

THURSDAY, 24 AUGUST 2000

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

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Retirement Villages Act

From **Mr Goss** (260 petitioners) requesting the House to consider the residents of Compton Gardens Retirement Village, Aspley request for the Government to review the section "Maintenance Reserve Fund" of the Retirement Villages Act 1999 which took effect from 1 July 2000.

Specialist Teachers

From **Mr Hegarty** (2 petitioners) requesting the House to recognise that the situation is desperate for children who have specific learning disabilities in our schools and that urgent prioritisation for the provision of mandatory quality training for generalist and specialist teachers be made, in order to allow these children to access their educational rights and to reach their potential.

Orchestras

From **Mr Hegarty** (824 petitioners) requesting the House to keep the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra separate so that both can continue in their best suited pursuits and that the QPO continues with the chamber orchestra performances in rural Queensland and that there is no reduction in the number of QPO players or of concerts given by the orchestra as a separate entity.

Radiation Therapy Services, Sunshine Coast

From **Miss Simpson** (514 petitioners) requesting the House to urge the Minister for Health to approve the provision of radiation therapy services at Nambour General Hospital and to immediately provide these specialist consultations on the Sunshine Coast.

Petitions received.

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES**Statement of Expenses**

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.33 a.m.): I wish to table the Public Report of Ministerial Expenses for the 1999-2000 financial year. This report is an initiative of this Government and represents the commitment that I made to provide six-monthly reports to Parliament on Ministers' expenses in a format that is readily understandable by the community. We keep improving on that format, as we have on this occasion. It is the culmination of expenses for the full 1999-2000 financial year of my Government and includes the entire expenses of running ministerial offices, including the salaries, superannuation contributions and all other costs associated with every member of staff.

In line with my commitment to accountability in Government, I have further enhanced this public report to separately provide details for Ministers, staff and the ministerial office generally. This report will provide greater transparency and enhance accountability. For the first time, the Auditor-General has been requested to check and certify this public report. This has expanded the Auditor-General's certification from reported expenses of Ministers only to the total expenses for each and every ministerial and parliamentary secretary's office. Because of this, the Statement of Expenses of Ministers of the Crown provided to Parliament in previous years is now redundant. It will no longer be provided, as it will merely be a duplication of the Ministers' column included in my enhanced Public Report of Ministerial Expenses. I believe that this audited public report confirms for all members that my Ministers are able to continue to provide their significant efforts in delivering portfolio outcomes without having to resort to the excesses of the past. The expenses are reasonable in the running of a modern Government. I table the reports.

PAPERS**MINISTERIAL PAPERS**

The following papers were tabled—

(a) Premier (Mr Beattie)—

Public Reports of Ministerial Expenses for period ended 30 June 2000

Letter, dated 23 August 2000, from Mr Len Scanlan, Auditor-General to Mr Beattie

- (b) Minister for Health (Mrs Edmond)—
Report on ministerial visit to New Zealand and the Cook Islands from 26 July to 1 August
- (c) Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services (Ms Bligh)—
Report on overseas trip to attend Community Services Ministers' Conference in New Zealand on 25 and 26 July 2000
- (d) Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Robertson)—
Report on ministerial visit to the United Kingdom and France from 8 to 16 July 2000.

OVERSEAS VISIT

Report

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.34 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House a report on a recent overseas trip to New Zealand and the Cook Islands.

OVERSEAS VISIT

Report

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (9.34 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House a report of a recent trip to New Zealand to attend a community services ministerial council.

OVERSEAS VISIT

Report

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Sunnybank—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (9.34 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House a report of my recent visit to the UK and France.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cape York Business Summit

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: This week's Cape York Business Summit offers the opportunity of a new deal between Government, business and indigenous communities. It will be held on Friday and Saturday this week. I will officially open the two-day summit which starts tomorrow in Weipa on the Cape York Peninsula. Also attending will be the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Judy Spence; the

member for Cook and Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads, Steve Bredhauer; the Federal shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Daryl Melham; business leaders and indigenous leaders. The Federal Government was invited.

This summit is a major plank in my Cape York Partnerships offer—the Government's offer—a formal offer from my Government to work in partnerships with indigenous people to improve the quality of life in Cape York communities. The goal of the summit is to drive economic development from local businesses through to larger industries such as resource exploration, mining and tourism and so on. We also want to identify opportunities for indigenous involvement in areas such as commercial development of marine resources and examine the potential for commercialising the existing intellectual, cultural and natural capital of Cape York. I hope the summit will generate ideas, establish strategic and business alliances and partnerships and identify ways that the State Government could facilitate development in partnership.

Participants will break into groups covering topics such as forming an indigenous business institute and establishing business networks on the cape and will report back to the summit on Saturday. I look forward to some innovative outcomes to help shape the development of the Cape York economic development strategy and set up partnerships between the Government, business and indigenous leaders.

For the benefit of honourable members, I table a kit of information, including the list of people who will attend and the agenda and goals of the summit. The Cape York Partnerships strategy also presents strategies on social development, community development and strengthening families and governance. We want economic development to break the cycle of welfare dependency and provide jobs. We want social development to set new principles where communities have greater power to set priorities and have greater ownership of programs delivered by State Government departments such as Education, Health and Families, Youth and Community Care. We want community development to build on the capacity of communities to take real ownership of their problems and decide how to solve them. We want governance to include the creation of negotiating tables involving representatives from communities and the Government. This strategy offers opportunity and hope for indigenous communities. This is real reconciliation and is a model that can be followed by the rest of

Australia. We intend, over time, to spread it to the rest of Queensland.

I spent some time referring to this in a debate last night on a private member's Bill, but I am delighted that we have got a number of acceptances from a large range of people. I mention a number of them: Mike Ahern; Richie AhMat; Chris Bartlett, who is a professor from the Harvard Business School; John Bidwell, who is the State Manager of AGL Pipelines; the Ministers I mentioned before; Michael Coughlan, who is the manager of indigenous issues for Normanby Mining Ltd; Andrew Craig, the Chief Executive of the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Frankie Deemal, negotiating with Chevron; Marion Gibney, Executive Director of the Queensland Mining Council and also from MIM Ltd; John Hay, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Queensland; Dr Charles Lane, the Chief Executive Officer of the Myer Foundation; Mr Alex McDonald, Marketing and Campaign Manager of The Body Shop; Terry O'Shane, of course, Chairperson of QIWG; Noel Pearson will be there; and Terry Piper, Community Affairs Manager from the PNG gas project from Chevron. Also attending will be Lester Rosendal, Commissioner from ATSIC; Sir Ninian Stephen, the former Governor-General; Mr Malcolm Turnbull, co-chairman and managing director of Goldman Sachs Australia Pty Limited; and the list goes on. I table that as part of the documentation.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal Domestic Violence Legislation; Integrity Commissioner

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: There are two important issues that I want to draw to the attention of the House. The first one is that I regret to inform the House that Queensland's interests are once again potentially being jeopardised by the actions of the Howard Government. John Howard has been seeking a unilateral power to call in the troops to deal with undefined circumstances of domestic violence.

I have concerns about the purpose and intent of these changes and I have concerns about their validity under the Constitution. For many years there has been a careful delineation between the roles of the military and the State police and both sides have worked closely and carefully to respect that delineation. It has been a proud record and I thank both the police and the armed services for that approach. The role of the military is to

defend the nation from external or internal threat. The Army has a proud reputation of being non-partisan and becoming involved in only domestic circumstances that cannot be handled by the relevant Police Service. As I said, the Army becomes involved only at the request of the Police Commissioner.

The Army has developed a close and cooperative relationship with the Queensland Police Service over many years. Members may remember the cooperation between the police and the military that made the 1982 Commonwealth Games a great success and a trouble-free event. I am sure that cooperation will continue, but I do not think that the actions of the Prime Minister contribute anything to that existing goodwill.

Yesterday I wrote to the Acting Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee expressing Queensland's concerns about the legislation now before the Senate. The use of the Army is linked to section 119 of the Constitution, which contemplates the initiation of any intervention only at the request of the State or Territory. So the Bill closes out the States and their police forces from having a say about the management of internal disturbances. It is left to a committee made up of John Howard, Darryl Williams and John Moore to decide the need for military intervention.

Mr Braddy: John Moore—that's a bit of a worry.

Mr BEATTIE: It is a real worry. I am advised that the Federal Government may be weakening on this point and offering amendments. I am yet to see any such proposal, but an amendment at the 11th hour, if it arises, does not resolve the question: why did John Howard seek to obtain these unilateral powers to call in the troops?

The Bill fails to define what constitutes domestic violence in which the Army may become involved, nor does it define the Commonwealth interests which these powers would seek to protect. It amounts to another attempt by Canberra to meddle in the operations of the States. What is more, John Howard's actions jeopardise the capacity of the Army to maintain its proud tradition of defending our community in a non-partisan, fair and objective way. It is unfair and un-Australian of John Howard to compromise the loyalty of our brave soldiers to pursue his own political ends. It endangers the ANZAC tradition, and I urge the Prime Minister to reconsider the legislation. I table a copy of a letter that I sent yesterday to Senator John Hogg, who is the Acting Chairman of the

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee.

While we are talking about matters of importance, the second issue I want to raise relates to the appointment of Australia's first Integrity Commissioner this week. It has confirmed Queensland's place as the national leader on integrity and ethics. On Monday, I announced that Alan George Demack, AO, a retired judge of the Queensland Supreme Court, has been appointed as Queensland's Integrity Commissioner. Mr Demack is appointed for a three-year term under the Public Sector Ethics Amendment Act 1999. He begins work this week giving advice on ethical issues to me, my Ministers, Government members of Parliament and heads of departments in raising community awareness of ethical issues. It was unanimously recommended by a panel including representatives of the churches and private industry.

Mr Demack is a highly distinguished jurist with a wealth of experience and a keen appreciation of ethical issues. He retired from the Supreme Court in May 2000 after a 22-year term. He had previously served as a senior judge of the Family Court and on the Queensland District Courts. During a legal career, which began in the 1950s, he has also chaired commissions of inquiry, including an inquiry into the status of women from 1973 to 1974, into the nature and extent of problems confronting youth from 1974 to 1975, and into in-vitro fertilisation and related matters in 1983.

Mr Demack wears and has worn many other hats that are relevant to his new role. He is an elder and lay preacher in the Uniting Church, has chaired the Queensland Marriage Guidance Council from 1973 to 1978 and is active in charities in his home town of Rockhampton. Mr Demack has a distinguished record of service in his professional life and to the community. For the information of the House, I table a copy of his resume.

This appointment fulfils an election commitment and sets this Government apart as the only Australian jurisdiction with an Integrity Commissioner. In fact, Queensland is one of the very few Governments in the world with an office of this nature. I think the only other one is in Canada. As I said, I table Mr Demack's CV for the information of the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Olympic Games Business Opportunities

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

Development and Minister for Trade) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: With only weeks to go before the Sydney Olympics, the Queensland Government has more than doubled its original target to help win Games business for small and medium-sized firms in this State. The Beattie Government, through the Department of State Development, developed an Olympic 2000 business opportunities project, which aimed to assist Queensland businesses to gain short, medium and long-term commercial benefits from the Sydney Games. Our original target was \$50m. In the past few weeks we have surpassed \$105m, and we expect that before the flame is extinguished this amount could grow by a further \$10m. This does not include—and I repeat: does not include—contracts won by branches of multinational companies based in Queensland or business generated by pre-Games training here in this State, and we have the largest contingent of overseas teams training in this State.

The manufacturing and services sector have won the bulk of the 200 contracts let to businesses across the State. Some examples of the successful tenderers include Tramanco Pty Ltd of Rocklea, which is supplying and installing wheelchair loaders, and Crisp Air at Acacia Ridge, which is installing airconditioning units into each of the 250 minibuses that will transport Olympians, Paralympians and visitors during the Games.

An important part of the project has been to ensure that Queensland business does not see the Games as just a one-off event. The knowledge gained will be used for ongoing events. We have focused on those ongoing events such as the Goodwill Games next year. The benefits of the project have assisted with the Olympic football to be held in Brisbane. It is anticipated that that will generate some \$3m worth of contracts for Queensland firms.

One important lesson learned from the previous Games is that they have impacts on businesses across the nation and not just on those firms near the venues or those successful in winning Olympics businesses. The department has undertaken an information campaign, which will include briefing sessions from the Olympic Commerce Centre to assist businesses to reduce disruption and take advantage of the opportunities generated locally by the Games. The business-matching approach used to ensure that Queensland businesses are able to compete for Games contracts has been extremely successful. The project will be further developed to maximise the benefits to the State's businesses from other events, such as

the Goodwill Games and events of both regional and State significance. In fact, information on working in the Sydney environment has been taken to the communities of Cairns, Townsville, Ipswich, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. This was via the Going for Gold series, which was organised by the Brisbane Olympic Opportunities Unit and the Brisbane Club information sessions organised by the Trade Division.

In the area of non-Olympic work, the Sydney office has made contact with more than 130 Sydney-based organisations. The Sydney business environment presents continuing opportunities for Queensland's small and medium-sized businesses. Analysis of business growth following previous Olympic Games has demonstrated a window of about six years of continued growth. The development of those opportunities in Sydney, through the Olympics and through our office, we see as being significant for small businesses over this period.

While Sydney will continue to grow, it presents an ideal opportunity for Queensland companies, which should not be ignored. We intend to expand our operations in Sydney. The fact is that we may not win the gold medal in terms of contracts—that will obviously go to Sydney—but we will certainly win the silver medal. We have learned lessons from this. The companies that have been involved with these contracts will have further opportunities not just in the Sydney market but also within the Australian market as well.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Boat Registration Concessions

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: Concessions are an important part of the Government's policy to ensure that people with low incomes can continue to enjoy a reasonable standard of living and quality of life. They help make essential services more accessible to those who need them most. The Government allocates significant funds for the provision of concessions to pensioners, seniors and others on low income for services such as health, household expenses, recreation, education and transport. However, some inconsistent policies have led to confusion and frustration.

Until now, a person could walk into a Queensland Transport Customer Service Centre and discover that they were eligible for concessions for their motor vehicle registration, but ineligible for a concession on their boat registration. In other cases, discounts were

payable on both, but were for different amounts. As of next Friday, 1 September, Queensland boat registration concessions will be brought into line with motor vehicle concessions. The changes mean that more Queenslanders will be eligible for concessions, and for others the discount will double.

From 1 September, all Pensioner Concession Card holders will be entitled to 50% discount on one vessel, regardless of the rate or type of pension. Also from that date, the Queensland Seniors Card discount will double to 50%. Holders of a Totally and Permanently Incapacitated—TPI—war pension will continue to receive a 100% concession. Although vessel registration fees are relatively inexpensive in Queensland, the difference will mean an important saving for some. The concession for registration of a small boat or dingy will be \$20.45. The saving on a small half-cabin cruiser will be \$35.85. And the concession on registration of a retiree's dream boat, for instance, a 10-metre cruiser or trailer-sailor, will be \$51.20.

Queensland's coastal and inland waterways provide important sporting and recreational opportunities for our older residents and people with a disability. These changes will put money in the pockets of more boating enthusiasts, giving them a financial hand to enjoy the water in a safe manner. Other important concessions provided by the State Government in the Transport portfolio include vehicle registration discounts, rail, bus, ferry and taxi fare discounts. The 50% concession to pensioners and seniors on the registration fee for a four-cylinder car is \$84.80. On a six-cylinder car they save \$130.30. QR passenger rail services are offered at one half of the adult fare to pensioners and seniors. In addition, holders of Pensioner Concession Cards receive four travel vouchers annually, each of which provides one free single economy journey on any QR service, except the north Queensland tourist trains. The vouchers can be combined to allow the pensioner one free return first-class journey.

This Government recently expanded the Taxi Subsidy Scheme to include more categories of people with a disability, offering eligible passengers a 50% concession. In line with the Government's social justice objectives, all public transport contracts require operators of urban bus and ferry services to provide half-fare concessions to seniors and pensioners. With the support of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, this Government provides significantly more benefits to seniors and pensioners than any previous Government. This shows the

Government's commitment to ensuring that some of the benefits of this State's success and growth flow to those in most need.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public Architecture Conference

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (9.53 a.m.), by leave: I want to inform honourable members of an initiative that I have taken as Minister for Public Works which impacts on the type of place Queensland will be in the future. I have always considered it important for the Government to stimulate public debate on issues related to our built environment. Last year, as honourable members will recall, the Premier and I announced the appointment of the first Queensland Government Architect, Professor Michael Keniger of the University of Queensland. His brief is to advise the Government on a range of issues related to public architecture and design.

Next month will see another important step with the staging of a conference in Brisbane to discuss public architecture. The conference—the Making of the Public Realm—will help promote innovation and excellence in the quality and design of public projects. It is designed to provoke thought and debate on the role that public architecture plays in shaping Queensland's built environment. The conference, being organised by the Department of Public Works, will be held on 26 September. Speakers will include Professor Keniger as well as Francis Golding from the Commission of Architecture and Built Environment in the UK, whom I met in London last year, National Capital Authority Chief Executive Officer Annabelle Pegrum, and New South Wales Government Architect Chris Johnson. I believe that the conference will be a landmark for all involved in the design of public buildings and places.

Past generations of Queenslanders left us with a rich architectural heritage and this conference will help foster wider public discussion about the legacy that we will leave future generations. I am particularly keen for young architects and those now studying architecture to attend, because their ideas and designs will quite literally shape our future.

The conference is part of my ongoing efforts to foster a greater understanding of the issues that influence our built environment and the buildings in which we spend our lives. Wider and more informed discussion of such issues can only result in the creation of world-class public projects which benefit all

Queenslanders both now and in the and future.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Forde Inquiry Monitoring Committee Report

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: Twelve months ago I tabled the Government's response to one of the most significant inquiries in Queensland's history. The Forde Commission of Inquiry Into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions marked a watershed in the delivery of child protection and youth justice services in Queensland. It shone a light on the past and revealed a broken system caused by almost a century of neglect. Most importantly, it exposed the abuse and ongoing pain in the lives of many children, now adults, who were placed in the care of that broken system.

Twelve months on I am pleased today to be tabling the first report of the Forde Inquiry Monitoring Committee. The independent committee was established by the Government to monitor the implementation of the Forde inquiry recommendations. I wish to thank the monitoring committee for the rigour and dedication that it has applied to this important task. I particularly wish to thank the Chair of the committee, Professor Ian O'Connor of the University of Queensland. I also thank Mary Eather, Beth Wilson-Szoredi and Kelly Trewin, committee members who were all formerly in State or institutional care. I am told that their personal experiences of Queensland's child protection and youth justice systems have been invaluable to the work of the monitoring committee.

The Forde inquiry made 42 recommendations. Last August, the Government expressed broad support for 41 of those. I am pleased to report that significant progress has been made on all of those recommendations. In its report, the monitoring committee commends the Government for the significant steps taken in implementing and progressing the implementation of the recommendations of the inquiry. In particular, the committee commends the Government for providing a significant increase in funding post Forde, establishing the \$1m Forde Foundation Trust Fund, the passage of new child protection legislation, the introduction of new Children's Commission legislation and the progress made in the area of youth justice, including the closure of the Petford Training Farm, the reduction in the rate of detention of indigenous children, increasing alternative

placement for young people on remand, major reductions in the use of watch-house detention for young people, increasing contact with family and friends and the progress towards the closure of the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre and the rebuilding of youth detention centres in Brisbane and Townsville.

The committee also outlined areas where more action is required, including funding levels, progressing amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act, and improving support for past residents. While the committee acknowledges the Government's commitment to increasing spending on children and families by \$40m over four years, it expresses the view that more needs to be done. I wish to assure all members of the House that the Beattie Government is committed to boosting services for children and families. The funding of this portfolio is a matter for deliberation in the Budget processes. In this year's Budget the Government went beyond its committed target with the allocation of an additional \$5m. This Government is proud of its significant investment to date and remains committed to building the resources of this portfolio.

The monitoring committee notes that the recommendations seeking changes to the Juvenile Justice Act are yet to be implemented. I can assure the House that the groundwork for the amendments has been laid with a comprehensive review of the Juvenile Justice Act. Amendments are currently being prepared for Cabinet consideration in the near future. I acknowledge the concerns expressed by the monitoring committee regarding the need for a more cohesive response to the needs of ex-residents.

Reconciliation with a painful past is a difficult and complex question. Unfortunately, there is no simple recipe which can be applied. While a great emphasis has been placed on improved support and services for ex-residents, a renewed focus is warranted in this area. To this end, the department has appointed a former resident to organise reconciliation events, the first of which will occur tomorrow, and a newsletter has been published to bring people up to date with the process of reform. I am also pleased to announce that I will be signing the official deed of trust to formally establish the \$1m Forde Foundation Trust Fund tomorrow. The Board of Advice, which is chaired by Mrs Leneen Forde and includes representatives of former residents, will then be able to advise former residents how and when to apply for support through the foundation.

I gave my commitment that Mrs Forde's report would not gather dust on the shelf. The Beattie Government resolved to establish the monitoring committee to ensure that the Government was accountable for the implementation of its recommendations. In 12 short months we have started to rebuild a broken system run down over decades of neglect. Though there is still much to be done, today's report shows that we have come a long way. I am proud of the progress we have made, and I congratulate those in the department, other Government agencies and our non-Government service partners who have committed to these reforms.

I acknowledge again the personal courage and strength of those who came forward and shared their painful and personal histories and made the Forde inquiry possible. I look forward to the 12 months ahead as we continue to implement the Forde inquiry's recommendations. Mrs Forde was right when she said that the State has not always been a good parent. The reforms that are under way will ensure that we are a better parent in the future.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Travel Agents

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (10 a.m.), by leave: An independent consultant's report into the regulation of travel agents has just been completed in line with the National Competition Policy review of the national scheme. The NCP review was commissioned by the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs. May I say at the outset that I have reservations about the report and its recommendations, which have not been endorsed by any State or Territory. One of the guiding principles for the NCP review is that legislation should not restrict competition unless there are obvious benefits to the community. This is of particular relevance to Queensland, a State where tourism is one of our most dynamic industries and where there are more than 700 licensed travel agents that fall within the auspices of the Travel Agents Act.

While one of the objectives of the Act is to provide for the regulation of travel agents, my primary objective is to protect consumers who suffer financial loss at the hands of an agent. This is achieved through the Travel Compensation Fund in a unique partnership between Government, industry and

consumers. The fund operates on a national basis and in the past 10 years has paid out more than \$22m in claims to consumers. Of that, \$2.6m has been paid out in claims resulting from the collapse of Queensland travel agents.

The compensation scheme operates on a cooperative basis between all States. That is important because it ensures that consumers are protected by the fund, no matter which travel agent they deal with in Australia. Of course, the last thing this Government would want to witness is the collapse of any travel agency. That is why we regulate the industry to minimise the chances of any collapses through incompetence or unconscionable conduct. That is why I have grave concerns about the recommendations contained in the NCP review of travel agents' regulation. It suggests that no regulation or insurance is needed in the long term. However, it recommends, as an intermediate step, that compulsory membership of the fund be dropped so that private insurers can compete with that fund. It would still be mandatory for all agents to carry insurance. The trouble is that the fund exists to compensate consumers in the event of fraud or insolvent trading. I have grave doubts whether private insurers would be prepared to underwrite losses in these circumstances. As well as that, if the national scheme was abandoned, consumers could easily slip through the safety net and be left stranded.

I lay upon the table of the House a report on the NCP review of the national scheme for the regulation of travel agents. It will be available for consultation until the end of October. However, I take this opportunity to assure the travel industry and consumers that I will take a lot of convincing before agreeing with any of these recommendations. We have to embrace some degree of change because of the rapidly changing nature of the travel industry. Honourable members should look no further than the escalating airline price war being waged through Internet bookings directly with airlines. Consumers keen to cash in on cheap fares should be aware that, by booking directly with airlines, they place themselves outside the protective umbrella of the fund.

It will ultimately be a matter for each State to determine how it will address the NCP recommendations. However, I can assure members of this House that the Queensland Government will continue to act in a way that protects the interests of the travel industry and, at the same time, meets the needs of consumers.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Trade Mission to Asia

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: I am happy to announce that the trade mission I recently led to Asia has achieved prompt results. Korean Air will run two new services direct to Brisbane following the acceptance of a proposal presented to it during the trade mission. From 31 October, the airline will dedicate 600 seats to the south-east Queensland market each week, providing the capacity to bring 30,000 tourists direct to Queensland. This is a huge capacity increase that directly benefits Queensland. The additional two flights means that Korean Air will now operate nine flights from Seoul to Australia each week.

I am delighted that my talks with Korean Air were fruitful and that the proposal that my Queensland industry colleagues and I presented has been adopted in full. This is a clear signal that the Korean market is back and kicking. Tourism Queensland is working hard with its industry partners on marketing strategies to capitalise on this extra capacity in the coming months. According to the latest International Visitor Survey data, inbound tourism to Queensland from Korea grew by 100% last year compared with 1998 with almost 50,000 Koreans visiting our State. Korea is back as a major inbound market for Queensland and Australia after a catastrophic downturn during the Asian economic crisis.

We were able to convince Korean Air to stay ahead of surging demand with increased seat capacity, and we now look forward to growing tourism in partnership with the airline. At my meeting with them, the airline was very positive and indicated its highly favourable view of Queensland destinations.

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs ROSE: This is good news. Do honourable members opposite want to listen?

The decision to increase capacity into Queensland proves that our international marketing strategies mounted as part of this Government's \$11m tourism rescue package are reaping rich rewards. More tourists means more dollars spent and more jobs for Queenslanders. The airline's decision will also boost Queensland's access to the long-haul markets of the United Kingdom and Europe, as well as the surging Korean market. Korean Air brings not just Koreans to Queensland, but tourists from the UK, Europe, Japan and even the United States. So we also boost our ability to tap into the Japanese market, which is also on the rebound after the financial crisis.

The south-east centres of Brisbane and the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast will directly benefit, with that benefit spreading with the flow of tourists to regional Queensland. The trade mission had discussions with nine international airlines in Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore as well as in Korea. Discussions were encouraging, and I am quietly confident that other airlines will join Korean Air and boost capacity into Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bushfire Season

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Sunnybank—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: Queensland is tinderbox dry at the moment and is facing one of the worst bushfire seasons in years. The State's first local fire bans were imposed on Monday as a result of a long dry period, plus predictions from the Bureau of Meteorology that next week could bring strong gusty westerly winds. Shires affected at this stage are Beaudesert, Boonah, Esk, Ipswich, Gatton and Laidley. It is expected that the bans will run only until Sunday. The Rural Fire Service is hoping that further bans will not be required and is urging property owners around the State to consider local burn-offs at the appropriate time to reduce the level of fuel in their areas.

Data collected by the Queensland Rural Fire Service shows that more than 90% of Queensland received fewer than 10 millimetres of rain during July. That is about the same amount of water produced by a couple of ice cubes. Many areas of southern and western Queensland have had no rain at all during August. Extensive frosts have also meant that a great deal of grass on both sides of the range has been destroyed and is now ripe to burn. Likewise, satellite and on-the-ground information has shown that there are large areas of fuel growth and that the curing rate is very high in large areas of the State, particularly in a band through the State's south-west into the south-east.

While the situation looks serious, our Rural Fire Service volunteers are better equipped and better prepared than ever before to deal with bushfires. Queensland has more than 45,000 rural fire volunteers, who make up the State's 1,600 rural fire brigades. They are well trained, highly dedicated volunteers who will do everything they can to protect and assist their local communities.

Labor Governments in this State have a long history of supporting our volunteer firefighters. Queensland's last major bushfire

season occurred in 1994. Successive Labor Governments have provided our rural fire brigades with record numbers of new rural fire vehicles. The rural fire levy scheme has enabled brigades to have more resources at their fingertips, while training and protective clothing and equipment provided to brigades is much better than previously delivered. In the past two years alone, the Beattie Government has delivered around 220 specially designed rural fire trucks to brigades across Queensland. Many of them were built under the \$7.5m Accelerated Vehicle Replacement Program designed to significantly reduce the age of the Rural Fire Service fleet.

Last month I had the pleasure of handing over 10 of these new vehicles to brigades in the Ipswich district. A number of those vehicles are now being used to help combat the dozens of fires currently burning throughout south-east Queensland. While our rural volunteer firefighters are equipped and prepared for the difficult job at hand, I would urge all Queenslanders to assist their local brigades wherever possible during this fire season. Individual property owners need to remember that the onus is on them to prepare themselves for the weeks and months ahead. Our rural fire brigades are ready and more than capable of dealing with the bushfire season that is almost upon us and will be working hard to minimise the risk of fire to life and property.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Comments by Member for Kallangur

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (10.10 a.m.), by leave: Last night the member for Kallangur wrongly attributed comments to me. A check of my speech in Hansard shows that the statements he made on page 2,708 were completely untrue. My personal explanation is that I did not make those statements at all. They are a complete fabrication.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.11 a.m.): I table Public Accounts Committee Report No. 54 titled Government Funding to Motorsport Queensland and move that the report be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

Mr HAYWARD: The committee undertook this investigation following a referral from the Leader of the Opposition, who raised concerns

about the loan arrangements between the Government and Motorsport Queensland. The loans were used to complete construction of the Queensland raceway. The committee is satisfied that the Government exercised appropriate financial management to safeguard Queensland taxpayers' dollars and that the financial arrangements entered into constituted a commercial transaction between the parties.

I thank the members of the committee, particularly the deputy chairman and member for Broadwater, Allan Grice, for their diligent efforts in preparing this report. On the committee's behalf, I thank research director Leanne Clare, research officer Anita Sweet and executive assistant Carolyn Heffernan for their hard work. I commend this report to the House.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Issues Paper

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.12 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee's issues paper titled *Dealing with Complaints Against Police*. As members will be aware, the committee is responsible under section 118(1)(f) of the Criminal Justice Act 1989 for conducting a review every three years of the activities of the Criminal Justice Commission and reporting to the Minister and the Legislative Assembly as to further action that should be taken in relation to the Act or the functions, powers and operations of the commission. The committee has embarked on the next three-year review and in May this year called for public submissions on a range of issues.

Committee members recently visited Sydney where we met with a range of New South Wales and Federal agencies to discuss the investigation of corruption and complaints against police and public sector employees. The committee also met with its counterparts in the New South Wales Parliament, namely, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Ombudsman, the Police Integrity Commission and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

One of the issues that we canvassed during our discussions was the appropriate mechanisms for ensuring that, as far as possible, agencies address their internal management issues and promote ethical conduct amongst their officers while remaining accountable to the Parliament and the public through independent external oversight. While

the experience in other jurisdictions does not automatically provide answers to any problems that may arise in Queensland's particular circumstances, we found the discussions to be very beneficial to the committee's current review.

As another step in the three-year review process, the committee has subsequently developed this issues paper to generate public comment on the appropriate mechanisms for dealing with complaints against police. It is now 10 years since the Criminal Justice Commission commenced its operations following the findings of the Fitzgerald inquiry. During that time, the commission has received more than 23,000 complaints against agencies across the public sector, including the Queensland Police Service. Appropriately, the commission has devoted increased resources in recent years to corruption prevention measures within its budgetary constraints. A key example is the work that the commission has done in relation to local government issues, both prior to the last local government election and through the preparation of the councillor information kit and other useful initiatives.

Through its more general role of monitoring and reform of the Police Service, the commission has also worked at various levels with the service to improve police management practices, internal disciplinary processes, policing methods and ethical conduct amongst police. Major projects in recent years have included those relating to community policing, police recruitment and selection processes and police promotion and transfer systems. There is clear evidence that the Queensland Police Service has made significant improvements since the pre-Fitzgerald era. The committee believes that it is timely to invite comments from interested agencies and individuals on whether it may be appropriate in the longer term for the Police Service to assume greater responsibility in relation to handling complaints against its officers.

The committee notes that the Criminal Justice Commission and the Queensland Police Service are currently involved in a joint project, Project Resolve, which is being trialled in the southern and south-eastern police regions between July and December this year. That project gives greater management responsibility to police supervisors by requiring them to liaise directly with complainants and take appropriate action to resolve matters. Apart from encouraging increased responsibility in the Police Service and providing more efficient complaint resolution,

the joint project also aims to benefit the Criminal Justice Commission by allowing it to divert its resources to focus on proactive strategies and preventive measures.

Without wishing in any way to pre-empt the findings of that trial and its implications for future policy development, the committee believes that discussion of the general issues surrounding the handling of complaints against police is merited. The committee stresses that the issues paper I have tabled today aims to generate public discussion of the matters it canvasses. In no way does it represent any decided views of the committee. I emphasise also that the committee recognises and underlines the importance to Queensland of the Criminal Justice Commission's continuing and central role in relation to oversight of police and the investigation of corruption and official misconduct matters throughout the public sector.

OFFICE OF MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Report of Expenses

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (10.16 a.m.), by leave: I lay on the table of the House a public report of expenses of the office of the Independent member for Nicklin for the period ended 30 June 2000.

OFFICE OF MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Report of Expenses

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (10.16 a.m.), by leave: I lay on the table of the House a public report of expenses of the office of the Independent member for Gladstone for the period ended 30 June 2000.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Employment

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—CCAQ) (10.16 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this Parliament supports Australian workers in their campaign to preserve Australian jobs by opposing the current unbridled free trade agenda."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Electoral Fraud; Ms K Ehrmann

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.17 a.m.): Today the Beattie Labor Government stands accused from within its own ranks of having indulged in and presided over electoral corruption. The question that

needs to be answered is this: why did it take the Federal Police breathing down the collective necks of the Labor Party before the Leader of the Labor Party and the member for Woodridge changed the rules? The reality from evidence given in the Karen Ehrmann case is that there have been allegations from within the Labor Party that Karen Ehrmann's ghosts may well have participated in the Mundingburra by-election, in the 1995 general election and in the 1998 general election—not claims made by the Opposition but claims made from within the Labor Party against the Labor Party in respect of practices that have been described as widespread and endemic.

Let us look at the engulfing cloud of the large number of members of the Labor Party in this House who have now been implicated. We have the situation in which Mr Don Brown, a State Industrial Relations Commissioner, presided over a corrupt Labor disputes hearing when he was president of the Labor Party. We have the situation in which the returning officer for the corrupt preselection was employed by the Deputy Premier and factional head of the AWU. We have the situation in which the State Secretary of the Labor Party, who presided over this corruption, now sits in this House.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order to put the record straight. Joan Budd is the general returning officer of the party, not the Townsville returning officer, or the Mundingburra returning officer, or the Thuringowa returning officer.

Mr BORBIDGE: I accept the Deputy Premier's assurance: she may have presided over more than one corrupt election.

Time expired.

Fuel Prices

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (10.19 a.m.): Today I call on Shell Australia to explain why on Tuesday the price of unleaded petrol in Middlemount was \$1 and 2.9c per litre, when consumers were paying a maximum of 96.9c in Dysart, 40 minutes to the north, and 97.9c at Tieri, 30 minutes to the west. These three mining towns are in a similar geographic location, so there should be very little, if any, variation in the freight component of the fuel sold through the bowsers. But for some reason fuel at Middlemount has a long history of being 5c or 6c a litre dearer than the fuel available at Dysart or Tieri.

I know that in the past local union representatives and community leaders have on occasions gone over the books. There is no visible evidence to support claims that the licensee is the one profiting from the higher

price. We feel that the 5c a litre is somehow finding its way back to Shell. Unfortunately, it is the lessee and staff who have to cop the anger and frustration from consumers.

I am of the opinion that people other than those who run the service station are responsible for what can only be described as blatant theft. Shell is raking in 5c a litre, but of course that cannot be proved by looking at the books at the local level. It must be hidden in the contractual arrangements between the lessee and Shell.

There is no doubt that the price of fuel is the hottest consumer issue around. For the people of Middlemount it has now reached boiling point. People living in the south-east corner of the State think they have been hard done by. They should look at prices in regional Queensland. By paying 90c a litre, motorists in this part of the State are 13c a litre better off than the people of Middlemount.

Shell Australia is involved in this rip-off and it must make public a breakdown of the price. For example, what proportion is related to the oil price? What is the fuel excise component? What amount is related to the GST? What is the freight component? What is the mark-up for Shell? What is the mark-up for the licensee? This is a simple process that would explain why the price of fuel in Middlemount is consistently 5c or 6c a litre higher than in the other towns of similar geographical location.

Member for Ipswich

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.21 a.m.): There is an old saying that "it takes one to know one", and the Treasurer is a walking, talking testament to its enduring truth. Yesterday he summoned up all the moral outrage he could muster to accuse an interstate trucking company of robbing the public purse. Talk about the pot calling the kettle black! This is the same bloke who rorted his parliamentary travel entitlements. This is the bloke who would not even own up when asked a direct question by his boss at the time, former Premier Wayne Goss. I will refresh the memories of the Treasurer and everyone else with a quote from Tony Koch's belated exposé in the Courier-Mail last year. It stated—

"... the examination concluded that it"—
meaning the report—

"referred to Hamill who ... had claimed travel expenses for a driving trip to Shute Harbour ... on Labor Party business. His travelling companion was the ALP's then-state secretary Beattie.

When ... Ministers were asked by Goss to acknowledge any reference to them, Hamill remained silent."

Mr HAMILL: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Moggill has made claims which are false and offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Dr WATSON: I am not surprised—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You will withdraw.

Dr WATSON: I will withdraw whatever he finds offensive. I refer to the article published in the Courier-Mail of 31 July 1999. Those opposite ought to read it again. It states—

"When ... Ministers were asked by Goss to acknowledge any reference to them, Hamill remained silent. He knew he had been named because he had the report.

...

"Labor people hold the view that Hamill's silence was a less than honest ... response. He sat back and let his colleagues pay the price ..."

So much for his self-righteous outrage and finger pointing yesterday. There is an interesting footnote to the story. Again Tony Koch states—

"... soon after it became known in political circles that Hamill and Beattie had not put up their hands, the whole matter was dropped like a hot brick.

Sir Max made a public statement"—

Time expired.

Tourism

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.23 a.m.): Tourism is Queensland's second-largest industry, conservatively worth some \$8 billion. My electorate of Barron River is home to the multi-award winning attractions of the Tjapukai Cultural Park and Skyrail cableway. Palm Cove on the northern beaches and Kuranda are famous tourist destinations in their own right. Barron River is also home to some of the extreme adventure sports for which the Cairns region is also justifiably famous—namely, abseiling, rock climbing and whitewater rafting, which I particularly enjoy.

I am also a strong supporter of and advocate for our tourist industry, so it was with great pleasure that I accepted an invitation to participate in the 10th anniversary celebrations of AJ Hackett Bungy at Smithfield, bungy jumping being another of these extreme adventure sports. As part of the celebration the company invited some of the original vine

jumpers, or land divers as they are called, from Pentecost Island of Vanuatu on which the western-style bungy jumping is modelled. I was very honoured to welcome on behalf of the Queensland Government Chief Telkan Watas, a member of the Great Council of Chiefs, and two of his kinsmen from Bunlap Village. Local Aboriginal dancers also performed a welcome dance before Chief Watas blessed the bungy tower and the young Pentecost Islanders jumped from the tower in traditional costumes, which was a spectacular sight.

I commend the company for fostering a partnership with the Pentecost Islanders and for their commitment to Cairns, and I wish them every success in their future development plans to further enhance their operation at Smithfield with the construction of a restaurant and other attractions.

