

TUESDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2000

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

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Mr V. J. N. Cooper; Mr H. Williams

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.31 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation for the services rendered to this State by the late Mr Vivian Joseph Northcote Cooper, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland;

2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Parliament of Queensland, in the loss they have sustained."

Mr Vivian Cooper was born in Parkhurst, Queensland, on 19 June 1909. He attended the Parkhurst State School and the Christian Brothers College in Rockhampton. Prior to entering politics, Mr Cooper worked as a coach painter and sign-writer for Queensland Rail until 1952. Mr Cooper was the chief inspector with the Queensland Fish Marketing Board until 31 December 1974. Mr Cooper was a member of the Rockhampton Vehicle Builders Employees Union, where he served as secretary and president from 1939 to 1952. From 1943 to 1945 he was secretary of the Rockhampton Trades and Labor Council. He was also involved in the Rockhampton Combined Unions Organisation, where he served as president and was a delegate to the Queensland Trade Union Congress.

Mr Cooper served as president on the Labour Day Celebration Committee during the 1940s and was the campaign director for the Federal seat of Capricornia and the State seats of Keppel and Rockhampton. In these positions Mr Cooper served the local and State tiers of Government by providing outstanding service to all sections of the community.

Mr Cooper won the State seat of Keppel in a by-election on 25 October 1952 and was elected to the Legislative Assembly in the 32nd Parliament. The State election of 7 March 1953 saw Mr Cooper retain the seat of Keppel. It was not until the opening of the 33rd Parliament on 25 August 1953 that

Mr Cooper made his maiden speech to the Legislative Assembly. Mr Cooper noted—

"Having been re-elected as their representative in this Parliament, I assure them that I will give of my best to further their interests, and the interests of central Queensland and of the State as a whole."

Mr Cooper was a great advocate for regional development, and noted in his speech that emphasis needed to be placed on extensively developing the area through providing electricity, bringing amenities and home comforts to country dwellers and developing the tourism industry for the central Queensland region. Mr Cooper was re-elected to the 34th Parliament in the State election of 1956 and represented Keppel until August 1957. Mr Cooper was the Government Whip between June and August 1957. Mr Cooper was in State Parliament until August 1957. Mr Cooper married his wife, Catherine, in 1933. Together they had three sons and one daughter. On behalf of the Parliament I extend my sympathy and that of this House to his family.

While I am on matters of condolence, I wish to inform the House that in the early hours of this morning—in fact, at around 12.30 a.m.—Harry Williams, who was a media adviser to the Minister for Transport, Steve Bredhauer, tragically passed away. Yesterday morning he was at a meeting of press secretaries and senior staff when he became ill. He was taken to the Wesley Hospital after that meeting and, tragically, he suffered a second heart attack at the hospital and died this morning.

Steve Bredhauer, the Minister for Transport, will not be with us today in Parliament because he is supporting the family. I attended the hospital last night and had a brief meeting with Harry's wife, Gail, and his two sons, Charles and Jon Paul. Many honourable members would have known Harry. I knew him from when he was an industrial reporter some 25 years ago. He was a good man. He had a great sense of humour. He had a generous spirit and a good natured approach to life. He was well regarded as a highly professional and ethical journalist. He was a loyal and dedicated staff member to the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads. I know that all honourable members will be thinking of him. Tragically, he was only 54 years of age. I know members would understand that it is appropriate for the Minister, Steve Bredhauer, to be making arrangements today with Harry's wife and family and to be supportive of them at this time.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.37 a.m.): I rise to support the comments that have been made by the Honourable the Premier and, firstly, on behalf of the Opposition, to extend our condolences on the passing of Vivian Joseph Northcote Cooper, Labor member for Keppel from 1952 to 1957.

I understand that the former member made his maiden speech in the coronation year of 1953 and the Premier has referred to his outstanding service to the central Queensland community in both a professional and a personal capacity. His involvement with Queensland Rail, the Queensland Fish Marketing Board, the Vehicle Builders Employees Union, the Rockhampton Combined Unions Organisation, the Trade Union Congress and a host of other bodies that were very important illustrates his commitment to serving the State of Queensland.

As I indicated, Mr Cooper made his maiden speech in the coronation year of 1953. In that speech he mentioned the importance of water conservation programs and tourism. I guess as a result of his long association with Queensland Rail he made the following interesting observation—

"I should like to submit that the Government of Queensland is to be complimented on its decision to provide modern air-conditioned trains, which is having a tonic effect on rail travel generally, resulting in phenomenal bookings."

It was clear that his involvement with Queensland Rail was carried through into the Parliament and championed in this place.

For a short period of time, from 11 June 1957 to 2 August 1957, he served as Government Whip. That career was cut short by the historic Labor split that engulfed Queensland politics at the time. I am sure that when we look back at the record—and I never had the opportunity of meeting or knowing Mr Cooper or any members of his family—we will see that he made a very solid contribution to the electorate of Keppel and to the Labor movement. I join with the Premier in expressing our condolences on his passing.

I was shocked and saddened to hear a few minutes ago of the passing of Harry Williams. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey to Harry's wife and to his children our very sincere condolences on their tragic loss. Harry was well known and well loved by members on both sides of this

House. Before he entered the service of the Government he was of course for many years an ABC reporter. Many of us enjoyed his fellowship, his friendship and also, on many occasions, his professionalism in respect of carrying out the role that he had in those days when he was reporting in the gallery and for the ABC.

As the Premier indicated, Harry Williams joined the staff of Minister Steve Bredhauer. I would like to place on record that while he was in the Government service he always maintained that display of friendship and courtesy to members of the Opposition for which we had known him in his previous career as a reporter. We are shocked; we are saddened. I extend to Mrs Williams and to the boys our very sincere condolences on his tragic and sudden passing. He has left us far too early. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult time.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (9.42 a.m.): I read the speeches of Vivian Cooper and I think that they could almost be a description of what goes on in Keppel today. Let me remind honourable members of just a few of his comments and see whether anybody can recall me saying anything similar. He talked about tourism being increased by 22% on the previous year. Then he said—

"... I should like to suggest that money be set aside as soon as possible to extend the scenic road from its existing terminal at Emu Park along the coast through Zilzie to Cooraman Creek, as a step towards its extension to Keppel Sands, and ultimately to complete the round trip from Rockhampton via Yeppoon, Emu Park, Keppel Sands, returning to Rockhampton via Tungamul. The extension of this link to Cooraman Creek would complete one of the finest marine drives in Australia, and would not only provide a great holiday resort for tourists, but be a great sporting and fishing ground for residents of Rockhampton and Central-western towns. It would also provide access to what is naturally a safe anchorage for fishing boats and greatly help the fast developing industry of hiring boats to day parties."

I can recall saying very similar things—updated, of course. In the same speech that he made on 7 November 1952 he talked about wash facilities on the Emu Park-Rockhampton road. He commented that very few of those facilities actually existed for ladies. It reminds me a bit of the issue of the outward-swinging toilet door.

I think that Vivian Cooper was a most remarkable man. He had a lot of vision and was a person who fought very, very hard for Keppel. Today that road is called the scenic route. If we think back, we realise that it was this fellow who really got it going and who encouraged people not to go directly from Rockhampton to Mackay but to go via the coast. Our tourist promoters today are saying exactly the same thing. We have been given excellent service by this wonderful former member of Parliament. It is sad that he has passed on.

In relation to Harry Williams, I just want to say that at one time I was Minister for Industrial Relations when he was an ABC reporter. He always gave a very fair interpretation of what was said. What we said was what Harry Williams reported. I do not think I ever had one difference of opinion with him in relation to his reporting. He was a very in-depth reporter who got to the bottom of the story and then reported it as it was. I say to his wife and family: bear up for the future. It is sad, but, unfortunately, that is life.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.45 a.m.): I rise to support the comments of the Premier and the Opposition Leader in relation to the late Vivian Cooper, a former member of this House. I also wish to add my comments with respect to the tragic loss of Harry Williams.

I had the honour to serve as Industrial Relations Minister for the period from late 1992 to early 1996. During that time I came to know Harry Williams. He was a man who was thoughtful, who was warm and who had a perspective which he brought to the reporting of industrial relations based on extensive knowledge and also on his own individual insight on issues. In that respect, he was not inclined simply to follow the common perspective of the day; he brought to his journalism in that area an understanding of the importance of industrial relations in the history and in the current circumstances of our community. Professionally, Harry Williams will be sadly missed. As one who has known him over a number of years, I am sure that many in this House will be deeply saddened that he has gone.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Fuel Prices

From **Mr Borbidge** (373 petitioners) requesting the House to call on the Premier of Queensland, the Hon Peter Beattie MLA, to immediately establish a Royal Commission of Inquiry with powers to investigate the retail fuel price in the State of Queensland.

Fire Warden Permit

From **Mr Dagleish** (56 petitioners) requesting the House keep the existing Fire Warden Permit and Right to Burn System.

Emu Mountain Road

From **Mr Davidson** (158 petitioners) requesting the House to take urgent action to resurface the Emu Mountain Road with Stone Mastic Asphalt, so that intrusive road noise will be reduced.

