I was very much in support of reconciliation. I was saying that the action that the Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I am being misquoted. I am suggesting that the Premier should read my letter before he casts aspersions on what I said.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, as you know, after the letter was read out, I took the opportunity to get a copy, and I have it here. The member stated—

"I firmly believe many people support reconciliation, but their support is in danger of being replaced by resentment—a resentment of action they find offensive and/or unacceptable. I believe your decision to fly the Aboriginal Flag at Parliament House is just such an action."

I think that is black and white. The honourable member is saying that he is opposed to the flag flying here. I am simply indicating that, as part of the advice from the Prime Minister's office, in terms of reconciliation—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. In my letter to you I was suggesting that there is a group of people in Queensland who would find it offensive. I did not say I did. In fact, I am very much in favour of reconciliation.

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

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I find it offensive that the Premier is taking my letter the way he is. I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: You cannot; he is only reading from the letter.

Mr BEATTIE: I am just reading his letter. Let me make the point that I think the letter from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is appropriate. It states that all departments in related portfolio agencies are advised that the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag may be flown with the Australian national flag to acknowledge National Reconciliation Week. I think we need to find those things that bring us together. This is an important part of reconciliation. I think flying the flag is important, just as I think on Sunday it is important that we walk to demonstrate that we are committed to reconciliation.

Fuel Subsidy Scheme

Mr TURNER: I refer the Treasurer to the fact that this week in Parliament he stated that his Government was considering repaying Queenslanders ripped off by the fuel

wholesalers by discounting vehicle registrations by half, and I ask: how could this be done equitably? How will pensioners, who already receive a discount on their vehicle registration, benefit?

Mr HAMILL: I wish to make two points about this whole issue of fuel and the equitable distribution of the subsidy. The concern of motorists right around Queensland is that they do not see the benefit of the 8.3c a litre subsidy which the Queensland Government has been paying. That is fact No. 1. Fact No. 2 is that this Government considers that to be unacceptable, because we are determined that, if we are going to provide a subsidy, it should go to the people for whom it was intended, and that is Queensland motorists.

We have not adopted a course of action as yet. We are facing up with the oil companies this afternoon. As the Premier said, we will be directing a very simple question to them, and that is: where is the money? Certainly, Queensland motorists are not seeing the money. In respect of ordinary Queensland motorists and pensioners, if we are not satisfied with the answer of the oil companies, we will need to determine an equitable way of delivering that subsidy money into the hands of those motorists. An area in which we might be able to do it is in respect of the traffic improvement fee component of registration, over which pensioners do not receive any discount. We might be able to look at some mechanism to alleviate pensioners further with their registration fee. But one way or another we are determined that the money that we have received from the Commonwealth will go to the people for whom it was intended, and that is the Queensland motorist, regardless of whether that person is in Brisbane, Birdsville or anywhere else for that matter.

Ordinary Queensland motorists are at a particular disadvantage under the GST. Unlike businesses, which will be able to claim input tax credits or claim fuel as a business expense, the ordinary Queensland motorist cannot claim back the GST. The GST is going to impact on the ordinary Queensland motorist in an horrendous way. Just as the GST attaches to other products, it will attach to fuel and it will force up the cost of living for ordinary Queensland families. That is something we cannot do anything about. But what we can do—and this is the point highlighted by the honourable member for Thuringowa—is deliver the fuel subsidy we currently pay into the hands of Queensland motorists no matter where they are, because that is something over which we do have control. We cannot

control Mr Howard's GST, but we can ensure that oil companies and middlemen are not siphoning off money that should be going directly to Queensland motorists.

Regional Forest Agreement

Mr PEARCE: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: can he advise the House as to the progress of the regional forest agreement?

Mr ELDER: I can, and I thank the honourable member for the question. I notice the spectacular lack of interest in this project from the Opposition. I will tell honourable members why there is a spectacular lack of interest. I am pleased to be able to inform the House that, of the 29 timber mills in the south-east Queensland resource area, 27 have signed the 25-year security of resource agreements. We are still negotiating with the final two. The industry itself has signed off on an agreement that it sees as being in the best interests of the industry.

I might also tell the House that through the work of my department and that of the Primary Industries Minister plantations are going in in Wondai, Murgon, Kingaroy, Blackbutt, Nanango, Monto, Wooroolin in the South Burnett—and there are over a couple of hundred hectares in that instance—Beerburrum, Bribe Island and Miriam Vale. And there will be more. They are the bases of the long-term resource underpinning these agreements.

It is clear that the only people playing politics are the Federal Government and members opposite. I noticed that in the recent Federal Budget the money is still there. There is \$80m to spend under the Forest Industry Structural Adjustment Program. But there is no money for Queensland. There is money for every other State, but no money for Queensland. What is the reason for that? At the moment, the votes are not in it for Wilson Tuckey. This is all about pulling back and garnering votes in the bush.

I also know that he has not read the RFA proposal from the member for Surfers Paradise. The Opposition put up option 3 the other day. That was its effort to try to come up with an RFA proposal that said we should put aside 300,000 hectares in reserve. Wilson Tuckey, though, in Caboolture said, "I think 200,000 hectares in reserve would be far more acceptable." In other words, he has not read the Opposition's document and this is as we always said it would be—about politics.

I do like the way in which Mr Tuckey wrote to one of his Federal colleagues to tell his colleague that they should talk to the Leader of the Opposition. Wilson Tuckey and the Leader of the Opposition must be really close because Tuckey referred to him as "Bob Borbidge". How close are the Leader of the Opposition and the Federal Minister Wilson Tuckey? Good old Bob! I think they are about as close as the Leader of the Opposition is with the coalition's past candidate Aussie Joe Bugner, who referred to him as "good old Bob Borbidge". Wilson Tuckey and dear old "Bobby" Borbidge—"BP Bob"—must be so close! Their closeness is shown by, one, Tuckey not having read the RFA and to have dismissed it out of hand and, two, not even knowing the name of the Leader of the Opposition in this State. How closely do the Opposition in this State and its Federal colleagues work? It has always been about posturing, but the industry has moved on.

Surat/Dawson Valley Project

Mr SLACK: I refer the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade to the fact that the extension period given to the private consortium to establish the feasibility of the rail and port infrastructure sections of the Surat/Dawson Valley project expired in April, and I ask: what is the present status of the \$3 billion project? What is the Government now prepared to do to facilitate the development of this valuable Queensland asset of world class thermal coal, recognised for its low polluting environmental qualities?

Mr ELDER: To Coonar?

Mr Slack: To the whole Surat/Dawson, the coal development—

Mr ELDER: We are still working with SUDAW in relation to the coal issues. I spoke to the member yesterday in the House about the coal issues.

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr ELDER: The member has had his chance; he has asked his question.

I answered a question from Mr Littleproud yesterday in relation to the Tarong issue. That is being moved forward, with Tarong being the proponents in relation to that. We are still working with SUDAW. We have not walked away from the agreement. We are still in there working with them in terms of the project. The difficulty for SUDAW is that coal prices—and I know the member would be aware of this; I am surprised that he asked the question—have collapsed. The difficulty in bringing on an

export coal opportunity in these terms is the price of coal. We have not walked away from SUDAW, but some commercial facts of life apply in this case. Those facts are that coal prices have gone through the floor. We are still working with them.

Mr Slack: There is \$4.1 billion worth of coal there.

Mr ELDER: Everyone knows how much coal is in the ground. A person does not have to be a genius to work that out. However, it has to be economically viable to pull the coal out of the ground and ship it overseas. When coal prices go through the floor, then those in the private sector look very closely at how they can actually financially underpin a project of this sort. Is the member saying that the Government should jump in and develop the coalmines with them? Is that what he is saying? We are still working with them. We are negotiating extensions, but we are still working with them. What is the member suggesting? Is he suggesting that the Government should jump in and develop the mines with them? Of course he is not.

The opportunities are still there. We are still working with SUDAW, but the commercial reality of life is that the international climate is not right for bringing on these types of projects at this stage. For that reason, SUDAW itself has stepped back from the Coonar opportunity—the mining opportunity. They are reassessing it, and they are working with us on it. Why? There is not an actual commercial outcome for it at this stage. A person does not have to be genius to work that out.

Queensland Teachers Union, Enterprise Bargaining

Mr FENLON: I refer the Minister for Education to statements by the Queensland Teachers Union that the Government has refused to negotiate during the current enterprise bargaining dispute, and I ask: can he outline the negotiations that have occurred and tell the House whether any progress has been made during negotiations with his department?

Mr WELLS: The honourable member is one who has had considerable experience in industrial negotiations. Consequently, he will understand very clearly when I say that negotiations are ongoing; they have been going on since 1 July 1999. It is actually—and the honourable member will understand the import of this—a finding of Commissioner Blades that there was no breakdown in negotiations. He stated—

"I am unable to come to the conclusion that EQ has failed to negotiate in good faith in this matter."

So Commissioner Blades himself has said that Education Queensland is negotiating in good faith.

We have negotiated many issues. We have agreed to restoration of the higher duties allowance, as requested by the QTU. We have agreed to institute salary packaging arrangements for all staff. We have agreed to current test cases before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission concerning long service leave and casual loading as part of the no extra claims provision proposed for the agreement. In addition, Education Queensland has bowed to a number of concerns that the union has raised with respect to its representation; we are negotiating with the union an appropriate clause to recognise the role and legitimate activities of union representatives. A union encouragement provision is being worked on.

My department has demonstrated a commitment to maximising permanent employment for supply teachers. Workplace health and safety representatives are a matter on which the negotiations have continued. This Government has an excellent record in respect of behaviour management, which is an issue that has been raised by the union. We have recently introduced alternative education centres, responding to a call from teachers that is many years old.

As to the proposition with regard to class sizes—this Government has a good record in respect of class sizes. I will tell honourable members the trend line with regard to class sizes. The union has said that the figures were lower during the Bjelke-Petersen era. That is true of one year. But if honourable members look at the trend line, they will see that for the rest of the time it was higher. Class size figures are now lower than they were during the previous Liberal/National Party Government and they are lower than they were during the Bjelke-Petersen years for every year—

Mr Connor: You've got them up the wrong way.

Mr WELLS: No, the member opposite is the one who has got it wrong. They are lower than they were for every year during the Bjelke-Petersen era bar one.

Time expired.

Electricity Industry, Tariff Equalisation

Dr WATSON: I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy to his 1998-99 estimate that the

cost of the tariff equalisation community service obligation would be about \$90m and to the fact that it actually blew out to \$420m, which is more than four times the original estimate. I ask: what is the anticipated cost of the tariff equalisation CSO for 1999-2000? Is it not a fact that one of the key drivers forcing up the price of power is his decision to make retailers carry the cost of this CSO internally? What confidence can anyone have in his chronic mismanagement of the Energy portfolio?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the honourable member for the question. I think it is common knowledge in this place that the costs have in fact increased quite substantially. I suppose we could all play the game of blame, but the facts are that some of the decisions taken by the previous Government have certainly contributed towards this cost.

Mr Seeney: That's the Goss Government.

Mr McGRADY: Never mind the Goss Government.

It is an issue to which we as a Government are certainly paying a great deal of attention. As I mentioned before, it would be quite easy for those on the Government benches today to throw some of the blame to the former coalition Government, but that is not what we are about. As we saw last week, this Government is all about providing an energy policy that will give this State what it needs. For the first time in the history of this State, the people of Queensland know exactly what the policy of the Government is. The Government no longer relies exclusively on coal and, as this policy states quite clearly, there are a number of plans that this Government has to redeem in order to restore confidence in the energy sector.

As a result of the extremely cold weather that we have had in the past few days, we have once again created and exceeded demand for power in this State. We still have in excess of 1,000 megawatts of power available for the people of this State.

Mining Exploration Reports

Mr MULHERIN: My question is directed to the Minister for Mines and Energy. In this age of technology and computerisation, can the Minister inform the House what his department is doing to enable the mining industry to easily access exploration reports?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question. I am pleased to inform the House that this information is readily and now easily available to all potential customers both

in Queensland and indeed around the world. Today I am pleased to release a new publication which will outline the current status of the mineral industry in Queensland. This publication is part of an ongoing strategy by this Government to turn around the downturn in mineral exploration in our State. This publication, *Queensland Minerals: A Summary of Major Mineral Resources, Mines and Projects*, is set to become an essential reference tool for explorers, developers and indeed the marketplace. The publication will identify opportunities for investment and trade within Queensland's mining industry. Easy access to information within the Department of Mines and Energy is critical in attracting potential explorers and investors to our State.

The *Queensland Minerals* publication contains detailed deposit information and tabular summaries for the major mineral resources of Queensland. This 350-page report is intended to encapsulate the current status of the minerals industry in Queensland. The information in this report is derived from a database which is included as a CD-ROM in the back of the report. The book has been produced by the Queensland Mineral Resources Project, which was established in January last year to provide instant and easy access to mineral resource information held within the Department of Mines and Energy. It is part of the Prospectivity Plus initiative established by the Government to address the declining trend in mineral exploration. The book is available through any office of the Department of Mines and Energy at a cost of \$50. I commend it to all members of Parliament.

Optometry Services, Queensland Health

Mr HEGARTY: I direct my question to the Minister for Health. I refer the Minister to the present situation whereby people requiring optometry services through Queensland Health are referred to private optometrists for eye testing and provision of glasses. Is the Minister aware of the growing number of optometrists who are refusing to treat Queensland Health patients, which is particularly affecting aged pensioners, because, apart from the Medicare rebate on eye testing, the \$7 provided by Queensland Health for glasses is insufficient to meet professional and administrative costs? I ask: why is the Minister refusing to implement funding recommendations to resolve this problem?

Mrs EDMOND: Queensland Health is very proud to say that it does provide something

which is fairly unique around the States, that is, extra services to a range of people on low incomes, including free basic prescription spectacles to Queenslanders who may otherwise not be able to afford spectacles. This scheme is made available to about 800,000 Queenslanders who are holders of a pension card, a health care card or a Queensland Seniors Card. This was an item that was of some concern under the previous Government. It was one of those many items which was in the bottom drawer—in the too-hard basket—when I became Minister.

Mr Elder: He did nothing about optometry.

Mrs EDMOND: He did nothing. Eventually, after a lot of pressure, my predecessor called for a review in April or March, just before those opposite went out of Government and when he knew he would not have to implement any of the recommendations. That was after the optometrists threatened to withdraw from this scheme in 1998. The optometrists association used that review to lobby very hard for an increase in their dispensing fee of \$7.50. Over a period, the fee had gone from nothing to \$7.50. They wanted it to go up to \$46. This was on top of the Medicare rebate of \$46.10 they got for the eyesight test.

In the interests of fairness, we rejected the proposals put to us by the optometrists and others that we should introduce fees for people using the scheme. They wanted to see it become a user-pays scheme. We also decided that the only justified increase in the dispensing fee was CPI, which gave them an increase. As a result of the review, Queensland Health has streamlined the administration of this scheme and addressed some of the specific concerns raised by the optometrists association. I am disappointed that some optometrists have withdrawn from the arrangement. However, I am encouraged by the efforts such as the visiting services that have been arranged to provide a more streamlined service and to ensure that eligible clients are not disadvantaged. We will continue to discuss this issue and work through—

Mr Hegarty: How are they going to get their treatment?

Mrs EDMOND: They are getting their glasses now. We just changed the arrangements.

Miss Simpson: They can't get access.

Mrs EDMOND: Patients are getting access to glasses under this scheme. However, there have been reports of delays in

some areas. I have acted to address that. I have instructed my department to ensure that patients are not asked to wait for authority forms. Of course, any urgent cases do get urgent attention. As I said, we will continue to work with them. We do not want to see a grab for fees from the elderly and pensioners to pay for this scheme. I would like to publicly thank those optometrists who do continue to ensure that the elderly and the disadvantaged are able to access free spectacles. The spectacles supplied under this scheme will continue to meet their needs.

EPIRB Beacons

Ms STRUTHERS: I also have a question this morning for the Minister for Emergency Services. I refer to a recent incident where a Queensland rescue helicopter was diverted from its search for a 30 year old man missing in the sea off Hervey Bay to look for another activated emergency beacon that was subsequently found in a rubbish tip near Caloundra. I ask: is the Minister concerned that people are not properly disposing of these EPIRB beacons and that this carelessness may cost lives in real rescue emergencies?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for Archerfield for the question. Emergency positioning beacons, commonly known as EPIRBs, are a vital piece of safety equipment for any boatie or bushwalker. The beacons send out a radio signal to help search and rescue organisations locate a vessel or individual in distress.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: I was in fact going to present this safety beacon to the honourable member because he clearly needs rescuing at every opportunity. There have been nearly 1,000 EPIRB beacon activations Australiawide this financial year, according to statistics from the National Search and Rescue Coordination Centre. But we do have a problem. While 115 of these activations were real distress calls, some 836 activations were accidental and a further 36 were hoaxes. I am of course very concerned that accidental or hoax activations account for an astonishing 85% of all EPIRB calls in Australia.

Beacons discarded inappropriately, misused or set off accidentally waste valuable resources and cost thousands of dollars in search time. Just last week a Queensland rescue helicopter was diverted from a search for a 30 year old man missing in the sea off Hervey Bay to look for a beacon which was eventually found in a rubbish tip near

Caloundra. The helicopter crew lost a valuable two hours in their search for the man, who remains missing. A helicopter rescue crew was recently tasked to fly from Cairns to Weipa after being alerted to a distress signal only to find it coming from an EPIRB left in a boat in somebody's garage. Helicopter rescue crews have countless stories of similar wild goose chases where they have followed a signal only to find that it has come from an EPIRB which has shorted after being left out in the rain or being switched on after rolling around in the boot of a car.

Beacons need to be easy to activate at all times, but this also means that boaties and bushwalkers need to take extra care to ensure that they are not set off accidentally. That is why it is vital that they be stored in a secure place at all times where they will not be able to go off accidentally.

Mr Horan: Why would you divert a helicopter looking for someone in the water to looking for someone on the land?

Mr ROBERTSON: If an EPIRB is no longer working, it should be returned to AMSAR, the Australia Maritime Search and Rescue authority. I will also be requesting my department to allow volunteer marine rescue units, volunteer coastguard units and the QFRA to receive EPIRBs that are no longer used to ensure that they are disposed of properly. I heard what members opposite said. They clearly do not understand that EPIRBs can be used on both land and sea. In fact, if they had been listening, they would understand that many bushwalkers use them. Therefore, helicopter crews do not have the discretion to know whether an EPIRB activation is an emergency or not.

Water Infrastructure Projects

Mr KNUTH: My question is directed to the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources. In the vicinity of Collinsville, 16,000 hectares of prime agricultural land has been identified by CSR for sugarcane growing. Sugarmill investors have indicated to me that the capital needed for new mills and expansion in the Burdekin is close to being finalised. I need to know from the Minister and his Government today what commitment will be given by them for irrigation and water infrastructure projects, such as the Urannah dam and the Elliott main channel, so that these investors can be assured of Government assistance and an efficient water supply for growers. Can the Minister today give these investors that assurance?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for his question. The Government is conducting assessments of potential locations for water infrastructure right across the State. The Burdekin is an area in which there is potential for further cane expansion. The water allocation management planning process for the Burdekin has started and will need to be resolved in order to determine both the availability of water resource and the best location and use for it. That process involves the local community, and I urge the local community to take an active part in keeping in touch with the community members of the community reference panel that works on the water allocation management planning process. That is occurring not just in the Burdekin catchment but also in all of the other major catchments along our coastline and in southern and western Queensland.

The question of whether any particular items of infrastructure will proceed will be resolved by addressing two issues. The first issue is the availability of water in the right place at the right time so that it can be captured in appropriate infrastructure. The second issue is the commercial feasibility of the development of that infrastructure in the delivery of the water.

My Department of Natural Resources is currently working to assess that commercial feasibility in respect of both Urannah dam and the Elliott main channel. At this stage, Urannah does appear to be a possibility. As I have indicated in this House in the past, the Elliott main channel is a more expensive exercise but we are still undertaking assessments of it. Ultimately it will depend on the commercial capacity of users of that water to meet the costs of its delivery. That will be determined further down the track, when the availability of the resource and the initial catchment assessments of the best location for infrastructure are finalised.

Logan City Bus Services

Mr MUSGROVE: On behalf of the Labor members who represent Logan City, I draw the attention of the Minister for Transport to concerns being expressed by the citizens of Logan City about their bus service, and I ask: what is the process of reviewing the contract currently held by Clarks Bus Service and what opportunity exists for members of the public to express their views?

Mr BREDHAUER: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have had many representations from the member for Springwood in relation to public transport

services in Logan, as I have from the member for Logan, the member for Woodridge and the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, who are representatives of that area. They have regularly expressed their concern to me about public transport services and in particular about Clarks Bus Service.

In recent years Queensland has been operating on a system of five-year bus service contracts. Clarks' contract was issued on 5 September 1995 and is therefore due to expire. Contract renewal negotiations are due by 5 September this year. Queensland Transport has begun a process of surveying the satisfaction of bus users and people generally in the Logan area about the services provided by Clarks. Clarks does not provide the only bus services in the Logan area—Park Ridge Transit provides services as well—but Clarks is the particular area of concern.

Quite a number of concerns have been raised with me, particularly by the four local members from that area, about the quality of the service. Queensland Transport's survey of bus users indicates that bus users share those concerns. I am most concerned that, over the last two years in particular, there has been a decline in the perception the people of Logan have of the quality of their services.

Concerns have been raised with us about the issues of fares, reliability of services, how Clarks attends to complaints when it receives them and about bus drivers and the fact that at times they are not as courteous as they should be. All of these concerns have been conveyed to Clarks. More importantly, Queensland Transport has also expressed its concern directly to Clarks about the lack of a quality assurance system and also about the fact that it has fare anomalies that impact primarily on students, who are obviously important.

There will be opportunity for consultation with the public in the area of Logan and with stakeholders. I encourage people in that area who have concerns to take them to their local members, because their local members have been very active in raising those issues with me and with my officers in Queensland Transport. We will make sure that all of those issues are taken into account.

With the advent of the south-east busway we think there will be considerable efficiencies and opportunities to improve the services in the Logan. The busway itself, from an infrastructure point of view, will improve services. The efficiencies to the bus companies will allow us to negotiate further improvements, but companies such as Clarks,

quite frankly, have not been operating to a level of service that we would expect. During the process of reviewing the contract that exists I will be taking advice from the local members on the future of that bus contract.

Bundaberg Hospital

Miss SIMPSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. I note that the Health Minister recently visited Bundaberg for the ceremony to mark completion of the base hospital's redevelopment, funded by successive State Governments, and I ask: what actions were taken to head off industrial action over chronic understaffing in the hospital earlier this month, and when does the Health Department intend to address the litany of serious workload concerns by hospital staff, including fears about cleaning standards in theatre areas, which were supplied in writing to hospital management months ago?

Mrs EDMOND: I am delighted to answer the question, because it gives me an opportunity to tell people about the wonderful day in Bundaberg that saw the opening of the hospital—the completion of the \$27.25m refurbishment of Bundaberg Hospital, one of the Labor Party's 1992 election commitments to rebuild Queensland hospitals and health services across Queensland. It was a wonderful day of celebration of a tremendous achievement for the community, with Bundaberg now boasting one of the best regional hospitals in Queensland.

There was not a negative word spoken. The member for Burnett was not there. Obviously it was not one of his visiting days to Bundaberg. If he had been there he would have seen the tremendous enthusiasm of the staff and the extremely popular stalls in the hospital's mini expo, such as the one by the extended mental health services—they say they have more staff than they have ever had before—or the one from oral health. They were boasting about the increased staff they have, how wonderfully things are going and how they are really cutting into the waiting lists in oral health. The PPP parenting service also had a stall. Its members later introduced us to parents at an afternoon tea. They were saying how wonderful everything was. At one of the stalls I met the palliative care coordinator, who talked about the huge boost in palliative care services. There was not a negative word spoken, because the member for Burnett was not there. All of these stalls attracted so many visitors, who were really impressed with the increased and expanded services the hospital has to offer. It was just such a wonderful day.

Throughout the day people kept stopping me to tell me what a tireless worker for local issues the member for Bundaberg is. They said that she is a great representative for Bundaberg and all of the surrounding district. She has to carry the entire load. They said that she works tirelessly for the people of Bundaberg, the people of Childers and the people of Gin Gin. They were all telling me what a wonderful representative she is.

Miss SIMPSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Will the Minister answer the question about safety concerns because of the workload these people are facing?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister's time has expired.

Mrs EDMOND: I move that I be further heard.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister's time has expired.

Mrs EDMOND: What a pity. There was so much more to tell.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Native Title; Queensland Day Celebrations

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (11.59 a.m.), by leave: I understand that Queensland's alternative State provisions in the native title arena will be tabled in Federal Parliament today, although I have yet to receive formal confirmation. Apparently all 13 parts of the scheme have been determined by the Attorney-General as complying with the Federal Native Title Act. Members should not be surprised by this. It has been clear from the start that the Queensland regime set well above the minimum conditions established by the Howard/Harradine amendments. It is a fair and balanced scheme developed after intensive consultation that deserves the support of all Queenslanders and all senators.

What is surprising is that it has taken 18 months since our legislation was passed in this House for this decision to be made. Daryl Williams acknowledged today that his Federal Act is unworkable and that there is a need for State schemes. Why, then, has he taken so long to process the Queensland regime? There have been 500 minor amendments arising from Commonwealth nitpicking, but the original form of the scheme remains absolutely unchanged. The Howard/Harradine amendments have not fixed the native title impasse; they have exacerbated it.

This is a fair and balanced model which should be followed by other States. It should become the model for Australia. If our model is rejected by the Senate, everyone loses. Mining exploration will disappear offshore and indigenous communities will miss out. I look forward to talking to the various senators and leaders of different parties to ensure that our regime is supported.

Today I also invite Queenslanders to a 10 day long birthday celebration. 6 June is Queensland Day, our official celebration of the day we became a State in 1859. I table a copy of the program for the information of the House, and I ask for the rest of my comments to be incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

But we have arranged events and activities over a 10-day period throughout the State to highlight the cultural and historical diversity and development of Queensland—and to honour the achievements of our people.

I think about it as celebrating everything that makes us proud to be Queenslanders and lucky to live in this great State.

It's a time when Queenslanders can come together to appreciate and understand our heritage—to think about the characters, places and events that have helped shape our unique culture.

Events start tomorrow with Celebrating Queensland Art at the Riverside Centre, Barefoot in the Park for the under eights in New Farm Park, Queensland Arthritis Foundation Annual Charity Lunch, and the B105 Morning Crew Suburb Party at Marchant Park, Chermside.

At Parliament House on Saturday evening Governor Major-General Peter Arnison will announce the Queensland of the Year and I will announce the Young Queensland of the Year.

On Queensland Day itself I will be joined by one of Australia's foremost and entertaining scientists, Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, to talk about Queensland's bright future as the Smart State.

And celebrations go right through to June 11 with a massive Picnic in the Park at the City Botanic Gardens.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Basil Stafford Inquiry

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (12.01 p.m.), by leave: Honourable members will recall that some time ago I gave information to the House that the CJC had appointed the Honourable W. Carter to

conduct a review of the recommendations of the Basil Stafford inquiry. I now table for the information of members the report on Mr Carter's deliberations.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (12.01 p.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's Alert Digest No. 7 of 2000 and move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

GST AND RELATED MATTERS BILL

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.01 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to facilitate the implementation of certain measures described in the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Reform of Commonwealth/State Financial Relations, and for related and other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER read a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.03 p.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of this Bill is to implement the State's obligations under the changes made to Commonwealth/State relations necessitated by the Federal Government's introduction of its new tax, the goods and services tax. Today provides me with an onerous task. This Bill provides the mechanisms necessary for Queensland to participate in the fiscal arrangements of the federation. The introduction of the goods and services tax—now just one month away—will forever change not only the Australian economy but Australian society. After all, what kind of nation collects a tax on books?

The introduction of this Bill provides me with no joy. I take some solace from the actions of the Beattie Government in protecting the interests of Queensland in dealing with the introduction of the new tax. Essentially we made the most out of a bad—indeed, dire—situation. The Beattie Labor Government took on the Howard Government and it took on the Kennett and Carr Governments to fight against proposals for funding arrangements that would have penalised Queensland for its low-tax status and record of sound financial management. Despite the wishes of those opposite, we took them on.

The pro-GST Leader of the Opposition—who makes no bones about his support for the new tax; "Simply," he has said, "for States it is good"—toadied to his coalition partners in Canberra and refused support for our stance. The shadow Treasurer—perhaps thinking he was still a Liberal Federal member of Parliament—toed the line of his ex-colleagues and stood by ready to watch millions of dollars denied to Queensland. We took on all comers and refused to watch Queenslanders be penalised. We took them on and secured millions of dollars in additional funding, fighting to the last to ensure Queenslanders were not penalised because of our low-tax status.

We secured an additional \$350m above and beyond the Commonwealth's original offer at the May 1999 Premiers Conference. This money, while not fully recognising Queensland's relative disadvantage as a low-tax State in the implementation of the GST, ensured Queensland was not left in the parlous position endorsed by every Queensland coalition member of Parliament, State and Federal. That isn't quite fair. But then fairness is a concept not well understood in this House when you consider that those opposite regard the new tax arrangements, centred on the goods and services tax, as fair. After all, you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

But it isn't fair to say every Queensland coalition member of Parliament, State and Federal, squibbed on Queenslanders and refused to stand up to the other States and the Commonwealth Government, because there is one exception. The honourable member for Fairfax, Alex Somlyay, stands alone and stands proud. He stood up for Queensland and endorsed the position of the Queensland Government as it stridently defended the interests of Queenslanders.

The honourable member for Fairfax obviously has a firmer grasp of concepts such as fairness and decency, loyalty and valour than your average GST apologist in the Liberal and National Parties. In fact, I feel for the honourable member, for he is obviously a fish out of water. An ability to understand concepts of basic decency and fairness and loyalty are not of benefit in the coalition, proven by his unceremonious dumping from the Ministry by the Prime Minister after the last election. The Prime Minister obviously uncovered the member's abilities, so well hidden during his time on the back bench, and promptly executed the member's ministerial career at the first opportunity. Let me again thank the honourable member for Fairfax for his support of the Beattie Government in this regard.