I also demonstrated my commitment to the tourist industry by initiating an annual market craft award valued at \$500 to encourage more hand-crafted products at the markets in Kuranda. I congratulate the inaugural winners, Mark and Leisa Burgess, from the original Kuranda markets, who make a range of jewellery, dreamcatchers and mandalas inspired by North American Indian culture, as well as Celtic runes carved from bone. Katie O'Brien of the heritage markets also received an encouragement award for her handmade candles and brass kaleidoscopes. I commend and thank the Kuranda Village promotion program for its promotion initiatives on behalf of the entire tourism industry in Kuranda and for its support for my craft award.

Funeral Directors

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (10.25 a.m.): Representatives from the Masonic Village Home for the Aged have brought to my attention what I consider an important issue that must be attended to by this House. One of their aged clients had died and was collected by Twin Cities Funerals for transport to the morgue and later to the funeral. What disgusted the people of the Masonic Village was that the body of the woman was just wrapped in a foil tarp, trolleyed out on a dilapidated chipboard-topped cart and unceremoniously crammed into the back of an old Falcon station wagon. In full view of the staff, the collectors pushed and shoved the limbs of the body to make it fit.

Staff members who observed this undignified act were extremely distressed. They say the vehicle was in very bad

condition—about 1970 vintage—and looked ready for the scrap heap. The rear tailgate window would not work, and so the collectors drove away with the window down. Masonic Village staff saw the same vehicle at the funeral service.

Funeral directors have a code of ethics that includes "to perform all services in a dignified and respectful manner". The community expects that "all services" includes those that are not necessarily visible to the public. The community expects and demands that respect be shown to our deceased loved ones.

Self-regulation of an industry is always preferred to over-legislation, but sometimes it is not enough. It is time this industry was looked at more closely to ensure this kind of behaviour is not commonplace. It may be time we looked at legislation to ensure that this kind of behaviour never happens again. I have written to the Minister for Health over this issue, and I believe she should be very forceful in her inquiries.

Ms J. Mayberry

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): I rise to recognise the passing of Jan Mayberry—a great Queenslander, a great performing artist, a great worker in our community and someone I am proud to call a dear friend. She passed away on Tuesday, 22 August and her funeral is due tomorrow. She was in her late 40s and she died of cancer.

Her life work was really in music and singing. She had extraordinary warmth, kindness and compassion. Her fans at the Coorparoo RSL who followed her band, High Street, will also be very sad to hear of her passing. They were also involved in the work she did in our local community. My wife and I often attended those concerts at the Coorparoo RSL to enjoy the good music, dancing and good company.

Jan Mayberry received a liver transplant two and a half years ago, on Christmas Day. I recall the thrill that went around our family's Christmas lunch table when we heard the news. After that transplant surgery she organised three Music for Life concerts. That is an incredible contribution to our community, because proceeds of those concerts go to the Princess Alexandra Hospital Foundation to aid liver transplant research. I trust that Jan's passing will continue to inspire those involved in Music for Life and that her energy will continue to ensure that this very worthwhile organisation contributes further to that fund.

I know that the thoughts of me, my family and the many people whose lives she touched are now with her two sons, Jessie and Luke, who are aspiring musicians, her partner, Michael, and the rest of her family. I have an enduring memory of Jan belting out, in her great strong voice, the song New York, New York. I am sure that is how she would like to be remembered. She had a great vivacity and love of life. As chair of the committee which oversaw the report to this Parliament on organ transplantation, I am very proud to have been associated with this great Queenslander.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Electoral Fraud; Ms K. Ehrmann

Mr BORBIDGE (10.29 a.m.): I refer the Premier to the affidavit of Karen Ehrmann presented to the District Court when she pleaded guilty to 47 counts of electoral fraud in which she states—

"When I was asked to take part in a situation, in the Mundingburra by-election, where people voted, using false enrolments, I refused."

I ask the Premier: as the member for Woodridge ran the Labor campaign in that by-election, can the Premier assure the House that there was no orchestrated campaign by the Labor Party to rig that election?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. As he well knows, I was not the leader of the party at the time. He will remember, in fact, who was the leader of the party at the time because he was his opponent. The bottom line with all of this is simple. I have made it clear right from the beginning and I make it clear again today: any of these matters that the Leader of the Opposition or anyone else wants pursued should be pursued by the CJC or the Federal Police, and I notice now that the Leader of the Opposition's coalition colleague in Canberra has announced that there will be a Federal parliamentary committee inquiry as well. We have more inquiries going on here than we have all had hot breakfasts! The bottom line with all this is—

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I do not have any problem with the Federal parliamentary committee. When the coalition was in Government, it was good at inquiries. We are getting a re-run now that it is in Opposition. It is consistent at least in that sense.

Mr Bredhauer: Why won't they have a look at petrol prices?

Mr BEATTIE: Exactly.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Don't be half clever about it. The bottom line is very simply this: these are matters for the police; these are matters for the CJC; these are matters to be properly investigated by the appropriate people. I know—

Mr Connor interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I will give the member an answer. If he wants to interject, that is his right, but I will give him an answer.

These are matters for the police or for the CJC. If the Leader of the Opposition believes these are serious matters, if this is other than a few cheap whinges—if this is more than just his whinge of the day—then he should send it to his Federal coalition counterparts in Canberra, or he should send it to the Federal Police, or he should send it to the CJC, or he should do the whole three. I am relaxed about any one of them.

The bottom line is this: I do not, will not, have not ever supported anyone who breaks the law when it comes to electoral matters, and I will never do so. I am not aware of anyone being involved in any improper activity in relation to elections or by-elections for any other seats—not aware of it at all. But the bottom line here is that this is not a matter for the Leader of the Opposition or for me as politicians; this is a matter for the police. These are matters that should be fully and properly investigated if they have not already been investigated. It must be remembered that the Federal Police have been involved in investigating these matters for something like three and a half or four years. It is not unreasonable to assume that they may well have already looked at these issues. But if they have not, then it is a matter for them to consider whether they will or not.

Let us deal with the issue of the Federal parliamentary inquiry. I noticed that that was announced by the Special Minister of State yesterday. If this inquiry pertains to matters involving electoral issues and improving the rolls, it has our full support. We will cooperate with it. But there is a very important boundary here, that politicians, be they on a parliamentary committee or not, should not get involved in matters that are properly for the police to investigate.

Electoral Fraud; Ms K. Ehrmann

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Premier again to the affidavit of Karen Ehrmann that I quoted. I refer also to the affidavit presented to the District Court by Mark Dyer when he said—

"The defendant provided the names of certain people whom she had actually witnessed forge documents relative to the outcome (of the) Mundingburra by-election in 1996."

I again ask the Premier: as his member for Woodridge was running that campaign on behalf of his party, has he received assurances from the honourable member that there was no such rotting, and will he give this Parliament today an unequivocal assurance, as Leader of the Labor Party, that his party did not rot the 1996 Mundingburra by-election, the 1995 general election or the 1998 general election?

Mr BEATTIE: I assume the Leader of the Opposition wants me to give an assurance that there was not a rotting of the 1901 general election as well! There are serious issues involved when we come to looking at electoral matters. The integrity and openness and honesty of the democratic system depends entirely and appropriately on there being public faith in the electoral system. That is something that my Government is committed to, and so am I. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that these matters be dealt with by impartial people, that is, police, not politicians. They need to be dealt with by police.

I do not know the full extent of the Federal Police investigation, any more than the Leader of the Opposition does, and I have not read the second affidavit he referred to. I have read the affidavit by Karen Ehrmann, and I have gone through it and given it careful consideration. But these matters are matters to be pursued by the Federal Police or the CJC, if they have not been already pursued, and no doubt they are being examined. All the Leader of the Opposition has to do, if he has concerns about these matters, is send them to the Federal Police, send them to the CJC, send them to a Federal inquiry if he wants. There will be no cover-up by my Government on these issues.

What we have seen from the Leader of the Opposition this week is a vindictive and vicious campaign to try to bludgeon the CJC into a particular public inquiry for cheap political gains, and nothing more. He even amended his own legislation. When he was Premier, he amended the Criminal Justice Act to ensure

that these inquiries by the CJC were held in private. Then he comes in here and complains because the CJC is holding private inquiries. He is indeed a hypocrite. His legislation provided for private inquiries.

We have nothing to hide in this matter. I have made it clear right from the beginning that we have nothing to hide in these matters. I will accept the independent umpire's decision.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

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

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member has asked the question. Now he will hear the answer.

Mr BEATTIE: We are prepared to accept the independent watchdog's outcome on these matters, and no dishonest muckraking by the Leader of the Opposition, no manufacturing of facts, will in any way detract from the fact that these matters should be investigated by the police.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive. I merely quoted the affidavits of Labor people before the courts.

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to withdraw.

The answer to this is very simple. These are matters for the police. They have our full support and full cooperation. These are not matters that should be pursued by politicians, and I will ensure that if anyone has broken the law, they will feel the full force of the law. End of story.

Vegetation Management

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer to the Premier's promise at the Roma Community Cabinet in March to amend the State Government's tree-clearing legislation if the Federal Government failed to deliver any financial assistance for affected farmers. Could the Premier inform the House what steps he intends to take or has taken to deliver on this promise?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. The honourable member is quite correct: I did give a clear commitment in Roma, on behalf of the Government, to Queensland farmers to remove the so-called of concern vegetation areas from the legislation if the Commonwealth refused to meet its national responsibilities. I met the Prime Minister, John Howard, in Canberra on 20 February. Mr Howard formed a task force and gave a commitment to make a determination on

Federal funds within six months. Those six months were up last Sunday, and I have not received—and nor have the relevant Ministers—formal advice from the Prime Minister or any of his Ministers on this matter. The State Government therefore has no choice but to deliver on that Roma commitment, which we are.

The first step in what happened yesterday, when I convened, along with two other Ministers—Rod Welford, the Minister for Natural Resources, and Terry Mackenroth, the Minister for Local Government—a meeting in the Parliamentary Annexe of all the stakeholders in this issue, including farmers, environmentalists, developers, local government and so on. It was quite a large meeting. All groups were unanimous in their criticism of the Federal Government's failure to deliver any assistance. What we have now is the second-best option, but it will still be the first vegetation management planning system in the history of this State. For the first time in Queensland, landowners who want to clear land will have to apply for permits regardless of the tenure of the land, and these applications will be assessed like any other development application. It is the first time in Queensland that tree-clearing restrictions have been applied to freehold land. We have moved forward on this issue.

The Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources, Rod Welford, will introduce legislation in Parliament today to amend the Vegetation Management Act. This will enable the proclamation of those provisions relating to areas that are in the endangered category on freehold land three weeks from today. Areas that are classified as of concern on freehold land will be removed from the Act. Those areas will not be subject to regulation. They will be assessed against vegetation management plans devised at a regional level by regional committees. They will be part of a planning structure, nevertheless. Vegetation types that have been classified as endangered and of concern on leasehold land, which makes up around 75% of the State, have already been protected under Land Act regulations implemented late last year. We have extended protection to the endangered vegetation types on freehold land and of concern vegetation types on freehold land will be covered by regional plans. As well, areas of high conservation value and areas subject to land degradation will be protected in consultation with landholders.

This is yet another example of my Government tackling the big issues while the

Commonwealth turns its back on its State responsibilities and its national responsibilities. We did it on the RFA, we have done it on the east coast trawl management, sugar and water and now we are doing it on vegetation management.

Ms K. Ehrmann

Dr WATSON: I ask the Premier: can he inform the House of any Labor or union entity that helped pay for Karen Ehrmann's legal costs and, if so, what strings are attached? If Ms Ehrmann did not receive such assistance, can he inform the House how she paid the substantial six figure bill for a solicitor and top Sydney silk?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. I love the selective way members opposite ask questions in this House. I have indicated on a number of occasions that all these issues are matters for the police. I am happy for any of these matters to be investigated by the police, the CJC or the Opposition's Federal parliamentary colleagues.

Mr Borbidge: Sergeant Schultz.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will allow the Premier to answer the question.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition is so rude that whenever I try to answer a question they ask, within 30 seconds he is interjecting. He would have to be the rudest leader this party has ever seen. Does the Opposition want a Parliament or does it want a joke? Why do members opposite not give us a chance to answer the questions.

Mr Borbidge: We want some answers.

Mr BEATTIE: If he would be quiet, he would get one. If he were not so rude, he would get one.

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

Mr BEATTIE: One of the extraordinary things I find about all this—

Mr Seeney interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Let me just repeat that I am happy for all these matters to be fully investigated by whoever wants to do so; the Federal Police, the CJC or the parliamentary inquiry. But I find it interesting and I find it intriguing that we get selective quotations by the Leader of the Liberal Party. He referred to the Karen Ehrmann affidavit. Presumably he has read it. Have you read it? He nods, so he

has read it. In her affidavit Karen Ehrmann makes one very clear point—

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: No, she makes a more important point. She says that she ran into me, which she did, and she asked me if I would give her any support. And what did I say? I said no. Members cannot come in here and selectively quote parts of the affidavit and then use it to try to engender something else when she said in that affidavit that I would not give her any support. Let me make it clear, I will never support anyone who rorts the law. I will never support anyone who breaks the law. What I said privately is what I say publicly. The Leader of the Liberal Party just got caught out.

Dr WATSON: I rise to a point of order. The question was about "any Labor or union entity". We do not want—

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

Dr WATSON: Mr Speaker, he can't use—

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Moggill will resume his seat. That is a frivolous point of order. If he does that again I will warn him.

Mr BEATTIE: They come in here and selectively quote the Karen Ehrmann affidavit—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. This is the leader of the political party that organised to pay her air fare down to Brisbane to get her out of Townsville for the 1998 general election—

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

Mr BORBIDGE: And he says they did not help.

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

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments offensive and ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: It is in the affidavit. The Labor Party paid her air fare to Brisbane.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will ask the member to withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: Withdraw what?

Mr SPEAKER: Those comments. You have just been asked to withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: It is in the affidavit in a court. The Labor Party paid her air fare—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the Leader of the Opposition will not withdraw, I will warn him.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Labor Party paid her air fare—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will warn the Leader of the Opposition unless he withdraws. I have asked the member to withdraw. Will he withdraw or not?

Mr BORBIDGE: I withdraw and table the affidavit which proves the Premier's lie.

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

Mr BEATTIE: I find those comments offensive and unparliamentary and I ask for them to be withdrawn. Here is a man who is bringing this Parliament into disrepute. That is what he is doing.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will withdraw his comment unequivocally.

Mr BORBIDGE: I did not know the Premier had a sense of humour.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will withdraw unequivocally or I will warn him.

Mr BORBIDGE: I withdraw the remark the Premier finds offensive. The affidavit contradicts what he has just told the House.

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

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker—

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

Interruption.

PRIVILEGE

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. I call the honourable member for Bulimba.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise on a matter of privilege—

Mr SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have said from the very start that I am not going to have this House deteriorate to a state of disarray. The Leader of the Opposition is just disrupting question time. I am now going to warn the Leader of the Opposition under 123A. He is now warned. I now call the member for Bulimba.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

City West Precinct

Mr PURCELL: I refer to the Premier's response to a question in this House this week in which he referred to the Roma Street parklands project and the significant role it will play in the development known as the City West Precinct. I ask: can the Premier inform the House of progress on any other projects in the City West Precinct?

Mr BEATTIE: I am absolutely delighted to do that. It is important that we talk about what Queenslanders want and how this Government is delivering for Queenslanders. Brisbane continues to mature into a capital city of which all Queenslanders can be proud.

Mr Horan interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: The City West Precinct will further enhance this great city, adding more colour, more life and, importantly, more open space. This week I informed the House about the Roma Street parklands, which is a very visionary project; the sort of visionary project one would expect from a visionary can-do Government like this one.

Today I am pleased to inform honourable members that State Cabinet recently endorsed plans to transform the historic Gona Barracks site at Kelvin Grove into an inner urban village as a key part of the Government's City West Precinct and Smart State strategies. Under this Government, things just keep getting better. I stress that this project is a feature of my Government's Smart State strategy. Gona Barracks will be at the heart of a world-class residential and educational precinct. Redevelopment of this site will anchor a wider high-tech education and creative industries precinct being developed in partnership with the nearby Queensland University of Technology. With my full support the Government has committed \$15m to this project to develop new industries including Internet and broadcast media, computer games and animation, digital and interactive production and e-commerce services. It also offers this Government the opportunity to include educational and research facilities such as the creative industries proposal on land on the barracks site and adjacent Government and university holdings, taking the whole Kelvin Grove urban village area to around 15 hectares.

It will also be a showcase development combining private and public sector housing, commercial and community facilities and open

spaces. Private developers will provide the majority of housing on the site with the funds generated from land sales being used to provide public or community housing. I assure honourable members that development will be undertaken to fit in with the style and character of the surrounding area while recognising the heritage values of the site. A conservation architect has been appointed to prepare a conservation plan and to be an integral part of the overall project team.

Master planning of the site has started and I am advised that a draft master plan is expected to be completed by the end of September, or maybe a little later. The draft plan, illustrating various options for development, will be put on public display on the Gona Barracks site for four weeks from perhaps early October. It is also planned to hold an open day on the site in mid October. Consultations with residents and business operators in the local area have also been undertaken and comments and suggestions will be used to develop the final master plan before the end of the year. We will then be in a position to call expressions of interest to see who wants to be involved in the development of this exciting and innovative project. This is part of the Government's philosophy of developing Brisbane as a magnet for the rest of the State. Is a great initiative for Queensland.

Ms J. Budd

Mr SPRINGBORG: I ask the Deputy Premier: if Joan Budd has been employed in his office for 11 years, as he indicated to this House yesterday, why was she in Townsville acting as a returning officer for corrupt Labor Party plebiscites?

Mr ELDER: She has been employed. I am pleased that the member is aware of that. I am pleased that he was informed of it yesterday. The fact of the matter is that she is a general returning officer for the party—

Opposition members: Speak up!

Mr ELDER: If the members opposite are having problems hearing me and want me to speak up, I will speak up. Joan Budd is a general returning officer for the party. She did go up there, at the party's request, to look at those particular issues, and not at taxpayers' expense.

Fuel Prices

Mr LUCAS: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development: how are small

businesses in regional Queensland faring with the rapid rise in fuel prices?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for the question, because the members opposite will find the answer interesting.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr ELDER: That is quite right. It is an issue that people are talking about more and more. I have found further evidence from around the State of the outrageous petrol hikes that are choking Queensland business operators.

Earlier this week I gave members just a few examples of companies that were having to cope with the heavy load of increased petrol prices. However, I have more disturbing examples from regional centres of the impact of the Howard/Borbidge GST-driven price increase in fuel. Without naming the companies, I will give the House an indication of what the climb in petrol prices is doing to businesses from Cairns, west to Mount Isa, and right down to South Brisbane. A small delivery business operator in central Queensland claims that a 7c a litre increase in his fuel costs since June has added \$6,500 a month to the cost of running his business. However, it is worse than that; there is a double whammy. That business operator had already negotiated many contracts with major companies based on lower fuel prices. He is now forced to pay the extra money out of his pocket. There are many business operators in the same position.

How could that business operator have forecast the rapid rise in petrol prices? After all, the Prime Minister of this country, Mr Borbidge and Dr Watson had promised Queenslanders that fuel would not rise under the GST. That is another broken promise. That business operator had negotiated contracts in good faith, and it is now costing him.

A small courier company operator on the Gold Coast says that his fuel costs have risen from \$30 a month to \$50 a month, slashing his profit margins and causing cash flow problems. He is squeezed between charging his clients increased courier costs and trying to stay competitive with the extra fuel costs and the impact that is having on his business. For a limousine company in north Brisbane, petrol is a major overhead. Staff report that they have been working longer hours to try to compensate for the increased price of fuel. The owners of that company claim that they have no choice but to increase prices to clients. They feel that they will lose customers, and ultimately close their doors.

What about the small tourism operator in Wide Bay? His is an industry in which fuel costs are paramount. That operator says that the increase in the price of fuel is adding \$3,000 to \$5,000 a month to the cost of running his business. That operator has told my department that he is now considering cutting staff or trying to renegotiate the charter prices that were agreed upon with clients months ago. That operator has shelved plans to expand and is now just trying to survive. Another regional business operator is paying over \$1 a litre for petrol, increasing his costs by 6%. That operator runs a small family business. He says that he cannot cope; the increase in the price of fuel has been too great and he is looking at closing his doors.

Those are just some examples that are coming to my department of small business operators in the electorates of the members opposite who are struggling to maintain their businesses and who are struggling to maintain the employment of their staff. Why? Because of a tax delivered by the coalition in Government.

Youth Development Programs, Lake Tinaroo

Mr NELSON: I direct a question to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. Could the Minister please explain why the Outlook youth development programs at Lake Tinaroo have been cancelled? When will funding be reallocated to these programs to get them running again?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. Funding for sport and recreation programs provided through that service are the responsibility of the Minister for Sport. I suggest that the member ask him when he has the opportunity.

Diesel Rebate Scheme

Mrs MILLER: I direct a question to the Treasurer. I draw the attention of the Treasurer to his previous public statements calling on the Federal Government to ensure that it continues to subsidise diesel for off-road users, and I ask: what response has he received from the Federal Government?

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr HAMILL: This an important question, and one which I thought even the loudmouthed member for Callide might be interested in hearing the answer to. The facts are these: the off-road diesel rebate scheme that the Federal Government instituted on 1 July still does not provide benefits to civil contractors and local authorities. Previously,

those organisations received benefits when off-road diesel was subsidised under State-based schemes.

On 30 June I wrote to the Federal Treasurer outlining our concerns in respect to this matter, and previously I have tabled that letter in this Parliament. The Parliament has also debated this matter at length and all members believe that there has been a gross inequity meted out to civil contractors and others who were previously—and quite properly—able to obtain subsidised off-road diesel but who have now been precluded from the Federal Government's off-road diesel rebate scheme.

It is a matter of record that over 50 days have elapsed since that correspondence was forwarded to Federal Treasurer Costello, and the lack of response has been deafening. There has not been any comment, any response whatsoever, to the plight of those civil contractors. That in itself is an absolute disgrace. The issue is causing considerable distress throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. For example, I noted comments attributed to the member for Burdekin, who raised this issue. I have even seen comments by the member for Mirani highlighting the fact that off-road diesel users are being denied the financial support that was previously available to them from the State, even if the member for Mirani did concede that he was a bit confused about the issue.

Let me state once again for the record how this situation arose. The Federal Government insisted on taking over responsibility for the off-road diesel subsidy. It has withdrawn \$175m of funding from the Queensland Government—money which was previously used to provide this financial support—and it still refuses to offer a scheme as broad in its coverage as that which existed at the State level in Queensland and which it replaced.

Civil contractors provide worthwhile services to the State Government and to local authorities. By not giving them the access to the off-road diesel rebate scheme, the Federal Government is forcing up the cost of civil works to public authorities across this State. It is a travesty. It is unjust. It is a clear breach of the coalition's commitment to business that their fuel costs would not rise as a result of the GST.

Electoral Fraud; Ms K. Ehrmann

Mr QUINN: I refer the Deputy Premier to an affidavit of AWU faction member Karen Ehrmann presented to the District Court when

she pleaded guilty to 47 counts of electoral fraud, in which she states—

"When I was asked to take part in a situation, in the Mundingburra by-election, where people voted, using false enrolments, I refused."

As the leader of the AWU faction in Parliament, I ask: were members of his faction involved in an orchestrated campaign to corrupt the Mundingburra by-election?

Mr ELDER: The first answer is: no, not to my knowledge. The second answer is this—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ELDER: No, I am not aware of anything in relation to the allegations. The Federal Police who have been investigating this matter and the CJC could have approached me or anyone else at any time.

Mr Beattie: Who won the by-election?

Mr ELDER: It is intriguing to note just who won the by-election.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr ELDER: Are the members opposite unhappy that they won that by-election? I will tell members opposite who were unhappy that they did: the people of Queensland! They learnt a hard lesson when members opposite were in Government for two years. I make the point that in relation to Karen Ehrmann's affidavit, which the member tabled, there are a number of areas that are disputed by the Commonwealth prosecution. I caution members opposite in terms of that. They are talking about a self-serving statement from someone who was convicted. The Commonwealth prosecution—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ELDER: I am just stating the obvious. There is a statement that is being disputed by the Commonwealth prosecution. In relation to the other matters, I have no knowledge and I am quite happy at any stage to be interviewed on it and to help, if that is possible.

Police Resources

Mrs LAVARCH: I refer the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to the fact that the Beattie Labor Government has given a commitment to increase police numbers in Queensland to 9,100 by the year 2005-06, and I ask: can the Minister inform the House whether the Government is on track to meet that commitment?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, the Opposition was being so rude that I could not hear the question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I was about to address that. We will have some quiet while we hear the question. The member for Kurwongbah will start her question again.

Mrs LAVARCH: I refer the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to the fact that the Beattie Labor Government has given a commitment to increase police numbers in Queensland to 9,100 by the year 2005-06, and I ask: can the Minister inform the House whether the Government is on track to meet that commitment?

Mr BARTON: I thank the member for the question. Contrary to the opinion of members opposite, the member for Kurwongbah is one of the best members in this House and is very supportive of police issues under this Government. The member was correct in stating that the Government is committed to increasing police numbers in Queensland.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I spoke earlier about disruptions to question time. I will warn any members if they disrupt again. Members can be sure that, if they disrupt question time again, they will be warned.

Mr BARTON: The member is quite correct that the Government is committed to increasing police numbers in Queensland to 9,100 by the year 2005-06. I am pleased to inform the House that we are well and truly on target now to reach that goal. As a result of that commitment the Queensland Police Service is conducting an aggressive recruitment campaign. That campaign means that our two police academies at Oxley and Townsville are operating at full capacity. Over the past year the net increase in police numbers in Queensland was 387. The net increase this financial year will be 357. The Beattie Labor Government has increased police numbers by 716 compared with their pathetic effort of 412 over the bit more than two years that they were in office. They made promises but this Government is actually delivering.

To be on track to hit the target of 9,100 officers by 2005-06 it was necessary to reach the figure of 7,519 officers this year. I am very happy to inform the House that last week we exceeded that number. Last week I attended the graduation ceremony for 39 new constables from the Townsville Police Academy. The inclusion of those 39 new constables into the ranks of the Queensland Police Service brought the total strength of the service in terms of sworn officers to 7,524. This means that there are more police in every

region in Queensland than there were when this Government was elected—far more. It means safer communities and a greater sense of security. It is a great achievement and further proof of this Government's commitment to achieving the promises that we made when we came into office.

Members opposite run around thumping their chests and spruiking slogans. The Beattie Labor Government is getting on with making real reforms and changes that are having a positive impact on the lives of Queenslanders. In fact, the Queensland Police Service is the only Police Service in this nation that is currently expanding. The new police powers, which came into effect on 1 July, give those officers the legislative authority that they need to do their jobs effectively. To meet our commitment we will be delivering an average of at least 316 officers a year for the next five years.

Mr D. Brown

Mrs SHELDON: I refer the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to the involvement of former State ALP President and now State Industrial Relations Commissioner Don Brown in the totally discredited ALP disputes tribunal hearing into Labor's corrupt Thuringowa preselection process in 1996, after which he said he would swear on a Bible that there was no fraud, and I ask: does the Minister consider a person who has presided over such a corrupt process a fit and proper person to hold a quasi-judicial appointment in this State, and will he as Minister stand the commissioner aside pending the outcome of the CJC and Commonwealth inquiries into Labor's corrupt electoral practices?

Mr BRADY: The first and most obvious and fair comment to make is: what is the allegation of corruption against Commissioner Brown? The fact that he was involved in an inquiry within the Labor Party? No evidence has been presented by the Opposition in relation to this—none whatsoever. They are just throwing mud. There is no evidence—

Mr Foley: No allegation.

Mr BRADY: There is no allegation that he was involved in any impropriety or that he did anything wrong. The fact that Karen Ehrmann has pleaded guilty in relation to matters that were involved in the broad area of the investigation does not prove that he knew of anything or did anything wrong. It is just a smear against a public official—

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Caloundra under Standing Order 123A.

Mr BRADY:—and is typical of the Opposition and the patronising manner of the person who asked the question.

Roadmaster Haulage Pty Ltd

Mr FENLON: I refer the Treasurer to media reports about the suspension of Roadmaster Haulage Pty Ltd's fuel bulk end user's licence, and I ask: can he provide more details of the circumstances of this case?

Mr HAMILL: I am delighted to respond to the honourable member. Yesterday in the House I stated that I was advised that a major interstate road haulage company which was licensed to buy Queensland subsidised fuel as a bulk end user "has been detected buying subsidised fuel and on-selling the fuel at an unsubsidised price to a distributor". A sum of some \$280,000 has been lost to Queensland taxpayers as a consequence. Interestingly, this morning we had former National Party press secretary John Miller rushing to the defence of the company in question, along with the shadow Minister for Main Roads, who rushed to the defence of the company on the airwaves. The Leader of the Liberal Party sought to smear his way into the same argument by again suggesting that the company in question had been wrongly done by. I provide the following information for the benefit of the House. My advice—

Dr WATSON: Mr Speaker—

Mr HAMILL: He does not want to hear the truth.

Dr WATSON: I rise to a point of order. At no stage did I make any suggestion like that. The Treasurer is wrong and he should correct what he said.

Mr HAMILL: The facts are these. Roadmaster was purchasing fuel at the subsidised rate from a major distributor on the basis that Roadmaster was entitled to the fuel as a bulk end user and not on-selling the fuel. In accordance with the Fuel Subsidy Scheme the distributor, on behalf of Roadmaster, was claiming subsidy relying on the entitlement of Roadmaster as a bulk end user. The honourable member opposite made great play of the claim that Roadmaster does not have fuel tankers. I advise the House that Roadmaster was using a contractor to cart the fuel.

Mr Johnson: You never said that yesterday.

Mr HAMILL: The honourable member should have asked for some more information instead of trying to defend the rorters—people who are taking money from Queensland taxpayers. Roadmaster applied for a licence under the bulk end user scheme in January 1998. The company was purchasing subsidised fuel under the transitional arrangements from inception. When evidence was received that the operator was on-selling, on legal advice a licence was issued on 22 August and immediately suspended. For the information of the House, I point out that Roadmaster is a major interstate haulage company based at Riverstone in Sydney. The entity has been operating since 1972 and was purchasing fuel in Queensland in 1996-97. Its depot and bulk storage facilities in Queensland are at Cannon Hill, and it has a storage capacity totalling 50,000 litres. Roadmaster owns 35 prime movers, 43 refrigerated trailers and two rigid trucks. If the honourable member cared to listen closely to what I said yesterday, he would know that I stated quite clearly that the rort in this case was using a bulk end user's licence to on-sell subsidised fuel. That is the rort. I find it quite incredible—and perhaps not surprising—that honourable members opposite should defend this sort of fraud at the expense of the Queensland taxpayer.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. The Treasurer's answer to this question asked today by the member for Greenslopes is just a correction of the statement that he got wrong yesterday.

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

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I did speak up, and if the Treasurer had got that right yesterday—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate.

Mr JOHNSON:—it might not have been an embarrassment to him today, either.

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

Mr JOHNSON: I say to him: he ought to go and get some of his facts right, too.

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

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. If the honourable member cares to check the record, he will see that I stated quite clearly the facts as I recounted them today. The honourable member should stop defending the rorters.

Mr JOHNSON: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not having a debate. The member will resume his seat. This is question time.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I find it offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Gregory under Standing Order 123A.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise on a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You are testing my patience.

Mr JOHNSON: I find it offensive that I defend the rorters. I find that offensive and I ask the Treasurer to withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will withdraw. The member for Gregory will resume his seat. If he gets up again it will be on a frivolous point of order, and I am warning him now.

Mr HAMILL: I withdraw anything that the honourable member finds offensive.

Electoral Fraud; Ms K. Ehrmann

Mr HORAN: I ask the Premier: is he prepared to hand over to the CJC or to the newly constituted Senate inquiry into systemic Labor Party electoral rorts in Queensland the full records of the 1996 disputes tribunal hearing into allegations of vote rigging in the Thuringowa preselection, and will he give an assurance that these records will not be tampered with?

Mr BEATTIE: In case the member had not noticed, I retired as party secretary in 1988, so I do not actually have control of these records. Let me make it clear: I understand that the Federal Police—and I was not involved in this; it was prior to my time as leader—have had access to whatever records they wanted from the time. Under their various powers, the Federal Police and the CJC have access to all these records, and I have no problems at all with them having access to them. These are not documents under my control, nor should they be. But I have no difficulty at all with the CJC, the Federal Police, the Federal inquiry, the Norman Luboff Choir or the twinkle toes dance club having access to them. I have no problem at all with them having access to those documents.

I want to reiterate a comment that was made by the Deputy Premier. The Leader of the Opposition and others have made a great number of references to the Karen Ehrmann affidavit. A number of aspects of the affidavit were disputed by the Commonwealth prosecution in that case at the pleading. There are issues in that affidavit that are in question.

They were not accepted by the court. In addition to that, it is important to say this: it was a self-serving statement by someone who pleaded guilty to these offences. It was a self-serving statement from a self-confessed forger. Honourable members opposite cannot have it both ways. On behalf of this Government, the Attorney-General sent that affidavit and other material on to the Electoral Commissioner for investigation in broad, open terms which indicated that, if he felt that it was appropriate, it should be sent on to the CJC or to some other body. That is exactly what happened.

From the beginning this Government has been open and up front about these issues. I make it absolutely clear today that we will provide whatever information or material it is within our power to provide that is sought by any properly constituted inquiry. Any such inquiry will have our full cooperation. People cannot quote selectively, as did the Leader of the Liberal Party when he raised issues earlier today. When I exposed what was in the affidavit, which clearly indicated my honest and up front behaviour in this matter, members opposite sought to interject and disrupt the Parliament because they did not want that part of the affidavit mentioned that talked about Karen Ehrmann approaching me at a function and asking me for support. What did I say? No! The member opposite has disrupted this Parliament today for political purposes. He is a disgrace.

Childers Backpackers Hostel Fire

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I refer the Minister for Emergency Services to the Childers backpacker fire tragedy which resulted in the loss of 15 young lives, and I ask: what extra steps is the Beattie Government taking to provide assistance to the Childers community to help it to recover from this tragedy?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question and for her continuing interest in the welfare of the people of Childers. The loss of 15 lives in the 22 June fire at the Childers Palace backpackers hostel was a major tragedy that affected not only the local community but also communities right around the world. The impact of this tragedy can also be measured in more than just human and psychological terms. It also placed a large financial burden on the Childers community.

The Isis Shire Council, State Government agencies, volunteer and welfare groups, and local businesses all provided tremendous

support for the surviving backpackers and the local community in the days and weeks following the fire. Under normal circumstances, the operational expenses incurred in this respect would be borne by the local shire and the other agencies involved. However, because of the extraordinary nature of the Childers backpackers fire and the operational costs involved, the Beattie Government has decided to activate natural disaster relief arrangements for the tragedy.

NDRA is normally only activated by the Emergency Services Minister to reimburse communities for the costs associated with natural disasters such as cyclones and floods. Isis Mayor, Bill Trevor, likened the aftermath of the Childers fire to a full-scale disaster operation. So it is only right that the council, Government agencies and other organisations involved in the operation are reimbursed for the expenses they incurred, as they would be in the event of a natural disaster.

Following consultation with the Treasurer, I have activated NDRA so that the State Government can reimburse the Isis Shire Council, Government agencies and volunteer groups for a range of counter-disaster and personal hardship relief tasks undertaken during the Childers operation. This funding is additional to the \$75,000 already provided by the State Government for temporary accommodation for backpackers visiting Childers as well as the \$25,000 provided towards the cost of a memorial to those who died in the fire.

The NDRA funding will allow those organisations who assisted the community and the surviving backpackers following the fire to recoup the cost of the assistance they provided, which included emergency accommodation, medical assistance, transport and fuel, clean-up operations, SES volunteer support, Queensland Rescue helicopter support, communications, Emergency Services staff overtime and travel expenses, counselling services and catering. All up, costs borne by the Isis Council, State agencies and volunteer groups that are able to be recouped under NDRA are estimated to be well over the \$92,000 mark.

Organisations and agencies eligible for funding under NDRA arrangements include the Isis Shire Council itself; Queensland Rescue; Counter Disaster and Rescue Services; SES volunteer units; the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care; Lifeline; Isis Fruit and Vegetable Growers; the Childers Neighbourhood Centre; and the Childers Country Women's Association. I thank all of

those organisations for the compassionate and professional manner in which they provided assistance in the immediate aftermath of the fire. I am very pleased that, on behalf of the Beattie Government, we can reimburse them for the costs of those efforts.

Drink-driving Conviction

Mr PAFF: I refer the Honourable Attorney-General to the case of a person convicted in the Rockhampton Magistrates Court on a charge of drink-driving and fined approximately \$160. Although no licence suspension or disqualification resulted and there are no details of the incident in court records, I ask: does this set a precedent? In the absence of any formal documentation, what happened to the \$160, and what involvement did the person's high-profile husband have in this matter?

Mr FOLEY: I am not aware of the case to which the honourable member refers. If he would care to give me further information, I will have the matter examined and inform the honourable member to the best of my ability.

Diabetes, Torres Strait Communities

Ms BOYLE: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Lately there have been media reports in relation to increasing rates of diabetes in the Torres Strait communities. I ask: can the Minister tell the House if she is aware of this problem? If so, what is the Government doing about it?

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the member for that excellent question. A conference is being held in Cairns right at this moment addressing the problem of diabetes in the community and, of course, recognising the higher rate of diabetes in both the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islander communities. In recent years, the Government has been concerned about a steep increase in diabetes-related deaths and hospitalisations in the Torres Strait and northern peninsula area, including, most distressingly, amputations of lower limbs among diabetics which run at 36 times the rate for Queensland overall.

The Government has addressed these shocking statistics. The results of the first randomised trial of improved diabetes care in a remote setting in Australia have just been released and are very promising. The one-year health care trial, conducted by Queensland Health in conjunction with the NHMRC, has dramatically decreased hospital admission rates for people with diabetes in the Torres Strait by an astounding 41%. This is

particularly important as the Torres Strait has the highest rate of diabetes in Australia. One-quarter of all adults in the Torres Strait has diabetes compared with about 7% of the general Australian population. The trial shows that a third of all hospital admissions for diabetes-related conditions in the Torres Strait can be prevented by some fairly simple changes such as a recall and reminder system and the establishment of a diabetes outreach team.

The locally managed recall and reminder systems used a simple card system in eight of the 21 clinics that took part in the trial. This meant that people with diabetes received regular checkups, advice and referrals by trained indigenous health workers. The success of the trial means the recall system is now being rolled out to all clinics, and this is expected to lead to the improved care of diabetes across the Torres Strait and the northern peninsula.

I take this opportunity to thank all local Health staff and management for their efforts. It is an outstanding success. Obviously, we still have an awful lot of work to do in preventing this disease occurring. It is a lifestyle disease. For members of this House and for people in these communities, it takes a lot of effort to change the impact that our lifestyle has on us, particularly in relation to diet, lack of exercise and so on. We all have to make the effort. I am as conscious as anybody that I, too, have to be aware. However, it is wonderful that we have had this sign of success in treating diabetes in the Torres Strait. This will lead to further improvements across the north.