Jet Skis, Pumicestone Passage

From **Mrs Sheldon** (480 petitioners) requesting the House totally ban Jet Skis from the Pumicestone Passage, to protect the delicate ecosystem of the Marine National Park and return the safe, peaceful amenity to the residents and ratepayers of the area; ban the use of Houseboats in this Marine National park area until sewage and refuse disposal stations are established to cope with the present and future demand; and provide adequate resources and manpower to police the current and future legislative requirements.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

The Clerk informed the House that the following papers, received during the recess, were tabled on the dates indicated—

13 October 2000—

Treasurer's Appropriation Statement 1999-2000

16 October 2000—

Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers (The Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing)—Annual Report 1 July 1999 to 21 December 1999

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by The Clerk—

Electricity Act 1994—

Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2000, No. 262

Fisheries Act 1994—

Fisheries Amendment Regulation (No. 4)
2000, No. 265

Forestry Act 1959—

Forestry Legislation Amendment
Regulation (No. 4) 2000, No. 261

Gaming Machine Act 1991—

Gaming Machine Amendment Regulation
(No. 1) 2000, No. 260

Mineral Resources Act 1989—

Mineral Resources Amendment Regulation
(No. 3) 2000, No. 263

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

Nature Conservation Amendment
Regulation (No. 1) 2000, No. 264

Water Act 2000—

Water (Transitional) Amendment
Regulation (No. 1) 2000, No. 266

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO A PETITION

The following response to a petition, received during the recess, was tabled by The Clerk—

Response from the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities (Mr Palaszczuk) to a petition presented by Mr Hobbs from 103 petitioners, regarding Queensland Transport services in certain QGAP offices—

11 Oct 2000

Mr R D Doyle
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Robert

I refer to your letter of 1 September 2000 concerning a petition from Mr John Page of Tara recently forwarded to The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland regarding the withdrawal of Queensland Transport service from some QGAP offices.

In reply I am very pleased to advise that the matter has now been resolved and that Queensland Transport services will soon be reinstated to the QGAP offices in Aramac, Blackbutt, Camooweal, Goombungee, Lowood, Maleny, Middlemount, Surat and Tara.

I have attached a copy of my reply to Mr Page for your information.

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Henry Palaszczuk

Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities

11 Oct 2000

Mr J Page
Fry Street
TARA QLD 4421

Dear Mr Page

I refer to the petition you had recently forwarded to The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland regarding the withdrawal of Queensland Transport services from some QGAP offices.

I am aware of the hardship that this action has had on the rural communities of Aramac, Blackbutt, Camooweal, Goombungee, Lowood, Maleny, Middlemount, Surat and Tara. However, I am very pleased to advise that this matter has now been resolved.

The Office of Rural Communities within the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has successfully negotiated with Queensland Transport to have these services reinstated through the QGAP offices.

I would also advise that the Government Agents are to be retrained in the delivery of Queensland Transport services prior to the handover of these services from the local Police Stations. DPI is continuing to liaise with Queensland Transport to expedite the training and the subsequent reinstatement of the services to these rural communities.

I am very keen to have these services returned to the QGAP offices as quickly as possible and DPI will keep all QGAP offices informed of progress in this matter.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact David Arber Divisional Manager on telephone 07 3224 4055, of my Department.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Henry Palaszczuk MLA

Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities

MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The Clerk tabled the following ministerial paper received during the recess—

Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities (Mr Palaszczuk)—

Direction to Queensland Sugar Limited, dated 29 September 2000, by the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities.

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following papers were tabled—

(a) Treasurer (Mr Hamill)—

Statement of Unforeseen
Expenditure to be appropriated—
1999-2000

- (b) Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources (Mr Welford)—

Report on the Administration of the Environmental Protection Act 1994 for the year 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fuel Prices

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: Motorists and industry continue to suffer from high petrol prices. Prices are still 15c to 20c per litre higher than they were six months ago. The Australian Automobile Association has confirmed a 25% increase in fuel prices over the past year. Some 80% of the country centres monitored by the AAA have average prices over \$1 per litre. The trucking industry is struggling to accommodate a 30c per litre increase in fuel prices, with owner/drivers forced to find an extra \$750 each week just to cover costs.

LPG prices have been the latest casualty, with a 14% increase in recent weeks. The taxi industry has been particularly hard hit by the introduction of a new tax on LPG—the 10% GST. This has been publicly acknowledged as one of the primary causes for the demise of the Brisbane Cabs company. Many school buses also use LPG. My office has received reports that it is now cheaper to buy leaded petrol than use LPG. Until now, the low prices for LPG have outweighed the fact that this fuel is less efficient. LPG now costs more per kilometre than leaded fuel, seriously jeopardising the future for LPG as an alternative cleaner fuel and making useless the substantial investments transport operators have made in LPG technology.

On top of all that, the crisis in the Middle East has seen speculation this morning that petrol prices will rise by another 5c per litre this week. That would mean another half a cent per litre in GST slipping into John Howard's pocket. It may also boost the CPI factor Peter Costello will use to index the fuel excise next February.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I take the interjections from those opposite. It shows how ignorant they are. The money stays with the Commonwealth. It does not come to the States—not one cent. It all goes to the Commonwealth. All of it stays with the Commonwealth and Peter Costello. We get not one cent of that increase. That is the dishonesty we get from the Opposition. It deliberately misrepresents and lies about

these things. However, what those opposite say is not the case. It stays with the Commonwealth. It may also boost the CPI factor Peter Costello will use to index the fuel excise next February.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Just hear the supporters of the oil companies cheer for the extra increases. Hear them cheer for the suffering of ordinary motorists in the bush and regional Queensland. Let them cheer for the oil companies.

As I said, this would mean another half a cent per litre in GST slipping into John Howard's pocket. It may also boost the CPI factor Peter Costello will use to index the fuel excise next February. What is already likely to be a further 2c per litre increase in fuel may turn out to be more than 3c and, therefore, prices in Brisbane will reach \$1 per litre thanks to John Howard. This would be a further tax windfall for the Commonwealth, pushing its total return from this fuel crisis towards \$1 billion. The Commonwealth is not expecting this money, so why does it insist on collecting it? It was not in its Budget.

This is a national issue which should transcend party politics. The Western Australian Parliament launched an all-party inquiry into petrol prices. It was chaired by a Liberal MP, Dan Sullivan. The all-party inquiry confirmed that the Federal Government and oil companies are making a huge windfall from current petrol prices. Remember, this is an inquiry chaired by a Liberal member from Western Australia. It found that, if taxation levels were the same as in 1990—the time of the last fuel crisis—petrol prices would be 14c per litre cheaper than what we are paying now. The all-party inquiry has confirmed that there is no need for the planned indexation of excise tax in February next year. The report states—

"The Commonwealth Government increased excise by 1.7 cents per litre during the transition to the GST."

That is, John Howard attempted to grab extra tax from fuel under the shroud of a new GST despite the fact that he promised that the GST would not increase fuel prices.

The Western Australian inquiry demands, as we do, that the windfall tax gain to the Commonwealth must be returned to motorists. The report of the inquiry contains a number of interesting findings about the influences on petrol prices in this nation. Deregulation of the wholesale price, the need for world parity pricing and the unjustifiable gap between city and country prices for fuel receive substantial attention in the report. The Federal

Government and the oil companies are clearly identified as culprits in the current fuel price roort.

My Government will be studying the report closely and we will investigate with other like-minded Governments the options available to bring fuel prices under control. I call on members of the Queensland Nationals and Liberals to stop sitting on their hands. Their Western Australian colleagues have the courage to say, "Enough is enough!" However, in Queensland the coalition is conspicuous in its absence in this important national debate. My Government will continue the fight against excessive fuel prices, whether the Borbidge/Watson coalition supports the Federal Government on fuel pricing or not.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gold Coast Honda Indy 300

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: On the weekend I was lucky enough, together with other senior Ministers, including the Minister for Sport, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Tourism and Racing, to attend the Honda Indy 300 on the Gold Coast. Today I would like to share with the House some of the facts and figures on the outstanding success of the event. The 10th anniversary Indy smashed all records and cemented its reputation as one of the world's premier motor sports events. During the course of four days, more than 269,800 people flocked to Surfers Paradise to witness high-speed action at its best. This is 19,000 more than the previous record set last year. On Sunday alone a record 107,785 people were track side for the thrills and spills of the big race, and what a race it was. There was great weather as well.

From the first lap the action was on and the pace never let up. With amazing speed and manoeuvres best reserved only for racing, the Gold Coast streets came alive. My congratulations go to the eventual winner, Adrian Fernandez from Mexico, and to second and third placegetters, Kenny Brack and Jimmy Vasser. Special mention must also be made of Queensland's own Jason Bright. In a stunning Champ Car debut, Jason fought his way up to as high as fifth place before eventually being forced out of the race on the 44th lap. Jason's performance was especially pleasing given the Queensland Government's support and sponsorship for his entry. Our State logo on Jason's car was seen by a staggering potential audience of more than 700 million people from around the world who tuned into the big event on their televisions.