This Bill implements last year's Intergovernmental Agreement which has fundamentally redrawn the fiscal architecture of this nation. The Intergovernmental Agreement is essentially a financial agreement which stops several sources of Commonwealth funding to the States and purports to compensate the States with the revenue from the GST. The Intergovernmental Agreement formalised a number of significant changes to Commonwealth/State financial arrangements, which in turn requires the States and Territories to implement amendments in their tax arrangements. This Bill effects those changes.

In overview, the changes in Commonwealth/State financial arrangements include:

- the payment of financial assistance grants by the Commonwealth to States and Territories will cease on 1 July 2000;

- the Commonwealth will cease to apply the wholesale sales tax from 1 July 2000;

- GST revenue raised will be provided to the States and Territories—or, more correctly, the revenue will flow to the States and Territories according to the Commonwealth Grants Commission's formula from 2002-03—but don't hold your breath;

- the temporary safety net arrangements for the taxation by the States of liquor, tobacco and, where applicable, petroleum, which were established by the Commonwealth on 6 August 1997, will cease on 1 July 2000;

- the Commonwealth will retain the \$177m of revenue to support off-road diesel use, as the Commonwealth will be providing a reduction in its petroleum excise and

- customs duty in the case of off-road diesel from 1 July 2000;

- for Queensland, this will mean only \$330m to be passed on to Queensland motorists to offset the high cost of fuel;

- the States and Territories will cease to apply financial institutions duty and stamp duties on quoted marketable securities from 1 July 2001—or pardon me, financial institutions duty—that's a tax we never had, and we will now subsidise the other States to remove this tax—their tax, not ours;

- the States and Territories will adjust their gambling tax arrangements to take account of the impact of the GST on gambling operators;

- the Commonwealth will legislate to require the States to withhold from any local government which does not make voluntary GST payments a sum equivalent to the unpaid GST; and

- the GST will be applied to Government fees and charges which are not declared GST-free by determination by the Commonwealth Treasurer.

We will meet our obligations under the Intergovernmental Agreement. However, as I have pointed out previously to the House, the GST is an inherently unfair tax which will see the tax liability of all Queenslanders increase. It will impose a tax where no tax has been before. It will be a fundamental change that will impact every Queenslanders every day. The deal done by the Liberal Party and National Party with the Democrats will, in just 30 days' time, cast a pall across the lives of all of us. No-one—not one person—will escape the GST. Far from being "for all of us", as Opposition Leader Howard promised the nation, this tax is clearly "against all of us". And it will be against Queenslanders.

Queensland, being Australia's low-tax State, will see per capita taxation increase, while the tax liability of other, more highly taxed States will decrease as bed taxes and financial institutions duty and other taxes—taxes we do not have in Queensland—are removed. There will be no revenue bonanza for the Queensland Government. Based on Commonwealth Treasury numbers, not one extra cent will come into Queensland for two years. It will not be until 2002-2003 that Queensland will see any financial benefit from these taxation reforms, despite paying more tax in the meantime.

The arrangements in place to facilitate the implementation of the new Commonwealth tax regime provide the States with the revenue derived from the GST. But the big lie in all of this is the suggestion that Queensland should be thankful for the GST because it will deliver the State its own growth revenue source. In fact, under the new Federal fiscal architecture Queensland's revenue reliance on the

Federal Government will actually increase. The Queensland Government has no unilateral right to change the tax in any way—its rate, base or other design features. So much for the Leader of the Opposition's assertion that the GST will enhance the Federation. His statement that the GST "will save the States" could not be more offensive. Make no mistake, the GST is not a saviour—it is, in form and in substance, a regressive and backward step for not only Queensland but the nation as a whole. Rather than alleviating the vertical fiscal imbalance, it exacerbates it.

There are many claims about the GST. It is claimed that it will provide a simpler tax system. But with each week that goes by, these claims seem more illusory than real. In the 11 months since the original legislation was enacted, close to 600 amendments have been made in six separate amendment pieces of legislation before the Federal Parliament. What is more, at last count 12,500 private rulings have been made to prop up the new tax system even before it begins. A simpler tax system—I doubt it!

The GST will negatively impact on many Queenslanders and the Queensland economy. It will put pressure on prices as workers seek to preserve their real wage position. There is a real danger of a wages/price spiral. This tax will increase the tax burden on the service sector, the sector that is the engine of jobs growth in a modern economy. It will savage tourism, financial services and the emerging knowledge-based industries, strangling our ability to provide new jobs and jobs for the future.

It will result in increased costs in the provision of public housing. As the GST causes increased housing costs, low-income households in rental accommodation will seek relief, placing increased pressure on public housing waiting lists to the detriment of those members of the community who will be most burdened by this new tax system.

This new tax will transform every businesses and community organisation into a GST collection agent. Is our society better off diverting these people's efforts into becoming

tax collectors rather than providing jobs and social services to the community? I think not.

This Bill implements undertakings in the Intergovernmental Agreement. It contains amendments to legislation which are necessary to protect the State's revenue position and to ensure there is no leakage of funds from the State. It also puts in place for the State an effective legislative framework post GST.

I now turn to the particulars of the Bill. Part 1 establishes the purposes and commencement dates pertaining to this Bill. Part 2 of the Bill serves as a record of Queensland's intention to comply with and give effect to the Intergovernmental Agreement, which is attached as a Schedule to the Bill.

While the Government will comply with the Intergovernmental Agreement, it will not be without cost. The Federal Government requires a "clawback" of so-called embedded tax savings from State entities as a result of the abolition of wholesale sales tax. It may be fine in theory but is much more difficult in practice.

The Beattie Government has carefully assessed the embedded tax savings that the Commonwealth Government has imposed for the 2000-01 year and believes that they will be very difficult to attain while maintaining key Government services. If agencies do not fully realise the Commonwealth's savings target, any shortfall will impact on departmental budgets and ultimately will affect the capacity of the Government to provide services to the people of Queensland.

Further, this "clawback" of embedded wholesale tax savings also means the State is unable to pass on any savings from the abolition of wholesale sales tax to its customers. In simple terms, as the Commonwealth has already taken the savings, there are no savings left to pass on. Consequently, most State Government fees and charges will increase by a full 10% during the GST's transitional period.

Part 3 of the Bill establishes the capacity for State and local governments, including Aboriginal and Island councils, to pay voluntary GST equivalents. This will provide State and local government with the confidence to apply the GST to all their transactions and will minimise the costs of complying with the GST.

Part 4 of the Bill provides the necessary changes to the fuel subsidy scheme which results from the cessation of safety net payments by the Commonwealth as part of national tax reform. The Queensland fuel

subsidy scheme was designed to ensure that the Commonwealth fuel excise surcharge that was imposed under safety net arrangements in 1997 was not passed on to motorists. In theory this was to be achieved by requiring anyone selling fuel to a licensed consumer, being either an off-road diesel consumer, a retailer or a bulk end user, to sell at the subsidised price. It would appear that the reality is falling short of expectation.

Nevertheless, as part of national tax reform arrangements, the Commonwealth will assume responsibility for the payment of excise rebates to those using diesel for off-road purposes. As a result, the Fuel Subsidy Act 1997 is therefore to be amended to cease payment of fuel subsidies to off-road diesel consumers from 1 July 2000.

In addition, the Commonwealth excise surcharge will cease from 1 July 2000. As a result, the Fuel Subsidy Act 1997 is to be amended to modify the basis on which fuel subsidies are paid to retailers and bulk end users. Amendments are also necessary to ensure the proper operation of the subsidy arrangements. As the prohibition on a fuel seller recovering the cost of the excise surcharge will no longer be relevant, a person selling fuel to a licensed retailer or bulk end user will instead be required to reduce the sale price payable by the licensee by the full amount of the subsidy. The seller may then make a claim for the subsidy from the Office of State Revenue.

Fuel sellers will not be disadvantaged by these arrangements as they may continue to take into account any relevant costs when setting the fuel selling price. To ensure purchasers' interests are also protected, any fuel seller who has received the benefit of a subsidy when buying fuel must pass on that full benefit when selling to another licensee or a retail consumer. Records must be kept to show the price at which fuel is sold and the basis on which the selling price is determined.

Transitional arrangements will ensure that obligations, which would have arisen but for the amendment of the Fuel Subsidy Act 1997, continue. For instance, repayment obligations will continue where a person inappropriately received the benefit of a subsidy before 1 July 2000. Notwithstanding these provisions, I want to make it clear to all members of this House and to the community in general that we are committed to delivering every cent we receive from the Commonwealth in respect of fuel to the Queensland motorist. Yes, there are real concerns that Queensland motorists are being short-changed and we reserve the right to take

whatever action is necessary to deliver the full benefit to the Queensland motorist.

Part 5 of the Bill contains amendments to a number of State Acts to effect the introduction of the GST, as well as implementing other requirements of the Intergovernmental Agreement. The details of these changes are contained within Schedule 3. The schedule also contains amendments to the Stamp Act 1894, including the removal of the stamp duty on transfers of quoted marketable securities from 1 July 2001. The Australian stock exchanges to be recognised for such transactions will be prescribed by regulation following discussions with other States and Territories. No other Queensland taxes are affected.

Schedule 3 also includes amendments to exempt the GST component of taxable wages from payroll tax. This will ensure that payroll tax is applied consistently, which is good for business and good for employment. To do otherwise would affect employment and particularly Queensland employment agents, given that other States have chosen to exclude the GST component of taxable wages from payroll tax. As all honourable members would know, stamp duty applies to registration, or transfers of registration, of motor vehicles. For new vehicles, duty applies to the list price including sales tax—in other words, a tax on a tax. Where the purchaser is exempt from sales tax, the sales tax component is excluded in calculating duty. With the abolition of sales tax from 1 July 2000, the Stamp Act 1894 requires amendment to remove references to sales tax.

As the interaction of wholesale sales tax and stamp duty has been problematic, so is the area of the interaction of GST and stamp duty on hiring duties. The problem arises because the Commonwealth intends to include stamp duty in calculating GST so that there would be a cascading of GST and stamp duty. To overcome this difficulty, the Government will amend the Stamp Act 1894 to exempt from duty the GST component of hiring charges. Most other States and Territories will provide this exemption.

The calculation of stamp duty where there is a GST component also requires clarification. Because most stamp duties are based on the consideration for a transaction, movements in the consideration affect the duty payable. GST is one of many factors influencing price. Suppliers will seek to recover their GST liability through price adjustments which pass on to the consumer the GST cost as well as other costs. Stamp duty therefore applies to the GST-inclusive price because of the way in

which GST has been designed by the Commonwealth, rather than because of any action by the Queensland Government. This approach is also consistent with other States and Territories.

The Beattie Government is committed to maintaining Queensland's status as a low-tax State. By adopting the above course of action, the State Government has not changed the basis for stamp duty. The Queensland Government is also required by the intergovernmental agreement to adjust its gambling tax arrangements to take into account the impact of the GST on gambling operators. In the case of bookmakers, this Bill provides for the abolition of the bookmakers' turnover tax to take account of the GST and to remove administrative burdens on bookmakers. These amendments are included within schedule 3 of the Bill.

On the issue of bookmakers' turnover tax, I need to acknowledge the role of the my colleague the Minister for Tourism and Racing in respect of the proposed Racing and Betting Amendment Bill 2000 that will implement the required consequential and transitional provisions arising from the abolition of the bookmakers' turnover tax.

This Bill provides for the measures that must be taken by the Government as a consequence of the introduction of the Federal Government's new goods and services tax. I wish to make it clear to all honourable members that this Government does not support this new impost. However, I present the Bill in fulfilment of our obligations.

Debate, on motion of Dr Watson, adjourned.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.22 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.23 p.m.): I move—

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

In August 1997, the previous Government introduced into this House an amendment to the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. Among other things, this amendment redrafted the regulation-making power under the Act. The previous regulation-making power specifically listed a number of matters about which regulations could be made, including fees. The 1997 amendment provided that a regulation could deal with a number of things, including administrative matters. It is my understanding that this was done as a convenience to replace a long list of matters for which a regulation could be made under the Act. This new regulation-making power did not specifically refer to fees. However, it is my understanding that fees were always contemplated as being included in "administrative matters" and that it was always intended to continue to provide for fees to be prescribed by regulation.

The former Minister, in his second-reading speech, certainly made no mention of the Bill's intention to depart from the practice of prescribing fees by regulation, and indeed the relevant section of the Act cites as an example the registration of registrable plant and the notification of construction work as matters for which a regulation could be made. Both of these processes have attracted a fee under Queensland legislation for many years.

The amendment took effect from 1 February 1998. Fees are payable under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 for a range of matters, including registration of workplaces, plant and plant design registrations and for notification of certain building and construction work. I have been advised that the ability to prescribe fees by regulation under the current wording of the Act has been questioned. This amendment seeks to clarify this issue.

It is essential that there be absolutely no doubt about the Act's capacity to allow for fees to be prescribed by regulation for these matters. In order to achieve this certainty, I propose a minor amendment to section 38 of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 to make it clear that a regulation may provide for fees to be prescribed under the Act and that the collection of fees since 1 February 1998 has been valid. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (12.25 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 and the Childrens Court Act 1992."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (12.26 p.m.): I move—

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

It is with genuine pleasure that I introduce the Penalties and Sentences Amendment Bill 2000. It is appropriate that I introduce this Bill during National Reconciliation Week 2000. As honourable members may be aware, National Reconciliation Week is framed by two significant dates in Australian history. The date 27 May was the anniversary of the 1967 referendum in which Australians voted to give the Commonwealth power to make laws for Aboriginal people and to have Aboriginal people counted in the census. The date of 3 June marks the anniversary of the High Court's Mabo judgment in 1992, which recognised the native title rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The theme for the fifth annual Reconciliation Week is "Corroboree 2000—sharing our future". In its document, "Corroboree 2000: towards reconciliation" the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation said—

"Reconciliation between Australia's indigenous peoples and all other Australians is about building bridges. It is about sharing our differences. It is about giving everybody a fair go. It is about building on the strengths of common ground."

Before a gathering of community leaders from around the nation, the council last Saturday presented to the Prime Minister, State Premiers, including Premier Beattie, and Territory Chief Ministers its Australian

declaration towards reconciliation. The declaration says in part—

"Reaffirming the human rights of all Australians, we respect and recognise continuing customary laws, beliefs and traditions.

Our hope is for a united Australia that respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all."

The purpose of this Bill is to get the courts to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to build bridges between these communities and the courts. It will amend the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 and the Childrens Court Act 1992 to provide for the input of community justice groups when adult and juvenile Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders are sentenced. The definition of "community justice group" will include community justice groups—which are funded by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development—elders and respected persons.

Under the Penalties and Sentences Act, the court may now hear submissions on sentence from community justice groups under the general provisions of section 9(2). Similar provisions exist under the Juvenile Justice Act. However, these submissions may only be given at the behest of the prosecution, the defence or at the request of the court.

The effect of this amendment will be that community justice groups will be able to make submissions on sentence of their own volition. The court will be required to consider their views on sentence, but, as with any other submissions made on sentence, community justice groups will not be able to direct the court as to what the sentence should be. The amendment gives examples of the kinds of evidence that the community justice groups will be able to give. This may include the offender's relationship to the offender's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, any cultural considerations, or any considerations relating to programs and services established for offenders in which the community justice group participates.

It is intended that the submissions given by the community justice groups will give the court some insight into the reasons for the offending behaviour and relevant cultural and historical issues.

Importantly, they can make the court aware of local sentencing options, particularly

those in which community justice groups participate. This will be of particular benefit to courts which conduct circuits in remote areas. The input of community justice groups will help courts visiting remote areas to understand the local circumstances and cultural background of the communities that they visit. It can be expected that the advice of the community justice groups will lead to more appropriate sentencing options for offenders. It will give the court information on community-based orders, which will allow the community to take a greater role in addressing offending behaviour in a culturally appropriate way.

It will be of particular benefit in the case of juvenile offenders where innovative sentencing options may be suggested to avoid incarceration and continued offending. At present, community justice groups, which are funded under the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Development's local justice initiatives program, volunteer their time to develop and implement local strategies for addressing crime and justice issues in local communities. They are involved in a wide range of activities, such as mediation, counselling, crime prevention, working with police, addressing causes of offending behaviour, such as truancy, alcohol abuse and domestic violence, supervising community based orders and assisting courts.

In some locations, magistrates already regularly seek the advice of a local community justice group and have found this beneficial to the sentencing process. In November 1998, Stipendiary Magistrate Sarah Bradley of Townsville, as she then was, gave a presentation to a conference on indigenous community justice in which she spoke about the successful example of the Magistrates Court working with the Palm Island Community Justice Group.

In the 1999 case of the *Queen v. Mara* (Unreported BC9904515) the Queensland Court of Appeal highlighted the benefit of evidence of this kind. In their joint judgment, the President of the Court of Appeal, Justice McMurdo, and Justice Thomas stated—

"By ascertaining the actual consequences of an offender's actions with such a community, courts may well obtain insight otherwise denied to them.

In the end we consider that it was desirable that the Court should know of the repercussions of the respondent's actions and of the way in which the community had responded to them and proposed to work them out."

The courts will also be able to receive advice from community justice groups as to whether the offender has received or would receive traditional punishment, such as shaming or growling. Sentencing courts in the Northern Territory have taken into account whether an indigenous offender has received or will receive such punishments.

In the case of *R v. Miyatatawuy* (1996) NTLR 44 (Supreme Court of the Northern Territory), the court had to consider an Aboriginal offender's sentence when the offence had already been settled in the traditional way by the offender's community. In that case a wife had stabbed her husband. Her husband, a respected person for both of their respective clans, made a submission to the court which said that there had been several meetings of the relevant clan groups to discuss the circumstances of the offence and possible resolutions. He said that during the meetings the offender had to face all the clans and families concerned under distressing conditions. While the meetings were taking place, the husband and wife decided to go to the Gatji outstation, which is a dry community. They lived there for some time and successfully overcame the problems of alcohol. Chief Justice Martin in his judgment said—

"A most significant circumstance bearing upon the sentence was that concerning the resolution or settlement of matters within the relevant Aboriginal community and the integral rehabilitation of the offender.

...

As the facts in this case show, the offender has accepted obligations, has been subjected to discipline, and by doing so has assisted in restoring the peace.

She has suffered a penalty analogous to that undertaken by entering into a supervised bond to be of good behaviour, and has not failed in her obligation."

In a similar way, by making submissions on sentence, community justice groups will be able to advise the court whether the offender has been subjected to traditional punishment, such as shaming. The court will be able to take this into account on sentence. While this amendment is not expressly legislating to give statutory effect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customary law, it will allow the court to take account of certain aspects of traditional sanctions, such as shaming.

The measures contained in this amendment will complement and reinforce the good work which is already being done by community justice groups and elders within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is hoped that it will reduce the incidence of incarceration as a sentencing option and give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people an independent voice in the administration of justice in their communities. Above all, the Bill gives recognition and respect to the views of Aboriginal and Islander people. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

SUCCESSION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (12.35 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Succession Act 1981 and other Acts."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (12.36 p.m.): I move—

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

It is with pleasure that I introduce this important legislation to preserve the right of parents and guardians of children to appoint a person to act in their stead in the event of their death. Many parents worry about what will happen to their children when they die. The decision about who should take care of a child in the event of a parent's death is possibly one of the most important, and private, decisions that a parent could make. This Bill preserves the right previously granted under the repealed Children's Services Act 1965 while updating the legislative framework to reflect modern concepts.

For some time, there has been debate in legal circles about the effectiveness of the appointment of a testamentary guardian under what was Part 9 of the Children's Services Act 1965. This Government has developed the

Succession and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2000, in conjunction with the Succession Law Committee of the Queensland Law Society, not only to clarify the right for parents and guardians to make this important decision but also to ensure that the legislative framework complements other modern regimes for the care and protection of children, such as the Child Protection Act 1999 and the Family Law Act 1975.

Firstly, this Bill inserts the provisions granting the power to appoint a testamentary guardian into the Succession Act 1981, the primary legislation governing the range of matters able to be dealt with by a person by making a will. Secondly, the Bill contains an inclusive definition of "parent" to reflect Aboriginal tradition and Islander custom. Most importantly, the Bill allows a parent or guardian to appoint a person to care for a child in their place, but provides that the guardianship will only take effect on the death of the child's last surviving parent unless the will shows that the person intended the appointment to take effect immediately on their death.

If the appointment is to take place immediately on the person's death, and there is a surviving parent or someone else with the responsibility for the daily care of the child under a decision or order of a court, the guardian's responsibility is limited to joint involvement in making decisions about the long-term care, welfare and development of the child. However, if there is no-one to care for the child, the testamentary guardian will be given the right to care for the child, and the right and responsibility to make decisions about the child's daily care.

The Bill also amends the Commonwealth Powers (Family Law—Children) Act 1990 to exclude the new provisions relating to testamentary guardianship from the general referral by the State to the Commonwealth of legislative powers relating to children. This will resolve any doubt about the legality of a testamentary appointment of a guardian.

Finally, the Bill preserves any appointment of a person as the guardian of a child through the execution of a deed, if the deed was in force prior to 23 March 2000, the date of repeal of the Children's Services Act 1965. While it is not the policy of this Government to authorise the appointment of a guardian by deed, it is important that no children be disadvantaged by the repeal of that Act.

I would like to pay tribute to Queensland Law Society President Mr Peter Carne, the members of the Succession Law Committee and, in particular, its chair, Dr John De Groote,

for their invaluable assistance in developing this Bill. This Bill demonstrates this Government's commitment to the family and its respect for the right of parents to make personal decisions about the welfare of their children. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP)
(Minister for Tourism and Racing) (12.40 p.m.),
by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Racing and Betting Act 1980 and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP)
(Minister for Tourism and Racing) (12.41 p.m.):
I move—

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

This Bill is the product of over five years of consultation and preparatory work. During this time the department has received numerous submissions and correspondence from Queensland racing industry stakeholders concerning suggested amendments to the current Racing and Betting Act 1980. Issues associated with the regulation and operation of bookmakers have been continually raised by stakeholders at all levels of the industry for many years. This Government is now addressing these issues.

While not being supportive of the Federal Government's GST proposals, it is opportune, from a racing perspective, that the recently introduced GST and Related Matters Bill abolishes bookmakers' turnover tax. I have taken this opportunity to prepare this Bill that not only complements the abolition of the bookmakers' turnover tax by the GST and Related Matters Bill, but also implements long awaited reforms to the law regulating bookmakers in Queensland. These amendments place Queensland at the forefront of legislative reform and allow the Queensland racing industry to get on with the business of running racing in this State.

This Government is committed to removing duplication and inefficiencies in racing administration and does not wish to duplicate the role of industry control bodies, which, under national code rules, are chartered with the responsibility of running racing. This is not to say that Government has no role to play—quite the opposite. However, this role should be limited to ensuring that the right environment exists to allow the Queensland racing industry to successfully get on with the business of racing. This right environment is critical, particularly now there is a privatised TAB, and the Queensland racing industry must operate commercially to ensure returns to the TAB are maximised for the benefit of all industry participants.

The proposed changes to the Racing and Betting Act 1980 do not remove any benefits currently enjoyed by bookmakers. This is not to say that the current arrangements may not vary. Indeed, they may. However, it is the industry control bodies that should decide on the future interaction between bookmakers and the wider racing industry, not the Government. These amendments provide the racing industry the flexibility to initiate any required changes to the bookmakers' operating framework. With respect to bookmaker operations, I strongly believe the Government's role should be limited to ensuring bookmakers are fit and proper persons to be entrusted with the responsibilities they are provided by industry control bodies.

Public confidence in all aspects of the Queensland racing industry is crucial to the success of the industry. The public must have confidence that those with whom they are dealing are honest. This legislation ensures such confidence can exist. This is not to say that the current arrangements have not served the Queensland racing industry well—they have. But it is now time to provide a framework that formalises this process, is open and accountable and, perhaps more importantly, fair to all participants.

These amendments make significant changes to the way traditional racing legislation has dealt with the regulation of bookmakers. For example, it places the responsibility for deciding the minimum telephone bet levels with the Queensland racing industry control bodies that license bookmakers. The issue of the minimum telephone bet level in Queensland is one that is more properly addressed in relation to commercial activities between bookmakers, race clubs, licensing bodies, the Queensland

racing industry, Product Co and TABQ Ltd rather than being dealt with in legislation.

As a result of these amendments, racing industry participants are provided the flexibility to respond to market forces and are able to adjust to a rapidly changing wagering environment. These amendments will remove the duplication that currently exists between the Racing and Betting Act 1980 and the code rules that apply to all forms of racing in Queensland. They also remove redundant and obsolete provisions of the Racing and Betting Act 1980 while enhancing probity checking of licensed bookmakers and providing the potential for bookmakers to be partnerships or corporations.

Bookmakers can only be licensed in Queensland by the racing control bodies and can only conduct bookmaking while at a racing venue, while a race meeting is lawfully being held. In other jurisdictions there are other types of bookmakers, for example, sports bookmakers. This is not the case in Queensland. Bookmakers are an important element of the industry and fulfil an important role at race meetings throughout the State. As bookmakers exist because of their nexus with the Queensland racing industry, the amended legislation refers to bookmakers as "racing bookmakers". The Racing and Betting Act 1980 will no longer regulate the "on the ground" operations of bookmakers. It is my intention that the rules of racing for the respective code should control bookmaking operations.

The GST and Related Matters Bill abolishes bookmaker's turnover tax. This Bill makes all necessary consequential amendments flowing from the abolition of the tax. In order to ensure the probity and integrity of bookmakers and the public confidence in the Queensland racing industry, an applicant for a racing bookmaker's licence must first apply to the Gaming Executive in the Office of Gaming Regulation for an eligibility certificate. A successful applicant will be issued an eligibility certificate that will state the applicant has met an established standard of probity and integrity. The person can then apply to the control bodies to be licensed under the rules for the relevant code. In order to ensure a smooth transition to the new processes, all current licensed bookmakers are deemed to hold an eligibility certificate.

The NCP review of the Racing and Betting Act 1980, which is currently in progress, relates to a number of issues which are addressed in these amendments. However, I am not prepared to allow Queensland to be left

behind while reforms are taking place in other States. This Bill will ensure Queensland is at the forefront of bookmaker reforms. Should the NCP report, which will be finalised later this year, identify any further amendments necessary to the regulation of bookmakers, such matters can be addressed at that time.

Debate, on motion of Mr Healy, adjourned.

MINING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 13 April (see p. 897).

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (12.48 p.m.): I have much pleasure in informing the House that the Opposition will be supporting this piece of legislation, the Mining and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to take this opportunity to make some comments about the mining industry, which is very important to Queensland. I note that a couple of days ago in this House the Minister made the comment that he had received his first question from me concerning this portfolio. There are a large number of issues involved in the mining industry about which I, as the Opposition spokesman for Mines and Energy, would welcome the opportunity to question the Minister.

The fact that we have had very limited opportunity to ask questions this year, given the shortness of the parliamentary sittings, should not be construed in any way as though we are not understanding of those issues. We are going to take every opportunity that presents itself to pursue those issues. There are some very important issues that are threatening the mining industry. There are some very big issues which the Minister, as the man ultimately responsible for the future of the mining industry in Queensland, should be doing his best to resolve.

This legislation seems to be precisely as the Minister described in his second-reading speech. He described it as a series of minor and non-controversial amendments with the intention of streamlining the administration of what appears to be an excellently developing industry-based superannuation scheme clearly sound enough to cope with non-contributions by either employers or employees during periods of unpaid leave. The scheme seems to ensure consistency between several pieces of safety legislation debated in this House late last year. I will not take the time of the House today to repeat much of the debate that occurred when that legislation passed through

the House. However, it is sufficient for me to say that the opinions we expressed during that debate are still widely and strongly held by the Opposition and by large sections of the mining industry.

This legislation also provides a simple extension of time for the drawing up of a regulation under the Explosives Act. The fact that there has to be an extension of time for the drawing up of that regulation is in itself something of a concern. However, we have been informed during briefings on this legislation that that regulation has been completed and is simply awaiting drafting. We can only hope that efficiency of Government processes are such that in future regulations do not need to wait a full year to be drafted and put into practice.

However, as I said, I want to take the opportunity today to make a few comments about the mining industry, because the opportunities to do so in the parliamentary process this year have been fairly limited. We have had a fairly limited opportunity to make comments about the mining industry and a fairly limited opportunity to ask questions about the many issues that are very relevant to the mining industry. Many of those issues are of sufficient importance as to be seen by some to be threatening the very future of the mining industry.

Who would have thought that in a State such as Queensland, whose economy has for many years depended upon the mining industry—a State in which so many people and communities depend on the industry for their employment and their economic base—there are people in the mining industry who are quite legitimately questioning whether or not the mining industry has a future. We have certainly come a long way from the halcyon days of the mining industry, remembering the contribution it has made and the importance and esteem in which it was held within the Queensland community. It still makes a huge contribution economically, but the level of esteem with which the mining industry should rightly be held is unfortunately falling.

I refer the House to a speech made by Dr Chris Rawlings, the President of the Queensland Mining Council. I hope the Minister has a copy of this speech. At the conclusion of my remarks I will table it. I am sure the Minister has seen it. It is cause for concern for anybody who has any sort of interest in the mining industry that a person of Dr Rawlings' stature should be asked to make a speech to the Townsville Chamber of

Commerce to address the question of whether there is a future for the Queensland mining industry. Dr Rawlings was asked to make some comment about whether or not the resources sector as such faced extinction. He said—

"To those of you in the north, such questions probably seem absurd, particularly at this time of announcement of major resource based projects."

There have been a number of major projects announced in the north and a number of major projects brought to fruition. But the lead time involved in bringing those major projects to fruition should be obvious to all of us. The point is that, while those projects are operating now, there is a gap, a lag. There are no projects in the early stages of development. That is what is threatening the very future of the industry. Dr Rawlings went on to say—

"I can assure you that, in capital cities, both in Australia and overseas, such sentiments are being expressed. Sadly, they are expressed even more regularly in the corridors of bureaucratic power in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne."

The time lines may vary. Some talk a decade, others talk longer. But there are many people in this country either convinced mining is a sunset industry or would like it to be. The major mining service centres, such as Townsville, have good reason to be concerned, if these sentiments continue to shape public debate and legislation."