Office Expenses of Independent Members

Mr LITTLEPROUD: My question is directed to the Premier. I refer to the expenses of office of the members for Gladstone and Nicklin tabled in the House today. The member for Gladstone has been awarded \$74,544 for office staff assistance for the year. The member for Nicklin has been awarded \$110,054 for the same purposes. Given that both are Independent members, one would have thought that the financial support would have been the same. I ask: was it because the member for Nicklin offered to give the Premier an opportunity to form Government that this member was given special consideration? Can the Premier justify why this discrepancy exists? Will it continue? Is it another example of this Government's ability, to use the Premier's own words of a few moments ago, "to fix anything"?

Mr BEATTIE: The Opposition has been in the gutter all morning, and it is continuing it now. I do not recall all the details of expenditure off the top of my head. However, I do know that the Opposition was about \$250,000 over budget, if the member is interested in that figure. I made a statement to the House on a previous occasion—or it may have been publicly—when I explained why there were some differences between the amount of support—

Mr Borbidge: Establishment costs.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, there were establishment costs and other matters.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Gee, those opposite are rude. It is unbelievable. Did their mothers not teach them any manners? Somewhere along the line, they missed out on manners. I am happy to have an examination. However, there is no preferential treatment given to the member for Nicklin over the member for Gladstone. There were some issues that I recall—

Mr Littleproud: Over \$30,000 worth.

Mr BEATTIE: Let us be clear about this: those opposite hate the member for Nicklin. They will do anything they can to destroy him. They are running a vicious and vindictive campaign. When the member for Nicklin comes in here, sometimes he votes with the Government and sometimes he votes with the Opposition. We do not go out and denigrate him. When he votes against the Government, we do not come in here and attack him. I do not attack him and I do not attack the member for Gladstone.

Mr Littleproud: Oh, yes, you did.

Mr BEATTIE: That is not true. I have never attacked the member for Gladstone. I respect the right of the member for Gladstone and the member for Nicklin to make up their own minds about how they vote for things. When the member for Nicklin votes against us, and he did it this week, he does it off his own conscience, as does the member for Gladstone. We do not set out to denigrate them. Those opposite have run a disgraceful campaign to attack the member for Nicklin because they do not like the fact that he won a National Party seat off them. That is what they do not like. They hate him. If those opposite had any sense of decency, they would respect the member for Nicklin and the member for Gladstone and respect their right to make up their own minds as to how they vote.

In relation to the member for Nicklin and the member for Gladstone, I never criticise them personally or in any other way. I have never gone to either of them and said, "I don't like the way you vote", or attacked them personally. I respect both of them, and it is about time those opposite respected them as well. What the people of Nicklin are seeing today is a vicious attack continued by the National Party to destroy their local member because he has the courage to stand up for the people of Nicklin. I say to the people of Nicklin and to the member for Nicklin: he should continue to have the guts he has demonstrated in this House. He is a great Australian and his electorate will support him because he has the guts to make up his own mind.

Public Housing, Inner City

Mrs ATTWOOD: My question is directed to the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing. I refer the Minister to the need for affordable accommodation in the inner and near city areas. I ask: can the Minister outline initiatives he has undertaken to address this need?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for her question and note in passing her interest in providing affordable accommodation to those in her electorate who need it. She is a great supporter of its provision and I thank her for that. This morning we heard the Premier outline what the future holds for Gona Barracks. As part of the \$6m we have expended there, which we intend to recoup from that project, there will be affordable housing and other forms of housing as well. Since this Government came to power two years ago, it has spent over \$26m in the inner part of Brisbane on public housing and community housing.

Mr Sullivan: Some award winning designs, too.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes. Since we came to office, we have had 23 projects involving more than 280 dwelling units. By the way, that figure does not include the \$6m we paid for Gona Barracks and it does not include the parcel of land we bought at Paddington. However, this highlights this Government's commitment to providing affordable accommodation for people who need it in areas that are accessible to the sorts of services they require.

This contrasts sharply with the actions taken by the previous Government. It managed to spend a lot less than that on housing. Why? Because it set a ceiling on it of

\$145,000 for a house and land package and \$150,000 for disabled housing. I asked my colleague the honourable member for South Brisbane what one could buy in her electorate for \$150,000. She told me, "Nothing." This morning I checked the type of accommodation we are purchasing. One cannot buy a house and land package anywhere in the inner part of Brisbane for \$150,000. In effect, since this Government came to power, housing is better off by \$26m and 280 units of accommodation in inner Brisbane.

This simply would not have happened under the previous Government because of the Watson wall. Under the previous Government, people in public housing and community housing were pushed to the outer limits of the city as occurred during the Nicklin Government. Those people were pushed out to areas where there were no services. I note that one of the first actions of the previous Minister for Housing was to overrule Mr Connor's plans on the Gold Coast. He scrapped those spot purchases the member signed when he was the Minister. The first thing he did was knock it on the head, because he said, "We don't want those glamour sites." That is the way it was viewed. We believe that nothing is too good for people in public housing, and I will continue along those lines.

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

NOTICE OF MOTION OF DISSENT FROM SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No, I call the Clerk with the order of the day.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr SPEAKER: Would you write to me on the matter?

Mr BORBIDGE: I am giving a notice of dissent against your ruling, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Write to me on the matter and I will do that.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I am rising on a matter of privilege.

Mr SPEAKER: Write to me about it, please. I call the Clerk.

Mr BORBIDGE: I give notice that Mr Speaker's ruling of 24 August—

Mr SPEAKER: Will the Clerk read the order of the day?

Mr BORBIDGE: I move that the Leader of the Opposition be heard.

Mr SPEAKER: Resume your seat.

Mr BORBIDGE: I move that the Leader of the Opposition be heard.

Mr SPEAKER: Resume your seat.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I am entitled to move a dissent motion. This is not the Malaysian Parliament.

Mr SPEAKER: Resume your seat. I have just ordered you to resume your seat.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I am entitled to move a dissent motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Resume your seat.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide will withdraw that comment.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will allow the Leader of the Opposition to give notice of a motion of dissent, and that is it. There is no debate.

Mr BORBIDGE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That is what I was seeking to do.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toowoomba South will withdraw that. I am not going to tolerate this behaviour.

Mr HORAN: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr BORBIDGE: I give notice that I will move—

"That Mr Speaker's ruling of 24 August not to have a matter of privilege suddenly arising from the Leader of the Opposition heard relating to electoral corruption in the ALP be dissented from."

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee E

Report No. 2

Resumed from 23 August (see p. 2672).

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question is—

"That the report of Estimates Committee E be adopted."

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (11.32 a.m.): I am pleased to speak to report No. 2. As Chair of the committee, in speaking to report No. 1 I have already paid my compliments to both Hansard and the committee secretariat for their tremendous skill and support. I do that

again on this occasion. I also ask honourable members to note that, as Chair, I was pleased to ensure that members of the Opposition had more than their fair share of time to question the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer. Approximately 60% of the time was given to members of the Opposition.

I particularly pay compliments at this stage to the Premier and to the staff of his department and various agencies whose budgets were under close examination. I mention, however, that I was not impressed by the Auditor-General's behaviour on the occasion of our committee hearing. He used the occasion to impress publicly upon us his concern over his budget. Our system is, as he would be well aware, that it is the Premier or the responsible Ministers who are under examination by the committee and that Estimates hearings are not an opportunity for any director-general or CEO to come and push his or her agenda. I also wish to have it noted that there would be no director-general who would say that he or she would not wish more in their budget.

Mr CONNOR: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is confusing a parliamentary officer with a director-general. The Auditor-General is a parliamentary officer and is not answerable to the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order. I understand the member's point, but there is no point of order.

Ms BOYLE: Any CEO of any organisation would of course want more. It is so that there are many more things to which we as a Government—any Government for that matter—could allocate money.

I was indeed impressed with the Premier's grasp of the questions around the Auditor-General's budget and with his decision, clearly expressed to the committee, that a review will take place in six months to further clarify how indeed the Auditor-General and his office are able to perform their duties without risk to their integrity.

I pay my compliments to the Treasurer. The committee examined him, his officers and his budget over a long period of time. His answers to committee questions were fast and detailed and showed a very thorough understanding of his portfolio. As an observer of that process as well as a participant, I must say that it was a means of increasing the confidence one has in the Treasurer of this State and in his capability of managing a complex Budget.

I pay my compliments to the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development and

Minister for Trade. I note in the reservation statement by Opposition members that the overseas student numbers issue is again expressed. As Chair of the committee it was clear to me that the particular member of the committee who wished to question the Deputy Premier on this topic came to the committee with a political agenda and that no answer to any of his questions was about to shake his point of view in that matter. I am pleased to have the opportunity, nonetheless, to report that his view is indeed a biased one.

Cairns, as some honourable members will already know, is home for a six-month period—sometimes shorter and sometimes longer—to many overseas students. We have a very fine industry working group, looked after by the Cairns Regional Economic Development Corporation, which is funded by the Department of State Development and which is growing overseas student numbers in Cairns, despite the trends mentioned by the Deputy Premier at the committee hearings. They are managing to succeed, despite competition that is causing difficulty with the overseas student market all over Australia, not just in Queensland.

I comment on the Opposition's statement of reservation, which contained an accusation of ministerial arrogance. This is indeed an unusual interpretation of the proceedings, as anybody who was present would be able to attest. Far from it: there was no arrogance on the part of the Premier or either of the Ministers. The quotation in the reservation statement is taken out of context. The comment was made jokingly, not arrogantly. In fact, all of the Ministers reporting to the committee were patient, sometimes with questions which were obscure and which carried clear political agendas that would not be shaken, despite hard factual information presented by the Ministers. It was my privilege and my pleasure indeed to chair the committee and I thank the Parliament for that opportunity.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.37 a.m.): I say in response to the comments made by the member for Cairns that hers was quite an extraordinary contribution. I cannot recall previous chairs of committees taking it upon themselves to criticise individual members of the committee, particularly when, in the position of Chair of that committee, they went out of their way to protect the Government and to protect Ministers from issues of very substantial community significance which the Estimates committee should have been probing. There

should not have been a situation of Government members of the committee protecting, hiding, preventing disclosure and covering up.

Our principal concern in relation to the Premier's budget this year is much as it was last year. We see a massive burgeoning of the department for not much visible return. That is the case in relation to the cash component of this budget which again, along with the Deputy Premier's, receives one of the largest percentage increases across Government for the third year in a row. This simply reaffirms that this is a centralist Government, as was the last Labor Government in this State, where the emphasis is on Executive Government empire building. Labor is again building a massive central bureaucracy which purports to be a coordinating agency but is in fact an abrogation of Cabinet Government. The key service delivery line departments such as Health, Education and Police, which have all once again received relatively puny increases in this Budget, must be tearing their hair out at the priorities that are being exercised.

The rapid growth in the department is occurring in a staff sense as well as a budgetary sense. When the coalition was in office, the strength of the department was around 607 full-time equivalents. By the end of this financial year, Premier and Cabinet will be well over 800 on the Budget forecast. That is massive growth in three years, and indeed, the actual number of people in the department already exceeds 800. One has to wonder precisely what they are doing when one takes into account the morale crisis that exists in the Premier's Department at present, which extends even to monitoring the email of public servants as part of an ongoing political purge being presided over by the Madam Robespierre of the Queensland Public Service, the Deputy Director-General of the Premier's Department, Helen Ringrose.

Mr Springborg: We know what happened to Robespierre.

Mr BORBIDGE: We know what happened to Robespierre. Morale in the Premier's Department is absolutely rock bottom. Emails are being monitored, electronic records are being detected, as an increasingly paranoid Premier and paranoid group of political apparatchiks decide to declare war on public servants who had served loyally the Goss Government and the Borbidge Government, and indeed, in some cases, Governments going back a long period.

The other area of concern that I have—and I must admit the total failure of the

Estimates committee process, aided and abetted by the Chair, and aided and abetted by the Labor members of the committee—was the disgraceful cover-up by the Government in respect of bonus payments to mates, bonus payments to directors-general across the Public Service. It was quite okay, when there was a bit of political pressure last year, for the Premier to come into this place and be the paragon of accountability and detail the bonuses that were being paid to the chief executive officers of a range of Government owned corporations. But when it comes to detailing his actions, as distinct from the actions of the boards of GOCs, the Premier was found wanting.

We do not know, still to this day, which directors-general received which bonuses. We can only assume that they all received the maximum amount, or he has a number of duds in there that he did not want to pay much at all. The basic premise surely is that if the bonus payments that are made to the CEOs of Government owned corporations are in the public domain, have been tabled in this Parliament by the Premier, the same should apply to directors-general, particularly directors-general who were not appointed on merit, whose positions were not advertised, in relation to whom a selection process was not gone through, and who have already received very substantial increases over and above the payments and salaries and conditions that senior directors-general and public servants were receiving under the previous coalition Government.

This Estimates committee farce that the member for Cairns presided over is a further demonstration that this Government is all spin and no substance.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (11.43 a.m.): I can only assume that the member for Surfers Paradise is having a bad day. As one of the members of Estimates Committee E, I once again say how impressed I am with this democratic committee process and with the transparency of the Government's operations. I commend the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer and their staff, departmental personnel and the staff of the Parliament for the efficient way in which these hearings were conducted and the forthright way in which the broad cross-section of questions was answered.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak in support of the adoption of Estimates Committee E Report No. 2, which covers the financial operations of the many and diverse sections of the Premier's Department, the

Treasury and the Department of State Development, which was established by the Beattie Government to ensure a whole-of-Government approach to Queensland's industrial development. In this regard, in my electorate of Bundaberg, where we have been suffering from one of the worst unemployment rates in Australia, we are seeing the results of that initiative, with Bundaberg gaining the first State Development Centre in regional Queensland, with support for numerous local business enterprises, support for the massive Bundaberg 2000 project and the recent launch of the new Bundaberg Industrial Estate on the former abattoir site, which will give our numerous food industries the best opportunity they have ever had to work together as part of this food precinct to promote their industries, to expand their opportunities and to create jobs. The \$5.4m already committed to this project by the State Government will go a long way to changing the negative image of this site from one where our abattoir was closed, with the loss of all 25 jobs, to a positive hive of industry with the potential for growth and the potential for hundreds of jobs.

The most exciting part of the budget for Bundaberg is the \$9.5m allocated for acquisition of land for water infrastructure in the Bundaberg region. This is the first time any Government has put money forward for this project, other than for planning, and it is certainly welcome news for Bundaberg.

The other issue from the report that I want to refer to is the Premier's initiative of Community Cabinet meetings. These Cabinet meetings have, in just 26 months, been held in 29 different centres across Queensland, giving almost 3,000 Queenslanders a chance to have formal deputations with the Minister or Ministers of their choice and allowing a further 2,000 people to have informal meetings with Ministers. It has given the Ministers themselves the opportunity to see first-hand the needs of the regions. This has been a wonderful initiative, especially for regional Queensland. It is good to see a Government prepared to do this work, and it is good to know that that process will continue.

This 2000 Budget, the third for the Beattie Labor Government, is a sound Budget, a responsible Budget, and a Budget that delivers on the Government's key priorities. It has introduced a host of new initiatives to provide a better quality of life for all Queenslanders, and it offers unprecedented support for rural and regional Queensland, providing opportunities for us all to meet the challenges ahead.

It was a privilege to be part of Estimates Committee E, chaired so efficiently by the member for Cairns, and I commend the report to the Parliament.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.47 a.m.): It gives me pleasure to enter the debate on the report of Estimates Committee E. I would like to join with other members in thanking the committee staff, the staff of Hansard and other parliamentary attendants for their support during the Estimates committee process.

I should start at the same place that the Leader of the Opposition left off when he was talking about the payment of performance bonuses to directors-general. It seems to me that one of the things that was obvious throughout the entire Estimates process was that the individual Ministers refused to answer the question, even though it was a legitimate question, about what was contained in the line item on employee salaries and expenses with respect to their director-general. They all put it off to the Premier and said that he would answer the question. The point that came through quite clearly was that, despite the numerous questions to the Premier on that subject, there was a complete refusal to answer and to give any details on it. I think that treats the Estimates process with contempt and it treats this Parliament with contempt. If the Premier is going to be the responsible Minister on that particular issue, then he has a duty to disclose that information.

It goes further, of course. The Auditor-General, in his submissions to the committee, made two very interesting points. One was that the budget that he has received from this Government is insufficient to properly plan his auditing processes. The Government said that it will reconsider that budget at the half-yearly review, but the fact is that the Auditor-General must be in a position in which he is able to plan his audit program. If he is not given sufficient money, then he has an inability to properly plan a complete audit process.

The second thing that the Auditor-General disclosed was the vast number of \$70 contracts that obviously have come about under this Government. On 14 August I wrote to the Auditor-General with respect to that issue after I examined a report on the review of the senior public servant appointment process. I was taken by the quote in that report from the Acting Public Service Commissioner, who stated—

"If it is considered that more detailed information is required, it might be

appropriate to list the numbers of contracts approved with estimated total remuneration values of contracts rather than specifying individual names and associated remuneration."

Although I think that that particular comment by the Acting Public Service Commissioner does not go far enough, it would in fact be a significant improvement on the information that the Premier has been willing to give so far. It will be interesting to see whether or not, in the responses in the future, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet takes that up.

More importantly, through the whole Budget process—and this came out quite clearly in the Estimates process—there is no guarantee at all of any accuracy of the figures in the Budget papers. I referred a number of times in the Estimates committee hearings to problems that had occurred with revisions to the figures that were in previous Budget papers. I particularly referred to the 1998-99 actual figures contained in last year's Budget versus the actual figures contained in this year's Budget. When we look at the actual figures—and these are supposed to be at the end of the audit process—one year down the track we find that the actual figures for 1998-99 in last year's Budget papers are in many cases significantly different from the actual figures in this year's Budget papers.

I raised that issue with the Treasurer at the time. I have also since then raised it with the Auditor-General, because I think it is in the public interest that we know exactly how accurate the Budget papers we are receiving are. On 11 August I wrote to the Auditor-General requesting that after he completes his audit process he consider giving to Parliament a table or some other form that compares the actual figures contained in the departmental reports with those reported in the Budget papers and that he comment upon the accuracy of the figures therein. The Auditor-General has recently replied to my request by saying that he will be pleased to give further consideration to that particular concern after the finalisation of the audits for the 1999-2000 financial year.

This is an important issue. If we cannot trust the figures in the Budget papers, if we cannot trust what comes before this Parliament, nothing else is relevant. Nothing else will follow if the figures are basically wrong.

Mr KAISER (Woodridge—ALP) (11.51 a.m.): This was my first experience with Estimates committee hearings in this place and I join with other members of the committee in thanking the staff of the

committee for the assistance that they provided to us and for trying so persistently to get us together in meetings and phone conferences. Those attempts failed on a number of occasions, but they were persistent and they did eventually, on a number of occasions through their very hard work, actually bring us together and get us on the phone, even if my phone did drop out halfway through.

Dr Watson: But we saw you nodding and you agreed to everything—

Mr KAISER: I was going to say that I am not sure that the minutes reflect the fact I was absent for the balance of the meeting. Be that as it may.

I also join other committee members in their praise for the Chair of the committee, the member for Cairns, who chaired the committee hearing so fairly that on one occasion she needed to be reminded that there were actually Government members present who wanted to ask a few questions. I think it might have been on the occasion of the Estimates for the Premier's Department. There were 50 minutes allocated and for 35 of those 50 minutes the Opposition had a fair go and the member for Cairns needed to be reminded that other Government members and I were there and wanted to have a go, so fair was she being to the Opposition committee members.

As I say, this was the first experience that I had with Estimates committee hearings. I have observed them from a distance in the past and have taken a bit of an interest in what was going on, but this was the first time I was actually physically present and playing a part in them. I was quite pleasantly surprised by the process and the opportunities afforded to the Opposition to ask probing questions and to ask about matters of concern and interest to them. I was pleasantly surprised that the process existed to such an extent to give an important process such as the Budget such scrutiny.

I have heard in this debate complaint after complaint after complaint from members of the Opposition about the lack of opportunity for them to ask questions and how flawed the process is. I can only say that when Opposition members get an opportunity to ask questions of Ministers and bureaucrats for the hour upon hour that that particular day took, if they cannot hit their mark, if they cannot make their point, then the process is not flawed; the problem is indeed with Opposition members.

Instead of using the Estimates committee hearings to trot out the whinge of the week

and to try to get a headline for that day, if Opposition members used the process to probe the Budget like they are supposed to and forgot about their concerns and about the whinge of the week and scoring the media headline for the day, they might actually find they get more out of the process.

Of course, the whinge of the week on the particular day that this committee was held was the bonuses paid to CEOs. I was stunned by the persistence of the questioning that the Opposition engaged in and the wasted opportunity that resulted from that persistence of questioning. All requirements of accountability were satisfied by the Premier's saying how much the bonuses cost and providing a range in which the bonuses were provided. The one thing he did not do was to announce individual amounts for individual CEOs. The reason for his not doing that became obvious during the course of the day. It is because the Premier wants to use these bonuses as a carrot and not as a stick. The Opposition's persistent questioning during the course of that day on that issue made it apparent that were we to announce individual amounts for individual CEOs, then the issue would become, "Why didn't some CEOs get the full amount? Why did some get this amount? Why did some get that amount?" That would have become the issue and those bonuses would become a stick for CEOs instead of a carrot. But despite the fact that the individual amounts were not disclosed, all requirements of accountability were met by the full amount of the total payments made to CEOs being disclosed.

I touch quickly on another issue that came up during the questioning of the Deputy Premier. That was his mention of the flexible response unit to help businesses in trouble. Of course, these days the issue of employment has as much to do with job security as it has to do with creating jobs. This flexible response unit is able to go in and help businesses that are in trouble. In response to a question from me, the Deputy Premier revealed that so far 30 firms had been assisted by that unit and that that effort had saved approximately 500 jobs—not created 500 jobs, but it may as well have, because it saved 500 jobs from being lost. These days we do need to recognise that, in an era of globalisation that is destroying almost as many jobs as it is creating, job security is just as important as creating jobs. I look forward to, hopefully, participating in tonight's debate about free trade to make some of those points.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (11.56 a.m.): I thank the member for Woodridge for his

lesson to members of the Opposition. I note it; I do not necessarily agree with it, while I may agree with some points that he made during his contribution. I compliment the chairman on the time that she did afford to members—

Mr Kaiser: More than fair.

Mr SLACK: Yes, it was fair and it was in that spirit that we entered into the Estimates debate. However, I am disappointed in the comments that she did make in respect of the reservation statements that were put forward by the members of the Opposition. I acknowledge, and I am sure that all members of the Opposition acknowledge, that the Estimates debate does afford members of the Opposition the chance to put forward their points in respect of policy issues.

Mr Kaiser: You just didn't do it very well.

Mr SLACK: I will not take the interjection because we have got a different point of view. If the member stopped to listen for a moment he might learn something, because he acknowledged that he is only new to the process, having participated in only one Estimates process. The member for Cairns is giving the impression that she is new to the process as well. Where I was disappointed in her contribution as chairman is that she was not asked to act as adjudicator. The person who has the responsibility to reply to the reservation statements is the Premier or the relevant Minister. It is in their court. It is not for the member for Cairns to make observations on the Opposition's points at issue.

It is fair to say that in Estimates committees political points are made by both sides of politics. The member for Capalaba, the Deputy Premier, was no exception. In fact, he was short on detail. That is why we have these five minute speeches, to afford members the opportunity to comment on those issues where we felt the Ministers being questioned had shortcomings.

The issue that was raised by the chairman, about which I put in a reservation statement, about overseas students is justified. There was no mention in the budget of an allocation of an amount of money specifically for overseas student promotion. It is a big issue in this State because the number of overseas students coming here determines the business connections we will have with those countries in the future and it determines the tourist numbers. Those students go back into their political arena and their business arena. It is all pluses. The numbers have been deteriorating. It is natural for me—

Ms Boyle interjected.

Mr SLACK: They are deteriorating in terms of the percentage of the cake. I take the member's point.

Ms Boyle interjected.

Mr SLACK: The member should just hang on and let me make my point. The numbers are deteriorating in respect of the overall numbers of people coming to Australia. I accept that, and I accepted that at the time. The reality is that, although the numbers have been increasing, the numbers coming to Queensland have been deteriorating. It is natural for the Opposition to be concerned about that and question the Minister about it, because the Minister has the responsibility. He acknowledged that responsibility in his department to coordinate the promotion of Queensland as a venue for overseas students. It is natural that I am concerned about the deterioration in the figures. The member for Cairns should also be concerned that the percentage of the overall number drops from 17% to 15.1%, if my figures are correct. It is fine for the Minister to quote the extra numbers who are coming to this country, but that was not the point of the question. There was a shortcoming in the Minister not giving the amount of money that been allocated in this Budget to address that issue.

I was disappointed in the issues surrounding the office of the Auditor-General. As the member for Nerang pointed out, the Auditor-General is an officer of this Parliament, and he has genuine concerns about his budget. In no way would we like to see constraints on the Auditor-General's budget in terms of him doing his job as an officer of the Parliament, and I say that as a member of Parliament. I make the point that in past Estimates committees officers of the Parliament have answered questions. On this occasion, the Premier chose to answer the questions and initially did not give the Auditor-General an opportunity to speak about the concerns that he had in relation to his budget.

I naturally asked questions about other issues, such as the Timor issue. That is of concern to us, because we had received information that genuine companies had not been able to get the support of the Government in their efforts in East Timor. However, an issue that is particularly concerning to me is this Government quoting a figure of 64% of the budget for capital works being allocated outside the Brisbane statistical division. I would like some clarification as to whether that 64% includes the Moreton division. Are we comparing like allocations in this budget with previous budgets? I believe

that we are not. The evidence is that we are not.

Time expired.

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (12.02 p.m.): I thank the committee for its report and its support of the expenditure proposals for which I have a responsibility. The minority of the committee have noted some reservations, which simply replicate the superficial political point scoring that they presented at the hearing, and which I dealt with in full during that hearing. So they are not worthy of response today. The Opposition does not let the facts get in the way of a good whinge.

It needs to be recorded that during my 10 and a half, almost 11 years in this place, I have never witnessed such an appallingly sloppy and ill-prepared attempt at parliamentary scrutiny than the Opposition's participation in this Estimates process. The member for Burnett did not ask me questions, because my responsibilities lie outside his shadow portfolio responsibilities. However, that lowered the tone of the committee as well because, had he asked me questions, I think that it would have been a better performance by the Opposition. The Opposition simply did not do their homework. Labor in Opposition worked hard to scrutinise in detail the Budget Estimates. In contrast, the Nationals and the Liberals seemed to base their investigation upon a cursory glance of the Budget papers, never letting the facts get in the way of a question. Of course, if the Opposition had dug further, they would have found everything to be in order, but they did not even try. Frankly, Queenslanders deserve better than the Opposition that is currently serving it.

I refer to performance bonuses. I have provided the committee with the full details of what bonuses are available to directors-general if they perform. It is a maximum of 15%, which for the highest paid DGs means a maximum bonus of \$29,700. Of course, the bonus could also be zero. That is up to my discretion, after an appropriate assessment process, as the employer of these DGs. It needs to be remembered that the accountability for the performance of these departments to the Parliament resides in the respective Minister.

In terms of the size of the department, it was explained at the hearings that a straight comparison of staff figures over the past few years cannot be made. The latest figures include 70 staff providing corporate services to State Development, which the earlier figures

did not include. Despite that explanation, the Opposition still used the straight comparison.

In terms of the Opposition's budget, I note that it pleads that its \$300,000 budget blow-out is not true because the travel costs of the leadership group have been transferred from the Parliament to my budget. Even if that point is accepted, those travel costs add up to only \$60,000. It would not be a \$300,000 blow-out; it would be a \$240,000 blow-out, representing an extra 10% of their budget allocation. My office came in \$25,000 under budget.

That is my formal response. I do not think that there is anything else in the dissenting report that needs consideration. I pay tribute to the chairman, who I thought handled the committee impeccably and tried to do a fair job. I think the vicious attack on her today by the Leader of the Opposition was simply another whinge. It seems to me that personal abuse has become very much part of the armour of the Leader of the Opposition. I find that at every opportunity he is out to viciously attack people. He did it to an independent public servant, Helen Ringrose, who cannot defend herself. He talked about her being Robespierre—name calling, which is hardly befitting the behaviour of a man who claims that he wants to be the Premier of this State. I know that these are frustrating times, but he has to learn to bite his tongue. Mine has bumps on it. Nevertheless, the Leader of the Opposition has to learn some discipline.

The Leader of the Opposition does not seem to like independent people. He does not like the independent Speaker, whom he attacked this morning, and he does not like Independents. He attacked Peter Wellington and, by inference perhaps, the member for Gladstone. He attacked the independent CJC. The Leader of the Opposition just does not like independent people. His behaviour is like that of a spoilt brat. Frankly, I think that the behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament this morning was nothing short of a disgrace. We all have responsibilities to lift the standards of Parliament. None of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. I do, too. However, for the Leader of the Opposition to come in here and have a serial, deliberate strategy to disrupt the Parliament—which we saw—and to use the Estimates committees as part of a continuation of that behaviour, is simply unacceptable.

If the Leader of the Opposition thinks that the community supports that sort of behaviour, I tell him that they do not. They are sick of it, and they are sick of politicians. Do members

want to know why the community does not like politicians? Because of what the Leader of the Opposition did today. He tore up the rule book, he tore up Standing Orders. He decided that he is God—better than rest of us and better than this institution, which we inherited from our predecessors. We have to appreciate the history, the conventions and the importance of this Parliament for which we are responsible.

The Estimates committee process is the most open process of Budget scrutiny. It was started in the Goss years. During those committees, Ministers have to sit down and be questioned, as they should be. Yes, it has to be a robust process. I accept all of that. But for the Opposition to continue this personal denigration, this attack on independence and Independents, which we have seen today and on previous occasions, I believe is unparliamentary. I think that it denigrates the process and I think that it is unacceptable.

I thank the majority of the committee for supporting the Estimates process. This has been a solid Budget and it will continue good government in this State.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.07 p.m.): It was interesting to see the Premier put on his sincere face today and come here and proclaim that he is a person with bumps all over his tongue and that he has always treated this place with great dignity. My simple quiz to members of this Parliament is: name the only member who has walked into this Parliament with a large dummy tied around his neck. It happened when the current Premier was Opposition Leader. Certainly, that was not about promoting decorum and standards in Parliament. It is great to see how the Premier's view of the role of Parliament and the dignity of Parliament has changed during his transposition from this side of the Chamber to that side opposite when he became Premier. So I would say that we should treat the Premier's comments with the modicum of cynicism that they deserve.

I am very concerned that, over the past few years of this whole Budget Estimates process, Budget documents have been presented to this Parliament that contain more and more superfluous information than we have every seen at any other time and less and less detail. When I first came into this place in the first years of the Goss era, it was far easier to read Budget papers than it is today. I acknowledge that we have gone from a cash accounting to an accrual accounting system. However, with all of that extra paper that we get each year, we get less and less

detail and the Budget is less and less easy to scrutinise. We need to consider that the volume of information that is thrown together in those Budget papers does not necessarily mean that we are getting the detail that we require to be able to adequately scrutinise the operation of the Government in this State. Sometimes we have to be careful about patting ourselves on the back when the basic aspects of public scrutiny are not being lived up to.

I am concerned also that the output Estimates bear absolutely no similarity whatsoever to reality. On the Estimates committee in which I was involved I questioned instances in which a statement had been made and in the next year it came up to half the projection for the output in the Budget paper, and the projection for the next year was exactly the same as the budgeted amount for the year before. We asked the Minister about the dynamics. Why should it be any different if the dynamics have not changed? I am convinced that a lot of these output figures are just pulled out of the air and put in the Budget papers to make things look good. There is not necessarily any expectation that they will become a reality.

The real concern that I had—and I pursued this in my Estimates committee—was the issue of bonuses for directors-general. A moment ago the honourable member for Woodridge gave the most extraordinary explanation of why it was justifiable and how suppressing public disclosure and transparency was really about accountability and not upsetting directors-general because it would mean that we would be using a stick rather than a carrot. As I understand it, only one director-general was given a performance bonus when we were in Government, and that was the director-general of the Department of Health. That was only after the former Health Minister in the Goss Government, Peter Beattie, contacted our Health Minister asking for the conditions of that contract to be honoured—something we did.

Today we are witnessing the suppression of transparency and accountability. We are unable to properly adjudicate and assess whether the amount of performance bonus being paid to individual directors-general in any way relates to their performance. It appears to me that the maximum, which is about \$30,000, is being paid to all of them regardless of their performance. Even the ones performing pathetically or in a mediocre way are getting the maximum amount.

I asked the Minister responsible for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Matt Foley, whether his DG had received \$30,000 and what the performance criteria were. He did not deny that. The performance in that department was mediocre. The DPP is in turmoil, SPER is not living up to expectations, the Magistrates Court is behind and the new coroners legislation is still being reviewed after two years, even though the work had been done in 1998. What are the performance criteria? Who judges them? This is nothing other than a way of dishing out largesse to some very mediocre directors-general in this State. It is largesse for some of the mates. Some of these people were not even appointed on merit. Basically, they were just offered the job. We can see that they are not up to the job.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.12 p.m.): It was interesting to listen to the ravings of the Deputy Leader of the National Party complaining that the Budget material contains too many figures, too much information; that it was a bit difficult for him to be able to comprehend what is in there. If he and other Opposition members took the time to study the information, they might actually find the answers to some of the more arcane issues that they were supposedly going to try to pursue during the Estimates process.

Some of us who have a bit of memory about the parliamentary process in the Queensland Parliament can compare very starkly the performance of the Estimates of today with what it was like when the National Party sat on these benches in the Bjelke-Petersen era. In those days the Estimates process was a total farce. They used to select only three departments in a year to have their Estimates debated. Of course, the selection never included any of the controversial ones. There was no opportunity to ask questions of Ministers or indeed pursue matters with public servants—no, no, no. If ever there was a period when there was no transparency and no accountability in Government it was those days. The only reason that anyone could come in here and claim that this Estimates process does not offer transparency would be that the person asking the question was so bone lazy as to not have done their homework in order to ask pertinent questions in relation to the Estimates.

Let me refer to certain aspects of the Opposition members' report in relation to the Treasury Department Estimates. I find it passing strange—and I assume that the member for Moggill would have authored this part of the Opposition members'

statement—that he has some concern as to the accuracy of the Budget figures. The Budget papers as they have been prepared in other years, and indeed under other Governments, contain figures for estimated actuals. Why? That is because the data on which those calculations are made is data which has been put together prior to the end of the financial year and prior to the accounts being audited.

For the information of the honourable member, I point out that the estimated actual figures which are published in the Ministerial Portfolio Statements were based on the best estimates that were able to be derived at a point in time. These figures were calculated initially as at the end of April 2000 based on data at the end of March 2000. Where apparent, initial calculations were adjusted for any known material variances.

It is also worth noting—and perhaps the honourable member for Moggill might take this to heart—that under the Financial Administration and Audit Act all accountable officers are obliged to furnish to the Auditor-General general purpose financial statements within two months of the year end, that is, by 31 August. We are not going to get actual figures until after that process has been concluded. For the information of the honourable member, I point out that today's date is 24 August. How on earth does he expect to have actual figures for a Budget paper presented on 18 July? The honourable member is not only misguided but also unreasonable.

The other points I wanted to make in relation to the honourable member's expectations relate to the extraordinary statements on page 8 of Estimates Committee E Report No. 2, where he states—

"The failure of the Treasurer to meet the legislative deadlines contained in the Financial Administration and Audit Act pertaining to the reporting on the consolidated State accounts 1999/2000 is of great concern."

The honourable member should listen to this. Under the Financial Administration and Audit Act we have another four months to go before the deadline approaches in relation to the audited data for 1999-2000. What on earth is he on about?

That was almost as good as the other performance of the member for Moggill in the Estimates committee hearing when he decided to ask a penetrating question about alleged cuts in Housing. He asked why the Government was cutting Housing. We were

able to ascertain that the circumstances arose from a policy decision taken while the honourable member for Moggill was a Minister in the coalition Government. It cut Housing payments, and that was factored into the Forward Estimates. The absent-minded professor—the erstwhile Minister for Housing—shot himself in both feet simultaneously at the Estimates committee hearing. Such was the calibre of the honourable member that he shot himself in both feet simultaneously. It was a great performance and indicative of the sloppiness and tardiness of an incompetent Opposition.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! In calling the member for Gladstone, I indicate that because of time constraints yesterday it will be totally in order for the member to speak to the Estimates of the Legislative Assembly now.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (12.17 p.m.): Thank you, Mr Chairman. I will take the opportunity to comment on yesterday's Estimates debate which, as the Chairman indicated, was suspended because of time constraints. I place on the record my appreciation of all of the staff of the Legislative Assembly for their courtesy, advice and assistance. I do not think any members could genuinely complain about the assistance that we receive, whether it is from Attendants, Security, Catering, Bills and Papers, Hansard or whoever else. Each one does a magnificent job.

I wish to touch on a couple of issues in today's debate, one of which arose in the last hour or so. I was disappointed by the manner in which a question was asked by the member for Western Downs. The question about the allocation made by Premier's to our offices as Independents was asked without it being foreshadowed to either the member for Nicklin or me. At one stage, the member for Nicklin was receiving \$170,000. I was receiving—and always have—\$150,000. That may have changed back to \$150,000 each. Be that as it may, my expenditure is on the basis of the demand in my office for personnel in particular. I am reviewing this structure and the location of the staff in my office at the moment, and that expenditure could change and, most likely, will increase. However, it will still be within budget.

The major concern that I was keen to raise yesterday and that I will raise today if I may—and it does concern this portfolio as well—is the issue of security. We live in a State in which the security risk is reasonably low and it is very easy for us to become complacent. The Parliament includes people who have a

high profile—the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer—and we deal with issues that can be quite emotive at times, and there are people in the community who will take an opportunity to vent their anger at those high-profile people.

I noted in the Hansard of the Estimates committee in relation to the Speaker's portfolio that there was a reduction in the security staff but that there was no set figure for the minimum staffing level for security. My concern is that each of us here is reliant on security staff being available to intervene at an early stage before an incident accelerates and becomes a problem. I am concerned that, if the number of security staff in particular is being reduced, there will eventually be an incident—and I hope not in the near future, but it could occur—and the reduction in staff could mean that security cannot be guaranteed.

The Speaker's response was that we have a police force for that purpose, but there is a response time involved. It needs to be on the record that, if there is an incident, the responsibility for that incident must lie with the decision makers and not with the security personnel, who may be trying to do the work of three people. As I said, it is easy to say that now, but when an incident does occur, I hope it is remembered that the reduction in staff numbers can have a significant impact on the ability of people in this precinct to do their job efficiently and that it is the decision maker's responsibility if an incident occurs and not the personnel who are actually trying to do the work of more than one person. Mr Chairman, I thank you for your tolerance in letting me speak on that issue.

There is another issue that I would like to raise and it is one that I am sure the Treasurer would expect me to raise at a time of Budget review. Every Government is challenged by the ability to raise revenue to expend in the vast areas of Budget portfolios, and I accept that. However, I again must put on the record my disappointment that Treasury has decided to raise significant amounts of revenue from Government owned instrumentalities or Government owned corporations, in particular the Gladstone Port Authority. It was actually impossible to find the amounts of money in the Budget papers. I believe that the sum that is going to be required is still being negotiated.