What a wonderful advertisement for the Sunshine State.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here they go; undermining the Indy and undermining Jason Bright. He is the first Australian to drive in the race. As the Minister for Sport just said, those opposite undermine anything positive. I also have no doubt that the broadcast images of our pristine beaches, beautiful weather and the friendly locals will have many people from overseas rushing to their travel agents. As members know, event tourism supports the long-term tourism interests in this State.

I would like to make special mention of all the volunteers for their efforts over the weekend and in the lead-up to the event. Thousands of Queenslanders showed tremendous spirit in volunteering their time for recent Olympic events in both Brisbane and Sydney. Just weeks later, that same spirit was alive and well during the Indy carnival. Approximately 1,000 people donated their time to help with Indy in some way. Amazingly, 81 had participated in all nine previous Indy races. The Indy carnival would not be where it is today without the dedicated support of people such as this. They are wonderful ambassadors for our State and our country and I thank them for their efforts.

The Honda Indy 300 has grown to become the most spectacular on the annual Indy circuit. We are delighted with the impact the Indy carnival has had over the past decade, and this year's event was no exception. In fact, on Sunday I had great honour in declaring the 2000 Gold Coast Honda Indy 300 the best Indy ever! I also have to say that it was the first Indy without any sort of political controversy. I believe that has a lot to do with the new Minister for Sport. I congratulate him for his efforts. We will see more of it in years to come.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Nitrate

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (10 a.m.), by leave: Recently I had the pleasure to venture to Moura to open what is an important facility for Queensland's coalmining operations. Queensland Nitrate's \$240m ammonium nitrate plant will not only be a key employment generator for central Queensland; it will also improve our balance of payments and reduce our need for imports. Its employment benefits

for the region have already been felt and will continue to act as a catalyst for other job creation along the jobs chain. More than 500 people were employed during the construction phase, and now that the plant is operational it has created 62 permanent jobs.

The joint venture partners, Dyno Nobel Australia Pacific and Wesfarmers CSBP, along with equity partner AXA Australia, have created a world-class facility. The facility is using leading edge technologies. The plant will have the capacity to produce 180,000 tonnes a year of explosive grade ammonium nitrate from coal seam methane or natural gas. It will be a key supplier to the State's all important coal industry, with long-term contracts to supply BHP, Rio Tinto and Peabody for their open-cut mines.

Another key factor in this project is the high level of local and Australian content. The company has told me that, of the \$240m total project cost, some \$190m was sourced from Australian companies. Breaking that down further, nearly 50% of the Australian companies' input went to Queensland companies. This is a solid result, and the new plant is a welcome addition to Queensland's expanding and broadening industrial base.

Not only does this plant employ leading world technology in its manufacturing process; it has also been designed with environmental considerations to the fore. For instance, maintaining air and water quality are prime objectives. The project's impact assessment study was undertaken on the basis that not only would statutory requirements be met but also the plant would satisfy the expectations of the local community. World's best practice is incorporated into the design to limit emissions to the atmosphere from the nitric acid plant's tail gas, and also air exhaust from the ammonium nitrate plant. No liquid effluent is discharged from operations, with water mostly being recycled. What is not treated is then discharged into evaporation ponds. It is important to note that the company has adopted the highest environmental standards with this project—standards, I might say, that would have been applied had this plant been built in a major city. The Queensland ammonium nitrate plant is a significant project for this region and a major boost to the local economy and the Queensland economy. It will broaden our industrial base, with significant value adding of our raw product.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Brisbane Institute of TAFE

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and

Industrial Relations) (10.02 a.m.), by leave: On 9 August 2000 certain allegations were made at a parliamentary Estimates committee hearing concerning enrolment of institute staff in programs at the Brisbane Institute of TAFE. These allegations were immediately referred by the Director-General of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to the Criminal Justice Commission. Concurrently, the department, with the full approval of the CJC, commissioned its own independent investigation by Smart Consulting and Research Pty Ltd. The results of that independent investigation have been forwarded by my department to the CJC.

The CJC has now advised that it will conduct preliminary inquiries with a view to establishing whether a full investigation is warranted. The Director-General of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations has stood down the Director of the Brisbane Institute of TAFE on full pay from 16 October, pending the result of the CJC inquiries. I will advise the House of all further developments.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tobacco Action Plan

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Labor Government is getting tough on tobacco. I am thrilled to report that this Government is set to introduce passive smoking legislation relating to enclosed workplaces and public places in a bid to curb the harmful health effects of passive smoking. Passive smoking legislation is just one of the major tobacco control measures that State Cabinet yesterday endorsed as part of the new Queensland tobacco action plan. The four-year plan will also provide continued help for smokers wanting to quit, provide specific strategies for indigenous people and address youth smoking.

The plan's legislative reform agenda, which covers passive smoking, tobacco advertising and access to self-service vending machines, is the most progressive ever embarked upon in Queensland. These significant new reforms are aimed at cutting the level of smoking in the community, reducing exposure to the harmful effects of passive smoking, preventing children from taking up the habit in the first place by reducing tobacco advertising and further restricting underage access to tobacco products.

The two consultation periods on the draft Queensland tobacco action plan—August to

October 1999 and July and August 2000—provided valuable guidance in and insight into developing this comprehensive approach. I thank the members of business, industry, health groups, university research bodies and trade unions as well as individuals and members of this House who contributed to this process of consultation.

The issue was too important to be rushed through—too important to thousands of Queenslanders to get it wrong. Each year more than 3,000 Queenslanders die from smoking, representing 81% of all drug-related deaths. The majority of smoking-related deaths are due to lung cancer, ischaemic heart disease or chronic chest diseases, including emphysema. The smoking death toll is higher than the combined number of people killed in Queensland as a result of murder, suicide, alcohol, illicit drugs, road crashes, AIDS, poisoning, drowning, fires and falls.

Smoking bans will be introduced in enclosed workplaces and public places, at casino gaming tables and in areas of liquor licensed premises when and where meals are served. The Government recognises that many clubs, pubs and restaurants already provide smoke-free dining areas to cater for the majority of patrons who do not smoke. The new legislation should encourage hospitality venues wanting to proceed with smoke-free dining to do so.

Youth smoking is another area that this Government is addressing, as rates are disturbingly on the increase in Queensland and nationally. We recognise that one-off strategies for young people do not work. In order to help young people resist smoking, we are introducing a range of legislative and educational initiatives. Queensland will legislate to ban point-of-sale tobacco advertising and tobacco promotions including free lighters and other giveaways. Research shows that young people are the most sensitive to tobacco advertising. To further prevent young people from accessing cigarettes, the Government will restrict the placement of cigarette vending machines to the bar and gaming areas of liquor licensed premises.

The maximum penalty for a retailer who sells cigarettes to a person under 18 years will also be increased from \$975 to \$5,000. This is the amount I argued for as Opposition Health spokesperson during the debate in 1997 and when legislation was introduced into the House. All other States and Territories have maximum penalties of at least \$5,000. This will create a further incentive for retailers to do the right thing.

The Government's youth health nurses, based in Queensland State schools with secondary students, will receive specialist training and resources to promote positive smoke-free messages and to help young people quit smoking. This was one of our initiatives that the Opposition Health spokesperson bagged as a soft little social welfare area. It has been most popular across all of Queensland. The legislative reforms are similar to those being introduced in most Australian States and Territories under the national tobacco action plan agreed by Australian Health Ministers in June 1999.

While special attention is being given to the needs of young people, adult smokers are not being forgotten. The Queensland Government is committed to the successful Quit campaign and will continue to support mass media advertising and the Quitline telephone counselling service.

The final major area to be addressed by the tobacco action plan is smoking among indigenous people. A pilot program is currently under way in north Queensland and Brisbane. The strategies developed during this program—awareness raising, quit programs, assisting workplaces and indigenous community venues to address smoking issues and health worker training—will be implemented during the next four years.

As a long time passionate anti-smoker who has treated cancer patients over many years, I am confident that this package of reforms and initiatives is a significant step in addressing the increasing costs of tobacco smoking to individuals, the health system and the community.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Holmview Railway Station

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (10.08 a.m.), by leave: As every member of this House would be aware, last week a boy died tragically while walking along railway tracks near Holmview Railway Station. I wish to set the record straight today about the circumstances surrounding community calls for improved access to the Holmview Railway Station.

The issue of safe access to the railway station was raised with me, as the local member of Parliament for the area, along with a number of other issues, some years ago. In response to the issue being raised with me, I wrote to the Transport Minister of the day, the member for Gregory, and the Gold Coast City

Council. I received a reply from the member for Gregory, which has been the subject of some unfair media coverage since the tragic events of last week, in which he says the money to build a footbridge or underpass at the station was not available. But the member for Gregory also raised some other—and, I believe, valid—points in relation to this issue which have been ignored by the media. Those points include potential safety risks for users if a fenced pathway to the station is built; the remoteness of the site creating a high risk to users if a pedestrian access is built under the tracks and the fact the area floods regularly, rendering any pedestrian underpass inoperable on a regular basis. Not only must the money be found but those other difficulties must be overcome in achieving a permanent solution.