Dr Rawlings went on to say further—

"The nature of public debate in recent times has focused on restraint of development on environmental, native title and cultural heritage grounds. The areas provide passionate, but often not well informed debate, about the true worth of controlled development to our society."

How right he is. Those three areas—environmental, native title and cultural heritage—are renowned, in my opinion. They are unique in that they have been characterised by emotive, passionate debate that has been very short on scientific basis. That debate has been very ill informed. It behoves those who take advantage of the power they can engender from the media to be responsible when debating those issues, to be aware of the impact that emotive debate on those issues can have on the Queensland mining industry and to be aware of the effect that the overuse of emotion in those types of

debates can have on the whole Queensland economy.

Dr Rawlings went on to say—

"Australia is developing a public environment, where the emotion relating to these issues carries greater weight than do the positive social benefits of increased employment, high quality infrastructure, regional development and economic growth."

I believe that that is the crux of the matter. There needs to be a balance struck between the areas of environmental, native title and cultural heritage. They are the three big obstacles that the mining industry must face. They are the three big obstacles that any mining project must face. To many people, they are hurdles that projects cannot get over. There needs to be a balance between those three areas and the other things that are important in our community, that is, the positive social benefits, the increased employment, the high-quality infrastructure and regional development and economic growth. There needs to be a balance between those competing issues.

I contend that at present the Queensland mining industry is out of balance. I contend that the pendulum has been pushed too far towards the emotive consideration of environmental, native title and cultural heritage issues at the expense of those positive social benefits, that is, the increased employment that mining can bring, the high-quality infrastructure that mining brings to rural and remote areas of Queensland and the regional development and economic growth that mining brings and has brought to large areas of Queensland over a long time. The State's mining industry is out of balance with respect to these competing interests. The pendulum has swung too far. That balance must be corrected.

Dr Rawlings went on to say—

"The mining industry has responded to the challenges put up by these and other issues by taking account of the social and environmental impacts in development proposals."

They have. If we look at the work being done now in those areas by any mining project, right from day one a huge amount of effort is made to take account of the social and environmental impacts.

Mr Pearce: They used to. They don't now. They don't care any more.

Mr SEENEY: I take the interjection from the member for Fitzroy. If we look at the difference in the process of establishing a mining project now to what it was 10, 15 or 20 years ago, the amount of work done to analyse and understand the environmental and social impacts is huge. However, we are never going to reach a point where those impacts are negligible. We have to accept that any major project is going to have an impact. The decision we need to make is whether those impacts are warranted to obtain the positive social benefits, that is, the increased employment and the economic development. We cannot have one without the other. We cannot have those types of positive benefits in the Queensland economy without having some environmental and social impacts. All of us would agree that those impacts have to be minimised. All of us would agree that we need to do these things as well as we can with a minimum amount of impact. In the end, for the sake of the Queensland economy, for the sake of the employment opportunities for future Queenslanders, for the sake of providing that infrastructure and that regional development, we have to do them. Dr Rawlings went on to say—

"We have attempted to be balanced in our approach and have demonstrated significant resilience, often in the face of stiff opposition."

I take this opportunity to agree and to congratulate those in the mining industry who have had to wrestle with these issues in order to deal with these problems. The issues of native title and cultural heritage, however, are a lot more intransigent. They have much more to do with politics. They are a lot harder to find a solution to.

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

Mr SEENEY: The two main threats to the Queensland mining industry are the native title and cultural heritage provisions that are being worked up by this Government and will be debated shortly by this Parliament.

I will spend some time dealing with the situation regarding native title. I say at the outset that it is difficult to understate the threat that the continuation of the native title impasse presents to the Queensland mining industry. It was interesting to hear the Premier this morning make a ministerial statement concerning the Queensland legislation which is currently being considered by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr Borbidge: After 500 minor amendments.

Mr SEENEY: Yes. Mr Beattie said that his information was that it would be tabled in Federal Parliament today. He seemed somewhat surprised that all 13 parts requiring determination from the Minister had been approved. In reality there was no need for him to be surprised. The Queensland legislation was well above the minimum requirements of the Commonwealth legislation.

The legislation that was passed through this House—it was opposed by the Opposition as extending rights to one group of Queenslanders that most other Queenslanders do not enjoy—was a long way short of what the Queensland mining industry deserved. As the Leader of the Opposition said, that legislation had to have 500 amendments made to it. That is a good indication of the extent to which it was rushed through this House. It is a good indication of the lack of preparation that went into that legislation. The Premier said that it was nitpicking. Five hundred minor amendments could hardly be called nitpicking. It is a good indication of the incompetence with which the Government has approached the whole issue of native title.

There has been an 18-month delay in dealing with this legislation. This morning the Premier was very quick to blame the Federal Government, as he is very quick to blame the Federal Government for almost everything. That delay has caused more problems for the mining industry. The fault for that delay lies very squarely at the feet of this Government—at the feet of the Premier and the Minister for Mines and Energy.

Let us look at the points raised by the Premier in his ministerial statement. First, as I said, the scheme was well above the threshold of Commonwealth requirements. The coalition fought for the consideration of native title before the law on an absolutely equal footing so that all Queenslanders were treated equally under native title legislation. What the Government provided on mining projects was a right to negotiate for Aboriginal people. That far exceeds the sort of consideration available to any other land-holder. A private member's Bill before this House, introduced by the member for Gladstone, seeks to rectify that problem.

Once again we in this House will have the opportunity to debate that issue. Once again we will have the opportunity to debate whether every Queenslanders should be treated equally in respect of native title. It goes to the heart of what level this Parliament considers native title to be at—whether it is equal to freehold title or

somehow greater, that is, inclusive of rights that freehold titleholders do not have.

I look forward to that debate and I look forward to making a detailed contribution to it. At that time I will reassert the position set out by the coalition in the debate on the Queensland native title legislation, that is, that every Queenslanders should be treated equally and have the same rights when it comes to mineral exploration and mineral development on their land.

As we said during the debate on the State legislation, the legislation which was passed by the State Parliament and which has been before the Commonwealth Parliament for 18 months is discriminatory. It was unnecessary so far as we were concerned, but it was necessary if the Premier was to have any chance of getting it past the Left Wing loonies in his own party. That challenge remains.

The challenge for the Premier and the State Government now is to convince their own colleagues in the Left of the Labor Party, who dominate the Senate, to support their legislation. We will watch with interest over the next couple of weeks to see whether those opposite can convince the Left of their own party, who dominate the Senate, to provide them with support. We will watch with interest to see whether they can convince Federal Labor members such as Wayne Swan—

Mr Kaiser: He is a Left Winger!

Mr SEENEY: Hopefully he is one of the more moderate. What about the Left Wing senators? What about Senator Jan McLucas? She is left of Left! How are they going to go about convincing somebody such as her? What about Nick Bolkus? How are they going to go about convincing him that their legislation deserves his support? That is the challenge for those opposite.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Wayne Swan is supposedly in the centre. It is a bit hard for those of us outside this factional arrangement to understand who fits where. The challenge for those opposite is to get that legislation—albeit flawed, albeit far from adequate, albeit far short of what the Queensland mining industry deserves—through the Federal Senate. We will watch with interest. The Queensland mining industry will also watch with interest. The Queensland mining industry is desperate for a result in relation to that particular piece of legislation.

The important point is that it is Labor in the Senate that has stretched out this native

title issue over a number of years. It is the Labor representatives in the Senate who have turned this into a marathon effort. The Labor representatives in the Senate will have a choice between speeding up the passage of the Queensland legislation or delaying it even longer.

It was interesting to see that the Premier said this morning that he will now seek the backing of the Federal Labor Party. I remember him saying in this House a few months ago that he was confident that he had it. It is obvious that the backroom deals need to be done. It is obvious that this issue will need to be considered at the faction meetings.

I hope for the sake of the Queensland mining industry that this legislation gets through. Even though it is flawed and even though we did not vote for it, it will, to some extent at least, break the impasse. It is only slightly better than the Federal legislation which the Queensland mining industry will need to fall back on.

The point is that an opportunity has been lost. The Queensland Parliament had the opportunity to pass a piece of legislation that would have made it possible for the Queensland mining industry to go forward under the native title regime, and the Government blew it. Not only did it not introduce into this House a piece of legislation that took advantage of the opportunity to provide the Queensland mining industry with the chance to continue to develop and to go forward with those projects that are so necessary for Queensland to meet the jobs targets that those in the Government talk about constantly; when it came to the crunch it was not prepared to introduce and pass a piece of legislation that gave it even half a chance of meeting its own jobs targets. So now there is a flawed, inadequate piece of legislation being held up in the Federal Senate by the colleagues of Government members. It gets worse and worse. The State Government faces the challenge of getting that legislation through the Federal Senate.

I want to take the opportunity to talk in some little detail about some of the difficulties being faced by Queensland mining companies as they strive to develop some of those projects. Those projects are important, and their importance is self-evident. It is important that that exploration work be undertaken in order to replace some of the old mines that close. It is imperative that mineral explorers have the ability to continually explore, and that, in a nutshell, is the problem.

The areas of critical concern with the Act relate, firstly, to access to the exploration permit tenement to undertake drilling operations and, secondly, to the fact that no new title will be granted until late 2000 at the earliest, even if Government members are successful in obtaining the support of their Federal colleagues in the Senate. In particular, the meaning of "low impact activity" has been raised with me by just about everybody that I have had any contact with in the mining and exploration industry. Section 482(e) defines it as—

"... drilling and activities associated with drilling that—

- (i) do not include clearing or site excavation, other than the minimum necessary to establish a drill pad for a mobile rig;
- (ii) do not include clearing for a road or track."

Subsection (ii) is probably the most relevant provision. These definitions indicate that new access roads or tracks and drill sites for drilling activities are unable to be cleared under a low impact exploration permit. This effectively means that, for an exploration company to undertake drilling in just about every prospective area in Queensland, it must apply for a high impact exploration permit. To obtain a high impact exploration permit, explorers must enter into negotiations and compensation agreements, including payments, with native title holders and native title claimants.

The industry's key concerns with that are, obviously, that it is an impediment to drilling. Drilling is one of the most crucial aspects of the exploration and discovery process. It is impossible to discover a mineral deposit without drilling. To limit drilling to those who hold high impact permits, because of the definition which states that low impact activity does not include clearing for a road or track, is quite simply impractical and impossible.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I have just had a look at the Minister's second-reading speech. The primary policy objectives of this Bill are nothing like what the member has been debating. I have given him some leeway. I suggest now that he return to the contents of the Bill. The Bill is about a number of very minor amendments to the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' Superannuation Act, the Explosives Act and the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act. I have given the member some leeway, but I suggest that he now return to the contents of the Bill.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, with the greatest respect, you were not in the Chamber before lunch when I started to make this speech. I made it very clear at the beginning of my address that while the provisions of this legislation will be supported by us, the concern that we have is for the very future of the mining industry in its totality. I also made the point that this House has had very little opportunity to consider some of these issues; this is the first time that we have been able to debate anything concerning the mining industry in this—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has had 25 minutes to discuss those issues. I now ask him to turn to the Bill. The Standing Orders are very clear that debate must be relevant to the Bill under consideration. Some leeway is given, and I think the member has been given adequate leeway. I will not allow a much broader discussion than that. The member should return to the Bill.

Mr Lucas: He is really a bit of a cubist when it comes to this sort of thing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not need help from the member for Lytton. I could do without it, in fact. I will give the member five more minutes if he wishes to speak about general matters, and then I ask him to return to the contents of the Bill.

Mr SEENEY: I find it difficult to understand the ruling. However, as I said, this is the first opportunity we have had to bring to the attention of the House issues concerning the mining industry. This particular legislation is the Mining and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and, as I said at the beginning of my speech, it deals with arrangements for superannuation schemes. It also deals with amendments to create some consistency in mine safety legislation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am not going to debate the matter with the member. The rulings from the Chair have been very clear. When we are debating minor amendments to legislation, they are not to become wide-ranging debates on a particular industry. Minor amendments to legislation should be treated as minor amendments, and that is what should be debated. I have been tolerant and I have allowed the member time to discuss general issues. He is a new shadow Minister and I realise that he wants to express his views, but the rulings from the Chair have been firm for some years now that if minor amendments are under consideration, the debate should be confined to those amendments. We do not want to have major debates on minor amendments. That is what

the rules are there for. I will not debate the matter any further. We will not have major debates on minor amendments to legislation, because we would be here forever. My patience has run out. I ask the member to address the amendments contained in the Bill. I will warn him only once more and then I will sit him down.

Mr SEENEY: May I finish very briefly making the point that I was making?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, that is it. The member will return to the Bill.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, for the record, may I register my disappointment at your ruling. I register also my difficulty in understanding your ruling, given some of the debates that I have listened to in this Chamber. I register my further difficulty in understanding your ruling, given some of the leeway and latitude that I have seen extended to Government members. Having said that, I have the utmost respect for the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Callide is lucky that I am not thin-skinned, otherwise I would take some exception to his comments, but I will not do so.

Mr SEENEY: Can I say that I have the utmost respect for this institution. Mr Deputy Speaker, even though I have great difficulty in understanding your ruling, I will reluctantly comply with it.

I will conclude my contribution to the debate by reiterating that the Opposition does not have any opposition to the minor amendments that are contained in this legislation. The amendments that the Bill makes to the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' Superannuation Act are sensible, and they certainly have our support. We can only hope that, in time, that superannuation fund continues to have plenty of mine employees to make the contributions that are necessary for the fund to continue.

Given the threats that the mining industry is facing, which I would have liked the opportunity to outline to the House, and given that some people are quite seriously questioning the future of the mining industry, there is certainly some doubt in the minds of many people in Queensland that we will need a Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' Superannuation Fund at all. That questioning is for those reasons which I began to outline and which I will welcome an opportunity to outline at some future date.

There must be grave concern in the minds of every member that an industry which has made such a contribution to the State

economy as the mining industry obviously has can face a position where its long-term future is seriously being questioned by senior people within the industry.

Mr Wilson: Which amendment are you referring to?

Mr SEENEY: I am talking about the amendments to the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers Superannuation Act.

Mr Wilson: Which amendment?

Mr SEENEY: I direct the member to the Explanatory Notes. If he pushes the button, one of the attendants will bring it to him and he can take a moment and read it. The first policy objective of the Bill is—

"... to provide a statutory basis for an existing administrative arrangement whereby the obligation on both coal employers and employees to pay superannuation contributions does not apply in respect of periods when an employee is on unpaid leave ..."

That is the particular part of this piece of legislation that I am referring to. Obviously the honourable member was not listening when I was saying that the coalition supports that position. However, we sincerely hope that there will be a mining industry which will provide employment to people and enable them to make contributions to the superannuation fund.

What my esteemed friend, the honourable member, does not understand is that there is a limit to the impediments that can be placed on an industry such as the mining industry. There is a limit to the impediments that can be placed on any industry. There is a limit to the number of hurdles that can be placed in front of any prospective mining project. When we reach that limit we will not have a mining industry. We will not need a superannuation fund because there will no longer be a mining industry to provide the employment, to provide the economic activity and to provide the regional development that has been so important to this State. The mining industry has played an important part in the development of this State.

Mr Wilson interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Ferny Grove will cease interjecting. We want to hear the member for Callide.

Mr SEENEY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I had forgotten which seat the member represented. All these Brisbane members confuse me. They are all the

same—union clones. They all come out like peas in a pod.

A Government member interjected.

Mr SEENEY: He should appreciate the traditions of the House and interject from his own seat.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: He is interjecting from his correct seat.

Mr SEENEY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your assistance. As I was saying, there is a limit to the number of impediments that can be placed on any mining project. The second major policy objective of this Bill must be seen against the background of the impediments that particular pieces of legislation place in front of mining projects. The second major policy objective sets out to correct a number of anomalies which have occurred with the amalgamation of the two mine safety Bills which were passed through this House late last year.

Once again we have a situation where members such as the member for Ferny Grove—given his narrow perspective of the mining industry, and given that he only sees the mining industry, or any industry for that matter, from one very narrow point of view—fail to realise that pieces of legislation, such as those which this legislation seeks to correct, place impediments, hurdles and burdens on the mining industry and make it less and less likely that mining projects are going to proceed. They make it less and less likely that those mining projects are going to provide the types of jobs, the types of economic activity and the types of regional development that they traditionally provide in Queensland.

Those are the points I was making, Mr Deputy Speaker, before you ruled that I was not allowed to continue. I believe they are very pertinent points. There has to be a realisation that there is a cumulative effect to the extent that these impediments impose an intolerable burden on the Queensland mining industry. We have senior people in the mining industry who are very seriously questioning whether the industry has a future. As a result, we see that major mining projects are delayed interminably. We also have major mining companies who are taking their exploration efforts overseas. They are doing that because of the cumulative effect of legislation of the type to which I have referred.

The pieces of legislation which this Bill sets out to amend amount to a further accumulation of impediments to the mining industry. They amount to a further detriment to the development of the industry. They

constitute a burden which is becoming intolerable. That is a perspective which is totally lacking in members on the other side of the House—particularly amongst the union clones who constitute the backbench.

As I said, we have had very little opportunity to debate issues pertaining to the mining industry. This is the first piece of legislation that I have had the opportunity to deal with as shadow Minister. There are major issues in the mining industry that deserve serious consideration.

A Government member interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, perhaps you could help me out with the baby-faced fellow up the back. The member for Springwood, is it? The member for Springwood should begin—

Mr Kaiser: The member for Woodridge.

Mr SEENEY: Not the member for Woodridge; he is not baby-faced, he is just plain ugly. The member for Springwood should begin to realise that this is a serious issue. It is all very well for young members who do not appreciate the mining industry to come into this House—

Mr McGRADY: I rise to a point of order. I object to the member for Callide referring to me in that way—"young members".

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is nothing in the Standing Orders that says that remarks about age should be withdrawn.

Mr SEENEY: I thought I was being charitable to the Minister. I certainly apologise if he takes offence at being described as young. As I was saying before I was interrupted, it is very easy to take the mining industry for granted. It is very easy to lose sight of the fact that this industry makes a huge contribution to the State of Queensland. It made a huge contribution to this State long before the baby-faced member for Springwood ever came into this House. It is not surprising that the contribution that the mining industry makes is not appreciated by members such as the member for Springwood.

It is not surprising that members opposite do not understand that the effects of legislation such as this—which Mr Deputy Speaker instructed me to speak to—are not fully appreciated by such members as the honourable member for Springwood.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I suggest there is also a Standing Order which contains a phrase about tedium in repetition. I understand that the member has a description for the member for Springwood, but I have heard it five times

now. It is becoming repetitious. I think we should get back to the Bill.

Mr Musgrove: I think he is trying to come on to me.

Mr SEENEY: I did not hear that interjection. I would appreciate the opportunity of responding to the interjection. I suggest to the new member for Woodridge that, if he is going to interject, he do so loudly enough so that I can respond. However, he should be warned that, if he interjects, he does so at his own peril.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I think that we have had enough hilarity. I suggest to the members on my right that interjections are welcome only if they are relevant, only if they are reasonable or only if they are witty. Otherwise they should be very rare. This Bill contains only minor amendments. We should discuss just those minor amendments. If we were to discuss every Bill in its totality, we would never get out of this place. That has been a longstanding rule for Bills that amend legislation in a minor way, so I suggest to the member for Callide that he has had his fun—

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not want to disagree with your ruling but, when you said that there has been a longstanding rule that members speak specifically to the Bill, my understanding is that in the second-reading debate of a Bill that is relevant to an industry some latitude was given for the very reasons that the member for Callide has advanced.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Callide has had 45 minutes of latitude.

Mr SLACK: But it is not strictly that members have to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Some latitude has been given, and that is for the Chair to rule on.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I accept your ruling, even though I have some difficulty in accepting it.

A Government member interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Despite the continued interjections from the Labor clones on the backbench, I am making a very determined attempt to speak to the policy objectives of the Bill. Be that as it may, I welcome interjections and I would be only too pleased to respond to them. As I was saying to the member for—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I do not welcome interjections, so I suggest that you do not receive them.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I agree with you that the interjections need to be

pertinent, witty and the other descriptions that you applied to them. I certainly agree with you in that respect.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr SEENEY: I am only sorry that I could not hear. Mr Deputy Speaker, I add to your words that the interjections should be loud enough for me to hear them so that I can respond to them.

However, I take the debate back to the Bill. I was concluding my remarks by saying that I once again want to place on record the fact that we on this side understand very sincerely the contribution that the mining industry has made to the State's economy. We understand very sincerely the difficult worldwide economic circumstances in which the Queensland mining industry needs to operate. We understand very sincerely the impediments that have been placed in the way of the Queensland mining industry by a series of legislation, some of which this amendment Bill sets out to address. We understand very sincerely the cumulative effect of those pieces of legislation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Callide that he is being repetitive. If he repeats that again, I will call the next speaker.

A Government member interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. I call the member for Burnett.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (3.03 p.m.): I rise to support the contribution of the Opposition spokesperson on Mines and Energy in the debate on this legislation. As the Minister said in his second-reading speech, the legislation has both the support of the Mining Council and the unions. The Opposition also supports the legislation wholeheartedly. Although the Bill is mechanical in nature, it obviously leads to some discussion about the future of the coalmining industry, because it relates to the superannuation provisions that apply to that industry.

It is fair to raise issues relating to the future of the coalmining industry and future employment within the coalmining industry, because people have to be employed to be entitled to draw superannuation. Many people are wondering what their future will be within the coalmining industry. As members are well aware, the industry is suffering tough times: prices are low and some mines are finding it difficult to operate. Recently, some mines have changed hands, which impacts on superannuation, severance pay and

redundancy entitlements—all of the things involved with wages and payments to miners.

The Opposition—as no doubt is the Government—are very mindful of how changes in the mining industry impact on workers. We are also very mindful of the contribution that the entire coalmining industry has made to the Queensland and Australian economies. Queensland would not have the strong economy that it has today without the big developments in the coal industry. Many people have opinions about the contribution that Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen made to this State but, when the Opposition was in Government for that long period, one of the really outstanding contributions that Sir Joh made was to get the coal industry up and running in this State. That industry became the backbone of the Queensland economy and contributed to a lot of infrastructure development and employment in this State, which gave workers entitlements to superannuation and, unfortunately, redundancy payments because of the pressures in the world coal market.

There is no doubt that, this morning in answer to a question from me about the Surat/Dawson development, the Deputy Premier was right when he said that coal prices are very low. At this point, it is with some trepidation that people enter into the coalmining industry in Queensland, in other parts of Australia, or anywhere in the world, that is, if they take a short-term view. However, I believe that the Queensland coal industry has a very positive future, provided it gets the support that it deserves and it is allowed to access that increased demand for coal in the world market.

At this point, while prices for coal are low, the predictions are that there will be a rising demand for coal. The 4.1 billion tonnes of thermal coal in the Surat/Dawson development is top-quality thermal coal. That is why that project has a future. The predictions for an increased demand for thermal coal range from 4% to 6% a year. APEC, which is recognised by the industry, predicts that by 2010, the demand for thermal coal is expected to rise by approximately 41%.

So there is a future for coalmining, particularly in thermal coal. Like the expression "oils ain't oils", not all coal is the same. Hard thermal coal, steaming coal, particularly the Surat/Dawson Basin coal, has very good environmental—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I also draw the member back to the relevance of this Bill. The member is allowed to talk about coal

and oil shale workers' superannuation, new explosives, and safety in mines.

Mr SLACK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been speaking for only five minutes. I have indicated to you that all of what I have said has an impact on superannuation entitlements. The future of employment in the coal industry is dependent upon developments in the coal industry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will let you develop that.

Mr SLACK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you accepted what I said in that, during the second-reading debate, there is a certain latitude in a debate on a Bill that is relevant to an industry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: But you are not addressing the Bill at all. In not one way at all are you addressing the amendments in the Bill.

Mr SLACK: I am addressing the points that are raised in this document. The Bill is about tidying up elements in relation to superannuation in the coalmining industry. I am talking about a very important issue raised today in the Parliament relevant to the coalmining industry. We have a debate today on a coalmining industry related Bill and you are saying that I am out of order for referring to something raised in the Parliament today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will repeat this for the member for Burnett: rulings have been made that, when we have minor and discrete amendments to legislation, we do not allow a general debate, for example, on the mining industry.

Mr SLACK: So what you are suggesting is—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Resume your seat. I will not debate that with you. I call the member for Gladstone.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (3.13 p.m.): I rise almost in trepidation! I take this opportunity to acknowledge the important role that mining plays in my electorate. We have a very young oil shale mining project in my electorate. I am sure that the amendments being made not necessarily to the superannuation fund but particularly to the mining and quarrying safety legislation will be very important to mines and quarries in my electorate.

I take this opportunity—and I acknowledge that I may be sat down for doing this—to commend the Minister for his actions before Christmas to ensure the health and safety of residents in my electorate in relation

to the oil shale plant. As I said, it is a young industry and one that is experiencing some difficulty in its start up. There has to be a balance between the need for the company to prove its technology and the rights of people who live in proximity to that plant to enjoy peace and safety in their own homes.

There were some other issues to do with oil shale mining that I was going to raise, but on the basis of what has been said I think my comments would be ruled out of order. However, there is an issue to do with quarrying that I must put on the record. The Minister is aware of the difficulties that QCL, as a quarrying activity, has placed on the community adjacent to the quarry. Parts of this Bill address superannuation, that is, guarding the income of workers in coal and oil shale mining. It also addresses safety and health issues in relation to mining and quarrying. The one part of the triangle that is still missing is the important role that Government must play in ensuring the safety and viability of landowners affected by mining, whether that is through social impact studies or through Governments of whatever type accepting responsibility for industrial impacts on the communities surrounding mines, particularly those mines that are of significance to the State in terms of generating income. Until that responsibility is accepted and Government plays some role in providing relief to residents in terms of the economic impact, there will continue to be a lot of opposition to new mines being started up.

One of the aims of this Bill is to enhance health and safety in relation to mines and quarries. It is proposed that this will be achieved by requiring the documentation of standard operating procedures. Among other things, there is a new requirement on site senior executives to forward an accident or incident report to inspectors within one month of the event. I am sure that if the member for Fitzroy were in the Chamber he would defy anyone to tell him that he could not put on the record his concern about the safety of miners, particularly coalminers, as they play a major part in employment in his electorate. He has spoken passionately in this place about the need for Governments, unions, mine company owners and coworkers to ensure that everything is done to make it possible for husbands and wives to leave home of a morning and know that in the evening they will return home safely.

Over the past couple of years there have been some very saddening experiences at mines. Recently, a miner was lost through a roof collapse. I am sure the House would

extend its deepest sympathy to the family of that miner. But that was not an isolated incident. The health and safety record of mines over the past few years has been anything other than acceptable. It would be best to prevent accidents at mines. However, if they happen, this amendment Bill will play an important role in ensuring that the incident can be finalised in a timely manner. Sometimes investigations are complicated. I am not disputing that. But they are dragged out such that a family that has been through the grieving stage and has come to terms with what has occurred has to experience it all again when hearings and so on are finally held. An accident report may not assist directly in relation to more serious incidents, but I think it is important to put in place anything that will ensure that incidents are examined, documented and reported on appropriately and fully in a timely manner.

I do not wish to prolong the debate any further than necessary. I would have liked to have taken more time to discuss with the Minister the issue of mining and quarrying in my electorate. Perhaps at a later date an opportunity will present itself. I commend the Minister for the work he has done and I look forward to working with him in the future to ensure mine viability in the electorate of Gladstone.

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (3.16 p.m.), in reply: I thank the three speakers who have participated in this debate. I thank the Opposition for its support for what we are trying to do here today. I was taking notes of some of the comments being made by the shadow Minister. Mr Deputy Speaker, in common with him, I would have been happy to have participated in a full-blown debate, but I respect the rulings that you have made this afternoon—and I think rightly so, too. The amendments are about three issues and this was not supposed to be a debate or a discussion about the whole of the Queensland mining industry.

I wish to make one observation. In the 50 or so minutes during which the shadow Minister spoke not once did he use the word "safety". This is what one of these amendments is about—safety in the mining industry. It is not about production at all costs. There would be no greater advocate for the mining industry than I in this place. I am not trying to throw bouquets to myself. While in Canada recently I had discussions with mining Ministers from around the world. During those discussions I could almost have closed my

eyes and believed that I was back in Queensland. The impediments to which the shadow Minister referred with respect to native title or cultural heritage are not peculiar to Queensland; this is a global issue. It is a global problem, if we want to use that word.

Mr Swarten: Especially in Canada.

Mr McGRADY: But it is not only an issue in Canada or the United States; I was flabbergasted to find out that there were native title issues in Finland. There are people in this State trying to make out that these issues are peculiar to Queensland. These are global issues. It is all very well to say that if we bury our heads in the sand it will all disappear, but it will not.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. I take offence at the suggestion that that was the attitude that I took. I find that misrepresentation offensive, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr McGRADY: I withdraw anything at all which the honourable member finds upsetting.

Some of my colleagues in the Queensland mining industry were running around for quite some time complaining about the legislation which the Beattie Government brought in with respect to native title. Today those same people—rightfully so, too—are running to Canberra and anyone who is prepared to listen to tell people what excellent legislation this is. And it is good legislation. The mining industry in Queensland certainly knows and understands that.

I want to be brief in my summation of this debate. Let me say that some of the comments that were made by the shadow Minister about doubts about the future of mining in this State are quite wrong. I have a great deal of confidence in the ability of this industry to grow stronger. The member for Burnett mentioned before that there is a doubt about the future of the coal industry. Members have to understand that, in the past 12 months, the Beattie Labor Government has given generation licences for some four new coal-fired power stations, which will take the amount of coal which would be required from 17 million tonnes a year to about 20 million tonnes a year. So there is no attempt by this Government to destroy the coal industry; in fact, quite the reverse is true.

The other point I want to make is that, when one travels around the world, particularly to Asian countries, one finds that Queensland has a tremendous reputation because, as the member for Burnett was saying before, not only do we have some of the best coals in the

world, we also have the infrastructure which is as good, if not better, than that in any other part of the world. We do not have ships lining up outside the ports waiting to be filled or emptied. We have a very, very efficient infrastructure and, despite what some people from time to time try to make out, the industrial relations situation in our mines and in our ports is second to none. Sure, from time to time we have the little Boer Wars, but the perception that the Asians in particular have about Queensland and the Queensland mining industry is quite excellent.