I believe it is an unhealthy trend for a Government to be requiring Government owned instrumentalities to raise loans to pass money back to Government in the form of a type of consolidated revenue. It means that

those instrumentalities carry the debt and pay the interest and redemption but do not have the benefit of the moneys raised to increase and improve the infrastructure that they themselves are dependent on. I put on the record that, if that is a method of future budgetary preparation, it is unhealthy for the State. It cannot be sustained by business operations and it is certainly not acceptable.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (12.23 p.m.): In an article in the Weekend Bulletin of 12-13 August this year, political reporter Sue Lapperman speaks of the public sector cost of Estimates committees, the process it involves and the exhaustive efforts of all the various staff and departmental officers. She goes on to say—

"And for what? To find out that most of the Opposition shadow Ministers had not bothered to do any homework."

I would have to agree with her comment.

After reading that article it would not be too unkind of me to say that one of those shadow Ministers was the member for Burnett. Estimates are a fine democratic process. However, the Estimates process is best served by a very active Opposition, an Opposition that is willing to work through the Budget papers—not skip through them—and not ask the same questions that it asked the year before.

It is interesting to note that the reservations in this particular committee report make reference to matters that were not even raised in questions during the Estimates hearings, that were not asked of me during the Estimates debate. I might say—and I agreed to this—that our Estimates finished 30 minutes early because both the shadow Minister and I had a function to attend. However, if Opposition members walked up to me and said that they did not want to finish 30 minutes earlier because they wanted to question me on the budget, they would find that I would agree to that every day.

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr ELDER: I am being fair about that. I said that I agreed to it because we had a black tie function to attend. However, we could easily have gone on for another 30 minutes if the shadow Minister had wished. He should not expect me to look a gift-horse in the mouth. That is my answer to that.

Let me turn to some of the issues. In relation to SUDAW and the Nathan dam, contrary to the assertions made in the

statement of reservations, the department is active in facilitating the project. In relation to the reference made by the member for Burnett to my playing the political card, I can only assume that that refers to the extraordinary success fee of \$2m that was provided by the Borbidge Government—a success fee that, in my view, does not satisfy the value for money criteria demanded by taxpayers. That is because the success fee was, in essence, for an expression of interest and no prequalification work was done in relation to the project. The success fee was paid by the Borbidge Government at a time when the only success guaranteed for the project was the premature political announcement. That is all it was.

Rather than reflecting poorly on the department, it reflects poorly on the judgment of the previous Minister, Mr Slack, for using public moneys in that way. In addition, I might say that no question was asked about the department's commitment to facilitating the project. His view of the project was implied not so much in his question as in his response. As for East Timor—

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. There was reference to it in the contract.

Mr ELDER: I heard the member in silence. He has had his go. He should give me the same courtesy.

In relation to East Timor, in the Estimates committee I made the offer to the member to obtain a briefing from an officer of the Department of State Development on the opportunities, but he is yet to take that up. I still urge him to take up the offer of that particular briefing. It is some weeks later and I have been advised that he has not taken it up. I offered him that opportunity. Had he taken that opportunity, the comments that he made in the report may have been somewhat different.

Mr Ray Garrard—and this was another issue that the shadow Minister raised—is a respected specialist in the area of energy and has had considerable experience over many years in that area. As I said, his input has been valuable in developing the energy policy and ongoing issues flowing from the work that he has been doing, and I commend him for his work. The nature of the relationship between Mr Garrard, Mr Rolfe and Chevron is entirely a professional one. In that sense, the member is abusing parliamentary privilege to imply otherwise. Implying that in the reservation report when he did not ask a question of me on that matter in the Committee hearing itself is a reflection of the

way in which he has abused that process. It reflects poorly on him. The member had the opportunity to ask me the question but did not, then he made that implication in this report to the Parliament. He should at least have had the courtesy to raise it in a question and give me a chance to respond without making such implications in this report.

In relation to overseas students, again the shadow Minister has refused to accept the fact that the Pauline Hanson factor played a role. We went through the old debate; we went over all of the old issues. He asked the same question that he asked last year. It disappoints me, because it shows that he did very little work in terms of looking at student numbers this time around. As for his comment about ministerial arrogance, I made the point that he gets to ask the questions and I get to answer them. That is not arrogance; it is just simply stating the facts. He asks the questions and I get to answer them. That is hardly arrogance.

I really do wish to thank the departmental staff, who worked hard to prepare for the Estimates. They must be disappointed at the fact that they worked so hard on preparing the answers to questions and none of them were asked, just the same as last year.

Time expired.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (12.28 p.m.): In joining this Estimates debate I want to address certain issues pertaining to the portfolio of State Development and Trade and, in particular, to address the local content policy that has been touted by the Deputy Premier. I noted with reserve his comments on local content policy in a ministerial statement on 22 June, which appears in Hansard at pages 1852 and 1853. He actually says—

"One of the priorities of this Government is to put as much work locally as possible into major projects."

He goes on—

"Not for the first time, members opposite have a record, and Queenslanders remember that record. By contrast, the policy of this Government is to work with proponents of major projects, and for the first time in this State we have a local content policy."

I actually felt warm and fuzzy when I heard those words. I thought that finally someone was going to address the City Country Alliance policy of supporting local business, supporting a local content policy and buying local.

I then received a call from a local Rockhampton businessman, Mr Peter Schuback of Mineral and Mine Movers. He

informed me of his involvement in the past with the US, Australian and New Zealand military manoeuvres off the Queensland coast and the Shoalwater Bay training area. His company assisted greatly in the combined exercise of Tandem Thrust 97. He has complimentary letters from the US military, including letters of appreciation from Lieutenant Commander Bruce Lemler of the US navy, the lead contracting officer. The letter expressed appreciation for his diligence, his expertise and his flexibility in meeting short-fuse requirements, reacting to last-minute changes and ensuring the successful movement of personnel and equipment. It was stated that this was highly commended by the US military.

Tandem Thrust 2001 is coming up. This same man requested to support the US military once again. Peter Schuback requested support from Rockhampton Enterprise Ltd, a State Development and Trade sponsored venture of alleged support for local businessmen, yet no assistance was given. Rockhampton Enterprise Ltd should support major projects. Tandem Thrust 2001 will be a major project. I am led to believe that Rockhampton Enterprise Ltd has received somewhere in the vicinity of \$780,000 in Government assistance over the past three years. I also believe that Rockhampton Enterprise Ltd was allocated some \$30,000 for a database of local military suppliers. It is supposed to have completed that database of local military suppliers for military access for such a venture as Tandem Thrust 2001. These businesses should have at least been contacted and advised to contact Mr Schuback, who was the contact the US military was going to use due to his close business relationship developed in the past.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. For the information of the member, Mr Schuback was assisted through REL with a list. However, there are letters I can show the member that the US military has not heard of him. It may be that one arm or some officer has heard of him, but I can show the member that file. In courtesy to the member, I accept his point, but he should be careful about where it leads. I am quite happy to show the member the file.

Mr FELDMAN: I thank the Minister. The point I was making is that I was assured by Ross Rolfe from the Office of State Development that this was being looked at. However, I was also told by Peter Schuback that he still has not received that list. I spoke to him as late as this morning to verify those details. He assured me that he has not received any such advice. He has even placed

advertisements in newspapers of his own accord for people to contact him who can assist him with car hire firms, office equipment, hire companies, computer firms, office suppliers and printers. Therefore, he is developing his own database in relation to that so he can assist local businesses and suppliers in Rockhampton. As I say, that was the advice he gave me as late as this morning.

Minister, I do not know where the discrepancy is, but that is exactly what Mr Schuback told me this morning. Perhaps I should have a tete-a-tete with the Minister later to sort out what is going on in Rockhampton. However, from what I have been told, this is certainly not helping local business. Something needs to be done. Local content policy is an initiative that needs to happen to support and look after local businesses. In light of that, I will talk to the Minister later to try to sort something out. As I said, something needs to be done and local business needs to be supported.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee F Report

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Mickel): The question is—

"That the report of Estimates Committee F be adopted."

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (12.33 p.m.): Firstly, I take the opportunity to thank my fellow committee members for their participation and input in the preparation of this report. I particularly thank our research director, Anita Sweet, for her guidance and administration of the committee's work and also Carolyn Heffernan for her executive assistance. I also acknowledge the work of Tim Mulherin, the member for Mackay, who chaired the committee until just before the hearing, when he had to withdraw due to medical reasons.

One of the showpiece components of the Employment, Training and Industrial Relations portfolio was the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives. At the time of the public hearing, the unemployment rate in Queensland was at its lowest level in a decade, falling from 8.8% in July 1998 when the Beattie Government first came to office to 7.8% in June. There has been a further reduction in July down to 7.7%. I am sure that other speakers and the Minister will reiterate those figures. As is the case with any good news, it cannot be repeated often enough. An important factor in those figures is that the youth unemployment and long-term

unemployment rate has dropped significantly over the same period. Youth unemployment has fallen from 25.2% to 19.4% and long-term unemployment has fallen from 30% to 26.4%. Those results are well below the Australian average.

The Government believes that the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives have played a significant role in those reductions. Since the Beattie Government came to office, around 23,000 people have received training or jobs under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives. These jobs arose from public and private sector apprenticeships and traineeships that were either directly created or subsidised by the Government program and also from the Community Jobs Plan and the Community Employment Assistance Program. This year, the Budget provides another \$91m to continue with the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives.

Over the past year, the Community Jobs Plan has funded 168 programs across the State at a cost of around \$28m. I have had the opportunity to personally visit and launch a few of these programs and have witnessed the tremendous enthusiasm, particularly of young people, who have had the opportunity to participate in them. These programs are giving people, particularly young people, hope. They are giving them an opportunity to brush up on their work skills and to gain new skills. In addition, communities are also receiving significant benefits from these programs by such things as the refurbishment of community buildings and landscaping improvements. My electorate has seen the landscaping and refurbishment of aged care homes and local parks.

To that end, it was disappointing to some degree to see the Opposition criticise these programs. The Opposition has failed to date to give a commitment that this type of program will continue if it is ever re-elected to office. If it is the case that these programs are abolished, that will dash the hopes of many thousands of young Queenslanders in particular. Last week when I visited Bundaberg with the Minister I met a number of young people who had been long-term unemployed and older mentoring workers, and all of them had received tremendous benefits. The Bundaberg area is one of the major recipients of Community Jobs Plans and Community Employment Assistance Programs.

I want to make some additional comments on a key statement in the Employment, Training and Industrial Relations

Ministerial Portfolio Statements. It appears on page 1. It refers to the problem of the growing gap in wage levels of the work force. This is an issue about which I have spoken in this place several times before. There is no doubt in my mind that wage inequality in the community is directly linked to the nature of the prevailing industrial relations system. The laws that have been implemented by the Beattie Labor Government under Minister Braddy have taken significant steps to redress the downward trends on this issue in recent years, particularly by creating a new Act to give a more proactive role to the Industrial Relations Commission in the setting of wages and conditions.

The growth of what is referred to as the "working poor"—it is a phenomenon so prevalent in economies such as the United States and Great Britain—creates social problems which are not dissimilar to that of high levels of unemployment. Whilst we have an obligation to ensure that our industrial relations system is able to keep pace with the changing nature of work and new technologies, there is still a constant that cannot be ignored, that is, the need for individuals and families to have access to fair and reasonable wages and to have reasonable levels of security in their employment.

Time expired.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (12.38 p.m.): The 2000-01 budget for the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations should continue to fund the core activities of the department and implement the Labor Party's policy as Government. The coalition is certainly concerned with the effectiveness of some of these policies being pursued. I was also concerned that a number of questions I asked on notice were not fully answered, and in fact only part of them were. One has to wonder why that was the case. I raised concerns in this regard about conflicting information given and how difficult it was as the shadow Minister to be able to relate one set of information to another when they are very different and operate over different fields.

The Estimates hearings really should be the opportunity for the Parliament to fully probe budget appropriations and expenditure. Unfortunately, they have developed very much into a cat-and-mouse game where the general idea seems to be to keep as much pertinent information away from the opposition parties as possible. I do not believe that making an art form out of concealing information is what this Government should be doing at Estimates committees.

It is a concern that for the third year in a row unemployment is at 8%, which is unacceptably high. Certainly the Minister had no answers as to how that rate was going to come down, nor could he commit to getting the 5% unemployment rate that the Premier has so often stated was his target—first for 12 months, then for two years and then for three years. Of course, it is not going to be reached because the Treasurer's own figures say it is 8%.

I reiterate: in Government the coalition generated almost 40% of all new jobs in Australia. I think that record stands up very well. Certainly it has not been beaten. When we look at the situation under Labor we see that the unemployment rate in Queensland exceeds the national average and remains substantially higher than the rates recorded in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. Really, Queensland is now competing against South Australia and Tasmania for the worst unemployment rate in the country. That is an appalling record for a great State such as ours.

The coalition does support job creation and genuine job creation programs. I have said that. From the information that was provided to me during the Estimates hearings, I am very concerned that a number of coalition electorates seem to have missed out altogether, or nearly altogether, on funding—particularly those that have a high level of unemployment. One has to wonder what criterion is really used. The Minister said that areas with 8% unemployment would certainly be looked after when it came to job creation programs, but in point of fact that is not true.

It is of concern also that the estimated operating loss for the department was \$26.961m during 1999-2000. I think it is unacceptable that departments can record such huge deficits when in this instance this department budgeted for an operating surplus of \$4.791m. Questions on that subject certainly were not adequately answered. Either there is a problem with the accounting process in the department or the Government is really not fulfilling the role that it should and is distorting the budget. Furthermore, when we see a department losing that sort of money we have to wonder what answers the Minister had to give, or should have had to give, to the Budget Review Committee.

I am very concerned about a situation that I brought to the attention of the Minister, that is, the apparent fraud that seems to be occurring across quite a widespread area of TAFE. I did ask the Minister to send that

matter to the CJC, and he did say he has done so. I have had a large number of contacts since then—both letters and phone calls. It seems that this problem is widespread across a number of TAFEs. One of the major concerns is that teachers are being forced to sign documentation that they are indeed students. This puts up student contact hours and, hence, more money can be billed. Certainly the body that seems to pay most of it is ANTA. In the meantime, we have a lot of genuine students out there who cannot access TAFE courses. This fraud is going on in a number of ways. At that stage I gave any material I had to the Minister, but I ask him to look at this matter fully.

Time expired.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (12.43 p.m.): As a member of the Minister for Mines and Energy's legislative committee, it is a pleasure for me to speak in support of the report of Estimates Committee F. I will use the time allocated to speak on the achievements of the Department of Mines and Energy under the leadership of the Minister for Mines and Energy, the Honourable Tony McGrady.

The electricity corporations within the Department of Mines and Energy will continue their commitment to capital projects within their industry. More than \$1.3 billion in capital works spending has been allocated this financial year for major maintenance upgrades and new construction to ensure that they keep pace with the ever-increasing demand for electricity. This is \$300m more than was committed by the corporations during the last financial year and represents more than twice the amount committed in the coalition Government's last Budget, that being \$0.5 billion. The Department of Mines and Energy will have a total operating budget of \$83.7m in 2000-01. This represents an increase of \$7.8m in spending over last year.

As its commitment to the Queensland energy policy, a Cleaner Energy Strategy, the Department of Mines and Energy will continue to offer programs that will foster the use of a greater diversity of cleaner energy sources. The Solar Hot Water Rebate Scheme will continue. The rebate has been increased to \$750. The scheme will receive funding of \$3m this year. Industry feedback suggests that the increased rebate has raised demand for solar hot water systems by around 100%. Of course, this also generates new jobs in the industry.

\$4.6m has been allocated for the Remote Area Power Supply Rebate Scheme, including the Daintree remote area power supply program. It is anticipated that more than 400

remote area power systems will be approved for rebates this year. In response to the good take-up rate of these systems, the number of formally accredited remote area power supply installers has increased from 12 to 48 and additional employment in the industry has been generated.

\$1m has been set aside for the working properties rebate scheme in 2000-01 which for the first time will provide Queenslanders on remote properties with a realistic option for a reliable, 24-hour power supply. This is a joint program with the Commonwealth Government. \$2.047m has been provided for Queensland sustainable energy innovation fund grants to develop renewable energy technologies.

The Queensland energy policy also seeks to meet the challenge of lower greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging the establishment of a competitive market for gas. \$1.098m has been provided for new systems, policies and processes to be established to support new petroleum and gas legislation in line with National Competition Policy. \$1.9m will also be spent on Stage 1 of a project that will review the benefits, costs and viable pricing options of introducing full retail competition into the Queensland electricity industry. A recommendation will be made to Cabinet. If introduced, full retail competition will extend to small customers the ability to shop around for power supply on the basis of quality and price and will lead to retailers delivering better and more innovative levels of service. This will act as a further stimulus to job and wealth creation in the State as electricity is a key factor input to new and expanding businesses.

Continuing to attract new exploration and mining ventures to Queensland to take advantage of the State's prospectivity remains a priority for the department. \$2.3m has been allocated to continue with the Prospectivity Plus initiative. This funding will be spent on mineral occurrence mapping, airborne geophysical data acquisition and the development of digital information systems that will promote Queensland as an attractive place to explore and provide a real incentive to potential explorers. Funds of \$0.8m over four years will continue to support the QTHERM coal promotion program in the international and domestic marketplace to take advantage of the 36 billion tonnes of thermal coal resources available in Queensland.

All in all, I believe this to be a good budget that will provide sustainable growth within the mines and energy sector and meet the high public expectation that any development be done in an environmentally

responsible manner. The Estimates process highlighted the very real importance of the Mines and Energy portfolio and the very real accomplishments that have been achieved under the Minister, the Honourable Tony McGrady.

I place on record that due to ill health I had to step down as chair, but I congratulate Mr Neil Roberts, the member for Nudgee, and other members of the committee on the work they did. I also acknowledge the research officers, Anita Sweet and Carolyn Heffernan, for the great work they did in assisting the committee to carry out its duties. I commend the report of Estimates Committee F to the House.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Mickel): I welcome to the Parliament today pupils, teachers and parents from the Marburg State School.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (12.48 p.m.): I value the opportunity to make some comments about the report of the Estimates committee that dealt with the budgeted expenditure for the Mines and Energy portfolio. The notable thing about this Estimates committee was not what information was supplied to the committee but what was not. The Minister for Mines and Energy was questioned about a range of current issues across the portfolio and consistently either would not or could not provide the information asked for. The Minister was unable to provide information relevant to his portfolio, but resorted instead to reading prepared answers that were long in rhetoric and short on fact. In most cases, because of their pre-prepared nature, they bore very little relevance to the thrust of the questions asked.

It calls into question the relevance of the Budget Estimates process when the Minister of this or any other department requires extensive departmental time to prepare written responses on a full range of possible issues and then sets out stubbornly to read those answers at the Estimates committee no matter what their relevance, or lack of relevance, to the question actually asked. That was the case with this Estimates committee. The Minister's answers all too often bore very little relevance to the question asked and, as such, made a mockery of the whole process.

The Minister was unable to provide the committee with relevant answers on a range of subjects raised by non-Government members—a range of current issues across the portfolio. The Minister was unable to assure the committee that domestic power consumers would not suffer further power price

rises. He was unable to assure the committee that those domestic power consumers, the mums and dads of Queensland, would be given a chance to share in the benefits of the fall in the wholesale power prices that has been enjoyed by the major customers that have taken advantage of the tranche 1 and tranche 2 contestability.

The Minister was unable to assure the committee that the Government owned corporations were being managed in a sustainable way. He was unable to assure the committee that the Government's strategy of tearing the dividends out of those GOCs and loading them up with debt was sustainable or that he was even prepared to consider the question of their sustainability in the continuation of that strategy. He was unable to assure the committee about the independence of the corporatised entities, especially Ergon and Energex, and especially in regard to the take-or-pay gas contracts that those entities have entered into—under political direction, I believe—with the Papua New Guinea gas pipeline project.

The Minister was unable to assure the committee that the Government's energy policy was not a reaction to the need to assist that Papua New Guinea gas pipeline project. He was completely unable to assure the committee—in fact, he appeared to be bamboozled by the suggestion—that other alternatives needed to be looked at to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He went almost to the point of admitting that the whole energy policy was simply to assist the PNG gas project and had very little or nothing to do with the greenhouse gas issue, which he has used to justify it in many instances, simply because it has simplistic electoral appeal.

The Minister had absolutely no ability to assure the committee that he was in any way concerned about providing support to the coal industry. The member for Mackay mentioned the \$800,000 over four years. What the member for Mackay failed to mention is that \$800,000 over four years to provide marketing expertise for Queensland's coal industry is, at best, at its kindest, a token contribution, and it illustrates better than anything else the absolute contempt that this Government is showing towards the Queensland coal industry, which has made a huge contribution to the economic base of this State for such a long time.

The Minister was totally unable or unwilling to assure the committee that the office of the Mining Warden was able to continue to provide the services that it has for

so long provided to the Queensland mining industry. He seemed totally unaware of the issues; he did not have a clue. The Minister was totally unable to assure the committee on anything about the pressing native title issue. Despite three opportunities, he could not assure the committee that he had spoken to the Queensland Federal senators whose support is so vital for the Queensland legislation to get through the Senate. He had three opportunities and he could not assure the committee that he had even spoken to the senators, let alone put forward the issues that are so important to the Queensland mining industry.

The Minister could not assure the committee that the RAPS systems that he is so passionate about for people in western and northern Queensland were anything more than a cop-out on his behalf, because he intends to get the money from the Federal Government. He made a mockery of the whole Estimates committee process.

Time expired.

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.54 p.m.): I take this opportunity to address some issues arising out of the Estimates hearings. Let me set the record straight, beginning with the State Government's record in reducing unemployment. The Beattie Government set itself a target unemployment rate of 5% within five years of taking office, not within three years. It is a target, and it is a target that the Government will continue to strive to meet. This Government has the courage to take a lead and strive for a real standard.

During the period of office of the Borbidge/Sheldon Government, the unemployment rate was at best 8.6%. It was always, right through the time of that Government, worse than the Australian average. The unemployment rate in Queensland now, under the Beattie Government, is at its lowest level for more than 10 years. Between July 1998 and July 2000, the unemployment rate fell from 8.8% to 7.7%. The Government can rightly claim to have made good progress on creating employment in Queensland.

During the first 25 months of the Beattie Government's term of office, 93,100 new jobs were created, 61,300 of which were full-time jobs. In contrast, in the first 25 months of the coalition's first term in office, 80,400 jobs were created but only 26,900 of them were full-time jobs. That is about 13,000 fewer jobs in the same period, and only 26,900 of them were

full-time jobs. There were 25,000 fewer full-time jobs created under the coalition Government than under ours in the same period. The coalition claims that it created 40% of all new jobs created in Australia at that time, but 40% of not very much is 40% of not very much.

The task of reducing unemployment is not helped by Queensland's labour force participation rate. In July 2000, Queensland's participation rate was 65.4%, the highest rate in almost five years, and compares with the Australian participation rate of 63.8%. This means that if all Australians sought work at the same rate as Queenslanders the current national unemployment rate would be 8.8%. The coalition also seeks to attack the Government's record in creating employment and training opportunities. The fact is that 74% of both CJP and CEAP approved projects are in electorates that have an unemployment rate of over 8%.

In terms of the departmental budget, the deficit of \$26.96m in 1999-2000 results from cash being received and recognised as revenue in 1998-99 and expenditure not being incurred until 1999-2000. This is the direct result of the accounting treatment of cash carryovers in an accrual accounting environment, but the former Treasurer didn't understand it, just as she never understood it when she was the Treasurer. During 1999-2000, extensive efforts have gone into improving the internal controls and checks on contracts for training delivery.

I note in her statement of reservations dated 22 August that the member for Caloundra alleges that the coalition has not received advice from me that the CJC is investigating matters related to the administration of training at the Brisbane Institute of TAFE. That statement is wrong and either deliberately or negligently misleading.

The matter was referred to the CJC on the afternoon of 9 August. I notified the Chair of the committee on Monday, 14 August. I am advised that this advice was faxed to the office of the member for Caloundra by the committee secretariat on 14 August. The staff of the member's office said that they could not find it. They got another fax the same day. Yet the member for Caloundra, either negligently or in deliberately misleading, put in a statement which indicated that she had not been advised. She grudgingly admitted it today, but again, why did she mislead the Parliament in her statement? I also note that the honourable member is claiming that additional information relating to practices at

the institute has come to light and that she intends to deal with it. I hope she does so.

I refer to the issue of a matter of privilege raised by the member for Caloundra in relation to my answer to non-Government Question on Notice No. 4. The answer was accurate and related to budgeted and actual expenditure for 1999-2000. However, in addition, I supplied more information. I supplied information not only for that year but for the whole of the period from October 1998 to 30 June 2000. The member for Caloundra is either naturally obtuse or deliberately misunderstanding the full information supplied. On two occasions in her statement she fails to acknowledge the realities. She has misled the Parliament in her statement. As I say, all she could do today was grudgingly say that I had supplied the information.

Mr Seeney interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Mickel): Order! The member for Callide will cease interjecting. He is really testing the patience of the Chair.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (12.59 p.m.): I have great delight in rising to speak to the Estimates committee report, especially in the area of Mines and Energy. I want to dwell primarily today on the issue of power for remote and isolated properties and other communities in western and northern Queensland. This issue has been overlooked by too many people for far too long. Those who live in these isolated and remote communities are virtually discounted as a non-event or as though they do not exist.

Mr Seeney asked a question of the Honourable the Minister during the Estimates hearing relating to a Mrs Julie Groves. Mrs Groves is now a councillor in the Barcoo Shire. I have to pay great tribute to her, because she is one person—along with many other women in the west—who is fighting long and hard, and at great cost to herself personally, to get rural power connected to isolated western properties. The point I make here is that the Minister has said—

"The coalition Government's proposed remote area policy was not practical, requiring a commitment from Government of about \$121m for 1,700 remote rural working properties."

The one thing that has not been taken into account here is the value-adding effect of these people who live in these isolated and remote communities and the disadvantages that they are confronted with. We have to remember in this House and in this State today that we have come a long way from the

packhorse and wagonette; we have come into the time of technology, and a lot of these people still do not have that technology and they are not afforded the opportunity of that technology because they do not have the advantages of being able to flick a switch to get that rural power.

Recently the Premier's parliamentary secretary, the member for Sandgate, and I received a deputation from a young mother, a Mrs Mandy Murray from Jundah, in relation to this issue. She is the mother of three young boys and she explained fully and precisely the inadequacies and the problems that they are confronted with today with their diesel generation sets. A lot of people do not even have a 240 volt motor, let alone other types of power.

As the shadow Minister made reference to in the Budget Estimates, when we consider the contribution of the Federal Government and matters concerning the greenhouse effect, the contribution by the State Government is very minute. While we embrace the RAPS scheme, we see it as only a stopgap measure needed until the coalition gets back into power and delivers exactly and precisely what these people in isolated and remote communities deserve. They deserve rural power so that just like anybody else at the flick of a switch they can enjoy the convenience of the mod cons of modern life and so that they can go about their lives in the same manner as other Queenslanders and Australians.

The one matter that has been totally overlooked here is the issue of the value-added benefits. These people are spending large sums of money generating their own power. If they had rural power that money could be spent enhancing their productivity. That money currently spent on generating their own power could be going towards the education of their children, the upgrading of some other parts of their property, whether it be fencing, watering or whatever, but at the same time the provision of rural power would improve their whole quality of life. If we acknowledge the value-added benefits and the amounts of wealth that are generated by these people who live in these isolated areas, I say to the members of this Parliament that I believe we have an obligation to provide that service. The members on this side of the House firmly support that it is a community service obligation that we make available that funding so these people can enjoy the same mod cons and the same quality of life as those who live in towns and other parts of Queensland who have grid power.

I say again that, while we embrace and support the RAPS system, it is a stopgap measure that is only filling a void until such time as the coalition delivers on the real issue of grid power. The wealth of this State is produced in those western communities, whether it be from coal, oil or gas, yet those communities cannot enjoy the profits and the benefits—

Time expired.

Sitting suspended from 1.03 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): It is a great pleasure that I speak as a member of Estimates Committee F. During the Budget debate I put forward my view that it was a classic Budget for a Beattie Labor Government—or for any Labor Government—because it was a Budget directed towards the battlers, families and local communities. Those principles underline the entire Budget. It was a balanced and sound Budget.

I refer to the two portfolio areas covered by Estimates Committee F. Firstly, I refer to the portfolio of Mines and Energy and a couple of matters that are of significance to my local area, which are covered in the Ministerial Portfolio Statements. As the Minister for Mines and Energy is only too well aware, the Ferry Grove electorate is a rapidly growing electorate. The suburban part of the electorate is expanding rapidly towards the north-west into the Samford Valley. The suburbs of Ferry Grove and Upper Kedron are increasing in size, as are the estates within Samford Valley, Samford Downs and nearby areas. That growth has meant a higher demand for electricity reticulation to that area.

I am pleased to see that funds are within the Budget to complete the initiative that was commenced in the previous Budget of a new substation at Samford, including a 33,000 voltage overhead line that runs 15 kilometres from Samford to Brendale. This new substation will cost \$3.6m. The substation will supply additional electricity capacity to cater for growth in Mount Nebo, Mount Glorious and Samford.

Another very worthwhile initiative is the investment by Powerlink of approximately \$7.5m to establish a 110 kV switching substation at Upper Kedron. That will upgrade the capacity and reliability of the electricity supply in my local area. The supply of electricity within the Samford Valley, particularly Mount Glorious and Mount Nebo, is a very, very important matter. Fortunately, a lot of that valley has retained a lot of its natural

vegetation and there is still a lot of wildlife. Therefore, the risks of damage to the powerlines and power disruption are considerably greater than there would be in the metropolitan area. These initiatives to increase the reliability and continuity of electricity supply for Mount Nebo, Mount Glorious and the Samford Valley are warmly welcomed.

I commend the Minister for Energex's quick response to community concerns about power outages. I have found that every time I need to respond to a constituent's complaint about power outages in the valley, Energex responds very, very quickly to that concern and gets on to the problem.

I now want to make a couple of observations in relation to the portfolio of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. Much of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements relating to Employment concerned labour market programs, which are listed within the committee's report. I want to make it very clear to this Chamber—if it was not already clear—that the coalition Opposition is deadset ideologically opposed to labour market programs. The Leader of the Liberal Party has called them phoney jobs. They have no heart in getting young people especially and long-term unemployed people skilled and trained so that they can take up employment. The coalition would abolish, as they did Federally, many of the labour market programs.

Time expired.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (2.36 p.m.): In rising to contribute to this debate on the Estimates committee report, I would like to express my appreciation to our initial Chair, Mr Tim Mulherin, who had to stand aside because of ill health. Neil Roberts then took over the Chair. I thank Neil, too, for his chairmanship of the committee, and the other committee members, and also the secretariat, Ms Anita Sweet and Ms Carolyn Heffernan for their timely and efficient support.

In speaking to the two portfolios, I would also like to express my appreciation to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations for his forthrightness in answering the questions that we put to him and also to his staff who supported him throughout the Estimates hearings. My electorate has had the privilege of seeing some of the State-funded Community Jobs Plans in action. Only a couple of weeks ago I visited one and would have to say that, as an investment by the State Government in the community, it has some very positive outcomes in terms of the percentages of

young people involved in those programs who end up in, if not full-time employment, at least extended employment and training opportunities.

A number of issues were raised and perhaps were not responded to fully. One of those would have to be the advertising for consultancies. The amount of expenditure was clarified and questions as to whether consultancies were advertised or not advertised were answered. However, the rationale behind whether or not consultancies were advertised was not always clear. There was no consistency in terms of threshold, that is, that a consultancy over a certain amount had to be advertised. Some quite expensive projects were not advertised and some inexpensive ones were. However, I think that is the case irrespective of which side of politics is in power.

It is right to reinforce the need for apprenticeships and traineeships. I know that the Minister has the support of the State in that regard. They provide a tremendous opportunity for young people in particular, and older people, who may have very good motor skills but who are not particularly interested in academic fields.

From my point of view, it was fascinating to learn that the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations was not aware of the quantum of the amount that was paid as a performance bonus to his director-general. The payment of a performance bonus is a moot point. I think that either side of politics would have the opportunity, and may take up the opportunity, to pay a performance bonus to a senior bureaucrat. However, it was intriguing to say the least to learn that the Minister, whose director-general was paid a performance bonus, was not involved in the quantum of that payment.

I turn to the Department of Mines and Energy. Again, I thank the Minister and his staff for their responses. I believe the Minister went out of his way to give detailed responses, at least to the questions that I asked on notice, for which I thank him. The Chevron gas project is still not finalised. A lot of information was given about the importance of that project to the State and my electorate and also the importance of coming to grips with the impact of greenhouse gas emissions. I thank the Minister for the information that he provided.

Again, in relation to the performance bonus payment to the director-general, in this instance at least the Minister was able to say that he was fairly closely involved in the discussion about the eligibility of the D-G to a

performance bonus. He seemed to have been included in the loop a little more in relation to assessing the quantum. I still put on the record that, quite apart from whether or not it should be paid—I think either side of politics would pay a performance bonus—it was intriguing and mystifying that the Minister for the portfolio was not advised of the quantum of the payment made to the director-general.

It is critical that local businesses be involved in the projects in their communities, whether they are Government owned or private enterprise projects. That is the only way our local communities will be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel in relation to reducing unemployment levels, particularly in regional Queensland. I welcome any moves the Government makes to allow local businesses to tender for and be involved in capital works projects in regional Queensland. The funding for underground electricity cabling—

Time expired.

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (2.41 p.m.): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate on the report of Estimates Committee F. I intend to use my time this afternoon to speak to the portfolios of Mines and Energy and Regional Development. At the outset, I congratulate Dr Ted Campbell on his appointment as the director-general of the department. He had been acting in that role since the untimely death of Mr Ron Boyle in April. I knew Ron well, as did many other honourable members. I worked with him when he was the Director-General of the Department of Business, Industry and Regional Development under the Goss Government. On the record in this Parliament I again say that Ron has been and will be sadly missed.

Mining makes a significant contribution to the gross State product of Queensland. One of the keys to a successful mining industry is exploration. It is logical that without exploration activity mines will not be established. The Minister and the department recognise this and the Budget provides support for exploration activity. If one turns to the report of Estimates Committee F one notes that a total of \$30.17m has been allocated to Mineral and Energy Exploration and Development Services.

I take the opportunity to mention an important initiative of the Department of Mines and Energy set out in the report, namely, the Prospectivity Plus initiative, which is an \$8m initiative over four years with the aim of promoting exploration and mining activity in Queensland. It aims to promote Queensland's

prospectivity to domestic and international explorers. As I have stated previously in this Parliament, that is important in maintaining the mining industry in this State. For the year 2000-01 an amount of \$2.3m is budgeted. As I said, it is a four-year program, with an amount of \$8m over that time. What makes this initiative so important is that Queensland is competing in a global market for a share of the declining investment in exploration expenditure. Trying to get money for exploration is not easy. This money and support from the Government and the department goes a long way towards helping in that respect and gives it a good kick-start.

Since the initiative commenced in 1999 extensive new geoscience and resource data have been developed. That will have the effect of driving further mineral projects in Queensland. As I have said before, the exploration scene is changing. It is very competitive both within Australia and internationally. A number of issues are involved, including commodity prices trends. Sometimes the trends are up, but generally, particularly over recent years, they have tended to be down. There are also other issues, such as native title. As I said before, the State Government's exploration initiatives are encouraging exploration in the State. We have to compete and remain attractive for exploration. As a State we have to try to anticipate changes so that the necessary capital that is involved in exploration and developing a mine to fruition can be attracted.

It is set out pretty clearly what the funds in the recent budget for this program will achieve. They will be used to continue the acquisition of geophysical data over potentially metal rich areas in north Queensland. The funding will help to provide information packages promoting Queensland's most prospective mineral and petroleum provinces. It will be used to develop digital information systems to make geoscientific and resource data more readily available and the program will use Internet technology to deliver information and promote Queensland's mineral and energy potential to an international audience. As I said, that is particularly important in attracting capital in a competitive international market.

When discussing the Estimates for the portfolio of Mines and Energy it is impossible to ignore expenditure issues as they relate to the effects of native title. In the previous year, \$1.3m was expended. In this year, provision is made to draw down from the Treasurer's Advance as required.

Time expired.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (2.46 p.m.): I rise to speak briefly to the report of Estimates Committee F on capital expenditure in the portfolio of Mines and Energy. As everybody would realise, this portfolio remains one of the most important in the State. The bulk of the \$1.372 billion budget is almost self-funded through investments from State electricity corporations.

It was pleasing to note that some of the projects proposed and budgeted for by the coalition Government and which were considered to be facing the axe under the incoming Labor Government a couple of years ago are finally becoming a reality after a lot of consternation about their future. I will mention two of these. The Callide C project involves the construction of an 840 megawatt station—two by 420 megawatt plants. It is a joint venture with Shell Coal that is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2001. Tarong Energy, which dropped off the Budget completely a couple of years ago, is also funded to continue the construction of the long-awaited 450 megawatt extension and also the other power facility at Carole Park. The controversial national grid interconnector is nearing completion, which will benefit Queensland through its entrance into the national electricity market. The major upgrade to the Swanbank plant has been long overdue. The plant was on the edge of extinguishment. That will assist in maintaining Queensland's level of generated power. Other upgrades to generators are part of an ongoing program to maintain their viability in this very competitive market.

The advent of further privately funded power stations such as the Millmerran project will keep Queensland up there as the leader for power production in Australia. We all know that future power supplies will rely on alternative energy supplies, such as gas—besides the coal-fired power stations that I have mentioned and a few others that are already online. Queensland is also a leader in the continuing investigations into gas supply sources—for example, the Papua New Guinea fields, the Timor Sea and, of course, our own coal methane supply, which has been investigated thoroughly in recent years.

I now wish to touch on some of the local issues affecting the electorate of Charters Towers. I am pleased to see the continued allocation for the mid west SWER line upgrades. This has been a tremendous program and is a much-needed upgrade that will benefit many land-holders and property owners in the Richmond/Winton area. I do believe, however, that many of our SWER line

connections right across the State need a decent upgrade. We seem to have problems with those lines that have not had a reasonable upgrade for many, many years. If capital funding is spent on major upgrades, it will further decrease the amount of maintenance and patch-up jobs that have been occurring over the past couple of decades.

The link between Richmond and Hughenden is progressing well and, when completed, will also enhance the continued power supply to all of the towns in north-west Queensland as the last link between Townsville and Mount Isa. I still remain very sceptical, though, about some of the other proposed alternative power supplies, such as the remote area supply, which the member for Gregory has already talked about today—about the problems facing some of those people on this program or wanting to get on the program—the Daintree remote area power supply and the western properties remote area power supply.

People are being forced to accept these schemes, as this Government will not even consider the SWER line connections or the grid power connections to rural and remote Queensland. It has already been proven that the people will be faced with dearer power supplies through these programs because of the ongoing costs and upgrades that these consumers have faced. With the advent of new technology, especially in relation to education in rural and remote Queensland, it is now more important than ever before to have an adequate and reliable electricity supply.

I wish to take this opportunity to actually thank the Minister for his quick response to the power problem which affected the small township of Homestead a couple of months ago in which all of the electricity appliances in every house blew up. Those people are very grateful for the assistance that the Minister was able to offer very quickly to get things back in order.

In the short time I have remaining, I wish to mention briefly some of the occurrences in the mining area which are having an effect on the electorate of Charters Towers. I make special mention of the mine capping program at Charters Towers, which is most important. Somewhere in the vicinity of 760 shafts have been catalogued. So it is very important that this program continues to further ensure the public safety of people in Charters Towers. The other area of concern—and the member for Kallangur mentioned it last night—is the current backlog of approximately 1,200

applications for exploration permits and another 600 applications for mining leases and mining claims. This situation has the potential to bring mining ventures to a grinding halt in Queensland.