Since then, I have not stepped back from my promise to work to achieve a solution, but not all problems can be resolved quickly once they have been identified. Since that letter, I have discussed the related issue of improved footpaths along the Beenleigh-Kingston Road, which would also provide a safe alternative, with local councillor Ray Hackwood. Improvements to that road are planned for the near future, and Councillor Hackwood and I have discussed the provision of adequate footpaths as that road is widened. Last Friday, the Premier made it clear that the problem would be resolved. He has advised me that he will work closely with me as the local member and the Transport Minister to achieve a permanent solution.

Much has been made of the fact I did not wish to comment on this matter last week. Unfortunately, I feel the need to set the record straight there, too. There have been no curt "no comments" from me or my office in relation to this matter. My staff were contacted by a television reporter last week and asked if I would comment on whether or not the boys should have been walking on the railway tracks. My staff responded that I did not wish to comment on that, for obvious reasons, and that the only comment I would make would be to pass on my condolences to the family, which I again do formally before this Parliament.

My staff also were contacted by Mr Byron Vale of the Courier-Mail after the television news report went to air. I personally spoke at length with Mr Vale, explaining the background to the issue and the steps I had taken. On Thursday, my staff were contacted by Mr Jacob Greber of the Courier-Mail. Mr Greber was told I did not wish to make any comment additional to the comments I had made to

Mr Vale, and the reasons why. Mr Greber also was told, off the record, that I wrote to the Gold Coast City Council and the then Transport Minister about this issue. Mr Greber was told that I had spoken at length to Mr Vale.

The circumstances of this young man's death are tragic and upsetting. It is appalling, in my view, that some sections of the media have deliberately misrepresented the circumstances about attempts to provide better access to the station and to politicise this issue.

I have been accused of many things in my lengthy public life, but this is the only time that I have been accused—unfairly—of being responsible for a death, despite taking all steps available to me, and—worse—of not caring about that death. It is offensive and very hurtful. I table copies of correspondence in relation to this issue.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Meeting of Housing Ministers

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10.13 a.m.), by leave: I want to outline to all honourable members some of the key outcomes of a meeting of State and Territory Ministers for Housing held in Adelaide last Friday.

Two issues discussed at the meeting were of particular concern to all State and Territory Ministers, and on both issues all States and Territories agreed more action by the Federal Government was required. The first concerned the influx of holders of temporary protection visas released from detention centres. Despite the fact that about 400 TPV holders have arrived in Queensland so far, the Federal Minister, Senator Jocelyn Newman, ruled out any extra funds for any State and Territory trying to address their urgent need for short-term accommodation. All State and Territory Ministers agreed that this position was untenable, given the fact the TPV issue has arisen from a deliberate change in policy at the Federal level. Senator Newman said there was no legal obligation on any Government to assist such people. In effect, she has slammed the door in their faces.

I raised with Senator Newman—as did other States—the enormous strain on resources being experienced by community groups and churches dealing with TPV holders when they arrive. This did not sway her from her position that both Government and non-Government organisations need not provide

any special assistance for TPV holders, despite the fact there is a clear need to do so. As Minister for Housing, I am well aware of the need to assist TPV holders and those helping them, such as the Catholic Church in Brisbane. This assistance must be delivered without prejudicing or compromising those standing in line for other housing programs. The Federal Government's point-blank refusal to provide additional funds will make that job even harder.

Another matter on which all States and Territories agreed was the need for a greater Federal effort in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. Of concern to Ministers was the fact that the Federal Government's contribution to ATSI housing through the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement has remained static at \$91m for the past 10 years. Under the current four-year CSHA, \$25.2m of that amount is earmarked each year for ATSI housing programs operated by the Queensland Department of Housing. Like other funding components of the CSHA, that Federal contribution is not increasing despite rising demand.

The Queensland Government has topped up this funding through a \$173m, five-year program started last year to address urgent housing needs in 34 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is clear the Federal Government is not pulling its weight in this area. State and Territory Ministers asked the Federal Minister to urgently investigate the allocation of additional funds for indigenous housing programs through the next CSHA.

On the issue of indigenous housing, I have made it clear to communities that their funding allocations under our five-year program depend on their efforts to improve rent collection and tackle rent arrears. I issued this warning in September last year after the Auditor-General reported that communities had accumulated a rent arrears bill of more than \$5m. The warning was repeated in April this year after receiving the first progress report on rent arrears in the 34 ATSI communities covering the first half of the 1999-2000 year.

I recently approved capital grants under the five-year housing program totalling more than \$41m for 2000-2001. These approvals were made after assessing the performance of communities over the entire 1999-2000 year. I wish to advise the House that 20 of the 34 communities funded under this program have received grants based on their satisfactory performance in tackling rent collection and arrears. A further 11 communities have received grants subject to them improving their

rent collection rates. I have refused to approve grants for three communities either because they did not return rent collection reports or their performance raised considerable concern. For the information of honourable members, I table a list of the 34 communities in those three categories. Officers of the Department of Housing will meet with the three councils whose grants have been frozen to discuss their performance and future funding arrangements.

In general, I am satisfied that most community councils have acted on the warnings I issued and have improved collection rates, and I congratulate them accordingly. In general, over the 1999-2000 year: 20 ATSI councils reported a decrease in annual arrears; 25 communities reported a collection rate of 90% or higher, with 19 of those reporting 100% rent collection; and accumulated arrears decreased by almost 8% percent for the 33 communities that reported. Naturally, accumulated arrears will continue to pose a problem despite improved collection rates. But overall, most councils are maintaining or developing strategies to reduce annual arrears which will hopefully also erode the backlog of arrears.

I again congratulate the vast majority of community councils which have tackled this issue and met with success. The payment and collection of rent is a necessary ingredient in providing families with decent, well-maintained homes. One cannot happen without the other. Rent collected for housing in ATSI communities belongs to those communities for investment in the maintenance, upgrade or construction of housing. I am pleased that more and more councils and householders are recognising that simple fact.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.20 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's Alert Digest No. 14 of 2000 and I move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

Report

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.20 a.m.): I table for the information of all members my report on the 46th Commonwealth

Parliamentary Association Annual Conference held in the United Kingdom in September at which I represented the Queensland Parliament.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Lang Park

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.20 a.m.): It is time for the Premier to admit that the Government's plan for a second-rate super stadium at Lang Park would be an unmitigated waste of public money. Barely a week goes by without some further revelation highlighting the folly of this \$280m monument to the political shenanigans of "Bollinger Bob" Gibbs.

As a committed Rugby supporter, I have always had my doubts about the Premier's plan to prop up Lang Park by sidelining Ballymore. Now we find that the Government has added insult to injury with its half-baked offer of alleged incentives to the Queensland Rugby Union. The Premier is planning to spend \$280m on Rugby League but he expects the QRU to sell out for next to nothing. It has already been promised \$4.5m to upgrade Ballymore, so the Government's offer amounts to compensation for one year's catering and the right to clean toilets at Lang Park. We all know that the Premier is an expert on ministerial toilet brushes, but I doubt the QRU shares his enthusiasm. Today's news is just the latest reason in a long list of reasons why the Government should abandon its plans for a second-rate super stadium at a third-rate site. It is yet another nail in Bob Gibbs' political coffin. The Premier is still committed to filling the casket with taxpayers' money.

The Government's figures do not add up, even with Rugby. Without it, they collapse in a heap. The Premier cannot, in all conscience, commit a future Queensland Government to perpetuating this extravagant folly. This is a 50 year venture and there is no compelling reason to formalise binding contractual arrangements before the next election. Brisbane does not need another monument to Government stupidity.

Member for Clayfield

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (10.22 a.m.): When the House last met, something truly incredible happened: the member for Clayfield finally 'fessed up on some of his political fundraising activities. He was forced, after months and months of being pursued in this House, to 'fess up to undeclared accounts.

Those accounts were not declared in his register of interests. The member for Clayfield misled the Parliament, misled the people of Queensland, misled the Liberal Party and misled the Queensland Electoral Commission. This man was a Minister in the Borbidge Cabinet and, until fairly recently, an Opposition front bencher. I presume he also misled the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition would do well to release any Cabinet discussions that may have occurred about these accounts. Did he inform the Borbidge Cabinet about these massive accounts for hiring staff for whatever purposes? I call on the Leader of the Opposition to release any Cabinet documents relating to those accounts.

But, more importantly, this affair is not over yet. The member for Clayfield has another account that has not been disclosed in this place and I suspect not to the Electoral Commission and not to the Queensland branch of the Liberal Party. In a speech in the Matters of Public Interest debate this morning I will reveal the details of yet another account and the member for Clayfield will be dragged kicking and screaming into this place again for yet another personal explanation as to why he has flouted the rules that every other member of this Parliament is absolutely obliged and compelled to adhere to.

We all get the letter every year. The Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee sends us a letter every year reminding us of our obligations—

Time expired.

Ms G. Wallace; Toowoomba Hospital, Industrial Relations

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.24 a.m.): After a disastrous industrial relations track record that saw widespread strike action closing down hospital services earlier this year inconveniencing hundreds of Queenslanders, we would think that this Labor Government would be looking for someone with sensitivity and skill to take over the helm of the department's industrial relations.