As I said, I want to be brief, but I would also like to compliment the member for Gladstone for the comments she has made. She rightly raised the question of safety in the mining industry. There is no more important issue today than safety in this industry.

Mr Johnson: Hear, hear!

Mr McGrady: That is right. There is no more important issue than safety. We simply cannot afford to have a mentality of production at all costs. Production is important; production is vital to the future of our industry, but so, too, is safety. As the member for Gladstone said and some other person said on television the other night, it behoves the industry to see the person going to work and that night being returned safe to his or her home. There has to be greater attention given to safety in this industry and, with all humility, I believe that the legislation which this Parliament carried late last year will go a long way to restoring or bringing safety into this industry.

My final comment on these amendments is in reference to explosives. We are asking for an extension of time for the existing Explosives Regulation. The result of the terrible and tragic accident that occurred a week or so ago is that it will allow us as a Parliament to consider what moves we need to take to try to ensure that those sorts of accidents do not happen again. Already we as a Government have made some changes to the way in which that particular industry is conducted. I would hope that in the time available to us we can really get involved as a result of these amendments, if they are carried by the Parliament. I welcome the Opposition to come along and have some input into how we can improve that part of the industry.

Mr Speaker, I would have loved to have been able to take another 23 minutes, but I am bound by the rulings that you gave to the member for Callide and the member for Burnett, so I will conclude my remarks. Just let me conclude by saying that the Queensland mining industry, whether it be the metalliferous

side or the coal side or the other associated parts, in my opinion is in good health. There are some issues there which have to be faced, but we are no Robinson Crusoe. The issues that we are confronting here, whether it be native title, cultural heritage or anything else, are the same sorts of issues which are being confronted by the mining industry right across the globe. I thank all those members who participated in this discussion today. I thank them for the support that they have offered for these amendments.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 22, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 31 May (see p. 1466).

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (3.27 p.m.), continuing: I will continue with my speech from last evening when the debate was adjourned at 6 o'clock. I got off the track a little bit, but I was talking about the young people who attend pastoral colleges throughout Queensland and the importance of not only what they learn while they are there but what they learn about particular industries. I talked about the Longreach Pastoral College, which deals mainly with the wool industry. They also have a very specialised cattle industry section. The students also learn horsemanship as well as managerial and maintenance procedures in relation to property management. There is a whole host of issues that young people are taught in those pastoral colleges.

I congratulate the former Government and the current Government on maintaining those schools. It is absolutely paramount that we have those institutions where young people can gain skills. I was reading only the other day, I think in the latest edition of Queensland Country Life, that more young women are now working in the pastoral industry than ever before. A lot of young women who attend these colleges go on to bigger and better things. It is a fantastic concept, and I will talk a bit more about that in a moment.

Last Saturday His Excellency the Governor of Queensland, Major General Peter Arnison, and his wife, Barbara, attended the Springsure show. The Governor referred to the guard of honour that was provided for him by Emerald Pastoral College students on horseback. Those students were all young ladies. The way that they presented themselves and the way that the horses were presented is a true reflection of the quality of student that these colleges are turning out. At the end of the day, it is all about the presentation, what they learn and the in-depth briefings that they receive.

I also want to specifically acknowledge the interest taken in these agricultural colleges by the former Minister for Industrial Relations, the member for Clayfield, who was responsible for restructuring these institutions by reshaping the structure of the management of the boards of the colleges to make them responsive to the needs of stakeholders and to be accountable for their management decisions. He was the Minister who also provided additional funding to supplement the enterprise bargaining arrangements and to reinstate the losses that had been incurred by the colleges when they did not receive annual escalation funds over a number of years, principally the years of the Goss Labor Government. I note that the amendments before the House today are designed to introduce a number of reforms in the training framework. These reforms include an audit program for training providers and proper processes for the introduction of training programs.

Another reform is the introduction of new streamlined and administrative arrangements for apprenticeships and traineeships. I touched on that subject last evening as well. I saluted the current Minister for the program he has put in place in relation to apprenticeships. This is absolutely vital to the young people of this State. Too much emphasis is put on academia today. Many young men and women can take advantage of trade skills—whether they be carpenters, plumbers, welders—in these different fields. It is absolutely paramount that we get more people into these areas of expertise. I know that the current Minister is working hard to make sure this becomes a reality. At the end of the day, as I said in the House last evening, it is our absolute responsibility to make sure that young people are looked after and that we create the channels whereby they can access these different professions.

I have one concern to raise with the Minister. The area of training is becoming a

bureaucratic nightmare. I am concerned that some of the processes are becoming more and more complex and are developing a language all of their own. I know there are complications. Some people in the community are not too sure about the right way to go down this path. That is something I want to talk to the Minister about later. Even though these complexities are there, I really believe that we can work our way around them. A lot of the confusion is probably misinformation and misunderstanding. Similar complexities are being faced by industries trying to get training programs established. There is misunderstanding. It is an issue that needs to be resolved.

The industry training advisory bodies and the Australian National Training Authority process are becoming a barrier to the development of relevant training. I hasten to say to the Minister that much of this problem of complexity derives from the Federal level and has been developing for some time. I have a real fear that some of the complexities associated with curriculum development are used as a barrier to prevent the development of training programs in what should be a competitive training market. While I note the Minister's intention to make this training framework more flexible, I fear that his honourable intentions are being sabotaged by vested self-interests making the process harder to understand. Those complexities should be analysed.

Any member who has tried to comprehend this complex legislation before the House today will get a pretty fair idea of how complex this training function has become. The member for Clayfield, the shadow Minister for industrial relations, has specifically detailed some of these complexities in his speech in the debate. I share his concern at the complexity of this legislation and some of the anomalies such as matters which seem to be at variance with the national training framework. Those anomalies seem to put in place a closed-shop mentality, directly the opposite effect the Minister has claimed is the intention of this legislation. I therefore propose to listen carefully to the Minister's summary and response to the specific items raised by the shadow Minister. If, as I suspect, the Minister fails to give satisfactory explanations, I shall be supporting appropriate amendments.

There is another issue I want to touch on in relation to the colleges in question. The instructors at these colleges are wonderful people. They do a grand job. More emphasis should be placed on their expertise and on not

only the work they do whilst teaching the students but also their efforts made to these magnificent institutions in their own time. They are concerned about the welfare of the students. They are concerned about the families of the students. I applaud the boards also. They consist of caring people. I believe the boards have played a very significant role in making these colleges work to date and have looked at ways of finding more creative activities for new courses at these colleges. As I said before, that is something that both Governments can take credit and kudos for. At the end of the day, these are programs in different specialist fields with an emphasis on training young people. Those young people are certainly going to be the leaders in agriculture in years to come.

There is another issue I want to touch on. There is a fair amount of angst in the community at the moment in relation to staffing at some TAFE colleges in my area. Even though the Bill specifically relates to the central region, there is uncertainty at the TAFE college in Emerald in relation to some of the casual staff or semi-permanent staff. This issue is causing a great deal of angst to people in the area, which incorporates Rockhampton and Gladstone. It is something that I hope the Minister can address. This uncertainty in relation to staffing is certainly not going to be beneficial to the people, no matter who they are, who want to take advantage of these courses.

The other issue in particular I want to touch on today relating to the Longreach Pastoral College is the continuation of a program that the former Minister, the honourable Santo Santoro, put in place when Minister, that is, the new dormitories for the Longreach Pastoral College. I have to thank the Minister for making that program become a reality. That is certainly going to be of very great benefit to that college and its students. In western areas of the State like Longreach, the summer nights get pretty hot.

Mr Santoro: It's 45 degrees or 50 degrees in some of those dormitories.

Mr JOHNSON: Absolutely. They were like ovens, as the honourable member for Clayfield has just said. I know that the Minister understands that as well. As Mr Santoro just said, people could not live in the male dormitories at night. The female dormitories have a very antiquated air conditioning unit. Therefore, this project is a fantastic achievement. I acknowledge that those new dormitories are now in the process of being built. That is certainly going to complement

that college in order for it to go on to bigger and better things for the young people who want to derive benefit from the pastoral industry in that part of the world.

In supporting this legislation, whilst I have raised areas of concern in relation to the complexities of some issues, I congratulate the Minister for making sure that some of the programs were continued. At the end of the day, if we can work together to highlight some of these anomalies, we can reach greater goals in all these institutions, whether they be pastoral colleges or TAFE institutions.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (3.38 p.m.): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Training and Employment Bill 2000 and to develop in more detail some of the issues already discussed by the shadow Minister, the member for Clayfield. Australian businesses today are facing the challenge of global competition. To survive and prosper in this environment, enterprises need access to skills that are of world-class standard. We need an effective framework in place which will provide those skills. The apprenticeship system has stood the test of time as an effective way of upskilling people.

The notion of apprenticeship training is certainly nothing new. Trade training has been around for as long as commerce itself. The essence of learning a vocational skill through being indentured to a master has changed little over the years, perhaps even centuries. Labour trends confirm that rapidly advancing technologies and pressures from global competition are squeezing out the necessity for unskilled labour. Instead, the requirements for current and emerging industries focus on specific skills that demand the support of dedicated vocational education and training.

Consequently, trade training is experiencing a dramatic shift in focus with the development of niche services and the expansion of structured training into industries where it has not existed in the past. Historically, the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland has not kept pace with these developments. It is a system in need of legislative overhaul. Structured training opportunities have for too long been restricted to what we know as traditional trades. They have been restricted by an approval process which is very bureaucratic. Under the existing legislation, industries also have to apply through a highly regulated process to have other callings recognised as apprenticeship and traineeship callings. In our view it is an inefficient process which is increasingly open to question.

It is unfortunate that the Government has not taken the opportunity to streamline this bureaucratic approval process for apprenticeships and traineeships when it is clearly in need of comprehensive overhaul. To some extent, the antiquated approval process seems to be a wasteful duplication of State and Federal bureaucracies, because the training has already been endorsed at the national level.

The national training framework provides for a wide range of qualifications across a wide range of occupations. Under this framework the industry sets the standards for the qualifications and how the skills should be assessed for that particular industry, including for apprenticeships and traineeships. These standards, assessment guidelines and the qualifications determined by industry are endorsed nationally. It has not even been established that there is a need for an additional approval process, but that is, of course, what we have in this Bill. The Government has seen fit to perpetuate an unduly bureaucratic process of applications and approvals after industry has already gone through an extensive consultation process and there has been a national validation and endorsement process. Under the national training framework, qualifications can be obtained through training on the job, through recognition of prior learning, through college training or through a combination of those. It allows the sort of flexibility that employers, apprentices and trainees have long been asking for.

I will give an example. The new national training arrangements for one industry may include 28 qualifications ranging from a certificate I through to certificates II, III and IV, diploma and advanced diploma. In Queensland, under this Government's legislation we are debating today, the industry would have to make 28 applications, some of considerable length, to have each of these qualifications recognised as apprenticeship or traineeship training. All of this when these qualifications have already been through an endorsement process! It is bureaucracy gone mad!

There is no disputing that one of the best ways of people getting skilled is through the mix of workplace training—that is, learning on the job—and college-based training. This type of training should be available across a broad spectrum of industries and enterprises. Under the new national arrangements this is possible. The potential is there for any qualification in any occupational area to be obtained through an apprenticeship or traineeship under this

scheme, but not in Queensland. The Beattie Government, in maintaining this additional layer of approval process for apprenticeships and traineeships, will be holding Queensland back.

The chief executive has been talking in public forums about his department's success in creating generic training orders for apprenticeships and traineeships. He claims that as each of these training programs is developed and approved the industrial relations aims are put in place and that new packages bolt on to the generic order. Industrial relations are obviously not the problem. What could possibly be the real reason for including a highly bureaucratic approval process for apprenticeships or traineeships? If an industry group or a company wants to employ people in traineeships or apprenticeships, it will have to apply to the Training Recognition Council for approval for the specific apprenticeship or traineeship. If the current processes are any indication, it will continue to be a paper-ridden bureaucratic process. If members doubt this they should just ask the industry training advisory bodies about the tedious application processes they currently go through to get approval.

Industries have really embraced the new framework and have sought to have some new qualifications in different occupation areas available as apprenticeships and traineeships. In doing so they have hit a wall of paperwork and inflexibility. In the past it has taken up to five or six months to get these approvals. That is, of course, if they are processed at all. Queenslanders are missing out on employment opportunities while these bureaucratic processes are used as a filter to restrict apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities to the usual club. While we recognise the importance of these more traditional trade areas and the historically important contribution these industries have made to Queensland's economy, we must also look to the future, where the new jobs will be. We must not ignore skills shortages in these manufacturing industries, but at the same time we must not forget the obligation to prepare for the future. Expanded opportunities for structured workplace training are needed. They should not be restricted to the traditional trades.

A recent report published by the Australian Industry Group titled *Engineering Skills Shortages* has highlighted that the flexibilities enabled by the introduction of a national training framework are not being taken up. The report states that rigid regulatory

requirements and difficulties in accessing the system are part of the problem. There was an opportunity to fix the rigid regulatory requirements through this legislation. That opportunity has been deliberately disregarded. The old system is being maintained.

For too long the State Training Council and its decisions have reflected a dominant union bias. The continuation of the same arrangements with the proposed Training Recognition Council will cripple the system. The Government needs to look seriously at the membership of the proposed council and the board to ensure that the old ways are not simply perpetuated. The old training club needs a clean sweep. We need an approach that will truly see our training system at the leading edge. We need reform, not just a continuation of an antiquated system at the hands of tired old union bureaucrats.

Where is the logic in imposing a second layer of approvals for apprenticeships and traineeships? Why is there a need for a statutory approval process? People in apprenticeships and traineeships have long had specific protections safeguarding their employment and training. It is good to see that the Government has followed the coalition's 1998 lead by bringing employment-related matters under the industrial relations legislation. However, what is different is that our legislative proposals would have brought new flexibility to the training system while not compromising the protection afforded to apprentices and trainees or the quality of their training.

A large majority of Queensland businesses do not invest in training their employees, preferring to recruit the skills they need. Developing the necessary training culture is difficult enough without having inflexible, unresponsive and inaccessible training models when businesses do make this commitment. Employers do need to see apprenticeships and traineeships as an effective recruitment strategy for the skills they need.

Some employers find it impossible to commit to a four-year training contract because of the nature of their businesses. The new qualifications under the national training framework make it possible for those employers to employ and to train for shorter periods. Group training companies—I had a fair bit to do with these when I was Minister, as the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing would today—have an increasingly important role to play in bringing employers into a system in which they would otherwise

not be able to participate. They are providing their host employers with the information and assistance they need to deliver on-the-job training to apprentices and trainees.

It is the belief of the Opposition that the Government has not taken up the challenge of making the apprenticeship system more accessible to employers. Under this Bill, even if employers overcome all sorts of hurdles and actually see the apprentice or trainee through to the completion of their training a superfluous paper war ensues. The requirements of multifarious applications entangle the training provider, the employer, the apprentice and the council in a web of crippling bureaucracy.

The Beattie Labor Government, on advice from the Minister, has not met the challenge of creating the framework for an innovative, quality vocational education and training system, of building something that encourages enterprise, individuals and communities to invest in training, or of getting the right balance between regulation, flexibility and quality. Of the major failures in this Bill, this is certainly one. I think that hampers the employment of young Queenslanders. Because it hampers the employment of young Queenslanders, it makes a nonsense of the Premier's mantra of "jobs, jobs, jobs".

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.49 p.m.): It gives me great delight to speak in the debate on the Training and Employment Bill 2000, which will benefit all Queensland industries. By entrenching the training plan into legislation as a key element of apprenticeships and traineeships, the Bill will ensure that every apprentice, trainee and employer in our State receives the high-quality training that they deserve. When more Queenslanders are confident that apprenticeships and traineeships provide worthwhile skills, more will be encouraged to embark on these important training programs. This will go a long way towards boosting skills in Queensland's work force, cementing our position as Australia's Smart State.

Queensland's building and construction industry provides an excellent example of employers and workers working together smarter and more effectively. This industry, like all others in our State, will benefit greatly from the new legislation. I congratulate the Minister on the hard work that he has done. It has not been easy. The building industry is an industry that pulls and tugs in all directions and has many different parts to it. There is the housing industry, which is nearly an industry apart from the commercial side of the industry, and there

is also the heavy engineering or construction industry which undertakes projects such as power stations. I believe that to get all those people to sit down and have discussions with the Government over a long period and to have come to an agreement on the way in which training should be delivered is an achievement. It is no small feat that the Minister has been able to bring that together by talking to all the interested groups. In a lot of ways they are groups that have many different agendas, but the Minister has got them all to agree on training and how it should proceed.

With the assistance of the Government, the building and construction industry is helping Queensland become the Smart State by skilling workers and raising proficiency levels. From 1996 to 1997, the previous Government created only 1,280 additional apprenticeships in building and construction when about 2,000 were needed to maintain the level of trade skills. When the industry is very busy, people are working long hours. When extra skilled workers are needed, nobody has the time or money to put aside for training. Of course, when the industry is slow and in a down cycle, there is plenty of time for training but nobody has the money to train people. As a result, many people who are in the industry and who should be getting trained up leave the industry to go to other industries because there is not enough work for them. They may be getting only a few days a week and the overtime is down, and they are chasing the overtime rates to get a decent income. It is very difficult to get people trained for our industry without Government assistance.

Just two Budgets later, this Government has turned that record around. The first financial year of the Beattie Government, with Paul Braddy as Minister, saw new approvals of building and construction apprentices and trainees more than double, jumping by a massive 102% compared with the previous financial year. This financial year, there have already been 2,740 new arrivals in the industry, compared with 1,862 generated in the whole of the last financial year of the previous Government in 1997-98. With the help of the Beattie Government, the building and construction industry is winning the war against skills shortages. This is a significant contrast to some of the solutions proposed by the Opposition during the debate in this House on the creation of the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund.

The Training and Employment Bill 2000 allows the Government and industry to achieve

more by providing the framework that will allow our training and employment strategies to work better. By discouraging non-completion and helping provide high-quality training, the legislation will allow our strategies to skill the building and construction work force more effectively.

The introduction of the Training Ombudsman will serve building and construction employers, apprentices and trainees well by providing a free, impartial access point for help throughout the life of apprenticeships and traineeships. The formal recognition of training plans for apprentices and trainees in the Bill means that they and their employers will be more fully informed about the training they will embark on. This will make the system more effective, discouraging non-completions while enhancing the quality of training received by apprentices and trainees.

The new legislation also formally recognises the important role that group training organisations have in skilling workers. Group training organisations are important for the building and construction industry because they allow host employers to employ apprentices and trainees for periods suitable to the industry and its variable economic cycles. I was one of those who, early in the piece, was fairly critical of group training. I believed that working for the traditional builder—one out, usually, with a family business—was the ultimate way to train apprentices. My experience with group schemes which move their apprentices around from housing to commercial to engineering—to different projects—is that the skill level that those apprentices obtain is far higher than if they had been with one employer who works within one type of industry all the time.

Previously I was seeing apprentices who were working mainly in the commercial area on high-rises. They would just become wood butchers, banging down decks and knocking up floors for 20 to 30 floors at a time. Their skills were limited. But now apprentices are moved around various employers, and they get to swing doors, put in windows, do stairs and treads and a whole host of other jobs that are needed to fill out an apprentice's training. When business is up, employers can call on these apprentices and trainees and help skill these workers to become qualified tradespeople. When business is down, the apprentices and trainees receive more formal training through their group training organisation.

The legislation will support the Government's training and employment

strategies for the building and construction industry, particularly its Training Fund. This innovative fund is an example of how the Government and industry can work together to address training problems. The fund is innovative because it eliminates the need to administer a levy, unlike what happens in other States. Instead, it is financed through the proceeds of investments from the portable long service leave scheme. Each year the fund will distribute about \$5m to encourage employment and training in the industry. Since the beginning of last year the fund has helped employers such as group training organisations hire an additional 734 apprentices and trainees, with another 152 about to receive funding. This will create real jobs and real skills where they are needed to address skill shortages.

Last year State Cabinet approved a range of improvements to a significant strategy that is now strengthening training in the industry: the 10% training policy. By entrenching quality into training and discouraging non-completions—which is a big issue in the building industry; where people, for various reasons, exit the industry or they just do not have any more contracts, we are now able to move those young apprentices—the new legislation will ensure that this strategy achieves more for the building and construction industry.

After the failure of the previous Government to implement it, the Beattie Government has revitalised the policy to ensure that apprentices, trainees and cadets comprise 10% of labour hours on Government construction projects. This creates a level playing field that encourages contractors on Government sites to employ apprentices and trainees. With the quality provisions of the legislation, these apprentices and trainees will have the passport to gain valuable skills that will help them succeed at work. This will help skills in the industry, securing its future. Through the policy, the Government aims to create up to 900 additional training opportunities in the next three years. Since it was launched late last year, 74 apprentices, trainees and cadets have already benefited. It is clear that our target to create 100 opportunities in the first year of the policy will be met.

Other Government initiatives to benefit from the new legislation include the Housing Industry Trade Training Program. This program generates training opportunities for building and construction apprentices and trainees who are employed by group training organisations. By formally recognising the Housing Industry

Trade Training Program, the Bill will secure the Government's investment in group training. Our commitment to group training organisations has worked. The program has already provided training opportunities for 507 apprentices and trainees since October 1998.

One can see that the new Training and Employment Bill 2000 will greatly benefit the building and construction industry. All Queensland industries are set to reap the rewards from the new legislation, which will protect the Government's investment in training. Each industry will benefit from streamlined administrative operations and contact points, greater awareness of training and formal recognition of the important elements of the training system.

I want to comment on the amount of work that the Builders Labourers Federation, of which I am still a member, has done in training. Just before I left that organisation to take up this job, we were setting in place a training regime within the federation. We had put on training officers and we had started to gear up our offices. Back in the days when builders employed their own labour, labourers had an opportunity to train. The training involving learning from one's workmates. There was no formal training involved. The Builders Labourers Federation has changed all that. It now has one of the largest training units in Queensland for non-skilled labourers—if not one of the largest units in Australia.

When work is slow, workers have the opportunity to undertake training at no cost to themselves. One of the largest classes we had was an English class. A lot of people in the building industry—particularly in the labouring area and in the underskilled area—are not Australians by birth. They have some difficulty in reading and writing English. Some of our larger classes involved teaching people to read and write.

I introduced a quarterly magazine. I can assure honourable members that the way to get information across to union members is to send the information home to the workers' wives. I was almost lynched after I sent home the first copy of the quarterly magazine because I included the wage rates in the magazine. The wives found out what their husbands were being paid. The workers were not very happy with that. However, the wives were very happy. We had a lot of approaches from the wives and children of workers who asked us to provide union members with training.

We now have not just English classes, but classes in such areas as concreting, steel-

fixing, scaffolding, hoist/winch driving, dogging, rigging, and driving such pieces of machinery as bobcats, backhoes and cranes. We have training for labourers in most areas. This formal training can be undertaken at the builders labourers centre at Rocklea. It is one of the largest training centres in Queensland.

I would like to thank the Minister, Paul Braddy, for the training scheme that he has helped to initiate in my electorate at the Balmoral Uniting Church centre. We have an old house in which we operate about 10 different programs. These programs assist people in my electorate. Originally, it was a very small house with very small rooms. It was not really appropriate for the amount of work that was carried on in those premises. We had many people coming to the centre to undertake courses.

Various organisations have contributed to the setting-up of the centre. I refer particularly to the department, Biga Training, Shane Cowan's organisation at Stones Corner and the Balmoral State High School. Students from that school undertake training in the building industry at the centre for one day each week.

We are going to put the verandas back on that old Queenslander and make the rooms bigger. We will also add some extra rooms. The community in general will benefit from the work and training that is carried on at this centre. It will not take long for the community to see results from the 60 to 80 volunteers who work out of the centre.

I have pleasure in supporting the Bill. I see it as a very positive step forward for training in Queensland in general, and for the building industry in particular.

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (4.05 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Training and Employment Bill. It may be difficult for members to find it, but hidden away at the back of this Bill on page 107 are provisions relating to TAFE institutes and TAFE generally. This in itself sends a strong signal about the Government's view of the importance and significance of TAFE in the training system.

In 1998, the coalition Government tabled a TAFE Institutes Bill, giving TAFE institutes the prominence they deserved as a long-established—indeed the major—provider of training in Queensland. The coalition, in Government, wanted to make TAFE Queensland more accountable by giving it a very well defined legislative base.

Clearly, the Beattie Labor Government has no concern for the status of TAFE institutes for it hides the TAFE provisions in the

back of the Training and Employment Bill. TAFE institutes are instruments of Government policy, but they are also places where Queenslanders are receiving, and expect to receive, education and training to qualify them for employment. The symbolism of this treatment of TAFE institutes belies the rhetoric pumped out by the Labor media machine. The Labor Party does not care about moving TAFE forward. It certainly has not moved TAFE forward through this Bill. It is the tail of the training dog that Minister Braddy has cloned.

During our term in office, the coalition Government was committed to improving the capacity of TAFE to operate in the competitive market. We supported TAFE in its efforts to become a key player in the State's vocational education and training system. We were committed to giving TAFE the autonomy and the flexibility it needed in order to make effective business decisions in an increasingly competitive training market. To do this, we were in the process of establishing business boards in the institutes. Those boards would have focused on the strategic business management of the institutes.

The boards would have approved the institute's business plan, monitored the implementation of the business plan and advised the institute director about industry, business and market needs and trends. The boards would have monitored the outcomes of courses, programs and services. In short, they would have been boards with a real job, unlike the institute councils which are proposed in this Bill. The councils will have a support and advisory role only.

It is regrettable that one of the first actions of the Minister and his chief executive officer was to scrap the practice of institute council reports coming into the offices of the Minister and the CEO. Who are the councils advising if the Minister and his senior officers are not interested in listening to what they say? They are toothless committees without a real job. That is the Government's proposal. That is what this Government wants. The Government will have up to 20 people who will support and advise. That will really move TAFE forward!

We proposed the appointment of persons to the business boards who had knowledge of, or experience in, business or commerce, vocational education and training, and industry and community affairs. Their role was to be focused on the strategic direction of the institutes. We wanted qualified and experienced people in the local community steering the institutes. We also provided for local colleges within the institutes to have a

voice through their own councils. We were committed to moving TAFE institutes into a position of business strength. We wanted to raise the status of these institutes and of vocational education and training in Queensland so that individuals, parents, business and industry would truly value TAFE's products and services.

A recent report about small business and training entitled *Big Business from the Small End of Town*, looks at what will work in terms of getting small business involved in training. It recommends that training providers—particularly TAFE—need to behave and respond more in the way of businesses. This affirms that we were on the right track. This is the sort of vision that we had for TAFE. We wanted TAFE to conduct the business segment of its interests more in the way of a business. But not this lot opposite! It was this Government that pulled the rug out from under TAFE by dismantling the small, efficient and strategically important State office almost overnight. TAFE simply was not ready for this dramatic shift.

The coalition's commitment was to move TAFE institutes towards autonomy in a carefully managed and staged process. We had already started down that path. The sudden restructuring by this Government two years ago destabilised the organisation. The effects of that are still being felt today. The Government's so-called 10-point plan for TAFE which is supposed to "settle the system down, to bed it down and get some sensible administrative arrangements underneath it all" was nothing but a transparent hoax. How did they do that? They created mass upheaval, they ripped out the support for TAFE institutes and said, "Work it out for yourselves." The institutes and their staff are still trying to work out for themselves which past era this Minister, this Government and this Bill are leading them towards.

On 13 April this year when introducing this Training and Employment Bill, the Minister referred to the Government's 10-point plan, claiming that this plan has ensured that TAFE takes its rightful role as the major provider of training in this State. The 1998-99 annual report of the Minister's department, in which this 10-point plan was promoted, also stated that every year one in 10 Queenslanders—300,000, or about 10%—pursue study or training through a TAFE Queensland institute. One can only hope and assume that this number has been maintained and improved.

In the coalition's 1997-98 Budget, an allocation of \$2.4m had been approved for the construction of a TAFE facility at Tewantin, which is in my electorate. Its curriculum was to provide enhanced training in the hospitality industry for the growing needs of the region. On 7 October 1998 in the Estimates committee hearings, Minister Braddy, in justifying his decision to scrap this Tewantin TAFE project—a project promised to be completed by Premier Beattie in his now deflated election promises—said—

"What we are determined to do is spend it"—

referring to public moneys—

"in the best places and for the best reasons. We are proceeding on that basis. As the project"—

referring to the Tewantin TAFE project—

"had not been formally approved, new investment priorities reduced the total at this time."

That occurred, despite the approval for the project by the coalition.

It is interesting to note that the Labor candidate at the 1998 election, a Mr Sfiligoj, who also committed himself and the Labor Party to the Tewantin TAFE, is now an adviser on the Minister's staff. I am absolutely astounded that Mr Sfiligoj has not been game to put his head up in the Noosa electorate over the past two years and make a statement about the Tewantin TAFE as a former Labor candidate, as a member of the community, or as a member of the Minister's staff. I do not know whether the fellow still lives in town, but I can assure the Minister that he has absolutely no credibility there, and nor does the Labor Party.

A Government member: Neither do you.

Mr DAVIDSON: I certainly do, because the people know that I am committed to ensuring that training is provided for all of those young people in my electorate. During that Estimates committee meeting, the Minister went on to state—

"The population is growing at a rapid rate, with by far the largest growth occurring in the southern part of the catchment area. Accordingly, the VET capital works program for the Cooloola Sunshine Institute is to be reviewed."

All that that gobbledegook really meant was that the Premier had lied to the electorate when he said during the election campaign that he would honour all coalition Government commitments. More than anything else, this

vacant site at Tewantin is a monument and testament to the election lies of the Labor Party and the Premier of this State. With this decision to put the Tewantin-allocated funds towards the Cooloola Institute—a TAFE already operating at Nambour—the Premier is doing nothing more than rewarding the member for Nicklin for his support in this House.