Time expired.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (2.51 p.m.): The budget expenditure within the portfolio of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations is generating some of the most significant life opportunities for the people of Queensland, that is, more jobs and secure jobs. I commend the Minister, Paul Braddy, and the dedicated staff of the department, who are showing great determination in their efforts to give Queenslanders job security and the peace of mind that brings.

The 2000-01 budget extends the highly successful Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program. The program is creating an additional 10,850 training and employment opportunities. When at the helm in this State, the Borbidge/Sheldon duo had no Employment Minister and no targeted labour market programs. I can vouch for the success of our Government's employment programs, having witnessed many young people and mature age workers in my area, most of them having been unemployed for a long time, now getting jobs through their participation in the Community Jobs Plan and the Community Employment Assistance Program.

In my own local area, the Acacia Ridge Community Centre, Nyanda State High School and Delfin Property Pty Ltd have worked with training organisations and other community groups to train and provide work placements for around 50 people locally—men and women of all ages who have been struggling to get into the work force. These three projects have been invaluable. In the Acacia Ridge project, Jean Jensen, the project coordinator, has achieved great results. She obtained a work placement outcome of 70% for the work skills for youth program and 90% for the training for mature age workers.

These employment programs are filled with good news stories. I have met many of the project participants and I have talked to them. I have wanted to know whether they are real jobs, because that is the sort of criticism directed at these programs. They are all saying very clearly that they really appreciate these sorts of opportunities and that they are learning a lot and gaining a lot of confidence. I am very, very confident that these programs are much needed. It is an absolute disgrace that the Howard Government pulled \$8 billion

out of labour market programs several years ago and that, as I said, when in Government, Borbidge and Sheldon did not even have an Employment Minister and did not have these targeted labour market programs.

One bloke in one of these programs is 35 and is married with three children. His previous career was as an assistant in aged care nursing. He had suffered a nervous breakdown, found his way to one of these programs months later and, through the program at Acacia Ridge, he gained a Certificate II in forklift operating. He is now working in a permanent job in a local company. That is the sort of good news story that these programs are producing. There are thousands more good news stories, particularly for young people, who are gaining a lot of benefit from our traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities.

The Budget papers boast \$43m to create 2,400 public sector traineeships in 2000-01 and continue funding for 570 public sector apprenticeship places. I know that Minister Robert Swarten has been leading in this area, offering lots of apprenticeship opportunities in his portfolio. There is also \$6m to assist employment of 3,000 new private sector apprentices and trainees in skill shortage areas. I know that the southern area of the south-east corner of Queensland is leading the way with lots of these private sector apprenticeship opportunities. In fact, I think we have one third of them in that southern area. This is an unprecedented injection of State Government funding and commitment to young people in Queensland.

On the industrial relations front, the Minister has also been on the front foot. He introduced leading edge industrial relations legislation last year and he has committed \$0.4m to an award review process that was specified in the new Industrial Relations Act. A major aim of this update of awards is to enhance job security. Given that around 31% of Queensland jobs are casual jobs—jobs that generally do not offer security—it is essential that every possible step be taken to give greater permanency and security to employees in Queensland. Future budgets must continue this commitment to job generation and job security.

I am also a keen advocate for balancing work and family, and I think that has to be one of the policy and funding priority areas in which the State Government, through the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and other departments, can really show some good leadership to the

public and private sector in that important area so that people can better balance those work and family responsibilities. This is a great budget in terms of its capacity to generate work and life opportunities for people in Queensland.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (2.56 p.m.): I would like to touch on a few subjects which are obviously of importance to my electorate of Cunningham. Firstly, I would like to speak about the Millmerran power project, which is going particularly well. Regrettably, one of the reasons it is going so well is that it is so dry out there. We are in drought conditions at the moment. That has made for a construction program that is running very well and on time. They have not had any delays due to wet weather or anything like that.

It is fairly interesting to see the construction of this project actually taking place. All these years we have worked towards trying to get the Millmerran project up and running. Of course, the fulfilment of that commitment is a wonderful thing for those people in that area. It is great to go into Millmerran these days and see the change in people's attitude and approach to the prosperity of the town and having confidence in its future. That definitely is very good to see. I know that there are areas of concern in relation to all of these projects, but I think they are far outweighed by the job opportunities and the security that they bring to the whole area. It is something that I am obviously delighted to see.

The other area I would like to touch on is Westlink, as we call it, which is the interconnector. I would have to say that it was a triumph for commonsense because, quite frankly, never in my life have I seen a more stupid idea than the original concept to take an interconnector through the middle of the southern area of the Darling Downs. It was to go through closely settled areas where people were living very close to each other on small farms, with rural subdivisions and with lots of small towns. The effect that it was going to have on that area of Queensland was just absolutely disastrous.

Mr Lucas: You wasted \$90m on that.

Mr ELLIOTT: What members opposite have to understand is that the Westlink interconnector runs mainly through Government land; it is using mainly Crown reserves. In the long run they will find that savings in maintenance will be made and it will ensure that there are no dramas with it. The problems they would have had with land-

holders and the potential for litigation if that other suggested project had gone ahead were enormous. I have never seen anything more stupid than the original concept. I was amazed that they would have embarked on such a project.

There was a little consultation between various people, and some people were prepared to be bought out. I have to admit that there were some small dramas with Westlink. If one compares them to the problems which would have surfaced with the original program, it is absolutely a breath of fresh air to see what has transpired. I also believe it will be on time, and that is great news for Queensland.

There is another area I want to touch on, and my colleague the member for Charters Towers touched on this previously. I refer to tariff equalisation. One of the best things that has happened as far as social equality throughout Queensland is concerned is the price equalisation of electricity tariffs. Quite frankly, it always used to amaze me that people in Brisbane were quite happy to cop a \$200m subsidy for transport from the Metropolitan Transit Authority, as it was known in those days. It was the view then that everyone should be able to use public transport without paying too much. It was believed that this was part of the social obligation so that people could get to work and so on. I have always accepted that. By the same token, there are other areas that this relates to, and electricity is one of them.

The cost of electricity to those in the bush was totally unjustifiable. The equalisation of those tariffs was indeed a triumph for commonsense and fairness. However, now we need to look at what is happening with fuel. If social equity is good enough for electricity, it should also be good enough for fuel. I find it staggering that motorists have to pay the current price for fuel in this day and age. At Charleville it is over \$1 a litre. The last time I was in America, it cost just over a dollar a gallon. How on earth can our producers and businesspeople be expected to compete against other countries where the cost is a third of ours? It is just a nonsense.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee G

Report

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Kaiser): The question now is—

"That the report of Estimates Committee G be adopted."

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (3.01 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on Estimates Committee G. Before speaking to the items discussed during the committee, I want to mention an issue involving liquor licensing and the local government environment. The Valley Music Council has been concerned for some time about threats to the entertainment industry in Queensland. This has come about as a result of problems regarding noise complaints from a minority of residents who have recently moved to be close to entertainment venues. The Valley Music Council is concerned about the administrative procedures and laws under the Liquor Licensing Act and Nuisance Regulations and their impact on entertainment venues. The council believes that, if entertainment has to be curtailed, it will have a major impact on tourism, hospitality and the entertainment industry in Queensland. As this industry is the second largest in Queensland, it is concerned about the flow-on impacts.

I wish to table a non-conforming petition of 16,000 signatures and an online disk of 1,000 signatures on behalf of the Valley Music Council which asks that the central Valley district be rezoned into a designated entertainment zone. It calls upon Parliament to review all legislation that affects the music and arts industry in Queensland. It calls on the Parliament to legislate for first occupancy rights for venues and communities in the event of noise complaints. The council is of the view that the laws which affect the industry at both a State and local level should be reviewed to consider the impediments which inhibit and threaten the vibrant music industry.

I know that the Minister for Tourism and Racing has an understanding of this issue, as I made representations to her on behalf of the Valley Music Council. The Minister has written to the Local Government Association in regard to this complex problem. It is all about balance—balancing the rights of residents with the rights of long-term entertainment providers to create a precinct that has become a tourist drawcard in its own right. I am a strong supporter of the Valley and what it has to offer in the form of an entertainment hub. My friends and I often attend venues in the Valley for an entertaining night out. I believe it is a bit rich for some people who choose to live in the Valley and inner city because they want to be close to the action to all of a sudden complain about noise. I think it is unreasonable for a vibrant industry to come to a halt because of a selfish few. I will say, however, that it is the responsibility of developers when planning buildings to ensure that effective noise

measures are in place. Ultimately, local councils should be responsible for ensuring that this occurs when approvals are granted.

I take this opportunity to thank Ministers and their respective departments for their contribution, my fellow committee members and all the parliamentary staff who made sure that the process ran smoothly. I do, however, want to spend a couple of moments discussing the actual benefits of the whole Estimates process. I have some concerns regarding the cost involved both in the actual conduct of the hearings and the preparation done by the departments. This concern has increased due to the lack of work done by the Opposition. I think Minister Mackenroth will agree with me that for two years in a row the most probing questions he was asked in Estimates were from this side of the Chamber. That proves the lack of work done by the Opposition.

I ask the Chamber to consider the fact that we supposedly have a process which examines the expenditure of the departments with a view to ensuring that spending was appropriate and effective. The truth hurts sometimes, yet I believe that the actual process is not questioned. I would hate to work out the real cost of this whole process, including departmental and parliamentary costs. While it is vital to ensure that Governments are kept accountable, I firmly believe that this process as used by the Opposition at present does nothing to ensure that this is the case. However, it does ensure that money which could be spent on vital services across a range of departments is taken up by the Estimates process. I believe it is the responsibility of us all to come up with a more efficient and cost-effective process. It is the responsibility of the Opposition to make it work.

In closing, I want to refer to a couple of matters affecting my electorate that relate to this budget. The Minister for Fair Trading and I are in strong support of an application by the Brisbane City Council on behalf of Queensland Netball for an expansion of the State Netball Centre, which will involve a youth centre. That funding application comes under "national facilities" in the Department of Sport. I encourage the Sports Minister to take a close look at that proposal. Hopefully, it will gain support.

I once again thank the Ministers and my fellow committee members. It was a long, tedious process, but it worked effectively due to the great parliamentary service staff. I hope that, in future years, the Opposition sees the

Estimates process as a more valuable tool instead of wasting time on trivial issues, as the member for Warrego did. However, I am sure he will waste the next five minutes talking about the same issue, which again proves the uselessness of the process with this Opposition.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (3.07 p.m.): I thank committee members, departmental officials and Rob McBride and his team of workers who helped us put the Estimates committee together. In his contribution to this debate the member for Mansfield talked about local government. The ALP is guilty not only of election rorts in Townsville but also rorting electoral arrangements in local government. I refer members to my statement of reservation in the Estimates committee report. I refer also to my statements in the Chamber yesterday. I remind members that, in the past 10 years, 32 councillors have been elected to this Parliament. Eighteen of those were conservative, 12 were Labor and two were Independent. Labor has a one-seat majority. One does not have to be Einstein to work out that, if it can remove some potential candidates running against it, that has to have some political advantage. The changes are nothing more than an ALP mates and faction protection racket.

Let me tell the Chamber more about it. As I mentioned yesterday, this is branch stacking in reverse. Instead of doing a Karen Ehrmann and increasing the number of strategic votes, Labor is going one step further by reducing and controlling the number and calibre of candidates who may run against it.

Mr Schwarten: What rubbish!

Mr HOBBS: That is what those opposite are doing. That is the issue. They are trying to manipulate the system to their advantage. It is amazing that in this day and age those opposite have the gall or the arrogance to try to deliberately influence the outcome of the next election. They are putting in place retrospective legislation affecting those candidates who have already signed up. They are discriminating. This has not come from the grassroots; it has from the party room of those opposite, and they know that as well as I do. The other day at the Estimates committee hearing the Minister said, "We are in the same position. We have an ALP member endorsed for the State election as well." There are no councillors endorsed by the ALP to stand at the next State election.

Yesterday while I was speaking the Minister rose to a point of order and said that he took little notice of the electoral

arrangements and that therefore he was not to blame. I suggest that the Minister should take a fair bit of notice. This is a Terrymander. Those opposite are going to wear that for a long, long time. The Minister and Mr "Vote Watch" will have to think about a few things.

Where does Jenny Hill come from? She is the person the Minister mentioned at the Estimates hearing. Those opposite are putting it all together again. They just cannot help it. The Townsville connection, Terrymander and Mr "Vote Watch" are all working in together. I believe this is a nest of corruption. Implementing this type of arrangement and manipulating the system for political benefit is a disgraceful abuse of the Parliament and of the Minister's office.

The Minister said at the Estimates hearing that he had doubled RLIP funding from the \$3.2m a year that the previous Minister had put in place to \$4m per year. We asked on notice how much had been spent. The answer was \$2.1m. When I asked what happened to the rest of the money, the balance of the \$8m, he said that they had to top up what Di McCauley had overspent. The departmental people said that that figure was \$1.2m. That totals \$3.3m. That leaves a balance of \$4.7m. Where is the rest of the money? We need to know. I would like the Minister to answer that because those figures do not add up.

I raised with the Minister at this and the previous Estimates hearing the issue of the money that was paid back by the department—some \$20m or \$30m that was sent back to the Treasury.

Time expired.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (3.12 p.m.): I am pleased to join this debate today, which is part of the Budget process. Estimates Committee G examined the portfolios of Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning, Sport, Tourism and Racing, Environment and Heritage, and Natural Resources. As a member based in a rural area I am interested in many areas of those portfolios. Unfortunately, time allows me to touch on only two or three of those portfolio areas and to look at what Budget allocations will mean for the people of central Queensland.

I was most interested in what the Minister for Environment and Heritage had to say about the proposed transfer of the environmental regulation of mining to the Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA. There has been some concern about the impact of moving the responsibility for environmental matters from the Department of

Mines to the EPA. The Minister was able to reassure me and the committee that the move was in fact welcomed by the mining industry as well as by the conservation movement. With the support of the major players there is no reason for concern. That is certainly a relief. They will be working together with the EPA to ensure that sustainable environmental management practices in mining are not only put in place but also followed. I look forward to legislation being tabled in Parliament later this year that will implement those transfer arrangements.

Another issue of importance to the central Queensland region is the water allocation management plan, WAMP. The Natural Resources Minister highlighted the problems associated with the WAMP process put in place by the former coalition Government. He also explained the need to overhaul the process to ensure that the community is better informed about and involved in the process at a much earlier stage than under the previous system, inherited by the Labor Government.

The allocation and management of our water resources are not always popular issues for Government. The Minister therefore deserves recognition and credit for the level-headed manner in which he has worked his way through the issues with the stakeholders over many months. I see many positive outcomes for Queenslanders from the proper allocation of water after due recognition and provision of water for environmental reasons.

This is about getting the balance right so that our primary producers can remain viable and sustainable, so that other industries such as mining and electricity can grow, so that urban water demands are met and, most importantly, so that we keep our river systems clean and healthy. If we can achieve those desired outcomes by the successful management of our most important asset, then we as a State and as a nation can look forward to a healthy and worthwhile lifestyle for future generations.

The Natural Resources Minister also provided details on the importance of fish migration in the Fitzroy and Dawson Rivers. The Minister correctly identified the numbers of weirs, dams and tidal barrages constructed on those rivers which act as a barrier to fish migration. Personally, I could never understand the thinking of engineers and Government departments who in the past failed to include a means for fish migration in our river systems. Fish populations, as we all know, are important to a healthy river and to the economic and social needs of the

community. For those reasons alone the people of central Queensland applaud the department's allocation of funds in this year's budget which have enabled the commencement of construction of effective fishways at the Neville Hewitt and Moura Weirs on the Dawson River. It is a great initiative and one that has been welcomed.

In response to questioning regarding the Rural Living Infrastructure Program the Minister for Local Government advised the committee of the benefits this program offers to rural and remote communities disadvantaged by location, size and a limited local government rate base. Ninety-four local governments and 32 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils with a population of less than 15,000 will benefit from this program. I congratulate the Minister for funding this program. It is a great program that has offered assistance to many small communities over recent years and is set to benefit many more over the next few years. On behalf of rural Queenslanders I sincerely thank the Minister for ensuring the continuation of what is a vital and significant program for many struggling rural communities. As a result of the Rural Living Infrastructure Program, small communities through their local council can improve community, recreational and sporting facilities, help develop tourism facilities or just improve the general outlook of their towns.

Time expired.

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (3.17 p.m.): In rising to speak to the report on Estimates Committee G, I thank the committee staff and of course Hansard for their professionalism during and also subsequent to the hearings. I also thank the other members of the committee for their cooperation.

There are a couple of issues I wish to raise in this debate. Before I do, I would like to actually pay a compliment to the Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport. In this modern world of technology it does not surprise anyone to see something new, but it did come as a bit of a surprise to us when we walked into the committee's hearings to see the Minister, his director-general and several key staff sitting behind computer screens from which answers to questions were read.

I do not know where this sort of thing will eventually lead. The mind boggles when we think that this type of technology might change the whole way we conduct Estimates hearings in the future. What is to say that in a year or

two committee members might not be sitting in their electorate offices, with the Minister sitting in his ministerial office and Estimates conducted electronically? As someone who does appreciate innovation, I pay the Minister a bit of a compliment in this regard. I understand that it was tried for the first time. I do not know how successful it was, but it was certainly innovative.

In relation to the Minister's portfolio area of Sport, I am very concerned about the future of the 12 State-owned recreation camps throughout Queensland. We have seen a ludicrous situation develop. An audit of those camps commenced in 1998. The company that was engaged to do the audit had its contract terminated earlier this year. As of the date of the hearings, the full departmental report still had not gone to the Minister. Two years later, the full report had not gone to the Minister. The Government has a responsibility to ensure those camps are kept in order to enable the provision of recreational activities for thousands of Queenslanders each year, especially children. It is about time that that report was done, it is about time the Minister saw that audit, and it is about time that the future of those recreation camps was secured.

I noted the comments of the Minister at last Sunday's Bundy Gold Cup Rugby League grand final that construction of the redevelopment of Lang Park will commence in March. Of course, there was nothing in the 2000-01 Budget that indicated that. The Minister indicated during the hearings that tenancy agreements were still being negotiated. I wonder how many financial and relocation agreements have not yet been settled with local business operators and what happens if the Brisbane City Council knocks back the application. So we will wait with bated breath on that particular project.

The Minister for Tourism and Racing's pathetic attempt to try to convince the Queensland tourism industry that this Government is fair dinkum about promoting tourism is worth noting. Every time this Minister or the Premier or another Minister gets to their feet in this place they waffle on with all the wonderful features of our tourism industry and how important it is to the Queensland economy. We all know how important it is to the Queensland economy. But when it comes to walking the walk, this Government is sadly lacking. Instead of walking the walk, it is simply talking the talk, with no significant effort to inject the sort of funding to this industry that it deserves. This Budget contains mostly carryover funding from previous years, and this Minister continues to perpetuate the untruth

that this Government is fair dinkum about tourism funding.

In fact, this Minister joined the throng of her colleagues who day after day walked into this place and talked the industry down with fears of doom and gloom as a result of the GST. That was, of course, until a few reports came out, including the May edition of the Queensland 2000 Barometer, which virtually said the opposite. The Minister certainly has changed her tune when, as late as today in a ministerial statement in this Parliament, she was glowing with news that international visitor numbers were going up, particularly from Korea, and what will follow as other Asian economies resurrect themselves. That will occur.

Mr Davidson: On a very small basis.

Mr HEALY: A very small basis, as the member for Noosa said.

The Government was also caught out during the Estimates hearing for trying to hide the abolition of the liquor subsidy scheme. The Treasurer let the cat out of the bag a few days prior to the Estimates Committee G hearing when he dumped on the Minister for Tourism and Racing by revealing that, as the liquor subsidy scheme was her responsibility, so too was the role of informing Queensland beer drinkers that their pot of beer was going to go up 2c. So what happened? The Minister wrote to the wholesalers. She did not make any public announcements about it but tried to hide the 2c a pot increase, a Queensland Government-initiated increase as part of the Federal Government's excise changes. So they said, "We won't tell anyone. Beer is going to go up anyway. They won't notice our little increase."

Time expired.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.22 p.m.): I rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee G, and in doing so I acknowledge the work of staff, both parliamentary and departmental, in providing the support necessary for the committee to discharge its responsibilities effectively. My appreciation is extended to the Chairman, the member for Mansfield, who provided professional leadership to the committee.

I wish to comment on the role played by the Trinity Inlet Management Plan in protecting the ecological sustainability of Trinity Inlet in Cairns. In response to questioning, the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Natural Resources reaffirmed the Government's commitment to TIMP. The Trinity Inlet Management Plan is an agreed non-statutory document that guides the

management of Trinity Inlet and environs. It does this through management principles based on ecological viability and sustainability, through management areas based on geography and through management systems based on issues of the day.

The purpose of the Trinity Inlet Management Plan is to seek to ensure coordinated and integrated planning and management between local, regional and State regulatory bodies of the Trinity Inlet ecosystem in line with the overriding principle of management. TIMP means ensuring that the decision-making processes are accountable, coordinated and efficient; they take account of short and long-term environmental effects; they seek to provide equity between present and future generations; and they apply the precautionary principle to the well-being of the inlet. It also means ensuring the sustainable use of renewable natural resources and the prudent use of non-renewable natural resources. It means minimising adverse environmental effects of development and ensuring that urban development occurs in areas where adequate infrastructure exists or can be provided efficiently to minimise the burden on functioning ecosystems.

I seek leave to table a document which outlines the significant achievements of TIMP over the last decade.

Leave granted.

Mr PITT: Trinity Inlet is considered exceptional and worthy of conservation for many reasons. Trinity Inlet supports an extensive area of mangroves exhibiting a range of species and community types, some of which are limited in their distribution elsewhere. The mangroves and other associated wetlands within Trinity Inlet have been recognised as important nursery areas for juvenile fish and prawns of commercial importance. The area supports a range of habitat types that significantly enhances the biodiversity of the region. Trinity Inlet contains habitats that are important to migratory waders of international significance. Remnant habitat types remain in the Trinity Inlet area that are otherwise scarce in the region, for example, sand ridge communities and freshwater wetlands. A number of rare and threatened fauna species utilise Trinity Inlet on a regular basis. The seagrass beds of the area represent one of the only two major inshore seagrass areas between Hinchinbrook Island and Cooktown.

Special care needs to be taken in allocating the remaining environmental

resources of Trinity Inlet so as to ensure that those areas and resources play a fundamental role in the ecosystem and its maintenance. Most of the remaining habitat needs to be managed carefully, and the uses occurring in Trinity Inlet need to be planned to maintain these key areas. The Trinity Inlet ecosystem has limited capacity to accommodate future modification, fragmentation or biological deterioration if it is to remain an ecologically viable and sustainable estuarine system. Most, if not all, of the remaining habitat should be retained and vital areas enhanced or rehabilitated to forge strong links between fragmented communities.

A number of observations can be drawn from a recently completed environmental analysis. The upper reaches of Trinity Inlet, including freshwater wetlands, riparian verges and intertidal waterways, are as important as the core mangrove areas in maintaining ecological functionality. It is important that habitat links between the marine and freshwater areas of Trinity Inlet, as well as to the surrounding hill slopes, remains an important issue. Any further reclamation of the remaining intertidal areas will reduce water quality, productivity and nursery habitat values, while further mangrove removal will increase siltation of waterways.

Retention and enhancement of the fragmented and narrow mangrove/saltmarsh fringe on the eastern side of Trinity Inlet from Hills Creek to Seelee Creek is essential to retain habitat continuity between the inner and outer estuaries. This is a strategic and long-term priority to facilitate the movement of commercial fish and prawn species through the estuary at different stages of their life cycle. Urban growth should focus on utilising existing infrastructure and promote infill development—I refer particularly to the FNQ 2010 documents—with appropriate consolidation and vertical living to maximise infrastructure efficiencies and minimise ecological pressure. Economic growth should be promoted within the ecosystem that can play a role in the protection and enhancement of the local environment, such as ecotourism and appropriate urban form. Any large-scale reclamation along the Cairns Esplanade will impact on productivity, nursery habitat and wading bird habitat and should be planned, designed and managed to minimise such impacts.

I wish to congratulate the Minister and the Government not only on their long-term commitment to the TIMP plan and the health

of one of our local icons, Trinity Inlet, but also on the purchase of the East Trinity site.

Time expired.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (3.28 p.m.): I thank all those involved in our Estimates hearings. I want to communicate to the Natural Resources Minister a grave concern I have that there seems to be an ever-increasing tendency to want to increase the price of water to the consumer, particularly to primary producers. An attempt was made to link water allocations with rates in the Mareeba Shire. Fortunately, the people there, supported by others who thought that this could happen to them, really put on a turn and the proposal was not proceeded with. I admit that that was to be a trial, but we did not reach the point of the trial. It is not good enough, and it is a great concern to everybody. If the price of water for consumers is too high, the simple facts of life are that they will lose confidence and they will not have the capacity to produce, and we as Queenslanders will be far worse off. Many of our goods will have to be imported when we could well grow those primary products ourselves.

I would also like to see budgeting for dams that we can build. There are plenty of dams, at least 11, in Queensland that can be environmentally sustainable. We only need to look at what has happened in St George. I can recall going to St George some years ago and, to be fair to everybody, it did not inspire me greatly. I have been there recently and the mind boggles at how much development has occurred around that area. Development simply means jobs. It is as simple as that.

I know Emerald very well because I was there well before the Fairbairn Dam was built. Emerald's population then was about 3,500 people; it is now between 12,000 and 14,000 people. The Fairbairn Dam is also providing sustainability for a great number of towns in the region. That dam is probably responsible for millions and millions of dollars by way of taxpayer contributions each year that is then distributed to all other parts of Australia.

I want to deal briefly with national parks. Currently, we are spending some \$5.50 per hectare on national parks. That compares with some other States which spend over \$10 per hectare. I simply say that we are going to have to collectively put a bigger effort into maintaining and improving our national parks. We need to make our national parks more attractive for visitors. We have to have sufficient rangers and other staff to give people the information that they need. I would like to think that we could get to the point at

which rangers could conduct seminars about plant species, animals and so on.

The other great concern that seriously needs addressing at a State and a Federal level—and I am not saying that the Minister is not doing anything about it—is the issue of the enormous spread of giant rat-tail grass. On Tuesday, 8 August in Rockhampton I attended a seminar and I was astounded to learn that this plant is spreading at an enormous rate and at this point there is very little that can be done to contain it. Although many people are trying to find a solution, we are probably going to have to pump more money into solving this problem. If members look at this map, which I am happy to table, they will see the extent of this problem. It starts up in Mareeba and goes right down the coast to south of Brisbane. Now it is finding its way out west. Climate does not seem to be a great barrier to this grass. It is very tough. Cattle cannot even digest it. The seeds—hundreds of thousands of them—go straight through the beast and are spread far and wide. This is a problem that we are just going to have to do more about.

Time expired.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport) (3.35 p.m.): I would like, firstly, to make a comment in relation to the Estimates process. I have to say that I found this year's Estimates process to be a complete waste of time. I have been involved in this Parliament for a long time and I recall the era of the Goss Government when we changed the Estimates process in this Parliament, firstly, to enable the Estimates of all departments to be debated and then in 1994 we introduced the committee hearings process to enable members of Parliament to question Ministers in relation to the actual line items.

This year's process that I sat through for four hours was a waste of time. I do not think that it really achieved anything in terms of making anyone more aware of what was going on in relation to my department. I think the shadow Minister for Local Government spent one 20-minute block talking about a proposal that we have for changing electoral procedures, which is nothing to do with the Budget, anyway. I was quite happy to answer his questions. As a member of Parliament, I was disappointed. As a Minister, I was delighted, because in the four hours that I sat there I certainly felt under no pressure whatsoever in relation to being questioned about any of it.

The problem with the shadow Minister for Local Government is that when we tell him something he does not listen and he just continues to say what he said in the first instance even though it is wrong. He raised the issue of RLIP funding and, once again, I put on the record what the situation is with that issue.

In 1997-98 the former coalition Government allocated \$7.05m over three years. In the first year of that program the then Minister for Local Government, Di McCauley, allocated \$8.05m—a million dollars more than had been allocated in the budget. She promised that to councils. When the election was held, we made a commitment to the local governments in Queensland that we would bring that program up to an allocation of \$4m a year. That required us, in the two years that remained, to allocate a further \$1.6m per year. So we allocated that money. The very first thing that we had to do was to meet the overcommitment of \$1m that Minister McCauley had made of which, of course, we were not aware when we were in Opposition. But we did meet that undertaking and we did allocate the extra money to make it a \$4m program, and that is now being continued for the next four years. This year's budget contains an allocation of \$4m a year for the next four years. So we have met the commitment and we have continued with that commitment to ensure that smaller councils can obtain funding.

The other issue that was raised, the review of electoral procedures that the member persisted with today, really surprises me. What we are talking about, and what he is talking about, is how unfair it is for people who are now endorsed candidates. We are talking about councillors who ran for election in March of this year—

Mr Lucas: Asking for four years.

Mr MACKENROTH:—asking for four-year terms, yet within three months of their election they sought endorsement from a political party to run at the next State election. I would say that the unfairness is that those people did not tell the electorate about that prior to the March local government election. If we want to talk about rorts, if we want—

Mr Wilson: Misrepresentation.

Mr MACKENROTH: If we want to talk about misrepresentation, that is where it is. Why did those people not make it clear to their electorates that what they really wanted to do was to run for another level of Government? Then their electorates could have made the decision. They have been deceitful in the way

that they have gone about that process, and the thing that everyone needs to understand is that if this proposal proceeds we will be stopping nobody from standing at the State election. All they will need to do is to resign their position.

Time expired.

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (3.38 p.m.): It gives me no joy to stand in this Chamber today and bring to the attention of the Queensland tourism industry the Labor Government's total lack of commitment to it. After the State Budget was announced this year, the Minister for Tourism issued a press release claiming that Graham Healy was a dud accountant. She went on to say that base funding to Tourism Queensland had increased to a record \$38.914m. When I go back through the annual reports of Tourism Queensland, I see that as far back as 1996 the base budget was \$29.485m. In 1997 it was \$33.899m. The annual report for 1998 showed that it was \$44.807m and the annual report for 1998-99 showed that it was \$47.116m.

Quite clearly, the Minister for Tourism has failed to advise the tourism industry, through her press releases, that the budget for Tourism Queensland has been reduced from \$47m to \$38.914m. That indicates a total lack of commitment by this Minister. I am sick and tired of people in the tourism industry coming to me and saying that they have been unsuccessful in achieving funding for their industry through the Minister and the Budget process because Treasury advises the Minister, who is advising the industry, that Treasury believes that tourism is a mature industry and that it does not need funding to promote and market Queensland. What an absolute joke!

I remember when I took over the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation, as it was known in those days, that we had to totally restructure that corporation. We had to appoint a new CEO. We had to appoint new directors of marketing. We had to appoint new senior staff. It was a disgraceful corporation that had been neglected for many, many years by Minister Gibbs and Minister Tom Burns. I think that the whole industry in Queensland knows the contribution that the coalition Government made to tourism in this State. I provided the first model for the tourism industry, ensuring that everyone in this State knew that the industry was worth \$8 billion a year and employed 130,000 people. No modelling had ever been done until the coalition did that.

It absolutely amazes me that the Minister then goes on to announce the allocation of funding for the Convention and Marketing Bureau, which was committed by the coalition Government in 1998—\$8m over four years. There should be no credit at all given to the current Minister for that. Everywhere I go I receive complaints, particularly from senior people in the industry. I refer to comments by Daniel Gschwind of the Tourism Council of Australia, who stated—

"It is disappointing that the government's commitment to tourism is not reflected in increased funding for its promotion. The government has not missed an opportunity to point out the importance of tourism in job creation, economic growth and regional development for Queensland—we would have liked to see that recognition translate into more investment for the promotion of our state."

As a result of the lack of funding for Tourism Queensland, there has been the abolition of the Convention and Incentives Program. The Gold Coast destination campaigns have not been successful, but there is no funding to do anything about that and relaunch new campaigns. The Australian Tourism Commission has no partnership funding for Tourism Queensland to undertake strategy studies of international markets. There are no new initiatives for Tourism Queensland. I have seen the Minister relaunch the Tourism Works for Queensland campaign. That was an initiative of mine in about 1997. The drive market strategy was also released by me in 1997.

The licensing of inbound tour operators proposal was complete when I left Government in 1998, yet Labor has done nothing about it in the two years that it has been in Government. That is a major issue for the Gold Coast, Cairns and other international tourist designations in this State. That proposal has sat in the bureaucracy for the past two years and has not progressed. I have read the statements that the Minister has made in the paper about it. Why does she not get that proposal, take it to Cabinet, have it approved and have it implemented? It is all there ready to go.

Over the past two months, a number of meetings by leading industry figures have been held, because the tourism industry in this State is in crisis. This has been the toughest year that the industry has seen in Queensland for a decade. All the tourist destinations—Cairns, the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane and the

Gold Coast—are in crisis. There are a number of issues to explain that downturn in the tourism sector—bad weather, the GST, the Olympic Games. However, what is the Government doing about it? Instead of offering more money through the Budget process to market Queensland both domestically and internationally, it has cut the base budget for Tourism by \$4m and the last expenditure in 1998 by the coalition Government by \$9m.

Why does the Minister not show some guts and some commitment to the industry and get into Treasury and fight for funding for this industry? The Minister and the Premier go around making all the rhetoric about how great tourism is and how important it is to the State's economy. They should show their support for the industry by allocating the money that is necessary to market this State in the international domestic marketplace to ensure the continued growth of jobs, which are so important to all Queenslanders.

Time expired.

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing) (3.43 p.m.): The Sydney Olympics provides both opportunity and challenge for the Queensland Tourism industry. Once again, Tourism Queensland will be at the industry's side to guide, to help with vital research, to offer strategic advice and to facilitate development. Tourism Queensland is acknowledged around Australia and the world as an effective and innovative marketing and promotional tool for the rapidly expanding tourism industry.

As I said during the Estimates hearing earlier this month, that expansion will be accelerated by the Olympics. Queensland is ideally placed to reap the rich rewards that are there for the taking. Firstly, we have the product; secondly, we have the will, enthusiasm and expertise within Tourism Queensland and the industry; and, thirdly, there is unremitting support from the Beattie Government which places the development of tourism high on its priority list. This Budget gives us the opportunity to cash in and to push ahead to maximise our opportunities. We intend doing just that, despite the attempt by a mischievous Opposition to cloud the issue.

The shadow Minister set out to spread inaccurate information relating to tourism funding. He claimed that funding had been slashed, when he knew all along that we had boosted Tourism Queensland's base budget, just as he knew that this Government had provided \$90m in special funding on top of TQ's base budget—additional funding that has

achieved sensational results. It was a cheap stunt but one seen as just that by the industry. I can assure members that that has earned him no friends. I listened to the member for Noosa refer to comments by Daniel Gschwind. If he wants to quote Daniel Gschwind's comments, then he should make sure that he uses all of them. He stated—

"Tourism funding had gone up by \$2m this year."

If the member for Noosa wants to quote the comments of Daniel Gschwind, then he should make sure that he quotes him accurately. He also stated—

"The GST had affected the tourism industry immensely."

So if the member for Noosa wants to stand in this place and quote the comments of Daniel Gschwind, then he should make sure that his quotes are accurate. I remind members opposite again—and I told them this during the Estimates hearings—that if they try to repeat that there has been a reduction in what they know very well was \$6m in special allocation funding—\$3m last year—\$2m this year and \$1m next year, if they try to pull the same stunt next year, I will expose them again next year.

The reality is that Tourism Queensland's base budget for this year has been swelled by a permanent—I repeat "permanent"—annual allocation of \$2m—something that the members opposite would never do. For the benefit of the shadow Minister and the member for Noosa, I will repeat that: there has been an additional \$2m allocated to the base Tourism budget because we are serious about tourism in Queensland. The base budget is a record \$38.9m—\$1.4m more than last year. This \$2m has been quarantined for marketing to attract more visitors, both domestic and international, to Queensland.

This financial year, the Government will inject more than \$250m into tourism infrastructure including, I am happy to say, the long-awaited Gold Coast Convention Centre. When the coalition was in Government, the then Premier and two other members represented Gold Coast electorates, yet in two years they delivered absolutely nothing for the Gold Coast. The combined chambers of commerce on the Gold Coast say that they have never had it so good as they have with this Labor Government because they got absolutely nothing from the coalition Government. We are not only putting money into the marketing and promotion of the tourism industry in Queensland; we are putting money into infrastructure so that we can

sustain the industry—something that the coalition never did.

The private sector realises the Government's commitment and is investing billions of dollars in tourism infrastructure, sparking predictions of a massive industry boom. I do not have to gaze into a crystal ball to see boom times ahead. I see the benefits spread from the coast to the outback; from the reef to the rainforest; from the established designations such as Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, the Whitsundays and the tropical north to the rapidly emerging tourist regions. Tourism is a major growth industry, with tourists injecting more than \$8 billion a year into the Queensland economy and employing more than 130,000 people directly and thousands more indirectly. This Budget gives us the armoury that we need to continue to play a vital role in developing such a dynamic industry.

I cannot let another of the cheap Estimates tricks of the member for Toowoomba North go unanswered. During the Estimates hearing, he sought to point the finger of blame for a 20c a pot post-GST increase in beer prices at this Government. Beer prices are what they are today because of the Federal Government.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (3.49 p.m.): Today I rise to make a few short comments in relation to the report of Estimates Committee G 2000. In relation to the Department of Communication and Information, Local Government, Planning and Sport, I wish to make a few comments about the local government grants and subsidy programs to shire councils.

There is no doubt that there is some inequity in the grants to shires in relation to the size of their populations. The smaller shires are definitely disadvantaged in their ability to gain adequate grants from Governments of either level to provide infrastructure for their constituents. I refer particularly to the very small shires that are discriminated against due to their population size, particularly shires such as Boonah with less than 10,000 constituents. These shires are very much behind the eight ball in terms of their ability to provide cultural facilities such as community halls and sporting facilities for their constituents when compared with the grants given to medium and larger shires. These smaller shires were not even considered in the Regional Centres Program assistance grants announced recently by the Minister's department, yet under this program some cities received grants in excess of \$1m.

I thank the Minister for the grant given to the Gatton Shire for its town program. There is no doubt that these smaller shires and their constituents should have the same access to amenities such as community halls and sporting facilities as the residents of larger shires.

I wish to refer to a particular problem in my electorate that relates to a situation occurring at Helidon on the banks of the Lockyer Creek. I realise that the Minister, Mr Mackenroth, has had consultations with the Gatton Shire Council over the past few weeks regarding the plight of these residents. Over the past two years, I have corresponded numerous times with a number of departments of this Government regarding this matter, including the Departments of Natural Resources, Main Roads, Emergency Services and the Premier's Department.

As the Minister is aware, a number of private dwellings are at risk of toppling into the creek due to the instability of this bank and the possibility of riverbank failure during the next floods. An inquiry into this erosion that was undertaken on behalf of the Gatton Shire Council, the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Main Roads was completed recently. Correspondence to the Department of Natural Resources from my office regarding the study carried out by Water Studies Pty Ltd has concluded that the responsibility for this erosion falls predominantly within the jurisdiction of the Gatton Shire Council. Unfortunately, as I said earlier, councils similar in size to Gatton cannot afford from their limited budgets to rectify such problems as are occurring at Helidon. Once again, under the grants system available to the shires, there is no money or no particular grant designed to cater for such occurrences.