However, in a recent move that defies imagination, this Government has decided that the new head over the department's industrial relations section should be someone with a track record that sends a clear message to health workers, and the message is: "If you thought EB4 negotiations were bad under this Labor Government, wait till you get to enterprise bargaining 5."

The Minister must answer why the head of the Toowoomba health district, Gloria Wallace, has been rewarded with this critical job as the new organisational development branch manager, a decision which is sure to inflame tensions given Ms Wallace's record of budget slashing at the expense of clinical services and her confrontational approach to staff management.

Let us look at what has happened at Toowoomba Hospital, one of the State's biggest regional hospitals, which has seen a 36% reduction in specialists under Ms Wallace's administration—something this Minister tries to blame on the doctors.

I quote from a memo, which I table, which was circulated in the Queensland Health Department quoting Dr Terry Coupland, staff specialist and full-time Medical Officers Association representative, addressed to Ms Wallace in which he accuses her of pursuing an autocratic path of confrontation, aggression and intimidation. The memo goes on to say that—

"Speculative criticism and the threats of unilateral decision-making can only further exacerbate staff disenchantment to the point of adding to the pile of resignations currently on your desk."

I make these comments—

Mr Horan interjected.

Miss SIMPSON: Yes, she got the director-general's top reward for cutting services at Toowoomba as well. I make these comments because of my sincere concern that arrogant senior bureaucrats, a compliant Health Minister—

Time expired.

Local Shopping Clusters

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (10.26 a.m.): Small businesses often find business life very demanding and the battle to survive and turn a profit quite unforgiving. If a small business owner operates from a large shopping centre, while the customer exposure is far larger, they are sometimes at the mercy of the larger retailers and the shopping centre managers and owners. When they operate from shopping strips, they can trade independently but are at risk of losing customers through the relocation of major service providers such as banks and post offices.

There is clearly a growing shift by shoppers back to retail shopping in neighbourhood shopping strips, for example,

in Blackwood Road in Mitchelton and Ferry Way shops in Ferry Hills. The Brisbane City Council has recognised that vibrant local shopping clusters are vital to rebuilding the fabric of our local neighbourhoods. An amount of \$600,000 was spent on the redevelopment of Blackwood Road, comprising 70 businesses, and we can now see the rebirth of this shopping community supported by the Mitchelton Business Association. Similarly at Ferry Way, the Pine Rivers Shire Council has spent sizeable sums on the beautification of the shopping precinct comprising 25 businesses and supported by the Ferry Way streetscape committee.

It is so hard for these small businesses when large national corporations such as the banks and Australia Post withdraw services. The ongoing battle that the Ferry Way shops and customers have waged to keep their post office open has been met by Australia Post's heartless refusal to overturn the closure of the post office. Several hundred local residents have filled out a survey identifying three major services needed in their shopping strip—banking, a post office and a bus service. I table the survey.

Given Australia Post's discredited performance on this matter, I call upon Australia Post to give a written guarantee to each small business in Ferry Hills and the residents that post office boxes and parcel collection will continue to be available from the Ferry Hills delivery centre and that a post point will be set up in the existing shops.

Burdekin Bypass

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—CCAQ) (10.28 a.m.): I seek leave to table 675 letters of Opposition to the proposed Burdekin bypass. I know that the Minister has received numerous letters of opposition to the Burdekin bypass project. In tabling a further 675 letters of opposition, I bring to the attention of the House that this brings the total number of letters received from the Burdekin community to approximately 1,400—with more to come. These letters were collected in just 36 days.

In addition to these letters, I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has tabled a petition with further signatures in opposition to the project. Surely this must send a clear signal to the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads that the Burdekin community does not want a bypass and that it is up to the Main Roads Department to return to the drawing board to offer the community less intrusive and non-farmer, non-business destroying alternatives. Will the Minister go

against the voice of the people and endorse an alignment that channels traffic away from the business areas of Ayr, Brandon and Home Hill, cuts farms in half and threatens the very livelihood of many Burdekin families?

All that the signatories to these letters are calling for is the commonsense approach of a second bridge crossing, with an upgrade where possible, of the existing highway to three or even four lanes, cutting back to two lanes in sensitive areas. This is the situation that exists in the south-east corner of the State.

The clear message is that the majority of Burdekin people do not want a bypass. They call for the complete abandonment of the alignment proposals. I am not against moves to ease the projected traffic congestion in the Burdekin electorate. There is a need, using only Crown land, to widen the existing highway to three and four lanes, where possible, to facilitate the overtaking of slow vehicles. The addition of a second river crossing would address the bottlenecks associated with the existing two-lane Burdekin Bridge, particularly at times when wide-load vehicles must cross the river and traffic in both directions must be halted to make this possible. It would be a travesty if this Government were to ignore the wishes—

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The names the honourable member mentioned can be tabled as a non-conforming petition. The time for Private Members' Statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Electoral Fraud

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): I direct a question to the Minister for Tourism and Racing. Is the Minister in receipt of any information that may assist investigations into electoral corruption in Queensland and, if so, what action has she taken?

Mrs ROSE: No, I am not. If I was, I would make it available to the inquiry.

Electoral Fraud

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a question to the Deputy Premier in his capacity as leader of the AWU faction in the Government and in his capacity as Deputy Premier in the Government, and I ask: is he in receipt of any information that may assist investigations into electoral corruption in Queensland and, if so, what action has he deemed it necessary to take?

Mr ELDER: I am not, and if I was, it would be with the inquiry by now. I suggest that, if the Leader of the Opposition has information, he does the same.

Job Creation

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to the most recent employment figures, which show a jobless trend rate of 7.5%, and I ask: what do the figures reveal about job creation in Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: This is what Queenslanders are really interested in—job creation and positive strategies—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go again. The Opposition is in the gutter—as usual. If those opposite are not whingeing—and they do that very well—they are out there trying to undermine everything. They are undermining Indy, they are undermining jobs, and they are undermining everyone they can. If gold medals were being handed out for whingeing, every member opposite would receive one. There is one area where the Opposition beats the Government hands down, and that is in the area of whingeing. The Government cannot compete with the Opposition in that area. Those opposite are world leaders in whingeing. No-one can come anywhere near them. If they are not whingeing, they are in the gutter.

The most recent figures—from 12 October—show that the unemployment trend rate is 7.5%, down from 7.6% last month, and 8.1% a year ago. What did this Government inherit? We inherited an unemployment rate of 8.9%—and going up.

This Government's performance represents a great achievement when one considers that we still have record levels of labor force participation. In the two years and three months that we have been in Government we have created 102,800 jobs—a figure worth remembering. How does that compare with the performance of the Borbidge Government? Let us make a comparison. In the two years and four months that the Borbidge Government was in office it created only 78,900 jobs. My Government is 23,900 jobs ahead of the Borbidge Government, and we still have not been in Government as long as the Borbidge Government was in office. We still have a month to go before we have served the same period as the Borbidge Government.

My Government is creating 125 new jobs every day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. We are about jobs, jobs, jobs, and we

are delivering. More than 20% of all the full-time jobs created in Australia since June 1998, when we were elected, have been in Queensland, where we have 18.6% of the population. Even the Leader of the Opposition was forced to acknowledge that my Government has created more jobs than his administration. He made that admission in the Courier-Mail. It was reported in that newspaper as follows—

"Opposition Leader Rob Borbidge said the Beattie Government had created more jobs than the previous Government."

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that accolade. He is quite correct.

What I want to know is this: what is the Opposition doing about petrol prices? What are those opposite doing about pressuring the National Party and the Liberal Party in Canberra about petrol prices? As a result of what has been happening in the Middle East, this morning we saw speculation that petrol prices will rise another 5c per litre this week. Who has his hand in every motorist's pocket? John Howard! Who supports John Howard's petrol pricing policy? Rob Borbidge, David Watson and all the Opposition members! All the members opposite support John Howard's policy on petrol pricing.

When we go to the next State election in a few months time we will be opposed to this policy of petrol pricing. Every member opposite will be in favour of it.

Electoral Fraud

Dr WATSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Mines and Energy. I ask: is he in receipt of any information that may assist investigations into electoral corruption in Queensland and, if so, what action has he taken?

Mr McGRADY: I have not received any information. If I did, as other Ministers have already said, I would report it to the commission. I would suggest that, if the member for Moggill has any information, he does the same thing.

Fuel Prices

Mr PURCELL: I direct a question to the Honourable the Premier. I refer to the growing support from the public and interest groups for the Queensland Government's call for a Senate inquiry into rising petrol prices, and I ask: can the Premier advise of any other backing for action on spiralling prices?

Mr BEATTIE: I can. The National Farmers Federation has held a protest in Canberra, calling for a freeze on the fuel excise. Does this Government agree? Yes, we do! Does the Opposition agree? No, it does not. Canegrowers have supported the Queensland Government's call for an inquiry into fuel prices. Is that supported by the Government? Yes! Is it supported by the Opposition? No!

The member for Gregory, in his column in the Longreach Leader on 29 September, wrote—

"The Commonwealth Government has got to understand that rural, and certainly remote Australia, will be wrecked by \$1 plus per litre fuel. And it's in the driving seat."