The one truth in the Minister's Estimates remarks was that the growth of population being experienced in south-east Queensland was his reason to relocate the approved funds from Tewantin. In the past 20 years, the population of the Noosa Shire, let alone the electorate, has grown from 11,000 people to 42,000 people. Currently, there are 13,000 children in schools in my electorate—all potential future TAFE students. The electorate of Noosa now has a total population of 66,000 people living within its boundaries. If the Minister's figure that one in 10 Queenslanders is now being educated in a TAFE college is accurate—and we have no reason to doubt that—and if he really believes, as he said in his second-reading speech, that Queenslanders need quality vocational education and training, then I can only ask him and his Government, as they blow their trumpets for presenting this Bill to this House: when are they going to acknowledge the Premier's promise to complete this approved coalition project? When are they going to acknowledge their own commitment to a very urgent need for a TAFE college at Tewantin/Noosa, given the population growth in my electorate—a factor that the Minister agrees should be the basis for establishing this form of education and which he highlighted again in his second-reading speech?

On the Minister's own one-in-10 figure, 6,000-plus people in the Noosa electorate are in need of a TAFE college now. In the Noosa Shire, where land is forlornly awaiting the establishment of a TAFE facility, more than 4,200 people are potential students—4,200 people are anxiously waiting for this Government to recognise their immediate needs and waiting impatiently for this Minister to provide them with this facility. Until this Government and this Minister recognise those people's needs and act constructively upon them, the rhetoric in this legislation is nothing more than a cheap attempt to cover up the dismal performance of this Government and this Minister in the vital area of vocational training—an area vital to the employment prospects of many people living in the Minister's acknowledged growth area.

Let us not hear from the Minister how he has thanked the member for Nicklin for his support and at the same time looked after the needs of the people in my electorate with the upgrading of the Cooloola Sunshine Institute. He and his Premier have failed in their quest to improve the employment position of many unemployed Queenslanders. They claim that this Bill will rectify the situation. However, it will not. They seem to be oblivious to the fact that, for many, the cost of accessing these courses of learning makes it too difficult for them to attend.

Currently, it costs those students from Noosa and the surrounding areas who attend the courses at the Nambour TAFE more than \$70 a week just to travel to Nambour. I cannot believe that in this day and age, when all Government departments have staff who have the expertise to identify where population growth is occurring and where people's needs are greatest, the Minister can continue to fund the Cooloola Institute and continue to build facilities there for the people on the Sunshine Coast. The growth is occurring at Noosa, Coolool, Maroochydore and Caloundra. The public transport system from Pomona to Nambour is shocking. To travel to Nambour from Noosa, people catch a bus to the railway station, catch the train, and from there walk to the TAFE college. The public transport system does suit the needs of those people. It costs students in many parts of my electorate \$70 a week to get to Nambour.

The hospitality facility that the coalition Government proposed for Tewantin fits in with needs of the local community, it fits in with the employment prospects of the future generations of my electorate and it fits in with the training needs of all the restaurateurs and hospitality facilities that employ staff. However, many of those people find it impossible to access the training for those jobs that is provided at Nambour and the \$70 transport cost that goes with it. Many of those young people are working 10 hours a week for \$10 an hour, or 20 hours a week for \$10 or \$11 an hour. Their income is \$100 or \$200 a week. They cannot afford to pay \$70 a week to travel to Nambour.

Let me recognise firstly that the previous Minister and my colleague, Mr Santoro, understood that there was a need to locate a TAFE facility to provide that training at Tewantin, because that is where the people live and that is where their places of employment are. There is not a hospitality industry as such in Nambour; it is all based on the coast. I get frustrated because many young people come to my office, or stop me in

the street, or talk to me in shopping centres and say, "I would love to get to the Nambour TAFE, but how do I transport myself there? I cannot afford the \$70 a week. On a rainy day, I cannot get from the train station to the institute." Those issues should be addressed.

The coalition Government proposed to offer some environmental studies and some fashion studies at that TAFE facility at Tewantin. Those courses fit with the needs of the Noosa community. Noosa is an environmental/ecotourism destination. Hastings Street is one of the fashion streets of the world. It is also one of the restaurant streets of the world. It is absolutely vital that we have a TAFE facility at Tewantin. For the Minister to pull the money out of that proposed facility at Tewantin and to give it to his little mate from Nicklin, Mr Wellington—who has no understanding of the training needs of the people in the region—for his own political purpose is a disgrace. The Minister and his department have neglected and misunderstood totally the needs of the people of my electorate. I am not just talking about the Noosa area; I am talking about Kin Kin, Pomona, Cooran and Cooroy—all of the people in those country areas who can access facilities at Noosa but who find it much more difficult to access facilities at Nambour.

The public transport of that area is another issue. Over the years it has improved enormously, and today it is much better than it was five years ago or 10 years ago. However, it does not suit the needs of the potential TAFE students in my electorate. My son is a carpenter by trade. He spent many days at Nambour TAFE—the Cooloola Institute. We had to get them there by our own means. Many, many other students and young people are under that same pressure. It is okay if mum can lend them the car or they have their own car, or they have a mate going to the institute, or whatever. However, the public transport cost excludes many people from attending that facility.

I know that the Minister is a reasonable man, so I ask him to reconsider the long-term future of that project at Tewantin. I know that he understands the needs of our youth. I know that he understands the role that TAFE has to play in communities such as those in the Noosa electorate. I would like him and his departmental officers to reconsider this matter, because I believe that the facility would have an enormous role to play in training many of the young people in my area for industries and jobs that are in existence now and will continue to grow.

The area is a major tourism destination in this State. The tourism market is focused on the environment, that is, ecotourism. It is also focused on the dining and culinary experiences of Noosa, its fashion stores and so on. A great opportunity would be presented by having such a facility at Noosa or Tewantin. It would provide training opportunities for young people in partnership, in many cases, with businesspeople in my electorate. Mr Santoro and I held a number of meetings with businesspeople who were only too willing to be involved in that facility at Tewantin on behalf of the community and to offer their services and expertise to provide appropriate training for all of these young people in my area.

I was appalled by the Minister's unbelievable decision. It was a political decision in the interests of the member for Nicklin. It has come at a cost to my community. Recently, there have been many reports in the media about people being dissatisfied with the level of service at restaurants not just in Noosa but throughout Queensland. If we read some of the food magazines, we see that there is a concern that service standards are dropping in many of our food outlets and restaurants. Noosa, with Hastings Street and now Gympie Terrace, and Coolool, to the south, are growing culinary destinations. This is complemented by the fact that they are fantastic ecotourism destinations. It is vital to provide such a facility in this part of the world. We have to ensure that we are providing the best possible learning facilities and, as a result, the best service levels—something that tourists from all over the world are looking for.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.21 p.m.): In 1997-98, when the coalition Government undertook extensive consultation in the preparation of new training legislation, we found that one of the key concerns of people in Queensland was how quality in the training system would be assured. At that time, we listened to those concerns and we put in place the 1998 Bill, which contained provisions necessary for a quality system.

Although most training organisations do a fine job, expecting to be in business for the long haul, unfortunately there are a few that transgress, that do not live up to the requirements of their registration and that give the other providers a bad name. I am sure all honourable members would agree that those training providers need to be weeded out. The reputable ones who maintain their credibility in the industry and with the public through the provision of quality services should be

supported. However, those that jeopardise the training, the employment and the futures of Queenslanders need to feel the full weight of quality control and the consequences of their actions.

In the coalition's 1998 Bill we were concerned that training providers operating in Queensland that had been registered interstate and that had contravened the conditions of their registration should be subject to cancellation by Queensland training authorities. We did not want, and still do not want today, any of those operators exploiting the people of Queensland.

Although we support mutual recognition under a national framework, we wanted to be sure that the appropriate action could be taken to deal with training organisations that did not meet the conditions of their registration. Therefore, we included a provision to cancel the registration of interstate providers found to be contravening the conditions of their registration. I note that this approach has been followed in the Government's legislation that we are debating today.

Consumers must have a choice in who delivers their training—a choice from a wide range of public and private providers. But the system must be a strong one, with appropriate checks in place, including penalties for non-compliance with the law. Quality cannot and must not be compromised.

There have been problems in the implementation of the national framework, as States have attempted to implement it within outdated legislative frameworks. This is true of Queensland. The Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 1991 is simply inadequate as a means of maintaining quality under the agreed national framework. It does not provide sufficient legal underpinning for the new system to operate in Queensland. The member for Clayfield, the then Minister, acknowledged this deficiency and drafted legislation to overcome it. The legislation before us today largely reflects the intent and the work of the then Minister, Mr Santoro.

However, the new training system has been under full implementation without any attention to the policy and legal frameworks required. Because of this it is not surprising that there have been a few problems in the transition phase. The Beattie Labor Government has been most negligent in not bringing this legislation forward before now, particularly given that two years have elapsed since the legislative framework was essentially ready to go. I understand that there are inconsistencies across States and Territories in

the implementation of the agreed national policy.

I note that the Federal Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Dr Kemp, recently called for State and Territory cooperation in the development of model legislation that will facilitate the implementation of agreed national policy. Amendments to Queensland's legislation will more than likely be necessary when this proceeds. All Ministers have agreed to the need for a fully integrated system and consistency across borders. We will be watching progress towards this goal and encouraging the Minister to work constructively towards its achievement.

Quality assurance systems are necessary and it is good business practice to have them in place. But we still need to have a sound system of ongoing monitoring and audit. The 1998 coalition Bill improved on the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 1991 by making arrangements for inspections of training organisations and workplaces much clearer. We wanted to give some teeth to the inspection process so that the people of Queensland could be assured that training was meeting the required standards. It is good to see that the Government has taken our lead and seen fit to include similar provisions under the enforcement section of this Bill.

Although we support the pursuit of unscrupulous operators and believe they deserve to have the full sanction of the law thrown at them, audits should not be used as a form of harassment of training providers. The conduct of audits and monitoring of compliance requires highly skilled operatives. There is no place for bias, badgering and incrimination in the conduct of audits. Impartiality, professional ethics and adherence to due process are required. Audits should not be conducted on the pretext that there are crooks out there who need to be caught. It is incumbent on the Minister to ensure that the departmental staff receive adequate training and support in performing the enforcement role and that only fully trained staff will be used. The last thing the system needs is undertrained and overzealous investigators wielding a heavy hand.

The competitive training market has changed the face of training substantially over the past five years. However, quality need not be compromised in this competitive environment. High standards in delivery and assessment are absolutely necessary. Organisations concerned about keeping their market share in this highly competitive environment are taking an active role in

building the system's integrity and maintaining a strong commitment to quality outcomes. Market forces are at work, with the introduction of user choice arrangements for apprenticeship and traineeship training. And these market forces are, in the main, working to improve the VET system. Where employers were once obliged to seek training support from TAFE for their apprentices' or trainees' off-the-job instruction, they are now at liberty to choose among TAFE institutes and private training organisations for the training organisation that best meets their needs.

The array of flexible delivery options for employers has seen market specialisation and the expansion of niche markets within the training sector. This serves the goal of quality training well. If industry does not value the products and services delivered or does not hold the provider in high regard, market forces will drive the provider into extinction. Employers and apprentices must have available to them the flexibility to change training providers during the term of a training contract if circumstances change or if service delivery is not up to the desired standard.

But market forces alone cannot be relied upon and we need to make sure that an effective system of monitoring and auditing is in place, and that it is evenly applied to all training organisations, both public and private. While standards can be set and criteria met in initial audits, it is a different story to maintain quality efforts when the heat is no longer directly applied. Vigilance in the scrutiny of provider operations is required. The monitoring process must identify those training providers falling short of expected standards and remedies must be applied to address those situations. A targeted schedule of audits keeps everyone on their toes.

The Bill before us requires the up-front check of training providers to include checks into the "character" of an individual and the business "reputation" of the organisation. Further to this, the council will check the current financial position and financial background of the organisation and whether it can provide the resources and services to deliver the training. But even with these checks things can go wrong. Such a heavy emphasis on the front end of the process can succeed only if there is adequate follow-up monitoring and audit. A heavy reliance on enforcement as a solution to the "quality" problem is not the only or, indeed, the best solution. With so many players in the system, enforcement by highly trained officers becomes a very expensive proposition. A more efficient approach is to manage the risks.

With several years of experience in the competitive market of training—a policy introduced by the Labor Government in 1992—the department must surely have at its disposal a mountain of data on the types of events or characteristics that might signal which training providers are at risk of non-compliance. The department's recent campaigns of aggressive auditing and public exposure of certain training organisations must also have yielded substantial data. This data should be put to good use. An approach that identifies those "at risk providers" for audit is a more efficient way of approaching the problem.

There is an alternative to tarnishing the image of the entire training industry by constant and sensational quoting of bad cases, such as the Minister has done in the this Parliament. The excellent performers must not be tarred with the same brush as those who are shonky. This brings the whole system into disrepute. Risk management must work hand in hand with enforcement in maintaining the integrity of the system and public and industry confidence in it. It is critical that the national system works effectively and consistently.

The reforms of the past years were designed to deliver flexible, responsive and accessible training arrangements for business and, in particular, small business. We must do everything possible to ensure that, when businesses choose to train, they get a quality product. This is why it is essential that Queensland's arrangements guarantee quality outcomes. We must have a legislative framework and an administrative framework that ensures that quality remains at the heart of the vocational education and training system in this State. Businesses and individuals expect and deserve quality training.

In conclusion, the Opposition would warmly welcome real commitment to the principle of quality in the system. We would welcome a real effort on the part of the Government to work towards a fully integrated national system so that quality issues impacting on Queensland's system are uniformly addressed.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE. As many members in the south-eastern corner may very well know, this is a high quality institute. It has had some management problems in the past. I understand that they have been overcome and that there is a more stable management regime at the present time. It has continued to provide quality

training for young people on the Gold Coast. It specialises in the area of tourism and hospitality.

Indeed, it has made a number of strategic alliances in recent years, most notably with Griffith University. I think there have been significant efforts in terms of cooperation, sharing of facilities and sharing of staff not only between the TAFE institute and the university, but indeed with the school systems as well. I think that is where some real progress has been made over the past 5 to 10 years: we have been more amenable to putting in place a flexible system that allows students from Years 11 and 12 to have experience with TAFE college subjects which may, in fact, involve some university resources as well. From a young person's point of view, this system in which we have been able to allow students to move easily between different modes of education has been a real advance in the past couple of years.

Allied to that is the recognition of prior learning, the fact that, hopefully in the future, students will be able to take a TAFE course, complete a certificate or diploma and have that recognised when they go on to university to undertake a degree. I think that is the way forward. For too many years now barriers have been set up between schools, TAFE colleges and universities, each one protecting their own turf. What is happening now is that we are moving to a more integrated approach where there are multiple pathways between these different institutions, and that is a great advance and one from which our students will certainly benefit a lot.

I know from talking to TAFE teachers, high school teachers and university people that they recognise the need to break down some of these barriers so that we can put in place a more flexible system that can better meet the needs and the desires of young people. The GCIT on the Gold Coast is certainly one of those institutions that is working towards this. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (4.34 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Training and Employment Bill 2000, it gives me the opportunity to raise a couple of issues this afternoon in relation to the Toowoomba campus of TAFE and also the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE. There are a couple of issues that I wish to bring to the attention of the Minister. Hopefully, some of those issues may then be addressed.

The Toowoomba campus of TAFE itself is split up into four different campuses around

the city. The main campus, of course, is located in Bridge Street, with another campus being located at the corner of Hume and Margaret Streets, which is the administration area of the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE. There are also some administration staff there in relation to the Toowoomba college. We also have trades, mechanical and auto located in Hume Street. On the western side of town we have the TAFE horticultural section.

A couple of weeks ago my colleague the member for Toowoomba South and I received a very good briefing from the local directors of SQIT, who outlined to us the 10-year capital works plan, or the strategic assets plan for Toowoomba as far as TAFE training is concerned, which will hopefully bring all of these campuses from various parts of the city onto the one campus, which would be the main campus in Bridge Street. It is interesting to highlight a bit of history of this campus.

The campus was built before 1989, during the reign of the coalition Government before last. The site that the TAFE college is on is actually the site of the old Toowoomba showgrounds. My colleague the member for Toowoomba South was, in fact, general manager of the Royal National Association at the time, and he was responsible for actually shifting the whole showgrounds from one part of the city right out to the western part of the city. I often drive up past the Toowoomba TAFE campus and wonder how we actually conducted a four-day show on that site. That site is also right in the middle of a residential area, and we actually conducted the speedway at that particular site. It is quite interesting. I often wonder how we were actually able to fit that on that site.

Now we have a magnificent TAFE complex at that site and there is plenty of room for expansion. There is a lot of land there where the TAFE college can, in fact, relocate parts of its services from around the city to that main complex. One of the areas that will be shifted will be the horticultural training section of TAFE, which is located on the western side of Toowoomba. This has been an interesting piece of history, too, because that TAFE horticultural centre is located on Education Department land. It was land that was set aside—and had been set aside for about the past 30 years—for a fourth high school in Toowoomba. I am sure that the Minister for Employment and Training will recall very, very vividly that particular site because he was Minister for Education at the time. I remember when he came to Toowoomba in 1994 or early 1995 before the 1995 election promising that

he was going to build that high school. Of course it never happened. But in 1998 we were able to do it.

The problem that arose was that the TAFE horticultural facility was not suitable on that land. It was not suitable because we had a Year 8 to 10 high school which, in fact, is a campus of the existing Toowoomba State High School. At the time there was a lot of toing-and-froing in relation to what was to happen to the TAFE horticultural section. At the time some heavy negotiations were certainly going on. Eventually it was decided that the TAFE horticultural section would be relocated, and that process is under way now. It will be relocated to the main TAFE campus.

In a place like Toowoomba, training in horticulture is very important. Toowoomba is famous for many things, most notably its horticulture industry. We have our annual Carnival of Flowers festival, and a tremendous industry for nurseries. We grow plants and flowers very well up there. That has always been something that people from miles around come to see, and that is good for tourism as well. It is important that we try to get as many young people as possible into the training sector of horticulture. Toowoomba has a very good, very well established and very well run TAFE horticulture section.

Brian Sams, who heads the horticultural section at the Toowoomba TAFE, has become a bit of a star over the past couple of years. He is very good at what he does and he is also very good at selling the message of horticulture training within TAFE. In fact, he now has a regular segment at the end of the local television news once a week promoting the TAFE horticulture section. It really has become a very popular segment. That sort of publicity will lead to a lot more young people realising that they do have a future in horticulture in the city by applying to undertake some courses in horticulture. That is part of the 10-year plan that TAFE in Toowoomba is looking at in relocating all of the various mini campuses into the one. Its location, which is right beside the Botanical Gardens, will be a great boon for TAFE in Toowoomba, particularly the horticulture section. I believe that this concept certainly has a lot of merit.

The other issue that I want to raise relates to the transfer of a parcel of land at the TAFE complex in Bridge Street. I hope that the Minister can give me some idea as to the progress on this issue. There is a proposal to expand the Cobb & Co. Museum which is located on land within the TAFE complex itself. The Cobb & Co. Museum is an arm of the

Queensland Museum. The Queensland Museum has been given approval and has received funding from the Heritage Trails Network to expand the Cobb & Co. Museum. The original plan was for a \$4m to \$4.5m complex. Unfortunately, the Heritage Trails Network funding only allowed for a \$1.7m complex. That is set to go ahead; as I said, approval has been given for it.

However, there has been a problem with the land. The existing Cobb & Co. Museum is located on a reserve for museum purposes. The trustees for the reserve are the board of the Queensland Museum. The new accommodation and the expansion of the Cobb & Co. Museum will overlap the present museum reserve boundaries onto an adjacent reserve which forms part of the Bridge Street campus of the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE. As I understand it, up until about October last year the trustee for this reserve was the Minister for Education. I understand that that has been transferred and the responsibility now comes within the ambit of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations.

In a value management strategic asset study for the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, officers of the institute and the Physical Resources Management Services Branch of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations indicated their support in principle for use of the additional land required for the project. In making available additional land to the south of the present museum, SQIT and DETIR were interested in the Queensland Museum transferring to SQIT land on the northern boundary of the present museum reserve. I understand that all that is needed is the formal approval of the Minister to the proposed transfer. I understand that that is with the Minister now. I wrote to the Minister last week outlining the urgency of this particular transfer simply because, as a result of the Cobb & Co. Museum receiving the money from the Heritage Trails Network, they have now been able to bid for some fairly major exhibitions. One of those is coming in January.

I am a little concerned that any unforeseen delays in the construction of the expanded facility may place future exhibitions in jeopardy. As a result, it is imperative that that transfer take place. I understand that agreement has been reached and, as I said, it is now with the Minister. All it needs is his tick of approval and signing off so that can occur. Quite frankly, tenders will need to be called in the next couple of weeks for the construction of this expansion of the Cobb & Co. Museum.

I would be very happy if the Minister could give me some indication as to the status of that transfer at this stage. I am sure that the board of the Queensland Museum and the board of the Cobb & Co. Museum would be very happy to receive that information so they know they can go ahead with calling tenders for the expansion of the Cobb & Co. Museum.

Another interesting thing I want to mention briefly in relation to Toowoomba TAFE is the fact that the Department of Housing has been instrumental in assisting TAFE students, particularly those students who have to come to Toowoomba from country areas, to find suitable, low-cost accommodation. By way of history, the Department of Housing owns a cluster block of units on the northern side of the city. The social problems surrounding these units were quite phenomenal. There were a lot of problems in that area with violence, drunkenness, damage to vehicles and damage to the property itself. In fact, it was costing the Department of Housing quite a bit of money to maintain those units.

I can recall convincing the Minister—I think Terry Mackenroth was the Minister for Housing at the time—to allow that particular complex to be used specifically for TAFE student accommodation. It has been a real model for the rest of the State because it has been quite successful. Students attending the Toowoomba college of TAFE are now able to get into low-cost, affordable accommodation. They are paying virtually the same as any public rental housing tenants would pay, but of course they are able to pool their money as there are three and four bedroom units. Parents of students attending TAFE certainly feel comfortable about that. They can send their sons and daughters to Toowoomba to attend a course at TAFE—particularly a long-term course—in the knowledge that they have suitable accommodation that is not going to cost them the earth.

There is another issue that has been raised over the past couple of years relating to the students at the Toowoomba State High School, particularly those doing manual arts courses. There is a history behind this issue as well. We have been lobbying for quite some time to get an upgrade of the manual arts building at the Toowoomba State High School. As I understand it, that will be happening with the latest make-over funding announced by the Minister. By the same token, I am pleased to say that I have been able to initiate talks between the principal of the Toowoomba State High School and the director of the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE to allow some of those students to access some of the

equipment which from time to time lies idle at various stages of the day and night at the campus of the Toowoomba TAFE.

I understand that those negotiations are continuing. That will be a real boon for some of those students, because some of the equipment in the complex is very modern and very up to date. I understand that some agreement has been reached at this stage to allow those students to access that equipment so that they can gain further knowledge and further training in relation to the various trades they are pursuing.

Mr Santoro: Third-party access to TAFE facilities? That's a sensitive issue.

Mr HEALY: It is a sensitive issue, but it is one of those practical things that needs to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. I think that this issue is certainly a very practical one. I want to thank the director of the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, Mr John Elich, for his willingness to provide briefings not only to me but also to the member for Toowoomba South over the past couple of months in relation to the Toowoomba college and the institute as well. I also thank other directors, such as Bill Jelocic and Shayne Baker, for the courteous briefings that they have given us.

Another highlight of the Toowoomba college is a very good and very professional hospitality training section. Toowoomba has many fine restaurants and many houses of hospitality, whether they be hotels or clubs. The hospitality section at the Futures training restaurant at the Toowoomba college is excellent. It provides a wonderful opportunity for young people to become involved in the hospitality industry. We have been quite successful in getting young people into the hospitality industry in Toowoomba and, as a result, they have been able to further their careers.

The member for Clayfield mentioned the photography section at the Toowoomba college, which is an award winning section. It has had some great success.

I understand that the coalition will be supporting this Bill. We do have concerns in relation to some sections of the legislation. I again ask the Minister if he would provide me with a response on the issue of the transfer of land from his department to the Queensland Museum in relation to the Cobb & Co. expansion. There is some urgency in relation to that, due to the time lines required to make sure that expansion takes place.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (4.50 p.m.): I am very pleased to speak to the Training and

Employment Bill 2000. At the outset, I congratulate the Minister for bringing this legislation to the House. Like his industrial relations legislation of last year, this Bill actually meets the needs of a modern work environment. The legislation before us follows a number of reviews. In particular was the 1999 report entitled Independent Investigation into the Quality of Training in Queensland's Traineeship System by Kaye Schofield. That identified areas for improvement in the current legislation.

The Bill before us provides for a far more effective structure for providing advice to Government. It allows for procedures for registration of training organisations that are in line with what are now nationally agreed policies. It also provides for a more efficient regulation of the apprenticeship and traineeship system and it introduces greater quality in apprenticeships, traineeships and vocational placements. I am also very pleased to see the creation of a training ombudsman to protect the interests of apprentices, trainees and employers. I believe this is long overdue.

The Training and Employment Bill 2000 will provide support for a flexible, high quality training system. My contribution to the debate will concentrate on apprenticeship numbers. Business and industry in this State need a very strong skills base if Queensland is to realise its potential as an economic powerhouse in Australia and if we are to boost employment opportunities for young Queenslanders. I believe it is important to provide from within the State the apprentices we need to drive our industries. It is important that Government plays a role in ensuring that we have the numbers and the quality of skilled tradespeople here in Queensland.

The new system will ensure the integrity of the apprenticeship and traineeship system by clearly defining the obligations and responsibilities of all parties and by simplifying associated regulatory and administrative processes. The Bill sets out in clear terms the obligations and responsibilities of all parties involved.

For the first time, the Bill gives statutory recognition to the requirement for employers and training organisations to deliver training to apprentices and trainees in line with an agreed training plan. The agreed training plan will ensure apprentices, trainees, employers and training organisations know their responsibilities from the outset. They can therefore work towards positive training outcomes. New processes, reinforced by appropriate penalties, will guarantee that

training is delivered as required. In extreme cases, the legislation provides for the revocation of the registration of a training organisation. Prohibited employer status will be applied to employers who repeatedly fail to deliver training—in other words, consistent misusers and consistent abusers of the system. The object of these reforms is to build quality into apprenticeships, traineeships and vocational placements.

The Bill will help this Government combat the high number of non-completions in the apprenticeship and traineeship system. It also will support the real progress the Beattie Government has made in the vocational education and training sector in the past 18 months.

Vocational education and training is critical to our success as a Smart State. Given that only about 37%, or 13,000, of Queensland's Year 12 students go to university each year, it is vital that we provide options for those who do not. It is apparent from the substantial increase in apprenticeships and traineeships in the past year that young Queenslanders have embraced this form of training as a viable career option.

In the 12 months to December 1999, new approvals for apprenticeships rose by 29% while new approvals for traineeships rose by 20%. This progress has been the result of a number of reforms and initiatives introduced by the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. As I said, the 1999 Schofield report, Independent Investigation into the Quality of Training in Queensland's Traineeship System, really highlighted the need for these reforms.

I move on to administrative arrangements for apprentices and trainees. The department and training industry stakeholders have also been working together since February this year to pilot new ways to administer apprenticeships and traineeships. During the pilot administrative arrangements have been tested, evaluated and refined in order to increase completion rates and improve the quality of training.

The program itself involves a number of initiatives, including: the provision of induction information before the training agreement is actually registered; the completion of the probationary period before the training agreement is registered; registered training organisations developing a training plan between the employer and the apprentice/trainee during the probationary period; and ensuring the employer has the

capacity to enter into a training contract with an apprentice or trainee.

The pilot is testing and evaluating the registration of training agreements after probation as a key to improving the quality of training provided. We have recognised the importance of the probationary period in ensuring that all parties to a training agreement have time to commit to a long-term training contract. Greater commitment will improve the rate of completions and the quality of training.

I turn to the matter of school-based apprenticeships. Queensland has been at the forefront in developing a school-based apprenticeship and traineeship program that enables students to gain vocational qualifications and valuable industry experience while at school. A school-based apprentice or trainee is a full-time student, a worker with entitlements who is paid for time spent at work and an apprentice or trainee under a contract of training. On completion, a young person can obtain a senior secondary certificate as well as a traineeship qualification or partial completion of an apprenticeship, which can be completed after leaving school.

In 1997 Queensland piloted the program with 30 students from State, independent and Catholic education schools. In 1999 we had over 1,900 students sign on for the program across the State. In total, 2,800 students have signed on since the start of the program—well over half of Australia's total effort. School-based vocational education and training programs are a legitimate alternative to traditional education. They are enabling students to get a nationally recognised vocational education and training qualification, as well as the OP they want.

Of course, we are all interested in breaking the unemployment cycle. There is an initiative within the department to achieve this. Building on Queensland's apprenticeship and traineeship system is the Government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative. The initiative is a range of strategies funded by the Government aimed at creating approximately 24,500 apprentice, trainee and job placement employment and training opportunities over a period of four years.

One of the main objectives of this initiative has been to increase apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities for young people, focusing on industries with skills shortages. This involves the implementation of 6,500 new apprenticeships and traineeships for unemployed Queenslanders in the public sector and 7,500 additional apprenticeships

and traineeships in the private sector over three years.

As at 24 April 2000, nearly 4,000 employers throughout Queensland had received almost \$11.8m in cash bonuses. These bonuses were paid for employing more than 7,200 extra apprentices and trainees in areas of crucial skills shortages under the program's private sector employment initiative.

This Government has a firm commitment to providing young Queenslanders with a high quality apprenticeship and traineeship system. This Bill cements improvements already made by the Beattie Government to the vocational education and training system and provides a strong framework to support quality in training. I support the Bill.

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (4.58 p.m.): If this State and its leaders are serious about securing our economic future, we must devote our energies to strategies that will make this inevitable, and quality vocational education and training is one strategy that must be adopted by every sector of our community if we are to compete in an environment of constant change. No-one in this Parliament can ignore the effect that technological advances have had on the way we do business, and neither should we assume that these advances will in any way diminish the effect on Queensland commerce, and yet the most obvious strategy to combat the challenges offered by technology is overlooked until the situation becomes critical.

Continuous improvement has long been accepted as a technique for success within many organisations, yet its connection to the maintenance of skills has yet to be made for many of our employers. We need a working ethos which values training and lifelong learning and which is underpinned by responsive, flexible and fair legislation. The private sector needs the right environment within which it can operate successfully. What is needed is an industry-led training system where industry sets the standards and one that reduces the bureaucracy to an absolute minimum.