These residents, in jeopardy due to no fault of their own, are largely from a low socioeconomic background and can ill afford to rectify their plight on their own. There must be some system that can be utilised to assist councils and residents in this situation. Governments in this country have no difficulty in handing out many millions of dollars per year to other organisations and worthwhile charities and also in foreign aid. It is a shame that we cannot look after our own constituents, who face a dangerous situation. Surely there must be a way to help them. I call on the Minister for Local Government to find a way in which we can assist this council to come to the assistance of its residents. This must be done before the next wet season as it is very likely that the first major flood—and this is a usual consequence of a dry period such as we are

experiencing now—will take these residents' homes and possibly their lives. We have had ample warning about this situation and we should be doing our best to do something about it.

In relation to the Department of Natural Resources, which will this year implement its new vegetation management strategies, I ask the Minister again to consider the way in which his department intends to implement this draconian policy. Again, I remind the Minister that if this policy had been introduced after more consultation with grassroots farmers instead of peak bodies, as was done in relation to the regional forest agreements, he may have found a different attitude on the part of the farmers. Again, there is no doubt that, if this is the road the Minister wishes to take, adequate compensation is necessary to prevent a rebellion amongst the farming community.

In relation to racing in the Lockyer and Toowoomba areas, I impress on the Minister the need for her to give careful consideration to any decision to close down any of these racing venues. This is causing a lot of hardship for the people involved in the harness racing and greyhound racing industries in particular. Many of these people depend on these industries for their livelihood. Their livelihood in turn has a great effect on the local people in those towns providing feed and so on—

Time expired.

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (3.54 p.m.): I am pleased to participate in the debate on the Estimates for the portfolio of Environment and Heritage and Natural Resources. I thank the staff of the Parliament for their work and also the chair of the committee, Mr Reeves, and other members of the committee for their participation in the scrutiny of the Estimates of my departments. A number of issues were raised by both Government and Opposition members in the course of the Estimates hearings. Although in a portfolio with such an enormous range of issues it is very difficult to cover all of them, I think there was a frank and occasionally cordial exchange on a number of key issues.

Understandably, members of the Opposition tended to focus on rural issues; that is the constituency in which they have the greatest interest. There is no question that dealing with environmental and natural resource management issues requires, for the first time in our State's history, that we manage our natural resource base in a very cautious

way. If we look at the history of the State's rural and regional development we see that we have transformed our State from a relatively small population with a small level of economic activity and scale to one which now spans across vast areas of Queensland, drawing massively upon our State's natural resources. Those natural resources—land resources, the quality of our soils, the sustainability of landscapes and our use of water—are now very heavily committed in many of the catchments across the State.

It is unfortunate that for political purposes some members of the Opposition continue to paint the unrealistic picture to rural people that somehow the scale of development that has gone on in the past can continue to expand forever. We know that is not the case. The reality is that future economic value has to be grafted out of new planning arrangements which ensure that we use our resources more efficiently.

That is why the Government is currently introducing planning systems for vegetation management and for water allocation and management across our State. There are some difficult areas. There is no question that when we point to past investments in water infrastructure, for example, in Emerald or in St George, we see that those investments have yielded significant economic activity in those regions. It is true that wherever we are able to harness natural resources we can generate enormous economic value. The problem is that we cannot continue to harness resources beyond the capacity of catchments to contribute them. That is the difficulty in which we find ourselves as a State and community as we move into the 21st century.

We face enormous challenges. We have to start to use our land and water resources in a sustainable way and within the renewable and natural renewable capacity of those resources. We need to manage our public lands and protected areas more effectively because of the economic value they add to the State not just in terms of tourism but in terms of biodiversity and long-term research potential for biotechnology and other industries, and we have to protect that biodiversity—our State's extraordinarily rich native biodiversity—from the ravages of both land degradation and the scourge of weeds.

The Opposition spokesman raised this issue particularly in relation to giant rat-tail grass, which is a problem in his area. In my view, there is no question that Queensland is unique among all of the States in facing an extraordinarily severe threat to the productive

landscapes of our State from weed incursion. Those weeds are starting to corrode the productive capacity of grazing lands and put to waste areas that would otherwise be fertile soils available for cropping.

We need to take a united approach with the Federal Government to the problem of weeds. Of the 20 weeds of national significance identified by a national consultative process, Queensland has 13 of them, which gives us a sense of the dimensions of the challenge we face. There is no question that, quite apart from the need to shift our future development path to one which is more sustainable within the capacity of our natural resources to provide, we also at the same time have to fend off the great challenge of weed infestation and pests which are also threatening our biodiversity and productive capabilities.

Time expired.

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh—NPA) (3.59 p.m.): I want to make it clear that I was not expecting the Budget to do much for my electorate of Burleigh, so in that sense I was not disappointed. However, my electorate is continually disappointed at the progress or, rather, lack of progress with long promised renovations to the Tallebudgera Recreation Camp. This comes under the responsibility of the Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning in his additional capacity as Minister for Sport.

Way back in 1993, the then Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Bob Gibbs, announced that the Government was considering a \$13m facelift for Tallebudgera Recreation Camp. Nothing happened and the following year the continuing Labor Government was talking up a more ambitious \$30m redevelopment of the site. The next Sports Minister was Deputy Premier Tom Burns, who declared that the Government was looking at the camp becoming a world-class sports centre.

The coalition was in Government for too short a time for our Minister, the member for Southport, to complete the plans he was setting up for upgrading the camp. Mick Veivers was able to get some capital works done, including a new hard court area and also a number of security measures. At least he was able to start off the purchase of the Playroom site to be added to the recreation camp site, and negotiations for this purchase were ultimately completed by Mr Gibbs after Labor was returned to Government.

After Labor came back into Government in 1998, I continued to lobby for upgrading of

the Tallebudgera Recreation Camp. Mr Gibbs wrote to me in December 1998 and advised that a study into the redevelopment of the camp was commissioned in 1995. We already knew that. In the same letter Mr Gibbs told me—

"The State Government would continue to provide for the demand for a low cost group camping and community sporting facility but reflect quality design standards expected of such a facility."

That was probably one of the more meaningless statements I have had the privilege of reading as a member of Parliament.

Honourable members interjected.

Mrs GAMIN: Madam Temporary Chairman, I am happy to keep raising my voice. I am sure that I can speak over these two gentleman.

We have had to fight for money for basic maintenance. At one stage we had to fight for kitchen renovations. If it had been a private facility and not a Government facility, the Gold Coast City Council Health Department officials would have moved in. I actually think that Minister Gibbs tried to get some money for Tallebudgera in the 1999 State Budget but got rolled by Treasury. His department identified \$7m as its contribution towards the upgrade of the camp and asked Treasury to contribute another \$7m. Treasury not only knocked back his application for additional funding but also took the department's \$7m from its budget.

Responding to a question without notice back in November 1999, Minister Gibbs talked about the old radio serial Blue Hills. The saga is certainly like a radio serial but, unlike a radio serial, there is still no happy ending. Mr Gibbs admitted that the Tallebudgera Recreation Camp is an icon, reassured the House that the Government would not sell the camp and said that the Government was undertaking a full review of recreation camps in Queensland. I do not know whether this was a new review or just a continuation of the old review.

Mr Gibbs then moved on to greener pastures and I asked the same question of the new Minister for Sport, Minister Mackenroth. His written reply did not tell me any more than did former Minister Gibbs, although in June this year Mr Mackenroth told me that a draft expression of interest for options for the redevelopment of Tallebudgera Recreation Camp is currently being prepared but that the redevelopment of the camp would not start in 2000-01. So that was all pretty meaningless, too. Even if it was only a facade, former

Minister Gibbs at least gave the impression that he cared about the Tallebudgera Recreation Camp and he did close down the Playroom. But the present Minister does not bother to pretend. At least he is honest; he just says: no. So the 2000 budget came and went without Tallebudgera getting a mention. There is no money for promised redevelopment and only the barest amount of maintenance funding.

I have chosen to spend my allocated time today talking about what is indeed a Queensland icon. Tallebudgera Recreation Camp is important to the lives of very many Queenslanders who have holidayed there at school camps and with youth, sporting, church or social groups over more than 50 years. There is half a century of history there. Children from country schools all over Queensland continue to visit the camp, and the camp school does a truly marvellous job in training country kids in surf and beach safety. It is time the Government stopped procrastinating and did something meaningful in terms of upgrading and refurbishing this important community facility.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (4.04 p.m.): I have spoken previously about the four non-conforming fishing permits that allow professional fishers to tunnel net around Peel Island in the Moreton Bay Marine Park. Members might be aware that there is a protection zone on the north-west of that island, as the coral communities around Peel Island have the highest diversity of coral species in Moreton Bay. For the benefit of my colleagues who may be unclear as to the purpose of a protection zone, I point out that it is to provide permanent preservation of the area to the greatest extent possible. All forms of taking, fishing, collecting and extracting are prohibited due to the significant value of these areas.

Time expired.

Report adopted.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Dr WATSON (4.05 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 4, after line 7—

insert—

'(1A) Subsection (1) does not authorise the payment of any amount for a performance bonus payable to a chief executive of a department.'

The coalition is not prepared to sign a blank cheque. The Premier and his Ministers

have refused to release any meaningful details of these secret commissions for secret services to the Beattie Government. They have treated Parliament with contempt and they have treated the taxpayers of Queensland with contempt. The people of Queensland are entitled to know who got what and why. They are entitled to know every last cent paid to every last bureaucrat. They are entitled to know the criteria on which those payments were determined and the exact dollar amounts.

Queenslanders are entitled to more than the obfuscation we got from the Premier during the Estimates committee. The cone of silence is working overtime. The Premier has dished out pay rises and bonuses of up to \$76,000 to CEOs without any independent scrutiny of their effectiveness in delivering core public services such as health and education. He will not answer our questions and he will not release the details. That is not good enough. Some of these Beattie fat cats have already received pay increases of over 40% in the past two years. Their total salary package is more than \$262,000 a year. This is a Government that told front-line professionals such as teachers and nurses to cop a pay rise of 3% a year.

Queensland taxpayers are being taken for a ride. These bonuses are worth up to \$30,000 a head. They are in addition to pay rises of \$46,000 in just two years—and that is more than the average person earns. The Premier claims that these massive bonuses are justified because his CEOs are doing such a great job, but we do not buy it. As far as we can tell, the whole Government is in a spin. Some of these blokes are lucky to have a job. The last thing they deserve is a bonus.

Mr Fouras: You are unkind.

Dr WATSON: The former Speaker interjects. I know that the former Speaker and current Chairman of Committees is actually committed to the Estimates committee process. I know that he was committed to that process when he sat in the Chair in the first Labor Government under Goss and I know that he actually thought the Estimates committee process would work. I think he would be ashamed of the obfuscation that the Premier and his Ministers have displayed over the past few weeks.

What we saw in the Estimates committee—and he knows this—was time and time again the Ministers refusing to provide details of the amount of the bonuses included in a line item in their budget. The whole idea of the Estimates committee process was to

examine the Budget in detail. What we have seen over the past couple of weeks is Ministers simply refusing to disclose knowledge that they should have had about what was included in those particular line items. If they did not have that knowledge, that of course shows that they are poor Ministers.

What did they do? First of all, they did not answer as individual Ministers and they kept saying that the Premier was going to answer it in Estimate Committee E. What happened there? Not only did the Treasurer go along like a lemming with all the other Ministers and refuse to answer the question with respect to him, but when it came to the Premier later on in Estimates Committee E, he refused to answer the questions. Honourable members can go through the first few pages of the Hansard for Estimate Committee E and look at the kinds of questions we kept asking the Premier to which he kept refusing to give a detailed answer. He simply refused to give the details that any reasonable person in Queensland would expect the Premier to know and would expect the Premier to disclose in this place.

What is the use of having an Estimates committee? What is the use of saying we will examine the Budget in detail when one asks a detailed question and gets a non-answer, not just from the Premier but from every Minister asked questions in the various Estimates committees? That is simply not good enough. The coalition is not going to sign a blank cheque. We are not going to allow this to pass without any discussion whatsoever and without making a point. If the Government is going to pay the bonuses, we will force it to the vote on this particular point. The performance of the Ministers in this Government and the performance of the Premier on this issue is extremely poor. It does not set the example of an open and accountable Government. It does exactly the opposite. The coalition is determined to make this Government accountable for every last dollar of taxpayers' money that it spends.

Mr HAMILL: Frankly, the amendment moved by the Leader of the Liberal Party asks the Government to breach contracts of employment with directors-general. I would have thought that the Liberal Party, which oft talks about the sanctity of contracts, would have been the last organisation to come in here and advocate the breaching of the contracts of employment with directors-general. It was also this same Liberal Party, along with its National Party mates, that tore up contracts of employment with directors-general in February 1996. I remember those

circumstances only too well. Quite a number of professional officers and public servants of long standing who served Governments of all political persuasions had their terms of employment torn up by an incoming coalition Government that was hell-bent on a witch-hunt against anyone who had the temerity to serve a duly elected Labor Government.

Furthermore, that coalition Government had such disrespect for those professional officers, who had been appointed according to the merit selection process, that they brought back a decrepit Dad's Army of discredited and disgraced hacks.

Mr Schwarten: Semi-sedated, semi-senile.

Mr HAMILL: Yes, a number of hacks who had been disgraced during their earlier service with a former and disgraceful National Party Government. There were, of course, other public servants who had discharged their duties appropriately. Nevertheless, this is yet another example of the scant regard for due process that comes from this ragtag coalition.

The point that needs to be understood by the honourable member opposite is that the Premier made it very clear: the performance bonuses that have been written into the contracts of directors-general are there for a positive purpose. We expect all directors-general to discharge their duties in an exemplary fashion. There is no room for those who cannot perform. However, the incentive bonus arrangement is there to provide a further incentive for those who are prepared to go that extra mile in delivering quality service to the people of Queensland. What we are dealing with here is a group of people who have specific contracts. They do not have unlimited tenure. They are professional people who are there to discharge their duties impartially and to serve the public administration of this State with distinction.

I am not going to see the situation arise in which this Opposition tries to tear up contracts that have been properly entered into with these people and tries to denigrate the individual performances of individual CEOs. The Premier has provided the Estimates committee with the quantum of funds that have been made available for these bonuses. What the Premier has not done is give line by line exactly how many dollars have been attached to the individual performance component of an individual DG's contract. I think that, under the circumstances, that is clearly appropriate. This Government is not going to tolerate these sorts of standover tactics from the coalition, which wants to simply

disregard the contribution that these people make to the betterment of public administration in Queensland.

Dr WATSON: What a short-term memory loss this Treasurer has. I can forgive part of it, because he was not around this time last year for the Budget. He was on the backbench.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Liberal Party continues to mislead the Parliament. In fact, if he cares to check the Hansard record, he will see not only that I handled Estimates last year but also that I was here to handle the full passage of the Budget. The comments are wrong. They are offensive. I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Dr WATSON: I withdraw whatever the Treasurer finds offensive. However, the fact of the matter is that he was in the Parliament but he was not in the position he is in right now. He was sitting on the backbench.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Liberal Party is obviously suffering a trifle of Alzheimer's disease. He continues to mislead the Parliament. He continues to seek to denigrate me. I find his comments both inaccurate and offensive. The Hansard record bears out the inaccuracies of his claims. I demand that he withdraw.

Dr WATSON: I know he was upset about the fact that the Premier had to present the Budget last year. I understand that. I will withdraw whatever the member wants. However, the facts are that the Premier stood here last year and presented the Budget. I can forgive the Treasurer for wanting to forget that part of his life.

Mr Horan: He was in disgrace at the time.

Dr WATSON: He was in disgrace at the time, and his performance has not improved since then.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. The member for Moggill continues to personally denigrate me. I draw his attention to the record that my role as Treasurer has been totally vindicated. I demand a withdrawal.

Dr WATSON: I withdraw again. The facts of the matter are that the Premier was Acting Treasurer when the Budget was presented last year, and nothing can expunge that from the record. Let me remind the Treasurer of what a short-term memory he has. He talks about the treatment of public servants. When Labor came to power in 1990, I remember the Goss Gulag which put public servants in a room with no telephone, with just a desk and nothing to do.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! I ask the member to keep his comments relevant to the amendment.

Dr WATSON: He mentioned the Gulag.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I am asking the member to keep his remarks relevant to the amendment.

Dr WATSON: What I am saying is relevant to the amendment, because it is about performance bonuses for CEOs. I am talking about the treatment of CEOs.

The treatment of CEOs under that Labor Government, in which the Treasurer was a Minister, was absolutely appalling. There has never been such poor treatment of CEOs in Government departments. There has never been such politicisation of the Public Service as there was under the Goss Government, and it is being continued and made worse. That is the reason why morale is so low in the Premier's Department, and it is at absolute rock bottom in Treasury. Morale has never been so poor. We have never lost so many senior officials from Treasury as we have under the stewardship of this Treasurer. They are leaving for the private sector because they do not want to work with him. It is the same thing right across other departments in this Government. That is the reality.

The hypocrisy of this Treasurer has been demonstrated. Where was he last year? Was he standing up for the CEOs of the GOCs last year when the Premier made each of those chief executive officers disclose their salaries and bonuses? Were they not under contract? These were Government owned corporations that were under the direction of independent boards, but he did not care about that. He rode roughshod right over them; he made them and their boards present every last detail of their packages. What a hypocritical position!

The Premier said last year—the Minister supported him—that that was in the public interest, that the public interest overrode any contract with the CEOs of the GOCs. But when it comes to the Government departments—those opposite want to pay a secret bonus on secret criteria—the Treasurer stands there and says, "There is a contract." What absolute baloney! I have never seen such a hypocritical attitude. The fact of the matter is that those opposite are trying to keep secret from the people of Queensland conditions of employment of the CEOs of departments that they are entitled to know about.

Time expired.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I want to clarify that the issue at hand is the payment of

bonuses to CEOs. I believe that the payments and their quantum should be made public. However, I want clarified whether this amendment in effect would remove the bonus perhaps paid legally and in good faith to the CEO by the Government of the day. If this amendment is passed, will it remove the payment retrospectively? These people would have a reasonable entitlement to receive their bonuses but, effectively, in spite of that contract this clause would remove the payment. Could the proposer please clarify?

Dr WATSON: The amount is a purpose for the future. It relates to this set of Estimates. We are saying that in this set of Estimates they cannot pay the bonuses. The Premier has already said that he can pay bonuses of zero to 15%. If this goes through he will be paying zero. It is not retrospective.

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

AYES, 37—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Dagleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 43—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, E. Cunningham, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Turner, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Resolved in the **negative**.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bills reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bills, on motion of Mr Hamill, by leave, read a third time.

PRIVILEGE

Expenses of Members for Nicklin and Gladstone

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (4.29 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. This morning the member for Western Downs, Brian Littleproud, raised some issues in relation to the expenses of the member for Nicklin, Mr Wellington, and the member for Gladstone, Mrs Cunningham. I

sought formal advice from the Director of the Ministerial Services Branch, Mike Goodman. He has written to me as follows—

"Dear Premier

Resourcing for Independent Members

Regarding your request for information on this matter, details are as follows.

The budgets for 1999/2000 and 2000/01 for the Independent Member for Nicklin and Gladstone are \$150,000 each. There is no difference in their budgets in either of these years.

In fact, their budgets have been aligned every year Mr Wellington has been in office, except for an amount of \$27,500 which was provided in 1998 to cover the setup of his office. Mrs Cunningham was provided with a similar amount for her office setup costs in 1996.

During 1999/2000 Mr Wellington spent \$119,652 which is \$30,348 below budget. Whereas Mrs Cunningham spent \$84,679, which is \$65,321 under budget. The main difference in their expenditure related to staff costs. However, both Mr Wellington and Mrs Cunningham had arranged their staffing within the limits that you had approved.

Mr Wellington currently has two full time staff members, Mrs Cunningham currently has one full time and two part-time staff members. During the year Mrs Cunningham had periods where she had less staff members than this.

I believe that it should be noted that it is without doubt that both Mr Wellington and Mrs Cunningham have been frugal with their budgets.

A breakdown of Mr Wellington's expenditure is as follows ..."

There is also a breakdown of Mrs Cunningham's expenditure. For the information of all members I table that information, together with another brief that has been provided to me by the department. I believe it is important that Mr Littleproud apologises to the member for Nicklin.

FEDERAL COURTS (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (4.31 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to make further

amendments consequential on the matters dealt with by the Federal Courts (State Jurisdiction) Act 1999 or by Commonwealth legislation relating to federal courts and tribunals."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (4.32 p.m.): I move—

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

The Federal Courts (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2000 is the third piece of legislation in a trilogy of legislation that the Commonwealth and the States are enacting to address the effect of the High Court decision in the case of *Re Wakim*. The High Court decision in the case of *Re Wakim* was that the act of a State vesting State jurisdiction in a Federal Court, and the Commonwealth consenting to the vesting of State jurisdiction in a Federal Court, is constitutionally invalid. Following the decision, the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, with the Special Committee of Solicitors-General and the Parliamentary Counsels' Committee, developed a trilogy of legislation to address the effect of the High Court decision.

The first piece of legislation is the Federal Courts (States Jurisdiction) Act 1999, which the Commonwealth and the States enacted in 1999. The Queensland legislation was introduced into Parliament by the Honourable the Attorney-General on 20 July 1999, and the legislation commenced operation on 29 July 1999. The purpose of the Federal Courts (States Jurisdiction) Act 1999 is to retrospectively validate decisions of the Federal Court or Family Court made relying on cross-vesting of jurisdiction, and to deem those relevant decisions of the Federal Court or Family Court to be decisions of the appropriate Supreme Court.

The second piece of legislation is the Jurisdiction of Courts Legislation Amendment Act 2000, which commenced operation on 1 July 2000. The purpose of the Jurisdiction of Courts Legislation Amendment Act is for the Commonwealth to amend the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1975, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act 1975, and the Jurisdiction of Courts (Cross-vesting) Act

1987 to the extent that the legislation is invalid. The second piece of legislation is complementary with the third piece of legislation.

The third piece of legislation is the present legislation, the Federal Courts (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2000. The main purposes of this Bill are—

- (a) to remove from State Acts provisions purporting to confer jurisdiction on a Federal Court;
- (b) to remove from State Acts any provisions purporting to apply the Commonwealth Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977 ("ADJR Act") as a law of the State;
- (c) to make changes to the State cross-vesting schemes that are complementary to amendments to Commonwealth legislation proposed by the Jurisdiction of Courts Legislation Amendment Act that was introduced into the Parliament of the Commonwealth in March 2000.

The purpose of the legislation is to amend the seven pieces of legislation establishing national schemes which rely on cross-vesting of jurisdiction between the Commonwealth and the States to achieve national administration and regulation of a number of industries and agencies. The schemes include the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals scheme, the Competition Policy scheme, the Corporations scheme, the Gas Pipelines scheme and the National Crime Authority scheme.

The Bill is essential because the legislation will amend the following legislation to the extent that the legislation is invalid—

- Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Act 1994
- Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Act 1996
- Corporations (Queensland) Act 1990
- Gas Pipelines Access (Queensland) Act 1998
- Jurisdiction of Courts (Cross-vesting) Act 1987
- National Crime Authority (State Provisions) Act 1985
- New Tax System Price Exploitation Code (Queensland) Act 1999.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP)
(Minister for Environment and Heritage and
Minister for Natural Resources) (4.37 p.m.), by
leave, without notice: I move—

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

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP)
(Minister for Environment and Heritage and
Minister for Natural Resources) (4.37 p.m.): I
move—

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

On 8 December last year, in a second-
reading speech, I outlined to the House the
background to the Government's Vegetation
Management Bill 1999. The Bill honoured our
Government's election promise to give priority
to the management of native vegetation. It
was prepared after consultation with key
stakeholders, including rural industries,
conservation groups, local government and
urban development interests.

Land clearing has long been recognised
by the scientific community as a significant
factor in land degradation, the loss of
biodiversity and accelerated greenhouse gas
emissions. The Vegetation Management Bill
1999 was designed to provide an integrated
planning and development framework to
ensure that any proposed clearing on freehold
land took account of important conservation
values and avoided costly long-term
degradation problems faced by other
Australian States. The Queensland Legislative
Assembly subsequently passed this Bill.

Mr Seeney: Without debate.

Mr WELFORD: There was debate. Check
Hansard.

Mr Seeney: How much debate was
there?

Mr WELFORD: It went all day.

At the time, both the Premier and I
acknowledged that financial assistance from
the Commonwealth was a key issue in
delivering a balanced outcome. And we had

very good reason to believe that the Federal
Government would back our efforts. Well
before the Vegetation Management Bill was
presented to the House, we received
assurances from Senator Robert Hill that the
Federal Government would support
Queensland's vegetation management
arrangements. In fact, it is well documented
that the Commonwealth had been urging
Queensland to act on this issue. Senator Hill
indicated he would make the continuing
provision of Natural Heritage Trust funds
conditional on moves by Queensland to
address land clearing. And in a letter to the
Government on August 9 last year, Senator
Hill wrote—

"I believe that if we are to achieve
our agreed national goal, and given the
potential land degradation and loss of
biodiversity in your State, we need to
substantially reduce the net loss of native
vegetation in Queensland."

Senator Hill also recognised that our
Government's approach would help the
Commonwealth make dramatic advances in its
commitment to greenhouse gas abatement
under the Kyoto Agreement. Queensland
moved ahead, confident of a cooperative
approach with the Commonwealth. Our
Government made a financial commitment of
\$111m over four years to support this new
planning system. In return we sought \$103m
from the Commonwealth to support the
legislation and provide assistance to any land-
holders whose viability was impacted by the
new system. To allow time for the
Commonwealth to provide this funding, the
Vegetation Management Act was passed but
not proclaimed into law.

In February this year, the Premier met
with the Prime Minister to facilitate a
partnership approach on this issue of national
significance. It is now history that the Prime
Minister—after strong representations from the
National Party—turned his back on
Queensland's farmers and refused to provide
any funding support for what most Australians
consider the most pressing environmental
issue of our time.

Instead, the Prime Minister set up a task
force to advise him on options for supporting
Queensland's approach. At the time, we
accepted the Prime Minister's assurance that a
proposal would be forthcoming within three to
six months. It is now more than six months
since that meeting and the Australian people
are well aware that the Commonwealth has
neither honoured the promises made by

Senator Hill nor the promises made by the Prime Minister.

As we sit in this place today, the media continues to report the deep divisions within the Federal coalition, the disagreement between the National Party and the Liberal Party on the importance of native vegetation management to our long-term environmental and economic well-being. These divisions have brought about the total paralysis of the Commonwealth Government's decision-making processes—a disgraceful do nothing attitude which has not only disappointed Queenslanders, but all Australians and the international community. This is despite having a \$400m kitty set aside to fund any measures that improve our country's greenhouse gas emissions. No amount of political rhetoric from the Commonwealth can disguise its failure to act, the failure to support the leadership shown by the Beattie Government.

As a consequence of the Commonwealth's failure, the Queensland Government is forced to review the legislation. Amendments are required to ensure the burden for doing the right thing—for protecting important vegetation communities and managing land sustainably—does not fall unfairly on a few land-holders. The principal change made by the Vegetation Management Amendment Bill 2000 is to remove provisions that provide for the protection of "of concern" or vulnerable regional ecosystems. These are ecosystems where between 70% to 90% of the original vegetation type has been cleared.

With no Commonwealth funding support, we regrettably have no choice but to remove mandatory protection for these areas before the Vegetation Management Act is proclaimed. This action honours a commitment the Premier made at a Community Cabinet meeting in Roma. This amendment means that on freehold land, we will protect "endangered" regional ecosystems—that is, those with 10% or less of their original vegetation remaining—but rely upon the regional vegetation planning process and regional vegetation planning committees to voluntarily extend protection, through a local planning process, beyond this level.

In addition to the removal of "of concern" regional ecosystems from the Vegetation Management Act, the Vegetation Management Amendment Bill provides an opportunity to make a number of other minor changes. These will assist in the smooth introduction of the Act and have been developed following further consultation with stakeholders.

A critical component of the vegetation management framework is the development of regional vegetation management plans. The Vegetation Management Amendment Bill will allow for leasehold land to be included in the regional vegetation management plans process. It is also proposed to allow areas of high conservation value and areas vulnerable to land degradation to be declared on leasehold land.

Other proposed changes ensure similar terminology is used in both the freehold and leasehold context to avoid confusion and duplication of processes. The Act will be amended to require consultation with land-holders whose properties are included in areas proposed to be declared as areas vulnerable to land degradation or areas of high nature conservation value. Land-holders will be able to comment on the scientific validity of any such declaration. In addition, the amendments will allow land-holders to comment on the proposed assessment criteria to be used for clearing proposals within the declared area.

Many of the proposed amendments are particularly relevant to local government. The Local Government Association of Queensland sought a period of transition for development applications handled by local governments which may have a vegetation clearing component. The Vegetation Management Amendment Bill provides for this extension. It provides ample time for local governments to receive detailed information, relevant maps and training for council officers.

Many local governments, particularly in south-east Queensland, have recognised their responsibility for vegetation protection and have passed comprehensive local laws on this subject. These councils have sought additional time to further develop these local laws and incorporate vegetation management provisions into their planning schemes in accordance with the Integrated Planning Act 1997. Our Government gave a commitment to preserve local government powers to manage vegetation over and above State laws and I am pleased to assist those councils which have local laws in place.

This Vegetation Management Amendment Bill is an important step in paving the way for a planning system to support sustainable land management in Queensland and I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lester, adjourned.

WINE INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP)
(Minister for Tourism and Racing) (4.47 p.m.),
by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Wine Industry Act 1994, 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) (4.48 p.m.): I move—

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

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP)
(Minister for Tourism and Racing) (4.48 p.m.): Queensland's wine industry is booming. The number of producers has more than doubled since the Wine Industry Bill was introduced into Parliament six years ago. Land planted to grapes for wine production has trebled in the past two years and the industry expects a 500% increase in tonnage harvested over the next three years. This Bill amends the Wine Industry Act by adding a new objective of fostering investment in and the growth of the Queensland wine industry.

At the time the Act commenced, we built in a review mechanism to ensure it remained relevant and consistent. Now, six years later, that review process coincided with the need to review the Act in line with the principles of the National Competition Policy. This Bill clarifies the eligibility of people wishing to operate as wine producers and introduces a second category of licence. There is currently only one licence, and it can only be granted to operators who grow the fruit used to make the wine, or make the wine themselves. This Wine Producer Licence will remain, retaining all privileges, although it will now link production activities to the licensed premises. A producer growing the fruit to make the wine must grow the fruit at the licensed premises. In other words, the licensee must operate a vineyard. A producer who is making wine must make the wine at the licensed premises. This means operating a winery.

We are introducing a new Wine Merchant Licence. This licence recognises that there are other operations that can add real value to the

industry, even where they do not directly involve a vineyard or a winery. This licence is not intended as a back door entry to the wine or liquor industry for supermarkets and other general retail outlets. Government policy remains against the sale of liquor in supermarkets, and this new licence in no way undermines that policy.

A Wine Merchant Licence may only be granted to an operator whose business will contribute to the Queensland wine industry in a substantial way. The Bill provides examples of activities that would be considered to contribute, and those that would not. You might be considered eligible for this licence if you buy fruit grown in Queensland and have it made into wine under your direction at another premises. You would not need your own vineyard or winery but would be adding value to the local industry by using Queensland product, Queensland facilities that might otherwise lie dormant, and producing new Queensland wines. You may also be eligible if you have planted a vineyard, with an intention of making wine from the fruit at a later date. Producers might initially apply for a Wine Merchant Licence and convert to a Wine Producer Licence when their own wine becomes available.

Wine merchants might also operate as a blender of wine to create a unique wine. A business that merely involves buying or importing bulk wine and bottling it is not acceptable as a licensee; a business that merely involves retailing wine made by others is not acceptable. This new licence type recognises that there are peripheral practices that fall short of full wine producers, but are nevertheless considered desirable. However, wine producers are still considered the core of the Queensland wine industry and therefore will be entitled to greater flexibility than wine merchants.

Only wine producers are able to operate cellar doors remote from their main premises, or obtain permits to sell their wine at special events. They will pay a lower annual fee. It is hoped operators who enter the industry as wine merchants will aspire towards wine producer licences by planting their own fruit or establishing wine-making facilities, thereby fulfilling the new objective of the Act and increasing investment in the industry.

Until now, licensees were able to supplement their licence under the Wine Industry Act with a limited licence under the Liquor Act. This enabled them to sell wine other than their own, although the sale of their own wine remained the primary focus of their

business. This process will now be simplified. Instead of applying for a complementary liquor licence, wine producers will be able to gain approval under their own licence to sell other wine that has not been made by them or made from their fruit.

The Bill removes the blending provisions that currently apply. Until now, licensees have been able to blend other wine with their own, provided the percentage of their product in the blend did not fall below 70%. Importantly, the labelling provisions will remain and will apply to both wine producers and wine merchants. This means that, despite the relaxation of the blending levels, consumers will at all times have access to true information about the source of any wine sold under the Act and will therefore have a measure of protection against fraud. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Healy, adjourned.

VALUATION OF LAND AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 22 August (see p. 2567).

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (4.53 p.m.): Valuations are an issue of great concern not only to the people of my electorate but also to the other ratepayers in Brisbane. Of course, they live on some of the highest value rateable land in the State. It is fair to say that, now that valuations are issued each year, they have become a major issue. It has never been fully explained to me why we have annual valuations. Many years ago, valuations were made every five years. Certainly, that is too long a time between valuations.

However, we need to ensure that valuations are carried out in an appropriate manner. Valuations are made on the unimproved value of the land, taking into consideration comparable sales in the area. That is fine, but as this occurs each year people who are unhappy with their land valuation have to object to it and go through the appeal process in the Land Court. I know that many people believe that they cannot be bothered doing that each year, so they just sit back and cop it as it comes, although they complain and whinge about the whole process. Nevertheless, this issue creates a great deal of unhappiness within the community.

Mr Springborg: It's got worse under this Minister.

Mr BEANLAND: Yes. I agree with that. In my electorate, there were some horrific valuations. For those ratepayers, it was not a pleasant sight indeed to receive new valuation notices stating that their valuation had increased by 20% or 25%—whatever the figure might be; in some cases it is even more—from one year to the next.

I notice that this legislation allows—as the Minister points out—valuations to be carried out each year, or every second year, or every three years. If some parts of the State are to have valuations carried out every three years, why should that not apply to all parts of the State? In this case, what applies to one ratepayer should apply to another.

Areas in Brisbane, the Gold Coast and other parts of south-east Queensland might have more significant changes to their valuations than some other parts of Queensland, and sometimes that occurs for no good reason. I know how the valuation system works. We have to ensure that valuations are not made simply by a computer entry. I also know that there are fewer and fewer staff in the Valuer-General's Department, that that handful of staff, who do a very good job, are becoming run down and are suffering more stress as more pressure is placed on them. Those valuers are facing greater pressures within the community because of the increasing number of valuations that have to be carried out each year owing to our increasing population and a corresponding increase in allotments. Therefore, those valuers sit down at a computer, work out an average value across-the-board, key in a few figures, press a number of buttons and away it goes for that suburb. They then move on to the valuation for the next suburb, the next suburb and so on.

Some people might say that that is fine, but every block of dirt is different. Some blocks are small, some are large, some are located at the top of a hill, some located halfway up the hill and some have drainage problems, and so on it goes. When making a valuation of an allotment, a range of such issues must be taken into account. Some of those issues change from one year to the next. I suggest that valuers should be allowed to have more time so that they can put greater effort into the valuation process and take into account the features of individual allotments.

I understand that the Minister is not going to increase the number of valuers in the department. No matter what I say, the Minister is not suddenly going to go out and put on a stack of additional valuers to carry out

valuations. However, if that were to occur, I believe that people across-the-board would receive a fairer valuation of their allotments. Therefore, the public would be more inclined to accept land valuations. They would not be simply looking at a set of figures and then finding out that everyone in the street had their valuations increased by the same percentage, which so often occurs. That is when the ratepayers become concerned, want to object and so on.

I appreciate the fact that valuations are made not only to residential property but also to commercial property. Valuations are carried out for a number reasons but, specifically, they are carried out to ascertain the rateable value of the property. Local governments were not particularly worried whether valuations were done each year, every two or three years, or every five years, because they work out how much revenue they want to raise and then levy the rates according to the valuations to gather that revenue. That would certainly even out some of the peaks and troughs in the marketplace at the moment.

Comparable sales have an impact on valuations. A range of peaks and troughs is generated by comparable sales of land in an area. That has to be averaged out in order to arrive at a fairer valuation. This is an issue that requires the Minister's attention. As I said, I realise that more valuers will not be appointed. The valuers we have at the moment are courteous and do their best. They put a great deal of energy and effort into their work, but at the end of the day they are constrained by time. They are under more pressure than ever, because there are more allotments, commercial and farm properties to value. This is a growing issue of concern.

People can object to a valuation if they wish to do so. They can fill in a form and submit it. If they want to take the matter further they can go to the Land Court. Before that stage they usually ask for a conference. Unfortunately, today more and more of these conferences are held in the Valuer-General's premises in Edward Street in the city, from which it is impossible for valuers to observe the features of allotments; they can do so only by visiting the properties of the people who are objecting. If we are to have an objection process that has any justice attached to it at all, it is essential that valuers are given sufficient time and resources to inspect properties. We might be talking about hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands of properties. But surely that is what the objection process is all about, that is, ensuring that people receive justice in relation to their

objections. From the objection process they can then go to the Land Court. Usually they go through a mediation process in the first instance.

As I have said, the Land Court officers do a good job. Recently, changes were made to the procedures of the Land Court to improve its processes. They do a great job for ratepayers through the mediation processes. I believe a lot of this problem could be avoided if at the outset more time were made available for the valuers to do their job in the way I am sure they would like to do it. If there is an objection, they should be able to inspect the site and speak to the property owner involved about the issues.

Land tax is the other major reason for valuations. The State will still collect its amount of land tax no matter what happens. Perhaps the State Government feels that if it does not have annual valuations for Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast it will miss out on some money. It might; it would not be the local governments that missed out. If the Government is planning to follow through with the former Borbidge/Sheldon Government's proposals to abolish land tax, this will not be such a big issue for the State; it will continue to diminish.

There were other issues that I was going to raise, but other speakers have already mentioned them. I refer to the effect of issues such as native title and water availability on valuations, particularly in country areas in the west of the State. In the future native title will play a greater role than ever before. The whole vegetation issue, which seems to have cropped up recently, will also play a role in relation to valuations, but not to the extent that native title will. It will become a major issue in relation to valuations.

I look forward to the Minister giving greater consideration not only to people in Brisbane but also to the landowners of the State generally when it comes to their valuations and ensuring that valuers are able to make on-site inspections. It was not that many years ago, before we adopted IT, that valuers went around from allotment to allotment and inspected them. It is not that many years ago that that process was carried out. From memory, the valuations were done every five years. Today all of that has gone. People sit at a computer, feed in a few figures, press a button and the computer gives the answer for whole suburbs and, in many cases, half a city. That is simply not good enough. More effort and energy needs to be put into ensuring that the State Valuation Service has

the resources to be able to give this important area the attention it deserves and to ensure that property owners, no matter where they live, are afforded justice in relation to their property valuations.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (5.05 p.m.): I rise to speak briefly to the Valuation of Land Amendment Bill 2000. There is no doubt that rising land valuations, particularly for rural properties, are a constant thorn in the side of property owners. This thorn certainly has been hurting in recent times, with much of the rural sector in a depressed economic state. It appears that the problems in relation to the valuation of farms occur particularly in areas that abut our larger towns and cities due to the encroachment of urban dwellings into farming communities. This causes a rise in the valuations of these rural properties, with a resultant rate rise to the owners. This has been a particular problem that has occurred regularly in my electorate of Lockyer.