The member for Gregory is absolutely correct. It is a pity that his leader does not agree.

Since then, we have had the member for Lockyer, in his column in the Gatton, Lockyer and Brisbane Valley Star, saying—

"There has been no doubt that Queensland farmers have been duded by the Howard Government."

The member for Lockyer got it right as well.

I am pleased to inform the House that the member for Crows Nest, a former National Party Premier, has now added his voice to the expressions of frustration and concern. It is a pity the member for Crows Nest is not still Leader of the National Party; he and I would have a bipartisan approach to doing something about petrol prices. In a sense, it is sad that the member for Crows Nest is retiring.

In his column in the Brisbane Valley-Kilcoy Sun, the member for Crows Nest said this—

"Fuel prices are causing anxiety and anger all over Queensland and why not?"

A good question! He goes on—

"Cutting excise is one thing in the short term."

He also says—

"If the Federal Government doesn't want to get involved then the Queensland Government could well show the way and the findings just might assist the Commonwealth in dealing with the issue. My motto has always been do something."

I say to those opposite that they should do something with their colleagues in Canberra. They should get their mates John Howard and John Anderson to do something.

The Queensland Government is showing the way. The Queensland Government is

doing something. We have been putting pressure on Canberra by distributing throughout the State petitions calling for a Senate inquiry. We have taken the rebate and given it to retailers to ensure that it is passed on directly to motorists. The rebate does not go to the oil companies any longer; it goes directly to the retailers and, thus, directly to motorists. This Government took on the hard task. Those opposite could not do it; it was too hard for them. This Government did it.

On Thursday of this week, petitions containing 25,000 signatures will be presented to the Parliament. That is the result of this Government saying to Queenslanders, "Stand with us and fight the Federal Government on this petrol rip-off." That is what it is. It is an absolute rort by the Federal Government. The people who are losing are ordinary families, ordinary Queenslanders, including people in regional Queensland and people in the bush.

What did the Opposition do when we raised this matter? Those opposite supported the oil companies. Every single member opposite is a mate of the oil companies. They are mates of John Howard and John Anderson. They have sold out Queensland.

Electoral Fraud

Mr SPRINGBORG: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities: is he in receipt of any information that may assist investigations into electoral corruption in Queensland and, if so, can he inform the House of what, if any, action he has taken?

Mr PALASZCZUK: The answer to the honourable member's question is: no. If I did have any information it would have been passed on to the Criminal Justice Commission long ago. I suggest to the honourable member that, if he has any information, he should do so also.

Premier's Export Awards

Mr REEVES: I refer the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade to recent media reports of a surge in regional applicants for this year's Premier's Export Awards, and I ask: can he give details of this growth?

Mr ELDER: I can. This year's export awards were an outstanding success. But what the export awards reinforced was the number and quality of companies from regional Queensland that have vied for the Premier's awards. With 83 applications this year, nearly one quarter of the applicants contested in the

emerging exporter category, with more than one third of the applicants—and this is a real plus—coming from regional Queensland. That goes to show that the Government's commitment to encouraging Queensland companies to export is paying dividends for this State. We are seeing a growing culture of emerging exporters and an increasing number of Queensland businesses out there looking beyond domestic shores to export markets. As I said, it was very encouraging that an increasing number of export nominees hailed from regional areas.

For example, Ausgoat, a goat meat cooperative that is helping to boost the State's goat meat exports, was one of the applicants for the awards. With a working office based in Wooroolin and member organisations throughout the State, the company exports meat and skin to Taiwan and the United States of America. This year exports have totalled \$2.3m. Although it did not make the final, it was a good example of a growing number of regional companies. This shows us exactly what is happening in terms of our regional exports.

It was good to see that this year's winner was Riviera Marine—a great boat building company and one with which I have had a long-term association. It won the exporter of the year award and the large advanced manufacturer category. Miandetta Fresh Foods won the agribusiness category. Warner Roadshow Movie World Studios won the arts and entertainment category. Griffith University won an award for education. Ranger Instruments won the emerging exporter category. Nu-lec Industries won the award for the information industry. MIM won an award in the minerals category. Banksia Pacific won an award for services and Russell Mineral Equipment also won an award. This year's Deputy Premier's Award—my award—went to Savage Garden, the local duo that has generated more than \$30m worldwide in sales exports.

Mr Foley: The arts industry succeeds again.

Mr ELDER: Yes, again. My recognition of them was not so much because of their boost in export performance but more because of their outstanding spirit in marketing Queensland to the world. Everywhere they go—

Mr Kaiser: Woodridge.

Mr ELDER: Woodridge. As members know, they are out there promoting Queensland. The Minister is right; artists and performing arts companies play a significant

role in advancing our export performance. I congratulate and commend them on that.

I say to all of our exporters this year that this was a marvellous effort on their part. This year's export awards had a record number of nominees. That shows that the export growth we are seeing in Queensland is paying dividends and providing jobs for us in regional Queensland. That jobs growth in regional Queensland and the impact of petrol prices will be the issues we will campaign on at the next election, while members opposite sit there sniggering.

St Aubyns Hospital

Mrs PRATT: Noting the Minister for Health's ongoing pursuit of the multipurpose health service for the South Burnett, the uncertainty surrounding the future of the only private hospital in the region—St Aubyns—and also noting that talks between Queensland Health and the Wesley were less than fruitful, I ask: would the Minister please outline her plans to meet the increased demand for services which will be placed on the Kingaroy Base Hospital in the event of St Aubyns' closure, and what reasoning can the Minister offer to convince the people of the South Burnett to remain in private health insurance?

Mrs EDMOND: The fate of St Aubyns, while it is very sad, is something that rests firmly in the hands of the Wesley Hospital and the Uniting Church as the owners and operators of that hospital. My understanding is that the reason it is having difficulties is the lack of people using it, that the numbers are as few as 10 per day. The figures I saw some time ago—and I have not seen any over the past few weeks—were down below five per day, which means that there is no concern with the South Burnett health district handling those numbers of patients through the public hospital system. So we do not consider that that will be a problem. We will be able to manage that adequately through the Kingaroy Base Hospital and the other hospitals in that area.

I think the last question was: what are we doing to encourage people to take out private health insurance? The State Government does not have a role in that. The Commonwealth Government is putting something in the order of \$2.7 billion each and every year into propping up private health insurance. I have to say that none of that seems to be running down to the private hospitals or the private health providers. In particular, we are getting letters from a number of the small hospitals on the downs and in

other areas saying that they have not seen any increase in the usage of their facilities as a result of the huge amounts of money that the Commonwealth is putting in.

In its recent Budget, the Commonwealth also announced an initiative which includes some packages of funding for private rural hospitals. I have no idea how that procedure works. I understand the Federal member has indicated that St Aubyns would be eligible for that, but we do not have any information on the eligibility criteria for that scheme. I would suggest to the member, as I have in the past, that if she knows any more about it, she encourages St Aubyns and its users to apply to the Federal Government for that scheme. I understand that the amounts of money that are handed out are very small. I do not know how that would be helpful to the long-term future of St Aubyns.

A major problem that I, as the Queensland Health Minister, am facing is that, for all of the large buckets of money that the Commonwealth is tipping into private health funds, we are not seeing any reduction in the number of people expecting services in the public sector. The number of people seeking outpatient appointments and services in the public sector continues to rise. Basically, we are seeing \$2.7 billion going down the gurgler without anybody's health benefiting.

Fuel Prices

Mr MUSGROVE: Is the Treasurer aware of new support for the view that the GST has hit regional and rural fuel prices hardest?

Mr HAMILL: The honourable member raises a very important issue and one which I think would be very dear to the hearts of most motorists and certainly those in regional and rural areas, and that is the impact of the GST on fuel prices.

Mr Elder: Not for the Opposition.

Mr HAMILL: It does appear that the Opposition in Queensland does not share that general community concern. But their colleagues in Western Australia do. Recently, a select committee of the Western Australian Parliament has reported on the pricing of petroleum products. That report makes very interesting reading indeed, because it suggests that country fuel prices are much higher than city fuel prices, not because of freight costs and not because of low volumes being sold in country areas. But the findings of that report were that, firstly, country fuel consumers were bearing the brunt of higher wholesale prices being struck by the oil

companies, and as a consequence of that the retail prices were similarly higher than that of the city's. What the report went on to then highlight was the way in which the GST is then applied. The GST is applied at retail sale. Consequently, because the price is going to be higher, the amount of GST that is going to be paid by consumers in country areas will be higher. To add insult to injury, that retail price will be further increased by the Commonwealth's excise policy with respect to fuel.

Early next year we are going to see the CPI passed on to the excise with the result that the price goes up again, and of course the GST is applied to that again. As we have a higher base price in the country, it is country consumers who are going to pay more—much more than their city counterparts. The select committee in Western Australia has called upon the Federal Government to not proceed with the indexation of excise early in the new year. We endorse that call. We believe that the Commonwealth should take its hands out of the pockets of motorists, particularly those in country areas, forgo its excise rip-off in the new year and thereby reduce the impost on country consumers particularly. This report demonstrates quite clearly everything that we have been saying about fuel pricing in Queensland. It is country consumers who have been consistently missing out on a fair go from oil companies, and they are certainly not getting a fair go from the Federal Government.