The committee structures created in this Training and Employment Bill build an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy onto an already complex vocational education and training system in Queensland. There is no doubt that we need a far less cumbersome system than that which we have under the current legislation. When the coalition consulted on reforms to the vocational education and training system in 1997 and 1998, we got a very clear signal from industry,

training providers, apprentices and trainees that the maze of advisory structures and standing committees had not instilled confidence in the system. Duplication of operations and unnecessary bureaucracy were two of the major common concerns.

Under the current legislation there are four statutory committees: a Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission; a State Training Council; an Accreditation Council; and a State Planning and Development Council. Then there are a number of committees which either successive Ministers or the commission have created, including Nagi Binanga, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee; a Disability Advisory Committee, an ACE Advisory Council and a Small Business Advisory Committee. I understand that the department recently added to this long list of committees with the creation of yet another committee, a Recognition Management Committee, to deal with quality issues.

That is 11 committees. Overlaid on those 11 committees are some 20 industrial training advisory bodies and their council, creating a system which is weighted down with a complex network of decision-making and advisory committees. Stakeholders tell us that it is a wonder any decisions which have any real impact on the end users of the system—employers and individuals—get made at all. Indeed, it is a wonder that, with all that input, we do not have the best system in the world. But we do not.

We listened to the concerns of stakeholders, and in the 1998 Bill we put before the Parliament we pared back this bureaucratic committee system to one Queensland Training Authority. We took the view at the time—and it is still relevant today—that the implementation of initiatives under the National Training Framework, including the Australian Recognition Framework, would require system flexibility that encouraged participation in training by industry, business and the community. In addition, we wanted to ensure we had a system that would foster decision making at the local level. We also wanted to achieve a balance between system flexibility and system quality. Our 1998 Bill embodied both these aims. So I am pleased that the Bill we are debating today has reduced that burdensome and outdated committee structure, even if only to some extent.

We envisaged one authority which would operate independently of the department with the responsibility for determining criteria and

guidelines for the registration of training organisations, accreditation of courses and the registration of training agreements. This authority would have represented industry and would have had the charter to write the rules for the vocational education and training system and advise on how the quality and integrity of the system would be enhanced. The authority we proposed would have had membership of up to nine people appointed for their experience and expertise in vocational education and training, industry or community affairs and for their ability to contribute to the strategic direction of the State's vocational education and training system. In line with the principles of tripartite representation, we also made it explicit in the 1998 Bill that membership would contain employee and employer representation. Accountability, particularly to small business and industry, lay at the heart of our proposed new arrangements. We saw a State Training Authority that would not work in isolation from its constituency.

It is still true today that advice from industry and the community needs to be sourced from a broad base and plays an important role in shaping the State's vocational education and training initiatives. Industry, enterprises and the community must have access to the decision-making and advisory bodies but must also be routinely consulted on major issues which impact upon them. Our legislative proposals would have achieved this. We were committed to true industry leadership of the vocational education and training system in Queensland. Let us hope the Government pursues this aim with its new Training and Employment Board. Let us hope that it gets it right this time, because it certainly has not got it right to date.

The committee structures we have before us in the Government's Training and Employment Bill include a Training and Employment Board and a Training Recognition Council. The proposed Training and Employment Board will replace the existing commission. This board will have advisory and executive functions. It will have up to 15 members, four of whom will be persons with standing with unions and four of whom will be persons who have standing with employers.

It is a good thing that this board is subject to signed directions from the Minister, because it does not have within its membership as a directly appointed member the chief executive of the department. Let us hope that the board does not venture off into territory that is not of its domain and do any damage before such direction can be issued. Without the guidance

of the chief executive on policy matters, this may be a very real risk. This lack of policy direction of the board represents, as it currently stands today, a very major weakness of the Bill.

We held the view that the principal advisory committee to the Minister should have a statutory requirement to consult widely with appropriate industry and community bodies, and the administrative arrangements for implementation included a performance review mechanism to ensure that the committee would be held accountable. We did not include any statutory standing committees of this principal advisory committee. We did not want to continue the duplication of effort by the Accreditation Council, the State Training Council and the State Planning and Development Council under our proposed legislation. This did not mean that the authority would have acted in a void, however, and we included the capacity for the authority to create its own committees as needed, with the approval of the Minister.

Another feature of the Queensland Training Authority structure proposed by the coalition Government in 1998 was the strategic focus of this authority. We wanted to relieve this peak body of administrative and operational responsibilities. We wanted the authority to be the stakeholders' voice and vision for the vocational education and training system.

A separate Training Recognition Council under the Government's Bill will amalgamate the State Training Council and the Accreditation Council. Instead of there being two moribund and irrelevant committees, the Government has taken the bold step of simply joining these two moribund and irrelevant committees into one and collapsing their functions. It is a source of concern that this council will have such wide-ranging executive powers. As my honourable colleague the member for Clayfield and shadow Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations has highlighted, we do not have driving licences issued and withdrawn by a committee. Why would we use such a scheme for the registration of training organisations or the accreditation of courses? It is simply not necessary. Who does the work on the ground anyway? It is the officers of the department who will execute the Training and Recognition Council's functions on a day-to-day basis. This simply creates a facade of a committee doing these things.

We provided for a range of industry and community advisory mechanisms. We saw the

industry training advisory bodies continuing to play a key role in the system by giving specific industry perspectives on industry skills shortages and other training requirements. We expanded the source of advice to include groups representing a sector of industry or a geographical area. This was to ensure that advice was representative of industry and community needs, particularly for small business and enterprises in rural regions, many of whom told us of their dissatisfaction with the consultative mechanism inside the ITABs. Advice from the eight regional round tables we established, along with other community and industry groups, would have balanced the advice. Round tables were a successful coalition initiative introduced in 1997-98. Their role was to provide advice on regional skills shortages and to assist with planning and allocating resources for the vocational education and training system by providing a regional perspective.

Representatives of both public and private training organisations sat on these round tables with local industry representatives so that changing regional needs could be addressed at the local level. Accountability needs to extend to everyone in the system, including those groups responsible for providing the advice that is so crucial to the success of the system. Similarly, conflicts of interest and the potential for bias in these key advisory bodies must be managed.

We stipulated that industry training advisory bodies would be ineligible for appointment as ITABs if they were registered as training organisations. To provide credible, unbiased and impartial advice on training priorities for public funding is virtually impossible when an ITAB is itself in the business of training. This potential for bias and conflict of interest is not recognised in the Government's Bill.

The committee and advisory structures in the Employment and Training Bill are a step forward in that the heavy weight of bureaucratic structures and functions has been improved somewhat, but they run the risk of perpetuating the old ways of doing things. I commend the Government for finally bringing this long overdue legislation before the House. For too long Queensland has suffered under the weight of a complex and highly regulated system. It is a pity that the opportunity to really refine that regulatory system has not been fully realised.

There will, of course, be interest in how this Bill affects training outcomes throughout Queensland. My own interest is naturally

focused on CSIT on the Sunshine Coast. This facility, as with everything on the coast, has undergone dramatic growth over the years. The Mooloolaba campus is in what could be called an academic precinct in my electorate. We have the Mountain Creek Primary School and the Mountain Creek State High School co-existing comfortably in the same street, with the TAFE college and the University of the Sunshine Coast not far away—a pleasant bike ride away, in fact.

The Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE is probably no different from any other provider, Government or private, in that it is bursting at the seams with IT training. The most significant areas for training at Mooloolaba are tourism, training and hospitality. One of the interesting areas that is proving very popular is heritage and interpretive tourism studies, which is responsible for training our new generation of tour guides. I also understand that CSIT has recently gained the services of Helen O'Niel in the hairdressing faculty. I believe Cooloola's gain is Central Queensland's loss in this respect.

Recent advice is that in round two CSIT has just been offered a \$2.5m training package which equates to 520 student places. I say well done to the Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE. If this offer is accepted, it means a flow-on to teacher positions, administration and supplies to be purchased in the local community. This is all great news for the Sunshine Coast. I trust that the Minister will be mindful of CSIT's current role and future challenges when capital works funding requirements are being considered. The team at CSIT are very proactive. Last year we were looking at the Camcos corridor which is planned to provide a new way of getting to and from the Sunshine Coast. It was quite a fulsome consultative process. CSIT offered to become involved by utilising part of its land so that it could have a station on the transport corridor. The station would help students on the campus and assist the community.

I have attended a lot of community organisation meetings at the TAFE college at Mooloolaba. It interfaces very well with the local community. That is something that should be encouraged in all our schools, whether they be universities, TAFE institutes, high schools or primary schools. These places tend to be locked up at night. However, they can be used for these meetings. I know that the TAFE college in Mooloolaba is very much involved in this area. I understand that discussions are taking place this week with people from the Mountain Creek Primary

School and the Mountain Creek State High School in order to overcome significant problems caused by parking and traffic access by students, parents and staff. I am sure that that cooperative spirit will ensure that the needs of all persons are met.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (5.15 p.m.): I wish to speak today about the appeals provisions contained in the Training and Employment Bill. Two years ago, when the coalition was in Government, the honourable member for Clayfield, as the then Minister for Training and Industrial Relations, introduced into this House a Bill which included a new appeal mechanism which was needed to replace mechanisms that were at the time sadly substandard. This new appeal mechanism provided for a much more transparent and independent appeals regime than that which currently is in use under the existing legislation. The proposed reviews mechanism devised by the coalition Government set new benchmarks in public accountability.

Under the existing VETEC Act 1991, any disputes over a decision of the State Training Council are dealt with by the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission. However, the potential for a real conflict of interest to arise is enormous, especially where concerns may be raised over a decision of this very commission. In such cases, the commission essentially reviews disputes about its own decisions or those of one of its statutory standing committees. I suggest that this is not the most accountable process and one which severely compromises the integrity and independence of the reviewing body. It is no good having Caesar judging Caesar.

Our solution was to provide for a transparent, accountable and totally independent reviewer to hear the dispute. Any person whose interests are affected by decisions of the decision makers must have an avenue of appeal—the right to apply for a review of the decision in question. We were concerned to ensure that these disputes could be dealt with expeditiously. No-one benefits from protracted reviews that simply cost all parties valuable time. We also proposed that a process of conciliation be mandatory before any review was started. As in any dispute, the preferred option is a mutually acceptable resolution between parties rather than having the matter resolved by arbitration.

The Premier obviously believes in this maxim and I am sure he was delighted when Minister Mackenroth achieved a resolution in

the recent case of Minister Swarten's public punch-up. So was Minister Swarten, I am sure.

Our proposals had teeth. No-one could dispute that there will always be occasions where conciliation will not facilitate a successful outcome. This is particularly pertinent where apprentices are concerned, especially when it is considered that most apprentices, by virtue of their young age, are often the most vulnerable people in the workplace. Our legislation, therefore, set out considerable additional powers where a reviewer, who hears a case of cancellation of a registered training agreement, finds the agreement has not been cancelled in accordance with the Act. Penalties would apply, providing the apprentice with the same level of protection as other employees. Penalties help emphasise the importance of complying with registered training agreements and maintaining them wherever possible.

Under our proposed legislation the reviewer had the power to order training to resume or to make orders that the employer provide certain facilities and equipment for the apprentice; the employer to remunerate the apprentice for any loss suffered due to the cancellation, or the apprentice to reimburse the employer—an amount paid on the cancellation of the training agreement.

Our legislative proposals would have provided the reviewer with the power to order the continuation of the training agreement and to require either party to reimburse the other party any amount lost or paid as a result of the original cancellation. We also made provision for cases where the reviewer considered it inappropriate for the training to resume. In all cases, the reviewer would have been required to observe natural justice. The reviewer would have acted quickly, given the fair and proper consideration of all the issues and acted with as little formality and technicality as possible.

However, in this Bill the Government has chosen to complicate things. Instead of having one process as we proposed—that is the reviewer—the Bill before us has three separate approaches for dealing with three separate types of decisions. First, they have created the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Ombudsman. This Apprenticeship and Traineeship Ombudsman has the function of receiving and sending to the council complaints by people who are parties to a training contract—complaints about the training, the facilities, the signing of the contract, the failure to register the contract and the failure of the apprentice to make progress. The ombudsman makes recommendations to the council about the

review of these matters. It is a sort of first stop for those things impacting on the apprentice's training. So it is a process independent of the council, which is a step in the right direction. We recognise that.

However, then there is a separate process for training recognition decisions. These are decisions about the registration of training organisations, decisions about the accreditation of a course, decisions about the recognition of an industry training advisory body and decisions about the recognition of a group training organisation. These decisions are appealed to the Magistrates Court. Given the Magistrates Court's functions in presiding over many criminal matters as well as civil matters, the question must be asked: how expeditiously will these appeals be dealt with? Would it not have been more expedient for one appeals tribunal or review panel to have dealt with these matters?

The Bill also contains a third process. This is for the appeal of decisions by the council or by the employer in respect of cancellations and stand-downs of apprentices and trainees, among other things. This process does not involve the ombudsman or the Magistrates Court; these matters are appealed through the Industrial Commission. How confusing for the poor trainee or apprentice! How will they know where to go to appeal? They will need a detailed road map and explanation, or someone to guide them through the maze. How expeditiously will matters be dealt with by the Industrial Commission?

This is an overly complex set of appeal mechanisms—a complexity that could have been remedied with one review tribunal. I am concerned that these appeal systems will complicate things for the stakeholders and the clients of the training system. We need a system that is accountable and completely transparent, but we also need to ensure that it is not overly complex and difficult for people to use. I am concerned about the efficiencies of relying upon the courts and the Industrial Commission for these matters. I think that we will see as a result many disgruntled and aggrieved people who are frustrated in trying to seek what they rightly deserve—an efficient system for dealing with appeals.

Is the aim of this complexity enshrined in the current Bill to encourage people to walk away silently from the training system and any problems it has caused them because their alternative is a protracted quest for justice through a quasi-legal, confusing and costly to negotiate maze? For the reasons that I have outlined, I do not believe that this Bill will meet

the requirements of the people in this State who are involve in training.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (5.23 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I join this debate, because it relates to a very important issue for my electorate. Certainly, the town of Ingham recognises that TAFE training is extremely important. Back in 1989, I was very much involved in putting together a concept for a TAFE in the Ingham district. As I said, there was a great deal of support for it because the people in that district felt that it was important for the students at the schools to have the opportunity to attend a TAFE facility and for people involved in industry to have the opportunity to undertake advanced TAFE training.

At that time, the closest facility that was available for those people was located at Townsville, which is some 113 kilometres to 114 kilometres away. Of course, for those people who lived in the farther outlying areas of the district, such as Abergowrie, it could take them quite a long time to travel to the TAFE at Townsville, and would be difficult to do on a daily basis. In fact, for those many young people who did not have drivers' licences or a vehicle and who were dependent upon the family car for their transport, it was very difficult for them to receive any TAFE training. So the concept of a TAFE for the Ingham district was developed. A steering committee was formed, and as a result of that committee there was a very strong push for the Minister at the time, Vince Lester, to do something about providing TAFE training at Ingham.

Certainly, the National Party Government of the day came to the fore and many options were considered. After having a look at some of the buildings in the district that might be suitable in the short term to develop this TAFE concept, it was decided that the old Catholic church had a good atmosphere for developing a TAFE. Coral Butcher, who at the time was involved with TAFE in Townsville, came up to Ingham and we discussed how we would go about improving the old church. I have to say that the efforts of Father Felazzo, Tony Gibbeto and the other members of the Catholic community were of great assistance in renovating that old church and bringing it up to a good standard.

For some time that facility was used for TAFE in Ingham. I have to say that Terrie Paterson, who was the principal of that TAFE from its inception, was really well received in the Ingham district. She came from elsewhere, but she has now settled in Ingham and she lives at one of the beach areas. She did an

enormous amount in not only developing the concept but also getting the goodwill of the community, which in those early days was critical.

The courses were quite popular and over the following few years the TAFE reached the point at which further refurbishing and restructuring of the church had to occur. That took place. We had to use an old house that was falling into disrepair. That old house was developed into the TAFE offices. There was very strong support from the community and the council for this further development of the Ingham TAFE. Councillor Vi Groundwater, over the time that TAFE has been in Ingham and up to the present, has been one of the strongest stalwarts of the development of the Ingham TAFE. Mark Tack was also very much to the fore in developing the whole Ingham TAFE concept.

Back about 1990, the Ingham TAFE was going to advance from the old church into a new concept. Unfortunately, an election got in the way and the plans for that development dropped off the map through lack of funds. It is strange how things in this business happen. However, the concept of building a new TAFE facility at Ingham no longer existed and we just had to carry on with what we had.

A lot of planning was done. It was proposed that a big shed could be used for training on heavy machinery. In Ingham there are a lot of cane harvesters and other pieces of heavy machinery. The Minister for Emergency Services has been to the area and he would have seen the cane harvesters and other machinery. It was essential to continue with this concept so that heavy equipment training could be conducted through courses developed with TAFE. When that did not go ahead and it was decided not to purchase the site that we had looked at, we took another look around the district and some buildings were identified. Unfortunately, under the workplace health and safety requirements they were deemed unsuitable for the types of courses proposed. We received a lot of support from the Colonial Sugar Refinery—CSR—and the mills to carry out some of the prevocational training for young people interested in developing their skills and going on to trades. They were of immense help.

The interest in training in the area, particularly TAFE training, was growing and it was essential to find an appropriate facility. Fortune favoured us, and at the 1996 election the coalition got into Government. I congratulate Mr Santoro, the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations

in the then coalition Government, on recognising this great need in the Herbert River district and beyond, down to Townsville, Cardwell and so on. He recognised the need for young people to be able to undertake TAFE training in Ingham. The council also contributed very heavily. It was decided that a library would be incorporated into the concept. Quite a deal of planning took place. I am pleased to see Phil Clarke in the advisers lobby. During that planning stage, we walked the streets of Ingham and noted the location of cafes, child-minding centres and so on. It was felt that any TAFE facility should not be developed without auxiliary services nearby.

An old ambulance centre pretty much in the centre of town was decided upon. A lot of people in the district were not pleased about the TAFE being located in an urban-type environment. However, the administration side of TAFE can be located in one area, with the training being conducted in other areas. The community acceded to the building of the facility on this old ambulance site in the centre of town, with other activities occurring elsewhere.

The Gilroy Santa Maria Catholic College is located on a large site. It was willing to provide some of its area for the new concept. However, because there were no auxiliary services nearby, it was not given the green light as a location for the Ingham TAFE. To its great disappointment, the TAFE was built on the old ambulance centre site. A lot of the prevocational training—small-boat welding and so on—is now being carried out at the high school. And I note that it is good to see the Minister back in the Chamber. I will mention his role with respect to the Ingham TAFE in a moment. The high school was willing to participate in the future development of the TAFE. It made its facilities available. Many young students are now able to do their secondary education and go on to further training, which will be of immense benefit to them in their future occupations. They might not necessarily move into the occupation for which they trained. Nevertheless, that training will stand them in good stead for whatever they do in the future.

The concept was commenced in 1998 and was completed in 1999. Then came the change of Government. It was disappointing to Mr Santoro, who had put so much effort into developing the concept, that he was not able to open it. But Governments come and go. It was extremely important that the Minister was on hand to open that facility. Along with some of the people on his committee, Minister Braddy came to Ingham to open the building.

It was good to see that, putting political differences aside, Mr Santoro also came up to be part of the opening ceremony.

About \$4.2m in total was expended on the facility, of which the Hinchinbrook Shire Council supplied about \$800,000 for the library. We ended up with an excellent facility. It accommodates activities other than TAFE. It has now become a community centre. For example, travelling exhibitions also use the TAFE facility.

The Ingham TAFE is going from strength to strength. When I required the assistance of a secretary, I was able to call on Leisa Menegon for some temporary work. I was fortunate that Leisa was able to do that work when my electorate secretary went on maternity leave. She is now sharing that position with a former secretary of mine with some 23 years' work experience, nine of which were spent assisting me. Both of them are doing an excellent job at the moment. The training that Leisa received at TAFE was extremely valuable. She fitted in with the office procedures very well. It was a great credit to Mr Santoro that he recognised that money could be spent in the Ingham district to train these people for their future occupations, which can only be of benefit to the Ingham district. The TAFE conducts a number of courses, including JP (Qualified) courses and so on. They are probably too numerous to mention. Further opportunities are always being sought by the college in Ingham. But it is not the only one in the electorate—

Mr Purcell: Wrap it up.

Mr ROWELL: I am sorry, I did not hear the member. I hope that the member for Bulimba is interjecting from his correct seat.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr ROWELL: Okay. I will accede to the member's wishes. It is very important.

I also recognise the Johnstone College of TAFE, which is at Innisfail. It was also built by a National Party Government. I think it is an excellent facility. There is little question about that. It was built on quite a reasonable site. A range of courses is being conducted there, such as hairdressing, business, agricultural, courses for people in the banana industry, courses for haul-out drivers and, of course, there is a course for justices of the peace which Aboriginal people have been patronising extremely well over a long period. It is good to see that the Johnstone TAFE is doing extremely well.

The facility, as I said, is excellent. There is no question about that. It has a large sporting

ground area around it, which is being used by the cricket club. I assisted them in getting some toilet blocks built. There was a bit of controversy about the building of them and so on, but they did get them through a sports grant. That is one of the very important facilities for cricket in the Innisfail district. If I had some more time, I would certainly tell honourable members more about the Johnstone TAFE. It is another very important facet as far as TAFE is concerned. The shadow Minister has been there, and I am sure that the Minister has been there, too. They would be fully aware of all the attributes of that great organisation.

I would just like to go on to a few other very important matters if time will permit. I am running out of time; I have only a few minutes left, but I have to mention these sorts of things. I will now mention an issue of concern to me. I received a representation from a person in Innisfail whose son had been put off work. A tool allowance had been allocated to the son. When I viewed the details of the tool allowance, I was quite amazed at what was provided as far as the employer was concerned. That tool allowance included a broom head, which cost \$46.60, and a handle, which cost \$6.70. It is probably not a tool that a person would use to any great extent in the carpentry trade. Then there was a big plastic bucket and a lid. The cost of the bucket was \$11.25 and the lid was \$3.15. Then this apprentice carpenter was also provided with a left-handed bricklayer's trowel. I think the member for Bulimba would be quite interested in this. Why would a carpenter be issued with a left-handed bricklayer's trowel when he is a right-handed person?

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr ROWELL: I do not want to take the interjection, otherwise I will run out of time.

Mr Mickel: No, no. We will give you an extension.

Mr ROWELL: The member will?

Mr Mickel: Yes, absolutely.

Mr ROWELL: All right. He is on.

This carpenter received a left-handed bricklayer's trowel that was valued at \$98.95. It is certainly an unusual piece of equipment for a carpenter. Then he also had a bent level, which was valued at \$75. He was also provided with 57 hard leaded pencils. These are the sorts of things—

Time expired.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (5.43 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to participate

in this most important debate. Never has there been a greater need or role for vocational educational and training to meet the rapidly changing needs of industry, business and the community than today. Of course, opportunities abound for students who participate in this area of education, whether it is in hospitality through to horticulture. In those industries and the ones in between there are many opportunities. Those with expertise in these and other areas have never been in greater demand. I think we have to compare those who have skills with those who do not. Certainly this is the era of skills, and young people who come through the educational system without skills start their adult life—their future—at a grave disadvantage indeed. Therefore, all students are to be encouraged to go on to university or to this vocational education training area to ensure that they do have appropriate skills for the future.

This legislation replaces the current antiquated legislation—legislation which the former Government was very much aware of, as the honourable member for Clayfield did a tremendous amount of work in this area. I am pleased to say that a great deal of the legislation and the Bill that we see coming forward here today contains a lot of that great consultation, that great work that the former Minister did. It is good to see that it has been carried forward. However, there are a number of problem areas which this Government or this Minister did not look at, but which the former Minister did, that would have further freed up the system. This legislation comes forward today with the extensive and major consultation that was carried out by the former Minister, together with some of the work carried out by the current Government.

There are a number of areas of concern with the legislation. One of those is the bureaucratic approval process in addition to other bureaucratic processes, which I see are still contained within the legislation. This comes at a time when there has never been greater competition in the marketplace and a greater need for freeing up the processes. It also comes at a time when opportunities abound for students in the secondary education system. Today we see a number of Queensland secondary schools which provide young people with the opportunity in their later years of secondary schooling to take in those vocational educational training areas. It gives them opportunities if they are not going to follow the more academic styles, if they are not going on to university because they are not suited to those types of courses, or if they are

not interested in them or they do not enjoy them.

We should not forget that people undertaking training today are not necessarily preparing themselves for life; they are preparing for their next career. Many young people have to recognise that they are going to have two or three careers, as many members in this Chamber have had. Everybody in this Chamber has had at least two careers. I am sure that you appreciate that, Mr Deputy Speaker. Of course, that is going to happen to young students today, too.

It is necessary in the immediate future for young people to move off into these areas if they are not interested in going to university or getting skills elsewhere. Secondary schooling provides those sorts of opportunities. The Toowong College, as it is now called, is one such school. I know that that is just one of many secondary schools within the Queensland schooling community that is moving towards providing not just courses, but courses that carry accreditation. That is terribly important because young people can see that, when they undertake these courses at secondary schools, they will get some benefit, some reward. They will leave with a certificate saying that they have completed a course in something—not just a course in nothing. They will have something to show for their work and effort. That gives them self-esteem; they will feel that they have gained something from their education in these particular areas.

It is very important that these types of courses have standing and accreditation in the community. Businesses and industry leaders are prepared to accept these young people—and the not so young, I might say—who are going through training for a second or third career. Some people return again and again to undertake different courses as they change careers. Those who have undertaken older style courses many years ago will also be looking to return to undertake the newer technology courses.

It is disappointing that, within this legislation and within this Government's legislation generally, we have not seen some of the changes that are necessary to free up the system. One has only to look at the Federal system and the opportunities that it is providing under the leadership of the Howard Government to see what can be achieved. That Government introduced new apprenticeships in January 1998, for example. The number of its new apprenticeships has grown rapidly. The latest figures that I have seen show that at the end of 1999 the number

of new apprenticeships was double the number that was provided for in the system left by the outgoing Labor Government. There were something like 268,000 new apprenticeships in training in that area.

This is not the only area in which we have seen changes by the Howard Government, which has done what it can in this area to put in place modern business principles which move with the times as changes occur. By 1995, the proportion of apprentices in the total national labour force was at the lowest level in three decades under the former Labor Government. In the early 1990s, when the Leader of the Federal Opposition, the Honourable Kim Beazley, was the Minister, apprenticeships in traditional trades fell by over 20,000 in one year alone. Rapid changes are occurring within this area. Training and education must be able to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. That is also the case for workplace relations. If this Government is genuinely serious about its jobs, jobs, jobs mantra, these two issues must go hand in hand. If the Government is to succeed with its mantra of jobs, jobs, jobs, it needs to develop both flexible workplace relations programs and, most importantly, a very flexible training system. However, that is not happening because there are too many bureaucrats within the system. Also, it is not flexible enough within the marketplace.

Queensland needs to develop a training culture. The current Federal Government is promoting that as hard as possible. We need to be more innovative. We need to improve the competitiveness of Queensland's industries. It is fair to say that that is not happening, and that has been one of the great disappointments of this Government. That greater competitiveness needed to allow Queensland's industries to compete in today's very internationally competitive marketplace is not in this legislation and is not in the workplace generally. That competition in the marketplace will only increase as time goes by.

This side of the Chamber—and I would hope the other side of the Chamber is, too—is about generating greater prosperity and wealth for Queenslanders. At the end of the day, that is what we hope to achieve. Enjoyment is a concept that goes hand in hand with that. Unfortunately, one of the many problems in the community today is that so many people are unhappy with life and unhappy with the workplace. They are unhappy with their training and unhappy with their education. That is a very important aspect for the young and not so young people undertaking these courses. They need the right attitude and the right

culture. Armed with those things, their opportunities are boundless. I am concerned about many aspects of this legislation because it does not achieve that goal.

There are a range of issues I want to touch upon relating to aspects of the legislation itself. I hope to get some answers from the Minister in relation to some of these issues. The legislation places restrictions after action to amend, suspend or cancel registrations once that action has been commenced following a show cause notice. The legislation therefore limits the capacity of registered training organisations to continue normal trading operations during any investigation by the department once a show cause notice has been given. A show cause notice can be given for a whole range of reasons.

One example is that the organisation is no longer a suitable organisation for registration. I presume that covers a multitude of sins that perhaps are not covered under other sections of the legislation. Therefore, if for some reason the legislation misses an organisation for whatever reason, there is this catch-all clause. I know Governments like to put catch-all clauses in legislation in case they have forgotten something. There are already four other subclauses in this clause, one of which is that the organisation has contravened a condition of registration. Another is that the registration was obtained because of incorrect or misleading information. That is fair enough, but nevertheless there is a catch-all clause.

The catch-all clause and the way in which the legislation is worded—that is, there is a restriction on businesses operating once the show cause notice has been given—limits the capacity of registered training organisations during any investigation by the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. A show cause notice would mean that the registered training organisation would have to cease taking any new trainees or students until the matters in the show cause notice had been remedied to the department's satisfaction. The legislation also prohibits businesses from advertising while that investigation takes place. There is a presumption that the show cause notice will always be based on fact. As we all know, that may not be the case. Nevertheless, the registered training organisation in breach of the legislation will have to stop operations.

This situation is of concern. I would have thought it would have been fairer to adopt an "innocent until proven guilty" approach and therefore not severely hamper the business

activities of the registered training organisation. As members can appreciate, those organisations will be very severely hampered because they will be closed down while this investigation takes place. This is very unfair on the provider, the RTO. If a TAFE college and a private provider are operating in the same area and the private provider has a show cause notice placed on it that prevents it from doing business or advertising courses, the only victor in that situation would obviously be TAFE. It is an unfair advantage.

Mr Santoro: That's the objective.

Mr BEANLAND: The member for Clayfield says that that is the objective. I hope that that is not the objective, Minister. I look forward to the Minister's reply to this, because it is a very serious issue. However, that will certainly be the result. If that is the objective, it is a very sad day indeed when a Government puts up legislation that achieves that end. That will be the result; there is no doubt about that.