This problem is often exacerbated when under the current Act the valuator deems that a property has ceased to be a viable farm and thus fails to attract a concessional valuation as rural land. Under the current Act this assessment occurs under section 17. Of course, rural landowners who do not agree with the new valuation have the ability to object to it. Unfortunately, the objection process is usually a conference to start with, and the objection process often falls on deaf ears. Many of these farmers cannot afford to go to our Land Court.

I welcome the amendment as proposed that qualifies the definition of "farming" in relation to its valuation. This amendment will go a long way towards rectifying many complaints that too often occur after valuation of a local government area. I concur with the member for Indooroopilly's comment that valuations are done too frequently. They used to be done every five years and now they are often done every one or two years.

There is no doubt that the addition of section 17(2)(c), which allows a commercial purpose, such as a farm, to have an average gross annual income calculated over a three-year period of at least \$5,000 and also takes in a new business relating to the harvesting of non-native forests and so on, means that many of these properties now fall within the ambit of a farming activity and thus will attract a concessional valuation. This new section will also allow many farmers to retire on their properties and allow them to have a downturn in their farming activity, for example, such as

from an intensive dairying activity to the raising of a few beef cattle that they can sell on a regular basis, and certainly for more than \$5,000 averaged over three years.

This raises a pertinent question that I put to the Minister: what will now happen to all of those properties that have had their concessional valuations removed by the department's valutors over the past few years? How will they be advised of the changes to this Act and about the fact that they may now be reconsidered for concessional rating valuation purposes? As I said earlier, I welcome these amendments and I thank the Minister for bringing this amendment to the House. I assure him that the City Country Alliance will now be supporting this Bill.

Mr Welford: What was that last issue you were inquiring about?

Dr PRENZLER: The question I asked the Minister related to properties that have lost their concessional valuation ratings but which will, under this new amendment, probably come under that ambit again. What I am asking the Minister is: how will these properties that have lost their concessional valuations be advised of the changes to this Act and about the fact that they may now be reconsidered for concessional rating valuation purposes? There are a lot of them out there.

Recently, I have brought to the Minister's attention at least one of those cases in my own electorate. A gentleman who had about 300 acres of property had sold most of it to his children. He left himself with 80 acres on which he raises emus and produces emu oil. He also raises cattle. He has recently had his valuation increased because he is no longer considered to be a farming enterprise. He certainly does come within the ambit of the Minister's new amendment. I am wondering in what way will the department advise these people, or will this happen at the next valuation? Will they have to pay the increased rates till then? What will the Minister do in relation to that? That is what I am asking.

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (5.10 p.m.), in reply: I would like to thank all honourable members who participated in the debate for their contributions. The reason for bringing this amending Bill on now and moving it up the list is obviously because the next round of valuations is due to be made on properties as at 1 October. So it is important that we pass these amendments so that they can be applied and provide the concessions and

clarifications that are needed for the next round of valuations.

The shadow Minister, the member for Keppel, has foreshadowed some amendments, and I have looked closely at them. I understand what the member for Keppel and the member for Warrego are driving at in relation to clause 5, but for reasons that I will explain in a moment I do not think I can accept the amendment. The amendment proposed by the Opposition actually makes the matter more confusing. This amending Bill would provide a clear distinction between a farming concession and an exclusive sole dwelling concession. In a sense, the concession is not a reduction in the valuation but a recognition that subdivision alone is not grounds for increasing the valuation. It is treated as if there is no subdivision.

The Opposition's amendment confuses that by including the farm component in the definition that is specifically designed to deal with only exclusive single dwellings. As I indicated to the Opposition spokesman, I did try to look at whether some variation on his amendment might be possible. It confuses those two concepts of the single exclusive dwelling and the farm when they are already quite separately defined in the Act. It just does not fit in this particular component. He has inserted his amendment into the definition of "single exclusive dwelling", which just cannot fit if "farm" is in there. At this stage I cannot accept that amendment.

I thank Opposition members for their comments in relation to many of the other matters. The issue raised in relation to clause 31 by the Opposition spokesman about the payment of a fee for the valuation roll by local government is not new. There is a longstanding arrangement whereby local governments pay for the valuation rolls that are prepared by the State and provided to local government for this purpose.

The member for Warrego was also interested in clause 5, and he raised some concerns about the operation of the Land Court. I believe that the Land Court still provides land-holders with relatively good access—very accessible by court standards—to justice. It does have a pretty significant workload and we do need to keep an eye on that so that there is no blow-out in delays. So far—in the past 12 months at least—the court has managed to keep delays relatively short. I think people can get a hearing within three months. It is pretty good at the moment and the court operation does a good job on that front.

The member for Tablelands raised issues about the rights to harvest on small blocks. The issue of the right to harvest really does not arise in relation to valuations, but I can assure the House that nothing in the vegetation management legislation denies people access to the right to harvest planted timber. It is only vegetation that is in place at the time that the Vegetation Management Act takes effect that is protected by that Act. The member also spoke about native title implications in his usually confused way and raised the question about the link between water entitlements and land entitlements, which really had nothing to do with this Bill.

The member for Redlands asked, as did some other members, about the discretionary powers in relation to the frequency of valuations. There has been a longstanding debate about whether valuations should be done more frequently or less frequently. Under the coalition they were made more frequent by legislative amendment many years ago simply because in times when property values were moving swiftly, it was deemed appropriate that there should be incremental adjustments rather than waiting for five years and then having an enormous leap in values. However legitimate that was, it certainly caused people to be concerned.

I think the concern about frequency of valuations, which was also raised by the member for Indooroopilly, is satisfactorily resolved with the current arrangement. That is, on the face of things, valuations are done on an annual basis. But in those areas—perhaps more remote parts of the State—where very little change in valuation occurs or very few sales occur, it is appropriate to extend the valuation period to maybe every second year.

The member for Redlands raised the issue of the southern Moreton Bay islands. I can assure him that the issues that have been causing concern will be addressed by the Government's recent announcement that those people who have existing rights will be able to exercise them for up to two years and the valuations in the next round will reflect that entitlement.

The member for Gladstone raised the issue of valuation notices. As I understand it, notices are always issued. I certainly receive my notice annually. Now every time a valuation is conducted, land-holders receive in the mail a notice of the valuation and a notice of their entitlement to object to that valuation through the usual objection process. I thank the member for Gladstone for her recognition of the amendments we are making in this

amending Bill to acknowledge the changed living circumstances of people so that "single dwelling house" now includes things such as granny flats and duplex apartments, and those arrangements will not be subject to increased valuations as a result of the broadening of the notional concession provided.

There is a complex difficulty in areas where few or no sales occur. It does make it more difficult to undertake valuations, but it needs to be remembered that our valuation system is based on valuations of unimproved value. I think this is something that the member for Indooroopilly and the member for Gladstone need to remember. It is the unimproved value that is currently assessed. In areas where there are no undeveloped blocks, again that complicates the valuation process and it is certainly understandable that people start to see the valuation process as some kind of arcane art rather than some sort of measured and scientific process.

The member for Gladstone also raised the question of State-based valuations and the fees charged and made reference to whether the State or local government should undertake their own valuations. There is no reason in principle why councils could not engage independent valuation consultants to do their own valuations. One of the discussions that has been held recently between the State and the LGAQ has been about the cost of valuations. Some local governments have suggested that they could do it less expensively than it costs the State to do it. Frankly, we do need to discuss those options. If there are better arrangements, then I am certainly relaxed about exploring them.

Finally, the member for Lockyer also raised the rates issue in relation to valuations. All I can say is that councils and all governments are faced with these criticisms about the impact of valuations on rates. However, the reality is that councils have the opportunity to differentially rate, to delay the impact of valuation changes on rates and to spread any valuation increase over three years so that the full impact of any valuation increase does not affect the rates until after three years. There are all sorts of combinations of mechanisms that a number of councils already have in place to minimise the impacts of valuation shifts on people's rates.

Unfortunately, there are some councils who choose not to do that. It is up to ratepayers to vote those councils out and vote in people who put in place proper arrangements that reflect the same arrangements that councils such as the

Brisbane City Council already have in place to minimise those impacts. For example, councils can put in place arrangements to cap any rates change for pensioners or low-income earners. Every member of this House ought to be able to say to constituents that their local council has no justification for blaming the State for the impact of rates which the councils have the unique legal authority to set.

The Land Court is one of the more accessible courts. The member for Lockyer raised concerns about access to the Land Court and costs. The reality is that there is little or no cost for access to the Land Court. Anyone can go there and represent themselves. There is no demand for legal representation. The Land Court is a very user-friendly court. Although it is called a court, by the character of its operations it is in fact a tribunal. I know that the members of the court give a very generous, sympathetic and fair hearing to any individual who wants to appear before it, whether it be on valuation objections or anything else. I commend the Bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP)
(Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Mr WELFORD (5.23 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 5, line 26, 'orchard trees.'—

omit, insert—

'orchard trees; and'."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr LESTER: I move the following amendment—

"At page 5, line 31—

omit, insert—

'(a) the land has ceased to be used for the purpose of a single dwelling house or farm and is divided into individual lots; and'."

The reason the Opposition has moved this amendment is that it has some concern that the definition proposed for "single dwelling houses" and "farms" is inappropriately restrictive in one area. Whilst it appreciates the difficulties in defining these terms, the

Opposition amendment is aimed at providing a fairer application of those definitions.

Mr HOBBS: I heard the Minister's comments earlier. I agree that we have to make sure that we get this right. We do not want this issue so complicated that it is difficult for departmental officers to try to work out who is eligible and who is not. However, that was not the reason for our amendment. The Explanatory Notes state that clause 5 provides—

"... a clarification that land developed for subdivision for the sale of individual lots does not qualify under the meaning of 'exclusively used' for a concessional valuation for 'single dwelling house' or 'farming' purposes under section 17."

Therefore, my question to the Minister is this: if one has a farm that is presently entitled to a section 17 valuation and the owner decides to sell and advertises in the local paper that the various blocks are for sale, at what stage does the Act trigger the loss of that concessional valuation? That is the first point.

The second point is that we have to make sure that, if the purpose of the Act is to be consistent, the reality is that that person has not changed the use of that land in any way at all in a physical sense, apart from the fact that they have to sell. That sale may be forced by hardship, by family breakdown or by any other means. It may even be voluntary. We need to ensure that there is some system to clarify this issue. If this amendment is not suitable, perhaps we could look at putting something else in place, or perhaps the Minister can give an assurance to this House tonight that the intention of the Act would not be to in fact catch those people.

Mr WELFORD: As I said before, I understand the point the member is driving at. He is looking at a situation where someone has subdivided their block and intends to sell the allotments but cannot sell and, as a result, is still living in the house. I think the member's question is what the impact will be on them.

Firstly, we need to look at what section 17 is about. Section 17 states—

"In making a valuation of the unimproved value of land exclusively used for purposes of a single dwelling house or for purposes of farming, any enhancement in that value for which the land has been subdivided by survey or has a potential use for industrial, subdivisional or any other purposes shall be disregarded irrespective of whether or not, in case of potential use as aforesaid,

that potential is lawful when the valuation is made."

In other words, the mere fact that it is subdivided will not mean that it takes the higher value of the subdivided lot as the valuation. It is treated as if it has not been subdivided. So they get that concession while they are living there after it has been subdivided.

That was always the case. What is uncertain is what happens if they are in the business of subdividing for commercial development and there is no farming; they are only engaged in the commercial business of subdivision. There needed to be clarification of when that business starts. That is why the amendment I have included here clarifies that the business of subdivision starts once it is subdivided and once it is advertised or the first subdivision has been sold. Once the owner has started advertising or they have sold the first block, then it is a business; it is not just a dwelling house. This clarifies the existing law which applied until now but which needed to be clarified to avoid dispute.

As a former Minister, the member will recall that there is that concession for developers who subdivide an area to, pending the sale of the individual lots, have the area treated at a discount valuation up until the point of that sale. As I understand it, that concession can still apply here. Even once the lots start to be sold, the unsold lots will still be treated at the original valuation—apportioned as if the whole area were still unsold. So they will get that concession until each lot is sold.

This really just clarifies the law that we both previously applied in our respective Governments. The Opposition member is concerned about delays in sales having an impact. As I said to him before, I do not think his amendment actually addresses that issue. Here we have said, "Once you start advertising, once the commercial business of advertising the sales is started, or you have made your first sale, that is evidence that it is no longer exclusive as a single dwelling."

I will undertake to monitor that very closely. If there are instances of hardship or unfairness that arise from this, we can come back and review it again. We needed some criteria for identifying when the commercial business of property development starts, and I think this is a reasonable first definition—that is, the land-holder has not just done the subdivision, which is the way the law read before, but has also started advertising or has made a sale. That is what we have done to clarify things. I do not think the member's

amendment really helps clarify that element any further.

Mr HOBBS: I think we are getting pretty close to agreement. I give the example of a widow who has a block of land. She puts it up for sale and advertises it in the local paper. That is evidence that there is a change going on, but it might not necessarily impact on her at that stage. If she sells the block—that block obviously would be treated on its merits—she would be—

Mr Welford: She retains the section 17 concession for all the rest of it.

Mr HOBBS: The same as the development blocks. I think that will be okay. Also, the Minister has said that he is prepared to monitor it. If there is any problem, we can come back to it.

Amendment (Mr Lester) negatived.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—

Mr WELFORD (5.32 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 10, lines 23 and 24—

omit, insert—

'(4) If the market survey report states there has been no significant change in values in the area, a regulation may extend the period for the making of a particular valuation by not more than 2 years.'

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 17, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 20, as read, agreed to.

Clause 21—

Mr LESTER (5.33 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 12, line 21, 'The Minister may appoint'—

omit, insert—

'The Minister must appoint'."

I am very concerned that this clause provides that the Minister "may" appoint an independent person as chairman of such a conference. There is no specification of the circumstances in which the Minister should follow this course of action and I am concerned that the potential exists for land-holders to be at a serious disadvantage in conference proceedings when no independent chairman is present. Land-holders may be unaware of the full extent of their rights and

not able to confer with the chief executive on an equal footing.

If indeed the Bill is to achieve the objectives as outlined in the Explanatory Notes for without-prejudice adjudication, I think this clause needs strengthening to require that the Minister must appoint such an independent chairman. Accordingly, the Opposition moves this amendment in the interests of protecting the rights of land-holders and ensuring the accountability and transparency of the legislation. I would hope and indeed expect, given the Beattie Government's self-proclaimed commitment to open and accountable Government, that the amendment will be accepted.

Mr WELFORD: I will explain the purpose of that provision for the Opposition spokesman. This adds to the existing arrangements for the consideration of routine objections. The existing section 43 provides that the chief executive, through departmental officers delegated with the responsibility, must hear objections. That is just the standard objection process where someone files notice of their objection and an arrangement is made for a valuation officer of the department to meet and hear that objection and review the valuation.

This amendment, providing a new section 43A and 43B, clarifies how the hearing of that objection must be conducted. However, it is not the situation that in all cases an independent chair of that objection process is necessary. The vast majority of objections are dealt with by the normal, routine process of a departmental officer from the valuation section simply meeting with the land-holder, going through the recent sales evidence of the area and explaining to the land-holder the nature of the valuation. The land-holder has the opportunity in that objection hearing process to alert the valuer to the various grounds upon which they believe the valuation should be adjusted. Clearly, we do not want the Minister intervening in every one of those objections to appoint someone from outside simply to be an independent chair and just sit there.

The provision the Opposition is seeking to amend relates to exceptional circumstances. For example, the year before last there was a whole range of objectors in one particular area over on the south side of Brisbane. It did require me to have an independent valuer from outside the department come in and do a review of the 100 or more objections in that particular precinct. This amendment gives me as Minister the authority to do that. That is why it says that the Minister may appoint a third

person to come in and do that sort of thing. Obviously the Opposition does not want to force me to do that on every occasion.

I think once the Opposition member understands that explanation he may see that his amendment really is not necessary to achieve what he is trying to achieve. Everyone will still get their right of objection. Everyone will still have their objection addressed through a formal objection hearing that gives them every right to make sure the issues are canvassed from the beginning. They do not have any limitations on grounds they can raise to have the objection reviewed as part of that objection process. It is only in exceptional circumstances that there needs to be a specific power for the Minister to appoint someone formally as a third-party independent chair of those objection hearings. That is why compelling me to appoint an independent person really does not serve any purpose.

Mr LESTER: I thank the Minister. I am still of the view that it would be better if this provision were included in the Bill.

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

AYES, 38—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalglish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 39—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Resolved in the **negative**.

Clause 21, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 22 to 33, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 1 June (see p. 1538).

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (5.47 p.m.): This Bill is really a machinery Bill to put in place the intentions of this Government and what were certainly the intentions of the previous Government. In terms of the background to it, as the Minister and many members would be aware, in August 1997, when we were in Government, the then Minister introduced an amendment to the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. That amendment, amongst other things, redrafted the regulation-making power under the Act. Previously under that power, there were specifically listed a number of matters in relation to 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—and I have spoken to the previous Minister—that this was done as a convenience to replace what had been a long list of matters in relation to which regulations could be made under the Act. That regulation did not refer specifically to fees. However, it was always the understanding that fees were contemplated as being included in administrative matters, and it was intended to continue to provide for fees to be so prescribed by regulation. That 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. But as the Minister said in his second-reading speech, he has been advised that the ability to prescribe fees under the Act had been questioned; hence, this amendment seeks to clarify this issue.

The Opposition has no problem with this amendment Bill. We understand the intent of it and we support it.

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (5.50 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable member for Caloundra, the shadow Minister, for her support for the Bill. The object of the Bill, as I have indicated and as the honourable member for Caloundra has also indicated, is to provide clarity as to the regulatory power of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 to prescribe fees. The Bill seeks also to validate the collection of fees since 1 February 1998.

However, since introducing the Workplace Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2000, my department has received legal advice that still

outlines some concerns as to whether the legislation I have put before the House does in fact remove all potential doubt regarding the ability of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 to impose a fee upon matters such as the notification of building and construction work. Therefore, I have to inform the House that I propose an amendment to the Bill, which is being circulated now. It does not actually seek to modify the amendment contained in the legislation but rather provides further clarity as to the validity of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 to make regulations imposing fees for certain things. This amendment to the amendment Bill seeks to make it as absolutely clear as we can. I seek the support of the House for it. It is to do exactly what was intended with the original amendment Bill. Again, concerns were expressed in relation to the matter that I have outlined. Therefore, it is my intention in Committee to further amend the amendment Bill.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—

Mr BRADDY (5.52 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 4, after line 16—
insert—

' (7) Without limiting subsection (5) or (6), the power to make a regulation to prescribe fees payable includes, and is declared to have always included, the power to prescribe fees payable for the following—

- (a) notification of building and construction work;
- (b) registrations, including registrations for registrable workplaces and registrable plant;
- (c) certifications, including certifications for prescribed occupations;
- (d) appointments, including appointments as accredited providers.'."

Amendment agreed to.

Mrs SHELDON: I have a question for the Minister. In so prescribing A, B, C and D, are these the only fees payable and by so

prescribing are we not getting into a situation where things not so prescribed could then subsequently be queried?

Mr BRADDY: There are a couple of others, but the intent of subclause (vii) where it makes reference to "without limiting subsection (v) or (vi)" is that it will cover any others that are not specifically referred to in the amendment.

Clause 3, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

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

EMPLOYMENT

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—CCAQ) (5.56 p.m.): I move—

"That this Parliament supports Australian workers in their campaign to preserve Australian jobs by opposing the current unbridled free trade agenda."

What do the sugar industry, the dairy industry and the majority of other rural industries have in common? They are all slowly being undermined and eroded by the Australian Government's blind adherence to free trade policies. This is not the first time that I have spoken on this topic and I am sure it will not be the last. What riles me, however, is how members of the Labor Party opposite have scoffed at my appeals to adopt fair trade instead of globalisation and free trade. They did not show concern months ago that the sugarcane growers could not meet their basic operating costs—the cries from the bush, once again, falling on deaf ears. That is not surprising given that Labor has been blindly pushing the free trade barrow since 1983.

However, the insidious job-destroying nature of National Competition Policy, free trade and globalisation is finally being realised in Labor ranks, as I knew it would. This became evident in the lead-up to the ALP national conference when Australian Manufacturing Workers Union Secretary David Harrison spoke out against free trade. With the final realisation that free trade is costing Australian jobs, Mr Harrison described the free trade policy as completely out of touch with the aspirations of the majority of Australians. The cries from the bush are now echoing in our cities and homes and it is for this reason that I support the AMWU in its campaign to preserve the Australian lifestyle by opposing the current, unbridled free trade agenda.

I have said repeatedly that Australia is a lone player on the level playing field of so-called free trade. The sugarcane farmers in my electorate know all too well how consecutive Labor and coalition Governments have robbed them of their tariff on imported sugar and forced export parity pricing on the domestic market. When the import tariff was removed from the sugar industry and not the textile and car manufacturing industries, the politicians of the day kept telling us to be patient and wait for the WTO talks to square up the global situation. Those talks in Seattle earlier this year failed again and the Federal Government continued to make a mockery of our farmers on the international stage. The whole WTO fiasco has highlighted the arrogance of the major political parties, which believe America, Europe and Asia will join Australia in a pantomime on the stage of free trade.

Colleagues, when Queensland cane farmers this year watched the sugar price plummet to a 14-year low, Canegrowers general manager, Ian Ballantyne, said that the farmers best hopes were through the WTO talks. In February, Mr Ballantyne said—

"A freeing up of trade in sugar will benefit us by bringing the world market price up by 25%, closer to the cost of production of efficient producers."

The benefit never came and the fiasco that unfolded in Seattle cast a dark cloud over the Queensland sugar industry, helped in no part by the flawed Sugar Industry Bill, which passed through this House not so long ago. The Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority predicted that more than 800 Queensland families would walk off their farms this year. Consecutive Federal Governments have hoodwinked Australian canefarmers into believing that there is some hope that the major trading groups such as the United States and Europe would join us on the level playing field. Last year, we even heard the outlandish claim that the Federal Trade Minister, Mark Vaile, might secure a 40% increase in the world sugar price through the WTO talks. What rubbish that was! At Seattle, that claim had proved to be utter gibberish.

For years, the peddlers of free trade have told rural families to wait for the next round of GATT or WTO talks, and then the next round and then the next round. The farmers to whom I speak have had a gutful of the empty rhetoric being pedalled by the free trade advocates. Those people merely dress up Australian industry as a court jester and parade it around in front of the world for other nations to laugh at. I just hope that it is not too late to get back

some of the dignity for the farmers who produce the foodstuffs that feed this nation.

It is also quite ironic that the Labor Party, which has scoffed at farmers' pleas for fair trade, now faces increasing pressure from within its own camp. The tip of the iceberg came with the predictions made yesterday by Queensland's biggest sugar cooperative, Mackay Sugar. Over the past five years, there has been no incentive for the sugar industry to expand and, as a direct result, Mackay Sugar expects to lay off 105 workers, one seventh of its work force. That comes not long after the Queensland Labor Government offered a pathetic \$10m assistance package for the sugar industry, taken mostly from existing schemes anyway. The Australian Workers Union is watching the Mackay Sugar redundancy process with a close eye, no doubt wondering how the party it supports could have let it down so dismally.

Is Labor really helping the workers? My City Country Alliance colleagues and I seem to be the only servants of the public who realise that, by making trade fair and protecting Australian farmers from the many subsidy and tariff schemes in place overseas, we can in turn preserve the many jobs associated with and created by primary industries all the way down the line—the electrical positions, the fitters and turners, the boilermakers, the cane locomotive drivers, the payroll secretaries and the cane harvester drivers. When Queensland's 6,000 canefarmers are in time crippled financially by their Government, down the track the workers hurt, too. At least the traditional Labor supporter is realising that they have been betrayed by their party—a party that has adopted the free trade agenda hijacked by the textbook bureaucrats.

On paper and in theory, free trade seems like a good idea, with everyone agreeing to drop their protection at the same time. However, I say to my colleagues that this is the real world and that they should wake up and smell the coffee and realise that our trade competitors and their elected Governments will continue to protect their citizens and constituents, unlike us, who have failed to do so. For example, Australian sugar producers are forced to sell at the world sugar price both domestically and internationally. Members may wonder where other countries stand in relation to free trade. In relation to the sugar industry, I will give them some idea.

The United States Government ensures that their refiners pay their millers at least US21c a pound for raw sugar, which is more than twice the world price. The European

Union has a quota for domestic beet sugar, which pays well above the world price. A removal of tariff barriers on farm products by the US would see the traded price of sugar increase by at least 17%. Japanese farmers receive 60% of their income from Government subsidies.

Late last year, the US Department of Agriculture announced plans to slash imports of Australian sugar by 2.8% while boosting international production. In July this year, the EU Farm Council voted not to drop its intervention prices for sugar from 63.19 euros for 100 kilograms of white sugar and 52.37 euros for raw sugar.

When the sugar price hit a 14-year low this year, Australian growers, forced by legislation to sell raw sugar domestically at the world price, received between \$180 and \$200 a tonne. That price is below the cost of production. However, Brazilian growers were paid \$315 a tonne domestically while Thailand growers pocketed \$545 a tonne. But that is not the best of it. The US canegrowers got \$632 a tonne domestically while European growers were paid \$1,090 a tonne. That is more than five times what Aussie farmers were paid. Shame, absolute shame!

Despite the supposed benefits of the deregulation of the Australian sugar market, the cost of refined sugar in supermarkets has actually risen to \$2.30 a kilogram, which is over 10 times the price of bulk refined sugar. Therefore, it is with pleasure that I move that this Parliament supports Australian workers in their campaign to preserve Australian jobs by opposing the current unbridled free trade agenda.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (6.05 p.m.): It is with much pleasure that I second the motion moved by the member for Burdekin that this Parliament supports Australian workers in their campaign to preserve Australian jobs by opposing the current unbridled free trade agenda.

Queenslanders are indeed twice blessed. We live in the greatest State in the richest nation on earth. Then why are our children filled with despair? Why are they increasingly becoming slaves to illicit drugs? Why are they taking their own lives? The answer is quite simple: economic rationalism is taking their jobs and destroying their morale. Unemployment is one of the most soul-destroying conditions known to modern man. Almost equally devastating is underemployment.

No matter how the bureaucrats fudge and confuse, no matter how many part-time

schemes they introduce to artificially deflate the unemployment figures, we as a nation are facing an unemployment crisis of mammoth proportions. The social consequences of this escalating situation will be horrendous unless Governments at all levels start to address the impact of unfair trade. We hear a lot about Australia becoming the clever country. If we are so clever, why are we allowing the transnationals to rape and pillage our country, helping themselves to our resources and paying little or no taxes? Why then are we allowing imports from multinational manufacturers, who grow rich on slave labour in Third World countries and at the same time take away jobs from Australian workers? Why then are we allowing our manufacturing industries and primary industries to be devastated by unfair competition from heavily subsidised imports only to satisfy the so-called level playing field? We give away our resources, we export our jobs, and we condemn our youth to a life as peasants. I ask: how clever is that?

Before the rabid free traders on both sides of this House start frothing at the mouth—as they did just a minute ago—and start yelling abuse about fortress Australia, let me tell them that we are not about rampant protectionism; we would not support tariffs or quotas just to prop up domestic inefficiencies. We do not support protectionism just to give our industries an unfair advantage over our trading partners. However, I can assure members that we do not accept and will not accept that our industries must compete with one hand tied behind their backs.

Yes, I am well aware of that tired old tale that, as we are major exporters, we must lead the charge to free trade. That is absolute rubbish as well. If we are about to take that view that we should import only from countries that have zero or near-zero tariffs, subsidies and quotas, we would be unable to find a trading partner. No-one except Australia is playing that silly game. While Australian workers and Australian farmers are being forced into unemployment and bankruptcy by playing the silly free trade game, our competitors are being subsidised to the hilt by their Governments, who care about providing jobs.

Many OECD countries subsidise their farmers to the extent of around 60% to 65% of their gross farm income. Our farmers receive 6%, and Governments of both persuasions want to reduce that even further. This is nothing other than absolute lunacy in terms of world trade. No-one imports from Australia because they think we are good global

citizens; they import from us because our products are top quality, the price is right and the importing country needs those products.

If manufacturing industry workers and farmers are in employment they are providing employment for workers in other industries. It is time we took a stance on this issue before our manufacturing base is decimated. When all of the infrastructure has been sold to Japan for scrap, when all of the factory sites have been sold to multinational developers to build golf courses, when all of the expertise has been lost and we are pouring millions of dollars into Indonesia, China, Taiwan or wherever else to import products we can and should be making here, who will fund the welfare payments to our masses of unemployed? One does not have to be Einstein to work out that there will be no welfare payments in the future; our nation will be reduced to nothing other than Third World status, with all of our people unemployed.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (6.10 p.m.):
The Government moves the following amendment—

"Remove all words after 'campaign' and insert—

'to promote Australian jobs and commit to policies which improve local content in manufacturing and develop jobs through industries such as food processing for the benefit of Queenslanders.' "

The amendment should be supported by all honourable members. Unlike the motion in its original form, this amendment seeks to acknowledge the reality, namely, that we are all for jobs growth. The unamended motion seeks just to preserve jobs. It does not recognise that this place will grow. It suggests that the economy is somehow under siege. They do not have to take my word for it. I cite the study done by the international company Goldman Sachs, through the Goldman Sachs Research Institute, which shows that the Australian economy is in its ninth year of growth. That is unprecedented.

We recognise that not all sectors and regions have shared in that prosperity. That study found that Australia's productivity performance in the nineties has even been more impressive than that of the United States. But Australia's experience is different from that of the United States. Whereas the growth in the US is related to new economic developments, Australia's growth reflects 15 years of extensive policy reform. The study also found that, in spite of Australia's reputation as an old economy, Australia is in fact highly tech literate. Computer use, Internet

and IT investment are amongst the highest in the Asia-Pacific. For these reasons, the impact of so-called new economy factors over the next 10 years is likely to be greater than in the past. Queensland will benefit from this boost and, therefore, we have every reason to be optimistic.

Let us turn now to the food processing sector. Some 30% of total manufacturing turnover in Queensland is in food processing. It employs 34,000 people. The exports are impressive. In 1998-99 meat exports were worth \$2.1 billion and sugar exports were worth \$1.3 billion. Food processing is vital to our primary industries sector. A study by ABARE over the period 1955-56 to 1996-97 found that estimates of farmers' terms of trade over that 40 years showed that, whilst there were significant fluctuations from year to year, the long-term trend is downward. That is why we have had to concentrate on food processing through meat. It was not so long ago that the honourable members up the back of the Chamber were leading protests about the pork industry because of what they perceived to be the irredeemable decline of that industry. Let us have a look at it.

Darling Downs Bacon has redeveloped its pork processing facility to export accreditation. It is now one of Australia's largest companies, employing over 600 people, with 72 of those being added recently—\$60m in capital. Nippon Meats is now undertaking a massive piggery in the area. Scoickers in Kingaroy has gained export accreditation and, as a direct result, added 50 jobs. It will add 100 jobs in Stage 2. There are great opportunities in goat meat, because there is no religious bar to it.

In Charleville we visited the firm of Western Exports. We helped it with a rendering plant and, as a direct result, it put on 27 employees. When it has a second shift in operation, that will mean another 70 jobs for Charleville. I spoke with the honourable member for Warrego. He says that the unemployment rate in Charleville as a direct result of this is practically zero. They are also working through the TAFE.

Locally, Australian Country Choice, which is retailing to Coles, represents a \$24m investment. It will have 680 jobs by the year 2004. AMH in Dinmore, near the electorate of the honourable member for Ipswich West, is now an export facility. It has created 400 new jobs in 18 months. It has had \$92m in investment to date and will have a further \$50m over three years. Warwick Bacon, on the Darling Downs, has 300 employees. Every single day it sends at least six containers of

meat to the Asian export market. We can buy avocados down the road from the Queensland Avocados factory for three for a dollar. However, because it processes and mixes them with other things to make guacamole, it can be sold for between \$10 and \$14 a tub.

Time expired.

Mr KAISER (Woodridge—ALP) (6.17 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by my colleague the member for Logan. The motion as it stands at the moment is nothing more than a cruel hoax on Australian workers. Many people in my electorate have been left behind by globalisation, too. My electorate is one of the most disadvantaged in this State in terms of unemployment rates. There are people in my area who have been left behind by globalisation and global market forces. But the answer lies in freer trade, not in restricting trade. There is not an easy solution. It is not easy to persuade people on that. But I would rather tell them the truth and do something for them than lie to them simply in an attempt to persuade them to vote for me, which is all that the crowd opposite at the back of the Chamber are doing.

It will be interesting to see how the Liberals and Nationals respond to this motion tonight. It will be very interesting to see what the free traders in the Liberal Party do and what the protectionists in the National Party do when it comes to voting in this debate tonight. It will be interesting to see whether they split or pursue a course of electoral expedience as well.

The answer does lie in freer trade, because trade opens markets. India, for example, has a rising middle class. The middle class in that country is as big as the Australian domestic market. What do members opposite say to workers in industries that are already exporting? What do they say to people in manufacturing jobs employed by exporters? What do they say to them in relation to their protectionist argument? Do they say, "No, whack up the protection barriers and tariffs", which are little more than a big flat tax on working people? Do they say that to them? Do they take away their opportunities to prosper and to provide for their families simply because of their ideological bent against free trade?

Free trade promotes innovation and boosts productivity. It tends to create the quality, rewarding jobs that I want my kids to fill. I do not want my kids to fill dead-end jobs or jobs that do not have a future. I want my kids to fill jobs that do have a future in interesting, quality work. That is not to say that

there are not legitimate concerns about free trade. Of course there are. I do not believe that Australian Governments should take a purely free market, laissez faire approach. It needs to be moderated and we need to match it with Government intervention here at home. As I have argued since the day I got into this place, globalisation requires greater intervention on the part of Governments, not less. Let us have a look at the record on some of the things that need to be done.

For example, when it comes to industry policy, like the kind of industry policy that this amendment proposes, what have we seen the Federal Government do—the Federal Government that members opposite at the back of the Chamber supported through their preferences at the last election? What did it do with the support that they gave them to get into office? It ripped the heart out of industry policy in this country.

Globalisation also requires research and development for businesses and industries to prosper. What has the Federal Government done? It has ripped the heart out of research and development. This is the Federal Government that members opposite at the back of the Chamber helped to install through their preferences. Globalisation requires labour market programs and labour force readjustment programs to ensure that workers can move from job to job in these days when no job will last forever. What has the Federal Government done? It has ripped the heart out of labour market programs. This is the Federal Government that they supported through their preferences. That is their approach.

Globalisation requires greater investment in education to promote the concept of lifelong learning, the concept that no-one is going to stay in one job forever anymore. We need to have a flexible education system to ensure that people are able to move from job to job, to make sure that they have the skills and the opportunities to move into the exciting new industries that are being created as a result of free trade and globalisation.

But what has the Federal Government done to education? There has been declining investment in education—the same Federal Government that the members up the back supported by allocating their preferences to its members. In supporting that Government by allocating those preferences, they have opposed everything that they say they stand for. The Federal Government has no intervention, no industry policy, no research and development, no labour market programs and no enhanced education.

People, particularly those on this side of the House, are concerned about the plight of workers in other countries, too. The answer to that does not involve cutting off trade with them. It does not involve cutting off your nose to spite your face. The answer to that lies in strengthening organisations such as the International Labour Organisation so they can actually play a legitimate role in making sure that workers' rights are protected in those Third World countries. The answer does not lie in cutting off trade and cutting off the opportunities of those people to prosper and to provide for their families.

Time expired.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (6.20 p.m.): I rise to speak to this motion because good, hardworking people in my own electorate have lost to overseas contractors the work that they are very able to do. When Callide B was being constructed, much of the infrastructure was brought in by ship. It was put together like a meccano set on hard ground here, but the initial welding work was done overseas. Incredibly, about 30% of the welding had to be rewelded. The majority of the high pressure joints had to be redone locally by our own contractors, and they did it well and they did it efficiently. It appears that Comalco may do the same thing, that is, have their engineering work done overseas and ship it here in bulk. Then the local workers will get the opportunity only to put it together and fix up any mistakes made by overseas contractors.

Recently I attended a meeting held in my electorate between workers and the AWU about the very same issue. It was well attended by people who just wanted a fair go. Local people know that they could not do all the work on a project the size of the Comalco project even if they formed local partnerships. But I believe that, if they called for tenders across Queensland and interstate, a great deal of the work could be done here, and our contractors should get that opportunity. Although it would be a new type of venture in which contractors get together and apportion areas of the work so that it can be done in a timely fashion and cost effectively, I believe it is an approach that can and should be attempted. The frustration for many is that often they cannot get even a toe in to tender, let alone apply their skills to provide an excellent product and ensure that not only local jobs are retained but also that new jobs are created.

My own electorate contains a good number of very efficient engineering works. One, I believe, is a world leader in innovation.

They all provide quality workmen and women and they are all keen to add to our economic strength, and I think every member here would think the same.

Mr Mickel: Do they sell it?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Some do. Every member here would echo that same theme. This extends to food manufacture and mango production. We export that as well.

Mr Mickel: We sell that overseas, do we?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Yes. It also extends to clothing and automotive castings. We have a lot of opportunities to do work locally, and the local contractors need to get the opportunity to tender.

I recognise that we are working in a global arena, but we should at least give our Australian workers—our Queenslanders and our locals—that opportunity when these major projects are being built. The Labor Party has a local content policy, and I think that is a step in the right direction. However, the policy has to be followed up by actions, and those actions are particularly important when major projects, such as Comalco, are on the horizon to ensure that local workers have an opportunity to be involved in the construction work—not the fixing up, not the meccano set type welding together, but the primary production.

The original motion says "to preserve Australian jobs by opposing current unbridled free trade". Both the original motion and the amendment are sound. Both of them are an attempt to provide an opportunity for Australian workers to work and to contribute to our own prosperity. I am not saying just in Queensland and I am not saying just in my electorate; I am saying across Australia. We have the ability to compete on a world market, and I am not arguing that. I am saying that our Australian workers have to have the opportunity to be able to prove it.

Some of the major industries that come here do not give locals even a chance to prove their credentials, and that is a tragedy. I have had both individuals and company representatives come to me and express their disappointment at the lack of opportunity. Many of them have admitted that when they tender they may be beaten on price, work or time frames, and that is a reason for companies to join together and provide the product in a timely fashion and in a cost effective way that the bigger companies will accept. However, again I go back to the argument that is presented to me over and over again: they must have the opportunity to

prove that they can do the job. I commend that motion to the House.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP)

(6.25 p.m.): This Beattie Government has been on about creating jobs and job opportunities throughout regional Queensland. We are trying to take Queensland from being a bulk commodities exporter to a place which value adds in the processed food sector. This is not easy because, firstly, we have to work out what we are marketing and who is our competition and, secondly, we need to see if we can grow the product and put it into a market at a cheaper price than our competitors and at the same time actively provide assistance to kick-start these industries. The best example of this is the meat industry.