Electoral Fraud

Mr QUINN: I ask the Minister for Education: is he in receipt of any information that may assist investigations into electoral corruption in Queensland and, if so, what action has he taken?

Mr WELLS: No, of course not. If the honourable member for Merrimac has any information, I suggest that he should provide it to the commission.

Fuel Prices, Rural Fire Brigades

Mrs ATTWOOD: I ask the Minister for Emergency Services: can he advise the House whether rising fuel prices and the Howard Government's GST are having an adverse effect on Queensland's volunteer rural fire brigades, and what action is the Beattie Government taking to assist rural brigades to ensure they are fully prepared to meet any challenges arising from a potentially disastrous bushfire season?

Mr ROBERTSON: As all members would be aware, Queensland has experienced an unusually early and volatile start to the bushfire season, which threatens to be the worst since 1994. Rural fire brigades have already been stretched to the limit, battling some more than 2,500 fires across the State, about 2,000 of which have been within 60 kilometres of Brisbane.

Two major factors are having an adverse impact on our rural fire brigades. Firstly, the unusually high number of fires so early in the season means that brigade budgets are being stretched because of unanticipated extra spending on essentials such as fuel. But, more importantly, rising fuel costs are also adding considerably to the financial strain on brigades, which are not only buying more fuel but paying higher prices for it. Brigades that budgeted some 70c to 80c a litre for fuel are now having to pay 80c to 90c, or even more, for that fuel. Of course, those extra costs to brigades are further exacerbated by the financial and administrative burden imposed by the Federal Government's GST. Together, those factors have the potential to erode brigade budgets and undermine the operational preparedness of rural fire brigades should the bushfire season worsen in the coming months.

Unlike the Inspector Clouseau opposite who are obsessed with matters down the road, the Beattie Government has moved quickly to address those issues and ensure the viability of rural fire brigades. Strategies are already in place—

Mr Seeney interjected.

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

Mr ROBERTSON: Strategies are already in place to assist brigades in genuine need. Any brigade with immediate problems should contact their district inspector for emergency assistance.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation.

Mr ROBERTSON: Today I want to announce a new initiative. Following my recent meetings with volunteer rural firefighters, I have directed my department to establish a task force to provide me with advice and recommendations to respond to identified needs arising out of the impact on rural fire brigades of the increased fuel prices, in particular petrol, and the recent bushfires that have occurred throughout Queensland. That task force will be chaired by the rural fire commissioner and will involve representatives of the rural fire brigade council and the Rural Fire Brigades Association.

In the meantime, rural fire brigades will be invited to access the standard offer arrangements that the Government has with BP so that they can purchase fuel at lower than usual pump prices. The task force that I have established will be reporting back to me within four weeks. This is further evidence that the Beattie Government values the contributions of its volunteer rural firefighters. The Federal Government may not care about our volunteer rural fire brigades, but we do. It is just another example of the Beattie Government getting on with the job.

Electoral Fraud; Shepherdson Inquiry

Mr BEANLAND: I refer the Premier to an article in the Courier-Mail on Saturday, 7 October which reported that the Premier received daily reports from a senior and impartial public servant attending the Shepherdson inquiry into the electoral corruption within the ALP, and I ask: is it true that a public servant, not a ministerial staffer, was given this task? If so, what is the public servant's name and in which department is he or she employed? Has the job description for that public servant's position been updated to officially acknowledge that vote rigging and electoral fraud by the ALP are now part of the administration of Government in Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: I wondered where this nonsense was going to go today. We have had Bullens Circus most of the day, and all the clowns have been on that side.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go, Mr "Rude" is back at it again. It is true—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question has been asked.

Mr BEATTIE: Does the member opposite want an answer, or does he just want to be rude? Let me make it absolutely clear that I am quite happy to answer any question in this place.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Given some semblance of peace, I am happy to answer any question put to me by the Opposition on any matter.

It is true, I have asked my departmental head to ensure that there is a departmental representative present as an observer at the inquiry to ensure that I am properly briefed. Why did I do that? I did that because in a ministerial statement to this Chamber I indicated that I would take certain action if

certain events occurred or certain material was provided to me. I spelt that out—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Can the member not be rude for just one minute?

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go, the member for Toowoomba South. He comes from a very—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego will cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: As I indicated to the House in a ministerial statement, if certain events took place or certain matters were drawn to my attention, I would take appropriate action. To ensure that I fulfilled my obligation to this Parliament, I ensured that there was an independent person from my department at the inquiry to provide me with appropriate briefings.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted again, so that I could honour the spirit of the ministerial statement I made to the Parliament, I ensured that there was a departmental representative at the inquiry to ensure that I was properly briefed. That is an appropriate and responsible thing for the Premier of the day to do, and I will continue to honour—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide will cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: I will continue to honour the high standards that I expect of Government. I will continue to honour the commitment I gave to the—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question has been asked and the Premier is answering it.

Mr BEATTIE: As I indicated, I intend to honour the ministerial statement I gave to this House. I have honoured that by ensuring that I have impartial briefings of material provided to the commission. I have indicated to the House that it is an officer from my department. In fact, I understand there have been two from time to time. They are from the legal section of the Policy Coordination Unit in my department. There is no additional cost to the taxpayer because they are paid to provide advice to me on these matters, and they are doing so.

These matters are matters to be determined by an inquiry, not some political witch-hunt. We should allow the independent head of that inquiry to get on with his job. If anyone breaks the law, they should go to jail—end of story.

Member for Whitsunday

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I refer the Premier to comments made by the member for Whitsunday and aired on ABC Radio's AM program on Monday, 9 October, and I ask: is it appropriate for members of Parliament to use blasphemy on morning radio?

Mr BEATTIE: I have to say that I was concerned. Like all Australians, from time to time I have been known to use certain words. In fact, the member for Gregory and I used a word which is a good old Australian colloquialism both inside and outside of this House, but it got us in a bit of trouble as I recall. I was concerned to hear that at the conference of the City Country Alliance, which claims to have Christian values, they were blaspheming.

I grew up in a country town. I have to say that the people in the Christian groups that I associated with as a young person would never have blasphemed. I believe that organisations such as Christian Outreach—all church organisations—would not be supportive of a member of Parliament blaspheming on State radio. I say to the member for Whitsunday, who masquerades as having Christian values, that people have to live up to their values. If a person claims to have Christian values, that person should live up to them. Taking the Lord's name in vain, which is what the member did on Statewide radio, is hardly the act of a Christian. I say this to him: if he is seeking to get the support of Christian groups in this State he will have to lift his standard and lift his game. The last thing the public likes is politicians who say one thing and do another. That is exactly what the member did.

A Government member: What did the leader do?

Mr BEATTIE: What did the leader of the City Country Alliance do? He went out and said some extraordinary things. He said, "We are tolerant, we respect other people's point of view, and we do not discriminate." I say this to him: I do not know what he is on, but do not give me any.

If City Country Alliance was serious about these issues, it would be out fighting against rising petrol prices. Instead of blaspheming, it ought to be out in the bush fighting to give

people a fair go when it comes to petrol prices. The CCA did over the National Party in a number of those seats. It got stuck into the National Party because it did not represent the bush any more. What has the CCA done? What has it done to keep down petrol prices? It has been like a tombstone and done nothing. Why does it not get out there and look after country people and give them a go? Instead of blaspheming, the CCA should stand up against rising petrol prices.

Mr FELDMAN: I rise to a point of order. This morning in his statement the Premier said that Dr Preznler was fighting for the bush. Is he misleading the House?

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: I was talking about City Country Alliance. What has its leader done about it? He has not said a word. The CCA should stand up for the bush instead of being a lot of wimps.

Electoral Fraud

Mr HORAN: My question is to the Premier. I ask: as a member of the ALP's administrative committee since 1996, does the Premier agree with the extraordinary public statements of the member for Woodridge that the Labor Party had absolutely no responsibility to either investigate or even report allegations of electoral fraud?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. As members know, a number of comments were made recently at a hearing of the commission in relation to comments on matters before the inquiry. I say to the member for Toowoomba: he and the rest of the Opposition should get out of the gutter and let this inquiry do its job.

Mr Connor: You said you were going to answer any questions.

Mr BEATTIE: I say to the member for Nerang: yes, I would, if he and all those opposite were not so rude. They come in here every day to disrupt this Parliament for cheap political gain. They continually interrupt and make it almost impossible or impossible for Ministers to answer questions. I am happy to answer any question.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go. The member for Callide always seeks to disrupt this Parliament.

Let me get back to the question. The point I want to make is very simply this: this inquiry has been established by the CJC. There is an independent head in charge of this

inquiry. That independent head should be allowed to get on with his job. He should be allowed to do it without political interference. The people of Queensland do not want these matters before the inquiry determined by politicians; they want them determined by the independent head of that inquiry. That is what they want, and that is what should happen.