There is nothing in the Bill to specify how quickly the department has to conclude investigations into private providers. It is feasible that a training provider could effectively be closed by the department stalling the process. Even the usual run of difficulties departments have in carrying out investigations will mean that the training provider has to close its doors. It will take some time to carry out in-depth and detailed investigations. The end result on the private provider, the RTO, is that it will have to close. It will face bankruptcy and a loss of jobs. That does not say much for a Government that talks about jobs, jobs, jobs. One of the fundamental features of this legislation will be a loss of jobs.

Following from that, I now turn to the prosecution of providers. Under this legislation, TAFE colleges cannot be prosecuted in the same way as a private training provider. I accept that. We are not going to prosecute the Crown unless the Government takes action against the director or a member of staff. This is based on the fact that the Crown cannot prosecute the Crown, and the same rules and regulations bind TAFE. I accept that they do, but when it comes to prosecution it will end up being different. The Bill is somewhat of a toothless tiger when it comes to TAFE colleges. They cannot be prosecuted. If a TAFE college is guilty of the same breach as a private training provider, the implications for them are not the same. That will not create a level playing field. We all know that there are not too many level playing fields around. However, the end result is that the legislation

has the power to close down the private provider. That is a very sad situation indeed.

The legislation defines a trainee as someone who is under a traineeship contract, regardless of whether the contract has been registered. I understand that in the past trainees commenced their traineeship after signing a training agreement. I am not sure whether that will apply in the future, but that was the situation in the past. The situation may arise that the training agreement—the contract—may have been signed and the provider remunerated for any training undertaken outside the registration period. This could easily indicate that, whilst the training agreement has been signed, the trainee is not a trainee until the contract has been registered by the department. There is an anomaly there. When does the contract actually apply from? What is the situation in relation to the time between when the contract applies and when it is registered? There is a concern in relation to that.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA)
(6 p.m.): I move—

"That this House recognises the dedicated efforts of members of the Queensland Police Service, despite the lack of financial support from the Beattie Government, and calls on the Government for an immediate boost to police budgets to provide police with adequate resources to meet equipment, vehicle, overtime and operational needs."

When the coalition Government was in power from 1996 to 1998 there was a real renewal in the Queensland Police Service—a renewal in the budgetary increases provided, in the resources and equipment provided and in the whole recruitment program. As a result of the massive recruitment program put in place by the coalition, in the order of 320 to 340 police are added to the service every year. I particularly mention the police academy in north Queensland.

Despite this wonderful legacy of the coalition Government, this financial year sees the smallest budget increase since 1992. On an actual to budget basis it is an increase of 0.1%, or an increase of 4% on a budget to budget basis. That 4% increase does not even cover wage increases and the cost of the additional police officers.

The Police Service budget is in the order of \$814m. Leaving aside the capital works component, if we estimate a cost for the 4% enterprise bargaining increase over the full financial year and estimate a cost for wages for the increase in numbers this year of 320, we see that the budget increase does not cover the increased wages costs of the Police Service. This budget is deficient. This budget does not provide proper and decent support for the everyday operational needs of the core business of the Queensland Police Service. Police are calling for money for things such as wages, overtime, paper, fuel for vehicles—not only for vehicles but also for boats—toilet paper, cassettes, training and other equipment. The money is just not there for these essentials.

At least five regions are in serious financial trouble. Some of the other regions that have managed to work within their budgets are seriously discontented. Police districts are making substantial cuts, at great sacrifice to them and the people they serve, and passing savings back to the regional headquarters, but they see nothing for it. In spite of all their hard work and effort and in spite of the sacrifices they make to cut their lowly budgets even further in order to deliver savings to regional headquarters or city headquarters, nothing comes back. There can be nothing more demoralising or sapping of the spirit of the Police Service.

The police are renowned for the way they work hard. They are prepared to go the extra mile, despite the difficulties of their jobs and despite the criminal element they have to work with. In my travels I have seen officers at almost every station doing unpaid work in their own time. They are prepared to do it, but they should not have to go to the lengths they do. I applaud them for having the level of interest in the service, job and profession such that they come in and prepare briefs or do necessary paperwork in their own time. But it really hits home when operational police are not able to undertake overtime to catch criminals—to chase a burglar in the suburbs or to bring in the Dog Squad, the Scientific Squad, the JAB or the CIB. The core business of one of the most important departments in Government is being restricted and hamstrung by budgets.

Nothing describes the parlous position of the Queensland Police Service better than a letter received from Neighbourhood Watch at Bargara in the Bundaberg area. The letter, addressed to Mr Slack, MLA, states—

"On behalf of our neighbourhood watch group, I would like to raise a very

important issue, that is of considerable concern to us.

A situation arose recently where a female person living on her own in a group of units, rang the police on two occasions at 3 a.m., to report a frightening domestic violence incidence, and was told by the person who answered her call that sorry no police can come, as the money allocated for overtime in this budget has run out.

We consider this allocation of overtime money not acceptable. The Police Service is just that, a service and not a profit making business. Peoples lives should not have to be put at risk just because no money is left in the budget."

I am happy to table that letter. When organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch are feeling so disgruntled that they write letters such as that, we have to look at the whole issue. We have to look at the complaints being made about the underresourcing and underfunding of the Police Service in this State.

This Parliament has to address this issue. We cannot continue to sweep it under the carpet. The Minister continues to blame his senior management. The Minister continues to blame little groups of officers who he says are disgruntled. But the responsibility lies with the Minister to convince his Cabinet Budget committee and to convince Treasury that police are deserving of an increase of more than 4%. The Police Minister is responsible for giving additional funds during the year.

The Opposition, the media, the Police Service, the Police Union and the public are telling the Minister day after day and week after week that there is not enough money for the Police Service to carry out its core business—for officers to do overtime, have the necessary equipment and so on. The Minister takes no notice or does not have any influence in order to get additional money and provide that little extra that is needed.

What are some of the problems arising from this pitiful and dreadful budget, which is an absolute insult to the Police Service? In Brisbane police officers have been told to hand in their car keys and return to foot patrols just to save money. So they are limited in the area that they can cover. There has been a clampdown on the use of petrol. Officers have been told to make arrests at the start of a shift and not at the end in order to prevent overtime. Numbers of watch-house staff and the hours they work have been reduced. Plain-clothes officers are working weekend

uniformed shifts to cut down on overtime. Fewer police are patrolling on the north side.

In Logan, a commissioned police officer refused to approve overtime for officers to go to the assistance of a resident who had an intruder in his house. The officer said that all overtime was suspended and could be authorised only by police inspectors or an assistant commissioner. At Redcliffe, where all the trouble has been, police were forced to use a civilian bystander's camera. An armed robber eluded police after a Dog Squad was held back because of an overtime ban. At Redland Bay response times need to be improved.

I turn to some of the country areas. There are one-man stations that are not provided with relief officers when the permanent officer is away on leave, on training or sick. There are 23 computers on the blink in one region. There is no scientific officer available. There is a shortage of staff in the watch-house in Rockhampton. There are cutbacks in overtime, training and so on. We see police houses in the country areas of Queensland not receiving maintenance, so years go by with very little maintenance. As a result, the cost of maintenance will escalate or the houses will be unlivable. At Kuranda in north Queensland there are nine police officers and one car. They are having to borrow cars from Mareeba and Atherton. The budget just does not provide for these basic needs. There is a need for relief staff in areas such as Charters Towers.

In Ipswich, staff shortages and budget constraints have caused court preparation to be criticised by the judiciary. Again, this is one of the core, basic requirements. Police need time and adequate staff in order to prepare the very best briefs so that all of the hard work and effort they put into catching the criminals can come to fruition. Officers are being given no time to attend to paperwork after an arrest as they must return almost immediately to street patrols. There is a lack of budget and overtime units, and officers do not have sufficient time to complete their duties. The list goes on.

My colleagues will speak about the problems at Coomera and Nerang. Thank goodness the media on the Gold Coast see the problems. They have supported the member for Nerang with front-page stories and editorials. They know that police in the area are not receiving adequate funding. The support is just not there. At Caloundra, business owners claim that crime problems in the area are the worst in years. The police to

population ratio on the Sunshine Coast is an absolute disgrace.

I have touched on just some of the issues, but I return to what I said at the start of my speech. The 4% budget increase this year was pitiful. It was inadequate. It is an absolute disgrace to treat one of the most important Government departments with such disdain. The Government provided a budget that did not even cover the enterprise bargaining wage increase and the wages of the increased numbers of police officers. This Parliament demands better support for the police.

Time expired.

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (6.09 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to second the motion moved by the member for Toowoomba South. In common with all members on this side, I call on this Government to boost the Police budget.

I table a copy of a clipping from the Sunshine Coast Daily of only two days ago titled "Police crackdown puts hoon motorists in a spin". Honourable members will have heard me speak on a number of occasions about the problems locals and visitors experience with the hoon element in our communities. The statistics referred to in the article list: 24 people charged with drinking alcohol in a public place; 51 outstanding warrants executed and satisfied; 82 vehicle defect notices issued; eight people charged with driving while disqualified; 10 people charged with unlicensed driving; and 28 arrests for offences other than traffic offences, including break and enter—all this in one operation, and I commend the officers for their efforts. But wait. When we examine the numbers and the types of offences being committed, it is obvious that a lot of these offenders reckon the chance of being apprehended is worth the risk. Why is this? I will tell members why: because this Government is underresourcing the service in terms of officers and other resources, to the point at which a sustained presence is simply not possible.

I do not know what is happening in other regions. My colleagues will certainly add their comments, and I suspect that the Minister's colleagues are giving him the same messages as Opposition members are. There is no substitute for police officers on the beat, and they must be supported by stations, vehicles and other resources. I am on record in this place criticising police to population ratios in Queensland generally, and in the north coast region in particular. I am not alone in this. I make just a few comments sourced from the Queensland Police Union Journal of March this

year in an article titled "Staffing model review". The article says that the model has "been perceived by members to be an abject failure". It states—

"Still the biggest problem with the model is the question of 'givens'."

Givens are comprised of support staff in police stations. If you do not have the police station, you do not have the givens. The article goes on to state—

"... if the model accurately reflects current working levels, there would be an improvement in numbers in areas where they are greatly needed.

If not, then maybe minimum staffing levels within divisions could be the answer to a problem of staff shortages that still seem to be the bane of every 'operational police officer'."

In short, the model needs, and has needed for some time, to be made relevant to the needs of not only police officers but also the public. Only then might we get some equity, particularly in growth areas.

Of course, the staffing model comes under such scrutiny only because there are not enough police officers to go around in the first place. The former Minister, Russell Cooper, ramped up the training program, only to see it slide in the past couple of years. What a disgrace it is to see that momentum lost.

Police numbers are not just about statistics; they are about having officers on the beat; they are about having an active presence and not just responding; they are about having the ability to become really proactive so as to increase police presence in schools and for Neighbourhood Watches and other community duties. I know that police are doing that now, and they are doing it very well, but as the previous speaker said, they are doing it in their own time. Police are doing paperwork in their own time. I will turn to overtime in just a moment. Police do a great job, but there is a lot of stress out there. How many officers are on stress leave at the moment? The Minister might like to respond to that question.

I am pleased to say that we are getting the situation under control at Mooloolaba and similar places, but for two reasons these communities should not have to fork out to pay off-duty policemen to be present: firstly, police and their families need and deserve their time off; and, secondly, these business communities have already paid their taxes once. Neither should they be levied for security officers, who are expected to do quasi police

work. That could give rise to a dangerous situation.

There is a simple answer: more funds in the next Budget for police—for stations, officers and resources. I have already written to the Minister on this matter. I am sure that if he has not read that letter, it is waiting for him. I referred to it in a speech just last night. I believe this is the most serious issue facing Queensland, and the Minister must face up to it. The second answer is to fix the police staffing model so that there is equitable distribution of those resources. That is most important. In the Minister's own electorate police are understaffed. The same applies in your electorate, Mr Speaker. I have seen the numbers in your area; they are even worse than mine, and I am sure that you are saying the same thing that I am saying to the Minister about this matter. We have to address the police staffing allocation model, and we have to have the right number of police officers to spread around in the first place, otherwise we are not going to move off square one.

Time expired.

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

"That this House amends the notice of motion to delete all the words following 'the Queensland Police Service' and insert the following words:

'That this House notes that the Beattie Government provided a record Police budget this financial year which meets the resourcing needs of the Queensland Police Service for extra equipment, vehicles, overtime and operational demands;

That the House further notes the record additional numbers of police being provided by the Beattie Government, with 502 extra police being provided to date.' "

It is about time the facts were told in this debate, because what we are hearing from the shadow Minister and the character who followed him simply does not indicate the true position. There was a record Police budget this year. That record budget followed the first Beattie Labor Government Police budget, which was also a record. It was a budget that enabled us to meet the needs of the regions. I will just go through the regions very quickly one by one. The Far Northern region got an increase of 10.5%; the Northern region got an increase of 6.1%; the Central region got an increase of 6.7%; the North Coast region got

an increase of 16.2%; the Metropolitan North region got an increase of 8.8%; the Metropolitan South region got an increase of 10.8%; the South Eastern region got an increase of 13.1%; and the Southern region got an increase of 10.6%.

Mr Horan: You know it is 4%.

Mr BARTON: I heard the member in silence, and it is about time he kept his mouth shut and listened to the facts.

The real facts are that there is an increased Police budget out there where it counts, in service delivery. The member for Toowoomba South continues to indicate that this 4% means that the costs cannot be met. I had him briefed by Mr Dick Warry, the head of Corporate Services, who went through the Police budget in great detail and pointed out where all the costs were and where all the expenditure was. All this proves is that even when the member is briefed, he cannot understand simple facts.

The reality is that there is a record Police budget. That budget has been directed towards service delivery. Contrary to the assertion by the previous speaker, the Beattie Government is also delivering when it comes to additional police numbers. Members opposite do not like that because of their lousy performance. In their first year back in Government, they increased police numbers by 159, and in their second year they increased the numbers by 268. This two-year period is not over yet, and we already have 502 extra police out there, and we will increase the Police Service numbers by an average of 325 per year for the next five years. That is real delivery. The cars, the equipment, the Glocks, the guns are going out there with the extra police that are genuinely being provided.

We have certainly had some media reports about budgets. It seems to happen every time we get towards the end of a financial year. We get the usual beat-ups because the shadow Minister suggests to people that there are real problems. Each and every time those allegations have surfaced, we have checked them out very thoroughly. Not one of the allegations that the shadow Minister has raised has yet been proven. He talked about an incident in Redcliffe with a photographer. The photographer was not there. There was a press photographer there who was asked to take photographs, and he provided those prints. It was not a private citizen. It was not an issue. The Scenes of Crime guy was at work and could have been called out.

The member claimed also that in one incident the Dog Squad was not called out. A police operational decision was made that it was not necessary. It had nothing to do with budget cuts. But we do not interfere in police operational decisions. When senior police management make decisions, we back their value judgment. In nearly every one of the cases where the shadow Minister has highlighted problems allegedly due to funding cuts, when we have checked it out it has come back to police making operational decisions that they are entitled to make.

I do not have much time left, but I will just talk about Nerang. The member for Nerang has been claiming that Nerang is a war zone. His own business community in his local press are criticising that assertion, because they know that the facts are that crime in Nerang is dropping. They know that clear-up rates are improving. They know that those 21 police in Nerang have a less wide range of duties to perform than they did in past years. They know that they are supported by the District operations support group of 24 officers with cars and equipment. They know that there are 96 people in the CIB with cars and equipment who can be pulled in to offer support. We are constantly seeing atrocious beat-ups.

Time expired.

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Minister. May I say at the outset that I cannot believe that the Opposition has the temerity to attack the Beattie Labor Government on police resourcing. As the Minister has just outlined, our record is a very proud one. We have provided a lot more police, more civilianisation of police positions, more cars—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr MUSGROVE: Please, sweetheart, settle down. We have provided better equipment such as Glock pistols. I know there have been a couple of problems with Glock pistols, but there is one thing for sure: they are a bigger bore than the honourable member who is interjecting. We have provided capsicum spray. These things have been happening right across the State.

Contrary to the absolute rubbish that has been peddled by the Opposition around the traps, the South Eastern region budget, which affects my electorate, has increased by some \$6.7m, or 13.1%. Also in my electorate we have had extensions to the Slacks Creek Police Station. I inherited that station. May I say that it was an absolute disgrace. We had about 50 officers working in a station that was

built in the mid-1980s to accommodate 15 to 18 officers. The officers were crammed into that station in appalling occupational health and safety conditions. When I was elected, one of the first things I did was go down to the police station and talk to the officers. I could not believe what I saw. I am pleased that this Minister has taken positive action to rectify that problem. The Slacks Creek Police Station is going to be expanded to the tune of \$530,000.

The Minister has also upgraded the Beenleigh and Broadbeach communications rooms to computer-aided dispatch. That makes a great deal of difference in the efficient allocation of resources. He has also provided funding for additional civilian positions to support the Juvenile Aid Bureau and the CIB at the Gold Coast.

This Minister has provided more police resources than any other Minister in Queensland's history. At Logan and on the Gold Coast he has established the district operations support groups. These are our modern day flying squads. If there is a problem in a particular area—maybe it is a licensed premises or something similar—those flying squads are moved in to clear up the problem before it gets out of hand. The local officers on general duties are not distracted by ongoing problems surrounding a particular establishment. Those officers are tasked according to police intelligence on offences. The system has proved to be extremely successful. The flying squads did not even exist under the coalition Government.

On the Gold Coast, the district operation support group has 24 members. At Logan the DOSG has 18 members. The members of these groups are out there on a daily basis locking up the bad guys in a proactive and strategic manner. As I said, they did not even exist under the previous Government.

In relation to police numbers, the south-east region has had an increase in sworn police officers of 95 officers since the Beattie Government came to power. The South Eastern region has also received an extra 48 vehicles since the Beattie Labor Government came to power. My electorate is in that region and I can see the improvements in policing on a daily basis.

I go to my Neighbourhood Watch meetings and I go to my community consultative committee meetings and I can report that, since this Government came to power, crime in the Slacks Creek police division has been on a steady and consistent downward trend. This has occurred because of

the positive actions that this Government has taken to ensure that police have the resources they need to do their job properly.

If one talked to the police, rather than making up stories in this place, one would be told by the police that all they ever hear from the coalition in relation to these matters is hot air. When the coalition was in Government it just did not deliver. We heard promises and tough talk about cracking down on crime, but the resources were not given to the police to enable them to do the job properly.

The member for Toowoomba South has made some outrageous allegations. The member has quickly gained a reputation in this place as one of the laziest Opposition Police spokesmen ever. The honourable member has spent far too much time plotting and scheming against his Leader and, as I understand, against the Deputy Leader of the National Party. If he spent as much time concentrating on learning the ropes in the Police and Corrective Services portfolio, he would have a much better reputation in this place and would not move such a preposterous motion.

Mr Seeney: A sign of desperation when you can't debate the issue.

Mr MUSGROVE: I can only wonder if the Opposition's strategy committee meeting this morning put the honourable member up to this. I feel sorry for him if that is what occurred. We have him putting up such preposterous motions. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition are smiling.

Time expired.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang—LP) (6.25 p.m.): The Minister questioned my description of the scene in Nerang as being a war zone. Unlike the Minister, I was there. That is the difference. The incident occurred right behind my office. Imagine walking into a shop where there is broken glass everywhere. The shop contains glass cases and there was smashed glass all over the place. There was a line of bullet holes that big running right up the back wall. There was a fellow in the shop who had blood all over his face and a scar down the side of his face where a bullet just missed him. He had pock marks on his face from broken glass. He had blood all over his face and all down his shirt. Besides that, there was a fellow lying on the floor who later died. I was in Egypt just after a war and it looked just the same. I invite the Minister to tell me what it looks like if it does not look like a war zone. I make the point that I was there.

I would like to especially commend all the police who service the Gold Coast hinterland community. They do a great job—often under difficult circumstances. It is a difficult job. At times I am sure they must feel that their task is insurmountable. I am also sure that they feel at times that their efforts are not appreciated. On behalf of the people of the Gold Coast hinterland community, I want to assure the officers that they are appreciated and they are held in high esteem.

I know that, when it really matters, they are there ready to do their duty in the finest traditions of the service. I am sure that police officers in other areas of the State are equally hardworking and are equally appreciated. I have no doubt that other parts of the State have similar problems to those that we have on the Gold Coast.

In this case, however, I wish to highlight the difficult circumstances under which Nerang police officers must work. In previous debates in this House I have described the limited resources with which they have to work. I have also described some of the consequences of the limitation of resources.

In this debate I wish to list the specific areas that need improving. As I said before, I have no doubt that other areas have a similar limitation of resources. In Nerang, the single major problem is lack of police numbers. The Nerang policing model needs to be increased to at least 35 operational police. This may sound a lot, but one must consider that police must have a presence seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Just to have two police officers operational in a car 24 hours a day requires many times that number.

There are 21 eight-hour shifts in a week. Assuming police officers did not get sick, did not have holidays and did not need training, one would still need 10 police officers in order to have two officers out in a car 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But, of course, there needs to be considerably more officers in order to cover the issues I have just mentioned. There also needs to be supervision, administration and many other duties too numerous to mention. Even with a police car on the road 24 hours a day, we would still not deal effectively with Nerang's problems. Nerang has grown too much.

Firstly, we need a crime car for peak crime periods. At the moment we have cars coming in from other parts of the coastal strip. The hinterland covers a very big area—800 square kilometres. We do not have the necessary street signage or street lighting. It is hard to find one's way around. Unless one is intimately

attached to the area and knows it backwards it is very hard to find places. Police officers also have to cover very great distances. We need locals servicing the area. We need a 24-hour service. We also need a crime car for peak crime periods.

We need foot patrols. I might add that, today, we had the first foot patrols in Nerang since I have been in this Parliament. It would seem that we are getting some reaction. We also need police for normal investigative and proactive policing, conducting day-to-day investigations into reported crimes. This would free up car patrols for more proactive policing. We need a summons and warrants car to deal with the backlog. There is a massive backlog of summonses and warrants in the Nerang area.

As I said earlier, we need our own police car at night, rather than sharing a car with Mudgeeraba. We need a public servant to augment the police to deal with the backlog of administrative paperwork. We also need to fast-track new firearms and supplies of capsicum spray in Nerang. We also need sufficient overtime being made available so that officers can work and catch up on the backlog. As I said before, Nerang has its problems. I commend the police for the hard work they do in Nerang. They are highly respected and highly regarded.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): I am pleased to rise in support of the amendment. At the outset, I recognise the tremendous work that is done by the Queensland Police Service. The electorate of Kurwongbah is located in the Metropolitan North policing region and is serviced by the Petrie Division and the Boondall Police Division. Sadly, over the past month both of those divisions have seen two tragic events that have been very traumatic for police officers. The first was the shooting of three police officers at Chermside. The horrible and callous attack on Constables Sharnelle Cole and Darryl Green and Sergeant Chris Mulhall touched nearly every Queenslanders. Since hearing the news of that fateful Monday morning, I think all of Queensland has been watching the progress of those three officers and they have been in their thoughts and prayers. I must say that, above all, Sharnelle Cole captured our hearts—her bravery, her courage, and her gracious spirit. She is a great ambassador for the Queensland Police Service.

The second tragic event happened in my own electorate of Kurwongbah. Two Saturday nights ago there was the fireworks explosion at

the Holy Spirit School. The police were called in straightaway and they worked tirelessly over the days after that tragic event getting evidence for their investigations. I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate and place on record my sincere appreciation to all of the officers of the Metropolitan North region for their dedication, duty, compassion and tireless work. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the ambulance officers, the fire service officers and the SES who attended at the Holy Spirit School. I think that those traumatic events still affect some of those officers.

However, I find it a great shame that, following these great examples of police work, Opposition members have come into this place and tried to play politics with the issue of police resources. Every time they do this, and every time there is a media report that tries to sensationalise an issue, it undermines our residents' feeling of community safety. It actually affects the quality of life of many people. I know of elderly people who lie awake at night because they feel unsafe because the Opposition is saying that there are not any police. It is just ridiculous. It is affecting those people's health and it is affecting their lives.

Mr Horan: Don't twist it around.

Mrs LAVARCH: Just in the past few weeks the Insurance Council of Australia released a report in which it listed the 10 safest suburbs in Brisbane and number five on that list was Lawnton, which is located in my electorate. That gave a tremendous boost to the residents of Lawnton. Elderly people said to me, "The Opposition is saying in the papers that it is unsafe, and here the Insurance Council says that we live in one of the safest suburbs." That is the reality. Lawnton is one of the safest suburbs. I say: shame on the Opposition for doing that.

I would also like to commend the achievements of Minister Barton in bringing down a record police budget for the past financial year. For the Metropolitan North region, that record Police budget has meant a \$4.6m, or 8.8%, increase. It has also meant the opening of the new Brisbane City Watch-house. As a lawyer, I can say that that is a very welcome measure. The conditions at the old watch-house were almost inhumane. I congratulate the Minister on that. That record Police budget also meant the opening of the Hendra Police Station, new police shopfronts at Chermside, the allocation of 15 civilian positions at the city watch-house, as well as additional civilian staff for the shopfronts and the upgrading of the regional communication

to digital technology. In terms of police numbers in the Metropolitan North region, since the Beattie Government came to power 64 officers have been sworn in and attached to the Metropolitan North region. On 30 June 1998, there were 886 officers. As at 1 May 2000, there were 950 officers.

Time expired.

Mr BAUMANN (Albert—NPA) (6.34 p.m.): In rising to support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Toowoomba South, the shadow Minister for Police and Corrective Services, I would like to endorse the words of the member for Nerang and take the opportunity to once again bring to the Minister's attention the concerns of almost 3,000 local residents of the Coomera police district and highlight some of the incidents of recent times that exacerbate the policing issues of our area. The continuing loutish behaviour of a small group of young people in and around Coomera's local streets not only creates fear in the minds of our senior citizens but also creates an atmosphere of doubt and concern in the minds of the parents of young families who also make up a large portion of that area's population.

Some acts of vandalism and, more seriously, downright destruction of local education and park facilities are not only costly but also are very disruptive and upsetting to our educators, students and public alike. Once again, I remind the Minister of my approaches to him in relation to getting a school-based police officer for the Helensvale State High School and the benefits of a police presence in this area. This lack of police presence in the most rapidly growing area in Australia led to the petition by almost 3,000 local residents that was tabled by me in the House some three months ago.

This same Police Minister, on assuming the Ministry some two years ago, bulldozed and elbowed his way to the control levers. That is an admirable concept, a Minister actually in control. Although I realise that in recent times the Minister has suffered fairly serious ill health and perhaps may not have had his hands on the levers, I point out that for at least one night in recent weeks the Southport Police Station, which is a 24-hour station, was not manned; it was unattended. Why? The officers were all off sick. "Obviously, the station must have rostering problems", the Minister could say, or could this indicate an understaffing problem? In another instance, officers were told to complete duties that included overtime but were not paid. I ask the Minister: how does that affect morale? I would say that it is enough to make a police officer sick.

A Government member interjected.

Mr BAUMANN: I am not being uncharitable at all. The headlines in local newspapers of recent times say it all: "Cop shop plea"—which is a headline taken from the local newspaper of the Minister's electorate—"Coomera wants 24-hour police", "Locals sign petition for 24-hour police", "Horan joins call for more police", "Hinterland call for more police", "Police bid to boost numbers slammed" and "More police not needed: Barton". But what about this gem: "Who's behind Coomera's thin blue line?". I will not read into Hansard all of this letter to the editor of the Gold Coast Bulletin of 25 April in relation to a stance taken by the honourable member for Toowoomba South and me, but it reads in part—

"Both stances smack of nothing less than political opportunism. The fact is that Coomera did not even have a police station until the Goss Labor Government built it in 1991."

I have a bit of information for the Minister. I was born and raised in the district just about 58 years ago and there was a police station there then. That will bring the Minister up to date on the history of that area.

I want to say another thing to the Minister, because I will not be totally unkind. I thank the Goss Government for following through and upgrading the Coomera Police Station. However, the plans and financial arrangements for that project were put in place by my predecessor, the National Party representative for Albert, Mr Ivan Gibbs, some time previously. Back in those days, it was manned with 18 general duties police—and that was the Minister's description. Since then the Minister has raised that number to 19. However, that does not mean, as the Honourable Russell Cooper says, a warm body actually there to take up that position. But still, that was in 1993. It is now 2000 and still that station has the same number of staff.

To finish off, I refer to this little gem headed "Yes Minister, now's the time for action", which states—

"Our police personnel are dedicated, hardworking people and they deserve better support from our politicians."

The police and residents have had enough so please acknowledge our problem and don't brush this under the carpet.

It will not go away."

Time expired.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (6.39 p.m.): When the Beattie Labor Government came to power, we said that we would be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. We said that we were going to properly resource and equip our police so that they were able to keep our community safe. We have properly resourced our police and they have better equipment than ever. We know that the job is not over yet. That is partly because of the fact that over 32 years of coalition Governments left Queensland police as the poor cousins. They were fed platitudes by Joh and big Russ. Do members opposite remember big Russ? He was the person who went to Fortitude Valley and said that there were no brothels there. The police worked in Third World conditions for Third World pay.

Mr Seeney: Blame somebody else; blame the GST.

Mr LUCAS: The member for Callide mentioned the GST. It is said that some things are going to be cheaper after the GST. One thing that will not be affected is the intelligence of the member for Callide, because 10% of zero is still zero.

The Labor Party understands what it means to look after the workers, and that includes the police. That is why they have enjoyed record budgets in their regions. The budget of the Metropolitan South region—my region—increased by \$4.7m, or 10.8%. If it did not increase by that amount of money, members opposite should say so. But it did. We have also seen the opening of the new Morningside Police Station. I point out also that, although this did not happen under the Beattie Labor Government, Tom Burns and the Goss Labor Government delivered the new Wynnum Police Station also. We have a great track record. We have also seen the relocation of the Inala police shopfront.