The Government acted to revitalise the Queensland meat industry by establishing the Meat Processing Task Force in October 1998 as a one-stop shop for industry to facilitate new investment and re-investment, encourage the retention of successful business, and identify and coordinate opportunities for developing a world competitive industry. The task force also administers the Queensland meat processing development initiative, a \$20m, three-year program of financial assistance to industry proponents establishing sustainable export or import replacement value adding activities in Queensland. The task force comprises officers from the Department of State Development, the Department of Primary Industries, the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Since its inception, the task force has—

- implemented plans for the sale and redevelopment of Queensland Abattoir Corporation sites with a particular emphasis on further value adding, investment, and job retention and creation;

- provided financial assistance to beef processors, pork processors and chicken processors;

- received expressions of interest from 10 other projects under examination;

- facilitated the creation of over 2,000 jobs and \$200m of capital expenditure from the QMPDI grants made to date;

- assisted 26 companies under the WorkCover assistance scheme;

- assisted the Biloela abattoir to extend to a second shift by resolving problems with water access;

- commenced programs to improve supply chains to beef and pork abattoirs; and

conducted studies and implemented programs to significantly improve training in the industry.

In Mackay, Thomas Borthwick & Sons, an export meat processing plant, has been a beneficiary of this revitalisation by the Meat Industry Task Force. The plant, which is located at Bakers Creek, employs about 400 people and processes about 750 head a day. As a major employer, the plant contributes significantly to the Mackay economy. However, due to its location, which is adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, the plant will not meet new environmental regulations pertaining to the discharge of effluent. Borthwick & Sons, the task force, the Mackay City Council and I have been working through the issues relating to discharge. It is really through this cooperative approach that a solution has been formulated which will satisfy the environmental concerns and provide water for irrigation, which will assist other industries.

This issue was the major stumbling block to Borthwick's vision of increasing production at its plant from 750 head a day to at least 1,250 head a day. This increase in production will require a second shift, thus creating a further 200 jobs. Now that Borthwicks can see a solution, it has now embarked on a major upgrade of the plant to cater for the increase in production and more jobs. The Government will also provide assistance if required to train the additional new staff.

It is not just large processing plants that have benefited from the assistance of the task force. A family owned company operated by the Brand brothers in Mackay manufactured a product called Mackay's Own Beef Jerky. They approached me about accessing assistance to restart their manufacturing business. The company had run into some compliance problems and was forced to close its manufacturing operations.

This operation supplied beef jerky to many outlets in the Mackay region. There was an uproar when customers could not get their favourite beef jerky product. I contacted Bob McCarthy at the Meat Industry Task Force. He was able to provide a consultant who assisted the company with its compliance. In the discussions I had with the Brand brothers company, I asked where it wanted to be in the future. It started thinking about national and global markets. When it thought about it, it said, "Where do we go?" I then put it in contact with Borthwicks. Through this association, it now operates out of a kitchen at the meatworks. That business is growing, because Borthwicks has the marketing

experience and the Brand brothers have the product.

Time expired.

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—CCAQ) (6.30 p.m.): This evening I rise to support my colleagues in the City Country Alliance in our bid to preserve Australian jobs. For too long now the Labor, Liberal and National Parties have actively supported the fallacious notion of free world trade. They have not yet woken up to the fact that free trade is a misrepresentative name for totally unregulated trade. Every single marketplace in the world, from the smallest neighbourhood flea market to the largest international stock market, is distorted to some degree or other by influences outside the market.

The headlong worldwide rush to embrace the lunacy of free trade is driven by a fatally flawed economic theory known far and wide as economic rationalism. Economic rationalism is the belief that efficient resource allocation and economic growth are best promoted by a free market. Nothing could be further from the truth. The only growth that a free market promotes is growth of extreme greed amongst that tiny group of extremely wealthy people world wide who have been successful in using the aberrations of the free market system to monopolise and destroy their competition.

The whole philosophical thrust behind economic rationalism is the complete and utter destruction of any viable level of competition. That is right: the complete destruction of competition. Competition is the very last thing the free marketeers want. Real competition—fair competition—results in vendors in the marketplace that are neither exceptionally large nor exceptionally rich. Competition, by definition, forces companies who are selling into the same market to refine their cost structure and to reduce their profit margins to a point where they can make a living but cannot get big enough to gobble up the competition and achieve a monopoly. Free trade, on the other hand, provides the opportunity for voracious commercial predators to swallow the opposition lock, stock and barrel. The result is the type of unlevel playing field that Australian manufacturing industries have been battling for too many years.

Unfortunately, these industries and their workers have been fighting these battles without the assistance of their traditional allies, the Labor Party. The Labor Party, in case members opposite have forgotten, is supposed to be the champion of the working class. Unfortunately, in the words of Kim Beazley's father—

"The Labor Party used to be the cream of the working class but now they are the scum of the upper class."

With those few insightful words, Mr Beazley Sr has summed up members opposite to a tee: they have forgotten from whence they came.

Tonight City Country Alliance, the true friends of the Australian worker, is giving members of the Labor Party in Queensland the opportunity to stand up and be counted. We are giving members opposite the opportunity to rediscover their backbones, if they still have them, and to stand shoulder to shoulder with City Country Alliance and the working men and women of this once great nation. We are giving them the opportunity to turn their backs on year after year of hypocrisy. The Labor Party is very good at pointing the finger at its National Party mates over their inability to make a decision for themselves instead of having all their decisions made for them by their Liberal masters in Canberra. It is time the Labor Party of Queensland stood up for the working man against the Federal Labor Party, which is hell-bent on destroying Australian jobs in the name of free trade. This Parliament must join together in the interests of this nation and vote to oppose the current free trade agenda.

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (6.34 p.m.): It gives me no pleasure at all to stand in this place and again lecture the economic illiterates—

Mr Mickel: Snake-oil merchants.

Mr MUSGROVE: Indeed, the snake-oil merchants. The IQ of those who sit in the corner of this Chamber is on a collision course with—

Dr PRENZLER: I rise to a point of order. I take offence at that statement. I ask the member to withdraw it.

Mr MUSGROVE: Of course, I did not mention the honourable member by name. If I had, my comments would have been far less charitable. It is a well-known fact that we cannot possibly withdraw from globalisation. Indeed, globalisation has already happened. It is already a reality in the world. The consequences of withdrawing from globalisation put forward by the economic Neanderthals on the back row would mean an instantaneous withdrawal of financial capital from the Australian economy overnight. In recent days we have seen the fall of the Australian dollar and the flow-on effect that will most likely have on our interest rates. We can only imagine the horror that would be

bestowed on us if we adopted the policies from those people up the back row.

Another perfectly good reason why we must maintain our links with the international economy relates to the transmission of technology. Earlier in the debate a Government member indicated the take-up rate of things such as computers and IT and the high investment rates that we in Australia enjoy in those industries. That, in turn, gives us cause for optimism in the future. All that optimism would be thrown out the window with the nonsense we hear from the back row. In fact, I find it quite incredible as to how a nation with only 1% of the world's population should be afraid of expanding its markets internationally. How could a small trading nation such as ours succeed with the "fortress Australia" approach proposed by those on my far right?

The argument which those opposite perpetrate can be summed up best by the virgin in the brothel argument, that is, why should Australia reduce its tariffs if other countries with which we trade do not also reduce their tariffs? The short and simple answer to that is this: tariffs are a flat tax on ordinary working people and they are a tax on jobs. In economic terms, tariffs have essentially the same impact as a flat tax, which is the GST. They hurt the poorest; all they do is get working Australians to subsidise the big end of town. That is what honourable members to my right are standing up for.

Earlier in the debate the member for Woodridge indicated some of the features of his electorate. My electorate neighbours his electorate, yet our electorates are very different. That highlights the spatial inequities which are associated with economic change. Whilst the member for Woodridge's electorate has very high unemployment levels, my electorate has relatively low unemployment levels. Indeed, my electorate is the largest service centre between Brisbane and Newcastle in New South Wales.

Recently I was very pleased to present a grant for some \$80,000 to a local firm, Nu-Style Constructions, given to that company under the Department of State Development's Innovation Start-Up Scheme. Nu-Style Constructions has a magnificent new technology whereby ultra lightweight homes made out of something similar to polystyrene are constructed in the electorate. Solar panels are embedded in the walls. These homes can be transported anywhere around the world and constructed in a matter of hours. It is a fantastic innovation, and I presented the grant

to the company in my capacity as the Deputy Premier's representative on the Queensland Innovation Council. It is innovations such as these which lead to genuine jobs growth, genuine export earnings and security for all Australians.

In the future we must become a knowledge nation. The old factors of production—land, labour and capital—are now outmoded. Knowledge is the key driver of economic change in the world today and the key creator of economic wealth. With firms such as Nu-Style Constructions in my electorate creating world-beating technologies and exporting to the world, I am confident that we have a very bright future. The Government's achievements across the State in getting so very many projects up and running are second to none.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (6.40 p.m.): I am glad we have heard from the honourable member for Springwood, who is obviously a champion of the battler. I am sure he knows how much education each and every one of them has, and he has just wiped out half of his work force. Free trade! Those opposite have done a good job of making free trade sound good. I am sure all their union members are listening to them. They have made it sound really good.

If our competitors played the same game it would indeed be good. Our competitors, however, do not play the same game. We opened our doors and they shut theirs with tighter tariffs. If we listened to those on the other side we would think that the Americans and the Europeans did not have tariffs, that they did not have primage on their imports. If we believed everything they said we would be believing in the free trade theory. However, as I said, they shut their doors and they shut them with tighter tariffs.

We are not against free trade if free trade means fair trade, but we know that free trade does not mean fair trade. Our workers and our farmers are paying the price of Mr Keating's theories for the long haul. Those opposite really have a hide. I hear that Labor is blaming the National Party for selling off Telstra. Down in Tasmania at its national conference some in the Labor Party were knocking free trade. It was widely reported that the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union was extremely outspoken in its opposition to free trade. One would have to wonder how fair dinkum the AMWU is in its stance on this issue.

Numerous concerns have been expressed to us by grassroots members of the horrific destruction of the jobs that flows from a

blind allegiance to that flawed and simplistic theory of free trade. One of our most fundamental philosophies has always been to strive for the protection of Australian jobs, so it was natural that we would offer our support to the AMWU. However, just recently at the executive level they asked us to drop the issue. Well, we do not propose to drop it, because grassroots union members demonstrated that they did not want us to. The executive's allegiance might be to the Labor Party, but I know quite a few unions that are starting to move motions to have the little bit of money they used to send the Labor Party sent to other places.

It is arrogant to disregard the wishes of grassroots members, as demonstrated by the major political parties and the union bureaucracy that is allowing our nation to be reduced to a Third World status and allowing our economy to be destroyed. The evidence is overwhelming. Everyone with a bit of commonsense can see what needs to be done to restore employment opportunities and preserve our standard of living. The actions of the political and powerful union brokers demonstrate that either they have absolutely no commonsense or they have a separate agenda, an agenda that requires them to sacrifice the future of Australian workers on the altar of free trade.

As I said before, we are not opposed to free trade if free trade means fair trade, but the current concept of fair trade is a cruel hoax—a cruel hoax on our farmers and on our workers. Almost every country involved in world trade is prepared to subsidise its farmers and its manufacturers. We then expect our manufacturers and farmers to compete against their heavily subsidised products with virtually no assistance from the Government whatsoever. We are fighting the battle of international trade with one hand tied behind our back. The victims, unfortunately, are Australian farmers and Australian workers and their families. All of them are now punch drunk, and here we have Labor politicians who do not care less and a union that is not prepared to put up a genuine fight for the survival of its members.

Yes, while the union power brokers are swanning about, pandering to the globalists and living the life of Riley, Australian workers are being thrown on the unemployment scrap heap, worrying themselves sick about how they are going to support their families. Union power brokers know the personal tragedies living all around them, but their attitude is obviously "I'm all right, Jack". The Australian worker has been well and truly deserted by his

Labor Party and his union. Some of the great Labor leaders of the past, along with some genuine caring union leaders gone by, would turn in their graves if they could see what this organisation has done for their workers.

Time expired.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (6.45 p.m.): The intellectual contribution of the member for Burdekin knows no limits. Imagine getting up here and saying, "The solution to our trade problems is to not accept goods from the United States and Europe if they will not accept ours." That will teach them! That will teach them, when everyone in our export industries loses their jobs. The fact is: we have 19 million people in Australia. There are 250 million—

Mr KNUTH: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member has misled the House. I did not mention the United States at all.

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

Mr LUCAS: Australia has a population of 19 million. They have a population of 250 million. They have huge domestic demand in their economies and can afford to subsidise and support trade, as well as have huge tariffs protecting them. That is dead right: we cannot do it and we cannot expect our work force to pay for it. We must export to survive.

Trade is not an easy street. The member for Burdekin thinks he can come in here and move a motion and that that is going to fix our problem in our export industries. I wish we could do that. There is one thing we can do by voting in this place. There is one way we can indicate a position. I refer to the WorkCover legislation and the workplace relations legislation. The National Party and the Liberal Party opposed it. I accept that; that is their policy. But the hypocrites of the City Country Alliance claim to be the party that represents the workers. Do they stand up for workers? An example of how much they stand up for workers is their vote against the Workplace Relations Bill for fair industrial relations laws for workers. On 27 August 1998 who voted against this Bill? Black, Feldman, Knuth, Paff and Prenzler. This is standing up for workers! How did they vote in relation to the WorkCover legislation, which gives workers journey claims and fair workers compensation? On 15 April 1999, Black, Feldman, Knuth, Paff and Prenzler voted no for workers' rights. That is the sort of record members of the City Country Alliance have in this place.

We need to do something. We on this side of the House have responsibility. I accept

as well that our opponents in the Opposition have a responsibility as an alternative Government. We do not always agree, but the fact is that we do not have the luxury of moving motions. We have to do something. We have to put up dollars, not print out and read a speech from conspiracy.com. We have to put money into the Community Jobs Plan, the Institute of Molecular Bioscience, the Australia Trade Coast, port expansion and so on. That is what it is all about—not moving motions. The fact is that we have \$4.8 billion in exports going to Japan and \$2.4 billion in exports going to the EU. What do members think will happen to jobs if we say to them, "We are not going to accept any of your produce?"

Mr Kaiser: What do you say to those workers?

Mr LUCAS: What do Alliance members say to those workers?

Mr Mickel: What do they say about Boeing?

Mr LUCAS: Boeing is in his electorate, carrying out Australian work.

Mr Paff interjected.

Mr LUCAS: American owned? Servicing American-owned planes? Let's not have them! That's a lot better! That will teach them, won't it? That will serve them right! They could hand all the workers a leaflet on their way out. Do they think they will be saying, "I was in the right. Jack Paff told me. I lost my job but, gee, I've got a warm inner glow." That does not pay the bills.

This State Government does not take the easy way out. We start at the bottom. We have literacy programs, Dean Wells; the Secondary Schools Renewal Program, Dean Wells; the Community Jobs Plan, Paul Braddy; the IT backbone throughout Queensland, Terry Mackenroth; local purchasing policy, Robert Schwarten; Smart State and the Institute of Molecular Bioscience, Peter Beattie; State Development and the Australia Trade Coast, Jim Elder; and the port motorway, Steve Bredhauer.

Members of the City Country Alliance have the luxury to move motions. We on this side of the House and those in the alternative Government have to try to solve the problems. We do not get to drive home and say, "I showed them at conspiracy.com." It is our responsibility to find solutions for the people. We are not always right, but we are going to work on it. We realise that we need to get jobs for Queenslanders—jobs, job, jobs. We need

to export and to develop our industry, not be economic Neanderthals.

This Government is active in pursuing policies in conjunction with the union movement. We have a local industry policy—

Mr Feldman interjected.

Mr Knuth interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Caboolture and the member for Burdekin!

Mr LUCAS: I do not need protection, Mr Speaker. They are just exposing their Neanderthal brains to this Parliament. It is unfortunate, but I suppose it is entertaining to have a look at oddities such as them.

The fact is that we on this side of the Parliament are about positive policies to improve the lot of the working people in this State. Their record shows that they are not.

Time expired.

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

AYES, 68—Attwood, Barton, Beanland, Beattie, Bligh, Borbidge, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, Connor, Cooper, J. Cunningham, Davidson, Edmond, Elliott, Fenlon, Fouras, Gamin, Goss, Hamill, Hayward, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kaiser, Laming, Lavarch, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Lucas, Mackenroth, Malone, Mickel, Miller, Mitchell, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Quinn, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Santoro, Schwarten, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Spence, Springborg, Stephan, Struthers, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Baumann, Sullivan

NOES, 8—E. Cunningham, Dalglish, Feldman, Knuth, Prenzler, Wellington Tellers: Black, Paff

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

GRIEVANCES

Genetic Engineering; Radiation Therapy Services, Sunshine Coast

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (6.59 p.m.): I take this opportunity to table a non-conforming petition that has been collected mainly on the Sunshine Coast with regard to a call for a freeze on genetic engineering. It reflects the degree of concern existing in the community with regard to this new science and its implications. I can well understand the concern of the community. There is a need to ensure that, with advancements in science, the concerns of consumers are appropriately dealt with. There needs to be a balance in this argument that gives some rights back to consumers.

I also raise the petitions that I continue to present on behalf of Sunshine Coast residents calling for improved cancer services on the Sunshine Coast. Certainly, part of that call by Sunshine Coast people, with some 9,000 signatories petitioning this Parliament, has been for the provision of a linear accelerator on the Sunshine Coast, radiation therapy services and specialist outpatient appointments. I welcome the announcement that the Government will be putting a specialist outpatient clinic into the Sunshine Coast for radiation oncology. However, I reiterate the desire of the people of the Sunshine Coast that there be the provision of radiation therapy services there.

With the advent of the new service being provided privately next year, there is a strong belief that this is an opportunity for the Government to pursue this matter. I have heard that the Minister will now consider negotiations. I urge that those negotiations have a framework and a time frame, given that this Government has been so opposed to purchasing public services from the private sector and given that the Government has been bagging the Noosa Hospital, which is providing public services through a privately owned facility. I have been most impressed with the professionalism and the ability of the staff of the Wesley Cancer Centre. This is a great opportunity. I urge the Government to put aside its philosophical differences and commit to a time frame for providing these services as soon as possible.

Time expired.

Secondary Schools Renewal Program

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (7.01 p.m.): I rise tonight to commend this Government's Secondary Schools Renewal Program to the House. The implementation of this program, which will see secondary schools built prior to 1975 refurbished and enhanced, is heralding a new age in the provision of education facilities in Queensland communities.

School communities right across the State are joining together to develop a range of outstanding and innovative proposals to enhance the role their schools play in the local community. In years past, the local school played a pivotal role in many of the successes, triumphs and dramas of community life. These valuable community assets were utilised by all members of the community, not just those of school age, for many hours of the day and night. This program championed by the

Honourable Minister for Education sees a return to those times.

The proposal submitted by the Beaudesert school community is just such an example of the marvellous community spirit which will result in very real benefits for the young people of Beaudesert and their families. The Beaudesert proposal will see a new focus on academic excellence at the Beaudesert State High School through the provision of information technology, visual and performing arts and agricultural education. The focus of these areas reflects exactly the interests of that community. Were they in Cairns, the proposal would contain different elements.

Secondary Schools Renewal is just one of the wonderful educational programs supported by the Beattie Labor Government. Throughout the State, schools are being refurbished, expanded and developed. In some places we are building new schools—at Forest Lake Varsity College and Woodcrest—in the next school year alone. As the need arises in other communities, the Government will build further new schools. At some time in the future one of those schools will be located in the northern Beaudesert area.

During yesterday's Budget debate both the honourable member for Beaudesert and I spoke of this possibility. I said that demographic projections did not show the need for a new school in the next couple of years. My comments were based on advice that I had received some time back. Given my interest in the topic of new schools, I had one of a series of regular meetings this morning where I was provided with new advice, which is that a new school will be opened in the next few years.

Time expired.

Banks

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (7.03 p.m.): There is no doubt that since the deregulation of the banking industry by the Keating Government the banks have as much compassion for their customers as a greyhound has for the lure on the race track. Banks certainly have been ruthless to their customers in rural and regional areas. The Commonwealth Bank has now announced the closure of its branches at Laidley and Boonah from 6 October. This leaves both these towns with only the National Bank for banking for the community and we do not know how long that will last. This is the bank—the Commonwealth Bank—that was originally set up by the Federal Government as a bank of the people, for the

people, yet it is now deserting the very people who built it to what it is today.

There is no doubt that the Commonwealth Bank is deserting the people of the bush in its greedy rush for profits. It had the hide to tell the customers of the Boonah branch that they could drop down easily to the close-by branch in Beaudesert, a branch that, for many people, could be at least 70 kilometres away. The Commonwealth Bank has deserted the pensioners, disabled, unemployed and, of course, the many businesses in these areas.

Perhaps it is time for these rural communities to consider reopening many community-type banks, as has already occurred throughout the country today. Perhaps it is time the people of Australia turned their backs on our banks and let them wither on the vines, as they readily do to their own loyal customers. If the banks had any sense, they would reconsider their positions, keep these branches open and show to the people of rural Australia that they are good corporate citizens.

Junior Football

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (7.04 p.m.): What a fertile field of football stars there is in the electorate of Ferry Grove. Grovely State School's Under 12 Rugby League team has claimed victory after its strong win against Kruger State School at the metropolitan grand final last week. It now holds the M. D. Mulcahy Trophy. Grovely's Under 12 team also excelled in the Statewide Foundation Cup, going down in a narrow loss to St Mary's School of Toowoomba last week. Overall, they came third in the State. These boys are real champions. Queensland Junior Rugby League should be justly proud of these young ambassadors of a great game.

The Ferry Grove Falcons Australian Football Club has just made history. A rapidly growing, nine year old club with strong parent support, this is the first time that the club has reached the finals in any year group and it has done so in the Under 12s and Under 14s. Next Saturday at Sandgate the Under 12s will play Aspley in the grand final of Metropolitan Division 1. The Under 14s will play Wilston/Grange in the grand final of Metropolitan Division 3.

Best wishes to all players. I am sure they will treasure for a lifetime the special privilege of reaching the pinnacle of junior Aussie Rules. The achievements of these footballers do not stop there. Five players from the Falcons

Under 12s recently played representative football in the Statewide Queensland primary school Australian football championships. Young Jack Hannam, captain of the Falcons Under 12s, had the honour of being selected to captain the Queensland side that played in the national carnival in Darwin. Three Under 14s Falcons played representative footie for Metropolitan West in the Statewide high school competition. Another three players also played for Brisbane West in the AFL Queensland junior Statewide competition in Toowoomba.

Last night at the AFL Queensland Juniors Best and Fairest Awards celebration here at Parliament House there was an acknowledgment of the Ferry Grove club for coming second out of 30 clubs in the club championship award. What a testament to our young talent. Does anyone doubt that we must do everything we can to get kids into junior sport?

Tunnel Netting, Peel Island

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (7.06 p.m.): In the debate on an Estimates report earlier today I started to advise the House about the four non-conforming fishing permits that allow professional fishers to tunnel net around Peel Island in the Moreton Bay Marine Park. There is a protection zone off the north-west side of that island. The coral communities around Peel Island have the highest diversity of coral species in Moreton Bay. For the benefit of my colleagues who may be unclear as to the purpose of the protection zone, I point out that it is to provide permanent preservation in the area to the greatest possible extent. All forms of taking, fishing, collecting or extracting are prohibited due to the significant value of those areas.

A few years ago, the DPI issued four permits for tunnel netting of black trevally in that area. I have yet to meet anyone who actually consumes black trevally, but I understand that the permits are lifetime permits which were let to enable gathering between October and March each year. Of course, the permits also allow by-catch and, surprisingly, during that same period of September/October to March fish such as sweetlip, bream, flathead, mullet and squire are in the same area. Of course, that is a very valuable by-catch for those fishers. These licences were given on the understanding that the licence holders had a prior claim on the area because their families had already fished there.

I have many recreational fishers in my electorate whose families have a tradition of fishing there as well. These recreational fishers recognise that there must be some protection for future fish stock. They are now happy to fish in the habitat zone just past the protected zone. They believe that the officers who issue the permits for black trevally and the by-catch for tunnel netters had very little understanding of conservation. They are calling on the Minister—as am I—to rescind those permits, to close that area and to leave it as a protected zone. If we continue to exploit our resource—

Time expired.

Mr I. Singh

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (7.08 p.m.): Education provides the foundation for this State's future prosperity. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to inform members that a State high school principal in my electorate has been invited to travel to India and present a paper at a UNESCO conference on his school's model for junior curriculum reform. He has also been invited to comment on preservice and postgraduate teacher education.

The school principal is Mr Iqbal Singh and he is the principal of the Burnside State High School, which is located at Nambour in the electorate of Nicklin on the Sunshine Coast. I understand that Mr Singh is the only Queensland and the only school-based delegate to be invited to participate in this conference. This prestigious conference is to be held in September and it will focus on strengthening educational values and innovative approaches to teacher education in the search for peace and international understanding.

Mr Singh is considered to be an excellent and innovative State school principal. This invitation confirms that these qualities have been recognised here in Queensland, in Australia and now internationally. The conference aims to have leading policy makers in education and teacher educators join in charting a way forward that will enhance the role of values education in the education systems of the world. This will be to the mutual benefit of citizens, communities, nations and the world at large. Mr Singh will be an ambassador for this country of whom we can be very proud. On behalf of the people of Nicklin, I take this opportunity to wish him well and thank him for accepting this invitation to participate in the conference.

Recycled Water, Lockyer Valley and Darling Downs

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (7.10 p.m.): The exciting proposal to transfer the waste water, or recycled water, of south-east Queensland to the irrigation areas of the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs provides a very crucial window of opportunity. Recently, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Councillor Soorley, spoke at a function in Toowoomba about the next 18 months, which is an important time to try to get this project under way while this water is still available and not sold off to other sources.

If this water was pumped to the Darling Downs and the Lockyer Valley, it would bring about an immediate \$150m increase in farm gate incomes. It would provide a huge boost for Toowoomba, other areas of the Darling Downs and the Lockyer Valley. Of course, it would also make an enormous contribution to the Queensland economy. When we think of all the environmental pluses of this proposal—that this water from Brisbane and the south-east would not be pumped into Moreton Bay; instead it would serve a useful, permanent purpose in the Lockyer Valley and on the Darling Downs—it really is quite brilliant. Any difficulties with the proposal can be overcome. Power is required to lift the water some 600 metres over the Great Dividing Range. Currently, Toowoomba lifts its water 400 metres from the Crestbrook Dam, so that is simply an engineering issue.

The cost of the water could end up being about \$120 per megalitre, maybe a little more. But it would be mixed with the bore water and the overland flow. Many farmers have ring tanks—and there are something in the order of 150 of these big earth and ring tanks on the downs—but they get only enough water to fill their tanks about once every third year. This extra water would bring down the overall cost of water to about \$80 per megalitre.

It needs enormous cooperation between State, local and Federal Governments and the farmers themselves to get this big, exciting project under way. It needs direction. The farmers are very satisfied with the support that they are getting from the Department of State Development. However, the proposal needs to be pulled together to make it happen in the next 18 months.

Parkview Gardens

Mr KAISER (Woodridge—ALP) (7.12 p.m.): Some time ago I raised in this place the need to regulate pensioner units.

They are not nursing homes, nor are they retirement villages, so they are not caught by the safety net of laws regulating the aged accommodation industry. Today I will provide further evidence of the need to introduce regulations, particularly a code of conduct and certain minimum requirements for tenancy contracts entered into by often vulnerable elderly people.

When I last raised this issue, I spoke about Parkview Gardens pensioner units in my electorate. I was contacted by many residents of Parkview Gardens to express their view that they were quite satisfied with that particular set of pensioner units. I am sure that is the case. However, many other residents are not. One resident, Mrs Coyne, was prepared to speak out publicly about her treatment at the Parkview Gardens pensioner units in my electorate when I last raised the issue in Parliament. Since then, I have received a letter from her relatives, which reads in part—

"Unfortunately we have been forced to remove my grandmother from these premises because of the intolerable behaviour of the managers, Ian and Jean Evans. Apart from calling my grandmother names, they showed their contempt for the elderly by telling her they 'hoped she had a heart attack'. My mother, my children and I were even followed out into the street and abused by these people for daring to speak to the media."

I am sure that all members of this Parliament would join with me in condemning this sort of thuggery and bullying of older people. I have referred this matter to the Minister for Fair Trading, who I commend for taking these matters seriously. Recently, she toured pensioner units to see the issues for herself, meeting residents, managers and tenancy groups. The Minister has advised me that Cabinet has decided to introduce the necessary regulations, and I am sure that the residents of pensioner units will welcome that. Mrs Coyne can take comfort from the fact that her courage will help to make residents more secure in the future.

Outback Revival Forum

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (7.14 p.m.): This weekend in Longreach we witness a forum known as Outback Revival. It is a forum that was initiated by Chrissy Hinde, the former manageress of ABC Radio 4QL in Longreach, to bring about ways and means of putting together policies to determine how we can see the outback revived.

I think that the most important factor to recognise—and I think that as parliamentarians we all recognise this—is our responsibility to our youth. One of the greatest export earners that we have in the west is our young people. We export them to educate them in high schools and universities on the coast. However, they never come home. I believe that this is one of the issues that we have to address this weekend. I congratulate people such as Paul Walmsley of the Department of Primary Industries in Longreach, who is the chairman of the Outback Revival committee. I congratulate also Amanda Chilcott, who has just won Miss Personality at the Brisbane show.

These young people give us the foresight, the vision and the determination to work extremely hard so that we can put in place measures and practices that will revive the outback and make it a great place to live. It is certainly a place where there is a quality of life. Many great Australians who have contributed to this nation were born, bred and reared in the outback.

I urge the members of this Parliament to take on board the initiatives that these people at the Outback Revival forum will come up with this weekend, because they will determine how we can make outback Queensland a better place for all and sundry.

Bayside Fuel Prices

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (7.16 p.m.): Tonight I will share with the House the results of my six-week bayside petrol price survey, undertaken with the assistance of my local volunteers in the Lytton electorate. As I have gone about my electorate, I have heard baysiders send out the message loud and clear that they are sick and tired of petrol prices going up and up when their incomes stay the same. My team of petrol price watch volunteers worked for a six-week period commencing 3 July 2000 and ending on 30 August. They toured 12 petrol stations in my electorate on a daily basis recording the price at the pump. The survey, which I now table, gives very clear evidence of the great benefits involved in shopping around for petrol. The figures show that HiTech and Liberty, both at Manly West, are very consistently at the cheaper end of the market. Matilda in Wynnum West and Ampol in Ernest Street, Manly, also performed strongly.

We have heard a lot of arguments from various players in the oil industry in their ducking and weaving on higher oil prices. They blame the GST, they blame international oil

prices, they blame the Australian dollar. There seems to be no end of excuses for the higher petrol prices. This is why the Beattie Government's policy to push the Federal Government into a parliamentary inquiry is right on track. The fact is that petrol prices keep on going up and motorists want to know why.

What gets me even more angry is the cop-out by all of our local service stations when it comes to the fluctuation in oil prices each week. The clear, undisputed evidence is that petrol prices go up each week on Thursdays and then come down again on Sundays and Mondays. This is a blatant attempt to rip off pensioners and public servants and other workers on their Thursday pay days. According to my calculations, a bayside motorist could save just under \$5 on a 45-litre purchase by buying their fuel from the cheapest station, rather than the dearest.

I thank Premier Peter Beattie for putting the issue of petrol prices at the forefront of public debate. I will continue my petrol monitoring on a periodic basis to make sure that I supply information to local residents. They deserve answers, and they deserve fairness in treatment.

I realise that price fluctuations are often not the fault of individual service station proprietors; they are on very tight margins and have to sell at the price based on what the wholesaler sells to them. However, the simple fact is that the weekly fluctuations of petrol prices going up every Thursday are not good enough.

Mr J. Hayes

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (7.18 p.m.): I rise to pay tribute to a gentleman in my electorate, James "Lofty" Hayes, who died on Monday aged 80 years of age. James Sherbourne Hayes was born in Melbourne in March 1920, one of three children raised by John and Susan Hayes. He was schooled in Sorrento before obtaining an apprenticeship as a printer. He had not worked long before the outbreak of the war, and he enlisted in the AIF in 1940. After training, he was sent to the Middle East as a member of the 23rd Anti-tank Company and later was seconded to the First Mobile Printing Company. He was promoted to corporal and was later wounded during a strafing attack by German aircraft. On his unit's return to Australia, he was discharged and joined the Air Force, training in navigation and wireless telegraphy. As a flying officer, he was posted to the south-west Pacific area. According to his children, this was dad's

fondest memories of the war. The Beaufighter squadron was based in places with exotic sounding names such as Morotai, Sanga Sanga, Noomfoor and Tawi Tawi.

After he was discharged, Lofty went fishing and after that became a lighthouse-keeper. He met his wife and they were married for 53 years. But the sea was his love and in 1951 he left the printing workshop and worked on a number of lighthouses. He did so for a number of years. During his retirement he was active in various clubs and organisations, including Legacy, Masons and Probus, as well as the golf club. He was a prolific writer. He wrote short stories for magazines and papers and he subscribed to the local paper. The last time I heard Lofty speak was at Australian Independent Retirees. He spent the first 10 minutes of his talk speaking about the mating habits of various species of birds he had observed at his last lighthouse. Throughout the time that I knew Lofty he was always a gentleman to me. To Lofty and his family I extend my sincere sympathies. He will be missed by many.

Childers Backpackers Hostel Fire

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (7.20 p.m.): The Childers backpackers hostel tragedy has had a number of consequences. In particular, it highlighted the resilience of the survivors, the tremendous outpouring of goodwill from all Australians and the wonderful resolve of the people of Childers to overcome this adversity. However, there have been other outcomes, one of which has been the resolve by the Emergency Services Minister to make every endeavour to guarantee and maximise fire safety in backpacker hostels.

The best and most modern backpackers hostel in Queensland is situated in Vulture Street in South Brisbane. It was checked during the fire service's blitz. All requests, which were all minor, were attended to by the owners. However, its insurers declined to reinsure it, as did a large number of other insurance companies. They declined point blank. One insurer quoted a premium \$44,500. Previously, it was \$8,500. That represents an increase of 500%. Ultimately, the best deal obtained was about \$19,000—an increase of more than 100%. This is happening across-the-board with other hostels following the Childers fire. This is a shocking example of profiteering. This is a shameful action by our insurers.

Backpackers are also suffering from the effects of the GST. For example, at Vulture Street food purchases by the backpackers

staying there have declined by 30% as a result of the GST being imposed on food. The increased insurance premiums and the GST are impacting badly on backpackers hostels. The Insurance Commissioner or somebody else must be able to take some action in respect of these profiteering insurance companies. It is un-Australian. It is a dreadful way to behave, particularly in light of the fact that these hostels have been thoroughly checked as a result of the fire service's blitz. They are safer than ever. I have never seen a worse example of profiteering. It is shameful that I have to stand up in this House and make this speech to express my abhorrence at the behaviour of the free market system.

Time expired.

Goodwill Games

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (7.22 p.m.): A search of the Goodwill Games web site today showed that of the 14 games to be contested in that event next year 12 are scheduled to be held in Brisbane, one on the Gold Coast and the location of the other is yet to be announced. One would have difficulty arguing against 11 of the sites chosen in and around Brisbane. The exception would possibly be the beach volleyball, which is set down for South Bank. That could well have been held on one of our magnificent beaches on the Sunshine or Gold Coasts. The Gold Coast will be holding the surf-lifesaving at Kurrawa Beach. Although there would have been a number of clubs on the Sunshine Coast capable of holding this event, I am sure that Kurrawa will do a great job.

However, as far as the triathlon is concerned—the one event yet to be located officially—it is really a no contest. The obvious choice would be the Sunshine Coast. It is Australia's capital of triathlons and comprises the nation's two best sites—Noosa and Mooloolaba. Obviously, my personal choice would be Mooloolaba. There is a history going back nearly 20 years of successful triathlon events on the Sunshine Coast and, as a consequence, the area has a strong community commitment to and experience in conducting and managing such events. If Queensland is going to maximise the promotional value of the Goodwill Games it is essential that we showcase our two magnificent coasts as well as Brisbane. I call on the Goodwill Games organisers, Queensland Events and all honourable members to support the Sunshine Coast as the venue for the Goodwill Games triathlon.

Kedron-Wavell Services Club

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (7.24 p.m.): The Kedron-Wavell Services Club under President Fraser Allom, Paul O'Brien and Secretary/Manager Ken Mogg has done great work in the local area, particularly with the sporting involvement they have not only at the Hamilton Road site but also with Shawsportz. I will leave the Shaw Road site out of this speech, because the club currently has a bid in with the Minister for Sport for the redevelopment of hockey fields. This has fitted in with a plan that has been developed over a number of years, which unfortunately was delayed by a couple of very selfish local people who used the legitimate processes of community consultation to delay the development in a very unproductive way. They lied about the possible environmental concerns for the area and they took no account of the rest of the community.

What is happening, though, at the moment is that the Kedron-Wavell Services Club has a bid with the Minister for a grant of approximately \$1.5m, which it will match with \$1.5m, for the major redevelopment of hockey fields. There is no doubt that the fields are needed, but there is great demand across the State for such facilities. I thank people such as Eric Jones and the Tidey family and many other families who over a number of years have worked with the former City United, now the Kedron-Wavell Hockey Club, to develop sport for the local area.

In relation to their bid with the department at the moment there are some difficulties. There is about \$50m worth of bids but only \$10m in available funding. But the advantage the club has is that it has put in a professional submission. It is a community-minded group that has considerable experience in the administration of sport. There will be widespread benefits in terms of juniors and seniors, males and females, and the use by other clubs of these facilities. If they do get the grant at this round they deserve it and I wish them well in their development. If they do not get the grant, I can understand the difficulty that the department has in not being able to provide the money at this stage. Whatever the outcome, I will continue to support them.

Disability Access, Railway Stations

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (7.26 p.m.): In the year 2000 disability access is still not available to many of our larger suburban rail stations in this city. Although I have made repeated requests for facilities for a number of stations, particularly Indooroopilly,

Graceville and Sherwood, it is clear that it is not forthcoming. Indooroopilly is one of the largest stations in Brisbane. It services a wide area of people, including visitors to the shopping centre and senior citizens groups. Wheelchair access does not help just people with disabilities. It also helps mums and dads with prams and people with other special access requirements.

I am told that one of the methods used to estimate the need for wheelchair access is for people to look at the number of disability stickers in and around the station car park. That is not a very good barometer. Obviously, people with those sorts of access requirements do not use those stations; they go somewhere else. Many of the stations, such as Indooroopilly and Sherwood, are impossible to get to if one needs that sort of access. At Sherwood the neighbourhood centre has been on to me repeatedly about this issue. The local senior citizens group, the local school and the business centre have also raised the issue with me. It seems that in the year 2000 we can do all sorts of things other than provide access for

people in wheelchairs, people with prams and so on.

Many of the elderly require ramps, lifts and so on; they cannot go up and down stairs. We should be encouraging people onto the public transport system and particularly our rail system. If we could revolutionise that by coordinating the bus and rail systems we could get a worthwhile public transport system in this city. It seems that the Government is prepared to do other things but not address—

Time expired.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (7.28 p.m.): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 5 September 2000."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.28 p.m.