As to police numbers, the Metropolitan South region has had an increase in sworn police officers of 42 since the Beattie Government came to power. As at 30 June 1998 there were 744 officers in the Far Northern region. As at 1 May 2000 there were 786 officers. As to equipment, we recognise also that it takes more than bodies on the streets to combat crime. The bodies on the streets need the right equipment—equipment such as Glock pistols, capsicum spray, Chubb handcuffs and extension batons. In addition to increases in officers' personal equipment, I am proud to stand here as the member for Lytton and say that the Metropolitan South region, which encompasses my electorate, has

received an additional 15 vehicles since the Beattie Labor Government has been in power.

The coalition can huff and puff all it likes and try to beat up law and order as an issue, but the fact remains that the Police Minister and the Government as a whole have delivered increased police resources to the community. Not only have we delivered; we have delivered in spades. There are now more police on the streets than ever, more police cars and new modern police stations with better working conditions—all under a record Police budget.

Tonight I wish to spend a bit of time speaking about the general issue of policing. It is not just about providing cash and resources to police and more police numbers, although that is of critical importance—something we all agree on. We need to equip our Police Service with the latest in legislation. It is no good if we have a year 2000 Police Service with good police numbers—though we can always do with more—and good police resources if we are not equipping them with the law to deal adequately with increasingly sophisticated crime. That is the real difference between members on this side of the House and members opposite. They are not capable of any sort of individual policy thought. Their only reaction is to criticise police resources. Where were their innovative legislative initiatives, similar to this Government's?

Some of the examples that are important include legislation with respect to covert operatives. We all know that it is the big organised crime syndicates that are the most difficult to crack. We are the Government bringing in the legislation to give undercover police the power to properly collect evidence against those people. This Police Minister is bringing into the House the most far-reaching DNA legislation in Australia. This will be legislation that will make sure that we can target those people who have committed criminal offences. Recently, I looked at the Australian Genome Research Facility at the University of Queensland, where Dr Ian Findlay is working on perfecting single-cell DNA techniques for crime detection. That will be a world-first tool for Queensland police. That is the sort of innovation that the Beattie Labor Government Smart State is bringing about.

I know that the Opposition and other members opposite waxed long and loud on the problems that we had on Anzac Day with the behaviour of a selfish and callous few. What has this Government done about that? What the other side wanted to do was to ban night trading at nightclubs. But what would that

have done about people who drank at home and went silly? What would that have done about people who are just plain rude and ignorant? It would have done nothing. This Government has applied the move-on powers to all war memorials. That will be in the new legislation. That is practical law enforcement that works.

Time expired.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (6.44 p.m.): This evening, in rising to support the motion of my colleague the member for Toowoomba South, I wish to address some of the issues raised by the member for Springwood and also the member for Lytton. They could take a leaf out of the book of the former Speaker of this Parliament, Neil Turner, who said that dirt thrown is ground lost. I think those two gentlemen could learn a lot from that. Nothing positive has come from the mouths of either of those two members tonight.

We are not talking about interfering with police carrying out their duties, we are talking about what the Police Service deserves—the support of this Parliament. These are some of the most dedicated and professional men and women in our society today. Almost daily we see police putting their lives on the line for us but not getting the total support they need, in spite of the Government's denial there are budget constraints, staff shortages, car shortages and general resource shortages.

These constraints are often felt in country areas first because smaller budgets do not provide the flexibility available under bigger budgets. The wives and families of police officers are being used to supplement the service. That is recognised by country people, but it is not fully appreciated by the Minister and his Government. Some of the wives do a great job under very difficult circumstances. My area covers some four police districts—Mount Isa, Longreach, and soon Charleville and Rockhampton—and I have a fairly good understanding of what country policing is all about. The city police are stretched, and country police, too, are working under very difficult circumstances. Country people are being disadvantaged through having to make do with one-man stations due to shortages and the stupid, antiquated process for the selection of officers, which involves a ludicrous waiting game to see who gets the nod and then a ludicrous appeal process to see why somebody else cannot have the job. Sometimes months go by before we see vacancies filled.

In urban areas services are run off their feet and there are regular delays in attending to Code 2, or urgent, jobs. There is a shortage of resources at some of our city stations, both on the north side and the south side of the city. There is a definite need for enhancements to the Dog Squad, which is often not on duty. Usually there is one on the north side and one on the south side. Resources are needed in the area of support investigations, for example, to apprehend drug pushers—the real scourge of society. Again, this is creeping into my electorate. I referred to this issue last week and I am working very closely with the police in my electorate to make sure that we keep this element out.

The underfunding of police places them in danger. Police put their lives in danger. They are operating against the odds because of the reduced resources they have to work with. This again encourages the law breakers. Police are human beings doing a great job against the odds. They need support. An example of police underfunding is written on the walls of motorways across the city. For example, men are working on the new busway to the south, yet there are louts in this city putting graffiti all over that magnificent piece of infrastructure. This is another example of police underfunding.

I notice in Brisbane that police resources are being cut and people are not able to get police when they need them. The member for Toowoomba South touched on that this evening, as did the members for Nerang, Albert and Mooloolah. The Minister can say all he likes, but it is about time we recognised the urgent need for extra police, extra funding and extra resources so that the police can carry out their job. This is a priority area in our community. Our police must have adequate funding to make sure that the law is upheld and the criminal element, who have no respect for themselves let alone their fellow citizens, can be brought to justice; so that that anarchy is taken off our streets and out of our communities.

One of the main issues of concern in country police stations is that of replacement officers for officers on holidays. There is a great shortage of replacement officers. The draconian policy adopted by this Government is certainly not accommodating the provision of replacement officers. It is also a concern when officers go away for seminars and are not replaced. At times there are days, weeks and months when we have no police in some of those one-man stations in isolated and remote Queensland. Windorah is a classic example. It is one of the main arteries to the desert,

Birdsville and other remote places, yet at the moment it has no police—

Time expired.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (6.49 p.m.): To quote from the great Australian movie *The Castle*, the member for Toowoomba South must be dreamin' if he thinks that there is any credence in his assertion that somehow the Queensland Police Service is underfunded. We know that he has less than a wholehearted hold of the shadow portfolio, because if he paid closer attention he would notice that there have never been more police, there have never been more police cars and never before have police worked under better conditions of employment. They had never even dreamt of some of the new technology and new equipment they now have. It is a far cry from the so-called good old days under Joh when my dad, who was a police officer, hammered out his reports using two-finger typing on an old typewriter. Worse still is the fact that the service did not even provide it; he had to pay for it himself.

I am going to confine most of my remarks to the Far Northern Queensland region, which I am closest to. Firstly, the budget for the Far Northern region was increased in this year's Budget by \$3.4m, or 10.5%. That is right, a 10.5% increase in the Far Northern region—not a cut, not an increase for inflation, but a 10.5% increase in real terms. Secondly, capital works included new stations at Bamaga, Coen and Laura and a new station at Edmonton.

In relation to that new station at Edmonton, the former coalition Government let the people of Mulgrave down in its two and a bit years in office. It boasted that it would establish a 24-hour police station in the Edmonton area. It never did. It was all talk and no action, which is typical of its approach to law and order issues. The coalition never got around to fulfilling this promise. It considered window shopping in real estate agencies for a site in the caneland between Edmonton and Gordonvale as a substitute for real action. A facility remote from the population hub would have been totally unsatisfactory. Had the previous Government ever followed through with this misguided plan, the community would have been short-changed. Further, it would have resulted in the downgrading of both the Edmonton and the Gordonvale Police Stations. This would have diminished the visible police presence in those urban areas where it is really needed.

At the moment there is only a 16-hour police coverage in the area, with backup being

supplied by Cairns. This new station, which is under construction right now, is being built for future growth so that we will not have to go through this scenario in 5 to 10 years' time. The final police numbers for the station have yet to be finalised, but a 24-hour station normally has about 20 general duties officers as well as a capacity for CIB and JAB officers. I understand that the new station will have a duty officers' equipment store, a general duties day room, a day room for the CIB, a day room for JAB, two electronic interview rooms, two holding cells, a vehicle holding inspection yard, a major incident room and a backup communication room for the Cairns district.

Also on capital works, there has been planning for a new station at Kowanyama, the opening recently of the Cairns Airport wing and traffic facility, and a new shopfront is being put in place in the Cairns Central Shopping Centre. There has also been a trial of police at Yarrabah and Badu Island—the QATSP program, which is a roaring success. We have also had funding for a replacement water police vessel at Cairns.

Thirdly, the Far Northern region has had an increase in sworn officers of 88 officers since the Beattie Government came to power. On 30 June 1998 there were 476 officers in the Far Northern region. As at 1 May 2000 there were 564 officers. This is a massive increase, which is making a massive difference to our community. People know that there are more police in the street and they know that it is because of the Beattie Labor Government.

Fourthly, these police are properly resourced. They have new guns, new handcuffs and new batons. I am very proud to say that we have received 14 extra vehicles in the Far Northern region since we have been in Government. It defies belief that the member for Toowoomba South can come into this House and whinge and whine about police resources when the facts are that they have never been better. I suggest that either he resigns as Opposition spokesperson for Police and Corrective Services and take up something that he has his heart in, such as knocking over his leader or, if he decides to stay on, he should get serious about it, learn about the portfolio, do some serious research, get his figures right and make a considered contribution. Let us have no more emotive and wild allegations. He should not waste this Parliament's time with a ridiculous motion such as this.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I refer you to the rulings of Mr Deputy Speaker this afternoon, who refused to let me continue—

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

Mr SEENEY:—if I did not debate the issue.

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

Mr SEENEY: This is a heck of a lot further off the subject than I was.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr SEENEY: There has to be some sort of consistency.

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

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 37—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Clark, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 35—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Mitchell, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Any further divisions on this motion will be of two minutes' duration.

Question—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 37—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Clark, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 35—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Mitchell, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

GRIEVANCES

Orchestras

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (7.04 p.m.): The arts in Queensland are not fairing well under Minister Foley and the posturing of the Labor Government in

promoting the arts. Recently Minister Foley announced changes affecting the State's two major orchestras—the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra. Both orchestras have a distinguished record in providing the public of Queensland with a high standard and diverse range of music. Regrettably, those two orchestras are destined to merge unless the Minister acts quickly.

Recently, the Federal Government conducted a major performing arts inquiry chaired by Dr Helen Nugent. The inquiry's recommendations for rationalisation were not unanimously accepted by all States, nor were they accepted by the Commonwealth. For instance, Victoria, with a population not much larger than that of Queensland and a State considerably smaller and more centralised, was allowed to keep separate the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the State Orchestra of Victoria. Yet that did not prevent that State receiving \$10m in Federal funding together with \$7m in State funding. The situation in Queensland, with the merging of the QSO and QPO, has left the State with only \$5.6m in Federal funding and a paltry \$1.4m in State funding—the State's contribution being only marginally higher than that of South Australia with a smaller population and an economy in dire straits. So much for the Minister's efforts on behalf of Queensland.

The administrative functions of both orchestras could be combined, but the 100 plus musicians of the combined orchestras pose limitations to diversity of opportunity for both composers and artists. Rural and regional Queensland will be better served by the separate operation of the QSO and QPO. There is community concern in small country centres relating to support for the Queensland Opera and Ballet companies; educational opportunities in high schools, including master classes and performances with locals; school orchestras; participation of local ensembles; and opportunities for collaborative performances with local music ensembles. These two orchestras offer opportunities for such an integrated program. All this is possible if the two orchestras are kept separate and if the State Labor Government can find another couple of million dollars to support this important Queensland industry.

Executive Salaries; Industrial Relations

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (7.06 p.m.): Trade union/shareholder alliances flexed their muscle during the Rio Tinto AGM last week in Brisbane. I commend ACTU

Secretary, Greg Combet, the CFMEU and other members of this alliance for their David versus Goliath quest to make big corporate boards more accountable for the blow-out in executive salaries, unfair industrial relations, workplace health and safety and environmental practice. I have no doubt that fair-minded Queenslanders are appalled by the extravagant salary packages being paid to many corporate CEOs. I have no doubt that fair-minded Queenslanders want corporations to be more accountable for safety and fair wages.

Australian corporate CEOs are following the North American trend where, in 1999, the average earnings for each American CEO was \$12.4m. This is more than 400% more than the CEO average of \$2.9m in 1994, but corporate productivity has not gone up by 400%. How can these packages be justified when workers themselves have had minimal pay rises? Shareholders have very little capacity to challenge these extravagances, but the emerging solidarity among unions and concerned shareholder groups will be a force to be reckoned with.

I am pro-investment, pro-economic growth and pro-jobs. Our State must continue to provide a climate in which corporations can grow and prosper. The Archerfield electorate is one of the economic hubs of Queensland that must continue to prosper. This corporate prosperity must not leave a shattered work force in its wake. It is incumbent on our Labor Government in our dealings with big corporations, particularly those receiving Government incentive packages, that we insist on fair industrial, environmental and health and safety practices and strict adherence to local industry content policy. I commend the metal workers union for their determined campaign in this area.

Fire Levies

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (7.08 p.m.): Last night at about this time I was in attendance at a public meeting in Kawana called to discuss the proposed increases in fire levies in that area from class C to class A. I thank the officers and public who attended. Firstly, I would like to express my disappointment at not being invited to be involved in the discussions at least as early as the local council discussions. The proposed changes originate from a Public Accounts Committee report in 1997 which recommended that the Minister direct the authority to review classes allocated to urban districts and implement mechanisms to ensure

continued equity within six months. The operative words are "review" and "equity". The recommendation was not to standardise classes across the board or to effect a huge increase in levy revenue. Similarly, the word "equity" was not, I am sure, meant to be restricted to the levy paid. Surely equity must also refer to the service that is provided to the ratepayer. In Kawana's case, and others such as Buderim, the service provided is dissimilar to that of areas in close proximity to a fully manned station.

Let me make two points. Firstly, the actual service that we receive in Kawana is very good and is substantially provided by our auxiliaries, and I commend them for it. Secondly, I question whether the levy paid should relate to the number of officers in the nearest station, but it does. This is where I believe Kawana and Buderim do not receive equity under the revised system being proposed. Due to the distance in traffic, it takes an average of 8 to 10 minutes to respond to parts of Kawana from the two fully manned stations. Kawana's good service is largely thanks to the auxiliaries. By using the Government system of classes, one could make a strong case for a D levy rather than a C levy. I do, of course, acknowledge and appreciate the value of back-up services.

In reality, Kawana has access problems, particularly at peak hours. These are growing every day through the northern end of the suburb and there is just one road through the suburb. I therefore call on the Minister for Emergency Services not to proceed with the proposal to increase Kawana from C to A and Buderim from B to A at this time and instead look at some other alternative proposals to acknowledge and reflect the particular access problems of those two communities and come back to the coast to hold public meetings in both communities and put those alternative proposals forward.

Gumba Gumba Youth Program

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (7.10 p.m.): This week, when we have seen some 200,000 people walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge as a symbol of their tremendous support for reconciliation, I am pleased to report on a very much smaller event that has recently taken place in Cairns but which is nonetheless very important. The Gumba Gumba elders hosted their graduation night for a number of young people with whom they have trialled an innovative program.

For these young people, many of whom have had difficulty with school attendance and

school performance and who come from families that are not fortunate, the elders have offered, out of school hours, a program of mentoring as it were. They have provided these young people with training in culturally appropriate skills and with information in recreational activities. They have taught them communications and they have taught them teamwork. They have given them responsibility and a chance to really blossom and discover their talents. At the same time, underlying all of this, the elders have provided for these young people examples of the best modern indigenous values and attitudes available. This program was supported by the Federal Government in a modest financial way. I give my congratulations to it for supporting this initiative.

There is no doubt that the program has been successful. Hopefully it can be continued and expanded. What was most important was seeing these young people, people who have already had difficulties in their young lives, showing self-confidence and pride and having developed a positive image of their own capabilities for the future. I offer my sincere congratulations to the directors and the staff of Gumba Gumba, in particular to chairlady Mrs Maureen Williams and to executive officer Mr Bob Colless. They do indigenous people and indigenous youth proud and provide the way for a positive future for indigenous young people.

Hospital Funding

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.12 p.m.): A virtually untouched \$120m Commonwealth grant to cut adverse effects in Queensland hospitals should have been apportioned to the Gold Coast Hospital before the sterilisation debacle. The Queensland Health Minister is constantly complaining about not having enough Federal Government moneys, yet she has let this sizeable grant languish for two years while hospitals such as the Gold Coast Hospital and many others have desperately needed resources to address issues of quality patient care. Queensland has been progressively paid this money since the start of the Australian Health Care Agreement two years ago. The money has been paid each week into State coffers, and this is where most of it remains, unspent, as was recently revealed to a Senate committee.

On the Gold Coast, 32 people's lives are in limbo as they await the outcome of tests since the failed sterilisation process resulted in potentially not sterile equipment being used in surgery. The Health Department's response

was a wafer-thin report resulting from an internal investigation. The Government blamed human error, however the scanty public evidence reveals a series of human errors which indicate a systems failure typical of a hospital under stress.

Recent research shows that Australian hospitals may be killing or injuring 10.6% of patients, which is up to three times the United States rate. A key point in the research indicates that this is due to the lack of external monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Is it any wonder we are sceptical of the Health Department and the Government's internal review of the Gold Coast Hospital disaster, or of any other hospital at which adverse outcomes are experienced?

This morning I asked a question relating to Bundaberg Hospital workers and their concerns about being under stress and having a lack of resources and that there could be quality issues affecting the care of patients. The Health Minister refused to answer that question. Those concerns remain in Bundaberg. They also remain in a number of other hospitals. Yet \$120m of Government funding has not been allocated.

Time expired.

Life Education Program

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (7.14 p.m.): Recently Parliament debated a proposal for the reinstatement of State Government funding for the Life Education program in schools. The proposal was lost on the casting vote of the Speaker. I urge the Government to reconsider its opposition to this program. To assist, I will quote from a number of letters I have received. The Woombye State School P & C wrote—

"We, as parents and teachers feel the Life Ed is a very substantial part of our children's education and value the service we have at present. Our kids enjoy visiting the van and it would be a shame to lose such a concept as this. We hope the Government see this as importantly as we do and will continue funding the Sunshine Coast Branch."

The Bli Bli State School wrote—

"On hearing of the discontinuation of funding for the Life Education Van our school community was most upset.

This van provides a springboard for many health, safety, social science and peer group issues. These issues are part of Education Queensland's curriculum

guidelines. Without the van visiting our school site the resources are either wasted or deposited at one school site, leaving other schools to borrow them or fend for themselves in covering the curriculum fully. Human resources within the van will be lost.

If other areas in Queensland have Life Education van visits, so should the Sunshine Coast, with a growing school community and new schools and classes opening yearly, this resource is fully utilised."

The Montville State School wrote—

"We strongly support Life Education for our children and recognise that the ability of Life Education to continue to provide the same level of services and education could now be compromised.

We will contact Life Education to offer our support and see if we can still submit the petition asking for restoration of funding."

The Mooloolah State School wrote—

"Mooloolah State School P and C Association would like to continue to support the Life Education Centre. We believe it to be a worthwhile program. However, with the constraints of our budget we are not able to pay for this visit without State Government funding.

We seek your support to restore the funding for the Life Education Centre school visits."

I ask the Minister for Education to reconsider his opposition to this program and to allocate funding in this year's Budget for the resumption of the Life Education program.

Smoking

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (7.16 p.m.): The decision to smoke is made between the ages of 12 and 16. Very few people start smoking after the age of 18. By the time our children leave school, 33% of girls and 31% of boys are smokers. Many of these 60,000 new smokers a year will become long-term smokers, and half of them will die prematurely. Every time there is a death resulting from a motor vehicle accident or a drug overdose it is reported in all media outlets, yet tobacco kills more people than motor vehicle accidents, illicit drugs, suicide and breast cancer combined. Tobacco is an insidious drug that undermines the health of the user.

The State receives \$521m per annum in tobacco taxes but spends a massive \$2.1 billion on diseases caused by smoking. There is no economic benefit to Queensland in supporting this manipulative and deceitful industry. The Queensland Heart Foundation has mounted a campaign to prevent the next generation of children smoking. It will be asking the State Government to fully fund its plan in the next State Budget.

The Beattie Government receives nearly \$8m in tax from the illegal supply of cigarettes to children, yet present expenditure on tobacco awareness and control is insignificant—less than \$1m. Despite 70 million cigarettes being sold to schoolchildren each year, no retailer has yet been prosecuted in Queensland for selling tobacco to minors. Government leaders talk about taking a hard line on drugs, yet they allow the most dangerous and surest killer of them all to kill 3,500 Queenslanders a year.

A comprehensive program can reduce smoking rates. It would save money and save lives. I urge all members to demand funding in the next State Budget for the Heart Foundation's Queensland tobacco action plan for tobacco control.

Crime

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (7.18 p.m.): The Australian Institute of Criminology, under the directorship of Professor Adam Graycar, does an excellent job in the work it has been assigned to do by the Federal Government. This federally funded body assembles statistics and monitors social attitudes and performances of various groups involved in crime and crime prevention across all jurisdictions within Australia. It also has access to research within Australia and overseas.

Consistently, the AIC reports that the fear of crime is considerably greater than the actual likelihood of a person becoming a victim of crime. This difference between the perception of crime and the fear of becoming a victim and the actual occurrence or likelihood of being a victim is brought about by a few things within our society, one of which is the media, which tends to sensationalise crimes. Perhaps the disgraceful act of an attack on an older person is highlighted and older persons then think they are the people most likely to be attacked, whereas the figures show that it is young men who are most likely to be victims of crime.

The other factor we saw tonight—that is the Opposition blowing out of all proportion the

crime statistics and crime figures. It is an absolute disgrace that particularly older persons feel that they have to lock themselves in their homes, feel that they cannot sleep and feel daily that they are going to be a victim of crime because people like the shadow Minister for Police, the member for Callide and others blow out of all proportion the crime statistics and the crime situation in our State. They ought to have greater responsibility in the work they do. There is no doubt that a victim of crime does suffer. I know and my family knows that from first-hand experience. But the fear that members opposite have put into particularly the older people in my electorate is disgraceful.

Time expired.

Toowoomba South Electorate Community Projects

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (7.20 p.m.): I speak tonight in support of the application for funding by the Toowoomba City Council to the Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Sport. The Toowoomba City Council has made an application for funding through the Regional Centres Program for a very exciting project in the main street of Toowoomba, Ruthven Street, to revitalise that whole street and build up the CBD. Already the Toowoomba City Council has done similar work in Margaret Street, with the completion of what is now called Eat Street and another portion called Style Street. I think that Margaret Street, running from the edge of the range down into the city, is now probably one of most beautiful boulevards in the world. If Ruthven Street can likewise be beautified, then certainly it will be a great project.

The second application by the council is for the development of the multi-purpose wetland and recreation complex within the west creek corridor of Gowrie Creek. This project is part of the Gowrie Creek catchment area management strategy, which has been adopted by the Toowoomba City Council. It is in the area between Stenner and Alderley Streets. It will provide great benefits to the city in the prevention of flooding and in enhancing the environment but also particularly in providing cleaner water into Gowrie Creek, which ultimately runs down into the Condamine and Murray-Darling Basin. This is a very important project that can provide not only for flood mitigation but also solve some recreational problems in the area. Both of these projects will provide an enormous amount of work for people in need of work.

I recommend to the Minister two other projects. Feasibility studies are to be undertaken on the areas surrounding the Toowoomba City Airport and also to create the concept of Toowoomba as an all-year-round garden city. Toowoomba is famous for its Carnival of Flowers, famous for its gardens, famous for its autumn leaves and famous for its spring gardens. If this concept can be promoted throughout Australia, it will do a great deal for tourism.

Time expired.

James Cook University High Technology Library

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (7.22 p.m.): 12 May 2000 will be remembered as an important milestone in the history of the Cairns campus of James Cook University for two very different reasons. 12 May was the day that the Prime Minister, John Howard, opened the \$12.5m state-of-the-art, high technology library building which featured in this week's IT section of the Australian newspaper.

I particularly commend the commitment of Judith Clark, Manager of Information Services, who has worked tirelessly to establish this magnificent new library. Ms Clark began as the university librarian when the campus collection consisted of some 2,000 volumes on a few shelves within the Cairns TAFE library. Today, more than a decade on, the library has in excess of 40,000 volumes and is truly a library for the 21st century, with a 24-hour computer laboratory, three electronic tutorial rooms and multimedia creativity labs, two videoconference and lecture rooms, an Internet cafe, a disabilities support unit, lecture theatre, and a study skills centre.

However, had it not been for the Beattie Labor Government, it could well have been May 2001 before the library was opened. It was only because the State Government provided a \$7.5m interest-free loan and a \$2m grant that students and staff have been able to utilise the library since January of this year. 12 May will also be remembered as the day on which some 200 striking academic staff and students rallied to make the Prime Minister aware of the serious implications of Federal Government higher education policies for regional universities such as James Cook, a theme taken up very strongly by both the chancellor and vice-Chancellor of the university at the library opening.

I want to place on the record my strong support for both academic staff and students

of the Cairns campus of James Cook University. As I indicated when I addressed the rally, their case against the Federal Government is compelling, and I wish I had more time tonight to provide details. I have written to the vice-chancellor congratulating him on his strong stand but also urging him to negotiate further with academic staff to provide a just outcome to their current 4% salary claim.

But ultimately neither students nor staff will achieve justice and equity until the Federal Government reverses its higher education policies and acts to support regional universities such as James Cook with increased funding. If 12 May represented the day on which the Prime Minister finally woke up to the fact that he is destroying Australian universities, it would indeed be an historic date, but sadly, I doubt it.

Time expired.

Walk by Premier and Ministers to Lang Park

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (7.24 p.m.): On Wednesday of last week we were treated to yet another erotic display by Queensland's self-proclaimed media tart, the Premier, and his Ministers for Silly Walks. "Perambulating Pete" proved to us all that no matter how poor our physical condition might be, it will be easy to get to Lang Park and get home again when his Government stops playing charades with the redevelopment. The Premier's Hannibal-like journey was aimed at convincing everyone that spending hundreds of millions of dollars on Lang Park was not only wise financial management but an investment in the health and physical wellbeing of all football followers.

To make an even greater impact on his wide-eyed and devoted followers, he and his Ministers for Silly Walks, the Sports Minister and the Minister for Transport—the three wise men—set out on their epic journey three hours before kick-off. Simple-minded folk might wonder why they allowed three hours to walk such a short distance, but Labor's answer to John Cleese provided the answer. Apparently these three wise men realised that they were not camels, so they had to stop for refuelling at a hotel along the way. After a few hundred metres, the Sports Minister had developed a raging thirst that had to be quenched; the Transport Minister—who has grown accustomed to having transport provided—needed a rest, and of course, the media tart needed to moisten his tongue for the ordeal of the well-planned media interviews that followed.

What has not been well documented to date is how the three nomads reached Roma Street station. Did they catch a train from Logan or Browns Plains or Redcliffe? Did they catch a bus to their nearest railway station and then catch a train to Roma Street? Or did their ministerial drivers chauffeur them to Roma Street so that they could walk the rest of the way, just like normal football followers would do?

These three streetwalkers captured the imagination of their ministerial advisers but proved absolutely nothing. Everybody knows it is possible to walk from Roma Street to Lang Park and back again; ordinary people have been doing it for years. But did these three intrepid bedouins, the staunch supporters and vocal advocates of public transport, act like ordinary people and attend Lang Park solely by public transport and on foot, and how did they make their return journey home? Have the three of them always attended matches at Lang Park via public transport and on foot, or was last week's trek simply for the benefit of the media? Will they promise to use only public transport in the future, or will millions of dollars be spent on footpaths exclusively for the peasants?

While the Premier continues to prostitute himself to his media fetish, members of the public will continue to shake their collective heads and wonder how much his erotic and erratic acts are costing them.

Time expired.

Community Employment Assistance Program

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (7.26 p.m.): I ask honourable members to imagine a man in his fifties who has lost his job and is desperate to find work. There is a job going at Geebung. He lives some 25 to 30 kilometres away, but has no car and no money for the train fare. He wants that job, so he gets up at 3.30 a.m. on a summer's morning and walks the 25 kilometres from his home to the job interview. He does not get the job and he walks back home again with the hope that something else will come along. Well, something else did. While it was not a job, it was an opportunity to participate in a Community Employment Assistance Program, a program under the Beattie Labor Government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative.

That program was the indigenous plant operators CEAP project conducted by East Coast Training Employment, a community-

based organisation. This is the very same program the member for Caboolture publicly denounced in our local press because he did not think there should be specific employment programs for Aborigines, even though some participants were his constituents.

I had the pleasure of attending the graduation ceremony, and I am happy to report that this man has now been placed in work and all his efforts have paid off. I commend the team at East Coast—Allan Sparks, Matt Beinstock and project coordinator Linda Renouf—for their commitment to breaking the unemployment cycle for all groups in our community. I also want to pay tribute to Caboolture Earthmovers and East Coast Training and Employment themselves, who put up their own money to sponsor participants in that program on top of those that were sponsored by the Government. East Coast Employment and Training conducts programs for many groups in our community, from women re-entering the work force to mature-age people who have been long-term unemployed to people with disabilities.

Time expired.

Mobile Phone Tower, Taringa

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (7.28 p.m.): I rise to support residents of Crag Road and in the vicinity of Crag Road and Stanley Terrace, Taringa who are opposing the latest mobile phone tower in that area. These towers are apparently necessary to facilitate the latest technology craze, mobile phones. The problem with this tower is that it is on an area of land which is in fact a road reserve and therefore it will require a road closure. I appeal to the Minister to refuse the road closure, because to allow the tower to be constructed

will destroy a marvellous area of bushland at the foothills of Mount Coot-tha—a wildlife habitat—not to mention, of course, the fact that it will be an eyesore in the area and contrary to local town planning by-laws. One of the requirements of town planning is to maintain the character of an area and the beauty of the vista, and this tower is totally contrary to that requirement.

I believe that there has to be greater co-location of these mobile phone towers than has occurred in the past. It is clear that whatever their output power, they must comply with local government town planning requirements. The Federal Government passed laws to give the community a say in such matters.

The only way in which the community can have a say is through local government town planning by-laws and powers. For that to occur, they have to make application and receive approval. In this case, because it is State Government land, I believe that gives the State additional powers to be able to say no. Therefore, I appeal to the Minister to refuse the road closure application to ensure that this project does not proceed and that these telecommunications companies look elsewhere for a far more suitable site for their mobile phone towers.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (7.30 p.m.): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 20 June 2000."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.30 p.m.