Mr Horan interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: This is not about getting answers to questions asked by the Opposition today; this is about politicising an inquiry. The people of Queensland want Tom Shepherdson and that inquiry to clearly determine these issues, not politicians.

Let me deal with the matter involving the member for Woodridge, since it has been asked. This inquiry is not an inquiry into my Government. These matters are ancient history. They date back to 1993, 1995 and 1996.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr BEATTIE: These are ancient matters. Any people who the inquiry finds may have broken the law in these ancient matters should go to jail. My Government came to office in June 1998. This inquiry is looking into matters which occurred in 1993, 1995 and 1996. The member for Woodridge is right: this is not an inquiry into the Labor Party, this is an inquiry into certain individuals. If any of them are found to have broken the law, they should go to jail, jail, jail, jail and jail.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. If those opposite missed it, they should go to jail, jail, jail, jail and jail.

Domestic Violence, Woorabinda

Mr PEARCE: My question is to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. Can the Minister outline the success of the Woorabinda community in reducing the level of domestic violence in the town?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for Fitzroy for the question. He is a great supporter of the Woorabinda community. He is very well aware of some of the initiatives that it has taken recently. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Woorabinda community. Last week I had the chance to visit

the community with the chair of the Queensland Domestic Violence Council, Ms Jackie Huggins. We met with the local football team, the Wadja Warriors. Some members of the House may be aware of the work that the community has done with the football team as part of its domestic violence reduction program.

The Wadja Warriors have been undefeated champions and are the reserve grade premiers in the region. They have not just been a success on the field, however; they have been an outstanding success off the field. The Wadja Warriors put in place some very simple rules. They put in place a rule that said no grog and no violence in their families. If players breached those rules, they did not get to play with the team. This has had an outstanding level of success. I have been very pleased to support it with funding through the domestic violence program of my department. I take this opportunity to recognise the support of Queensland Health. My colleague the Minister for Health has also been a great supporter of this project and has also visited the community to congratulate the team.

In the six months that the program has been operating the percentage of breaches of domestic violence orders has declined from over 90% to just on 30%. That is a 60% reduction in the breach rate of domestic violence orders in a six-month period. It is an outstanding result and one that has eluded many other communities, both indigenous and non-indigenous. There would be very few social programs that could honestly say that they had anything like that sort of success rate. I also recognise that the team has had the support of the Brisbane Broncos. Wayne Bennett has written on behalf of the Broncos to recognise not only the team's sporting prowess but also its members' good achievements off the field.

In my view, the strength of this program is that it comes from the community itself. It has not been imposed by Government. However, when the community came up with the program, the Government had an open mind and was prepared to support it. One of the other strengths of the program is that men in that community are saying to each other that enough is enough. Men themselves are recognising the terrible impact that domestic violence has on the life of their community. For years many of us have heard about the problems that beset Aboriginal communities. It is easy to stand on the sidelines and criticise. It is much harder to come up with solutions. This very small community has done just that. I take this opportunity today to congratulate it

and to say that this Government will continue to support that program.

I was also pleased to have the opportunity to announce a new youth crime prevention program for the community. Some \$80,000 will be provided to the Woorabinda council. It is a very energetic council with newly elected members. It has taken the challenge very seriously. It is determined to put in place early intervention programs that give the young people of that community a much brighter future.

Q-Link

Mr BLACK: As the Minister for Transport is absent from the Chamber, I direct my question to the Premier. Has Queensland Rail signed an agreement with a major private transport company to take over operations and amenities of Q-Link in major central and northern centres of Queensland? If so, what will the future hold for the current employees of Q-Link?

Mr BEATTIE: I did indicate to the House a little earlier today why the Minister for Transport is not here. I know that there was no criticism inherent in the question, but since reference was made to the fact that he is not here I will enlarge on the matter very briefly. The Minister is assisting Gail and the family today in terms of funeral arrangements for her late husband, Harry Williams. I did indicate to him this morning that I felt it appropriate under those circumstances for him not to be here. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for providing him with a pair, which the Whips coordinated. I was going to talk to the Opposition Leader had that not been arranged, but I thank the Opposition Leader on the record for facilitating that pair. That sort of common decency is important between us and I do thank him for that.

I am not aware of any contract that has been entered into. I am not aware of any deal that has been done along the lines that the member has suggested. That is the answer. Clearly, I will ask the Minister for Transport to provide the member with a letter or a phone call from one of his staff that may provide him with more information, but I am not aware of any deal.

QR is a very valuable and important part of the transport network in this State. I have to say that I am delighted with the success of the tilt train. Recently, when I visited Bundaberg the member for Bundaberg indicated clearly to me how popular it is. It has been so popular that it is hard to get a seat on it. It has been successful—

Mr Schwarten: That is the only complaint I get.

Mr BEATTIE: The member for Rockhampton says that the only complaint he gets is that it is hard to get on the train. It is a magnificent train. It runs from Brisbane to Rockhampton. As members know, we are currently working on extending the tilt train all the way to Cairns. It will obviously be diesel. There is a lot of work being done on that at the current time. A lot of money is being spent on upgrading the track. We will deliver on that commitment in terms of the tilt train and upgrading the track. All of those things have been important to provide the infrastructure for QR.

QR is facing an enormous amount of competition from road and other sources, but I believe that under the management structure it has it will compete. It has the expertise, the professionalism and the dedication and commitment. I believe that QR will more than hold its own. It will compete in that very ugly, competitive world that transport systems are in currently.

I am also delighted to see the progress in the Airtrain city link between the heart of Brisbane and the airport. This is one of the great initiatives of my Government. We signed those agreements when we came to office. It is like so many things; the Opposition was never able to reach these agreements. I am delighted we were able to sign the agreement for the Airtrain city link—another project we will deliver. When I think about it, this Government is just out there delivering. We are a can-do Government delivering all sorts of projects—for example, the convention centre at the Gold Coast. This is a happening State with a happening Government.

Rocky Point Sugarmill

Mr PITT: Can the Minister for Mines and Energy provide the House with an update on progress of the cogeneration plant at Rocky Point sugarmill?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question. I am pleased to inform the House that construction of the \$50m cogeneration plant at Rocky Point is well under way. Construction began at the start of August and we expect it to be completed by November next year. The new plant is being built by, once again, the Government owned corporation of Stanwell. It will be the largest of its type in Australia in terms of the amount of renewable energy produced annually.

As well as producing renewable energy, this \$50m investment will benefit the local community by providing jobs, jobs and more jobs. In fact, about 40 jobs will be created during the fifteen-month construction period and greater job security will be provided for seasonal mill workers—that affects my colleague the member for Waterford here—as this cogeneration plant and the nearby ethanol distillery will operate the whole year round.

I inform the House that the plant also provides opportunities for spin-off businesses to supply the waste it requires for fuel. Waste products, including bagasse and green waste, will fuel the renewable energy generator. As waste is used to generate electricity, the plant provides a real solution to waste disposal in the region. This will extend the life of the local landfill sites. Another environmental benefit will be the use of reclaimed water from the Gold Coast area, which will be used for cooling. The water will then be used a third time to irrigate the surrounding area, also helping the local sugar industry. The plant will produce enough renewable energy to power the sugarmill and about 10,000 Queensland homes through the Energex Earth's Choice renewable energy program.

Once completed, the cogeneration plant will be operated by the mill owners—the Heck group. Those opposite may ask, "What the heck do we care about cogeneration?" They are a fine family and they are doing a fine job. As I said before, this plant is part of Stanwell's commitment to becoming Australia's leading provider of environmentally responsible energy solutions.

Cr T. Mooney

Mrs SHELDON: Has the Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport taken advice as to whether it is appropriate for Tony Mooney to be stood aside as Townsville mayor pending the outcome of the Shepherdson inquiry? If so, what was that advice?

Mr MACKENROTH: No, I have not. I know the Local Government Act and I do not need to.

Job Creation

Mr MULHERIN: Can the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations advise the Parliament how labour market program initiatives such as the Community Jobs Plan and the Community Employment Assistance Program provide real job

opportunities for those in most need in our community and in particular in the Mackay region?

Mr BRADY: This question is about something of real concern to the community. It is about jobs. It is about jobs that would not be there if the coalition were in power. It has consistently opposed all of these labour market programs, as have its ideological mates in the Federal coalition Government.

On 15 September I had the pleasure of being in Mackay to announce half a million dollars' worth of targeted labour market programs that provide 190 long-term unemployed people with training and job opportunities—part of the Beattie Labor Government's successful programs to identify sections of the community which need extra assistance.

The 190 local Mackay residents are among the Queenslanders who are finding it toughest to get a job. These are people with disabilities, people of non-English speaking background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Australian South Sea Islander people, long-term unemployed youth and mature-aged unemployed who are disadvantaged in the job market. These are people who will be afforded jobs and self-esteem by working on projects that will benefit Mackay and the Mackay regional community—projects such as the refurbishment of the Mackay region tourism information centre, the upgrading and beautification of the grounds of the Mackay Base Hospital and the relocation and restoration of St Ann's Convent building in Sarina.

These are people who will get these opportunities only if the Beattie Labor Government is in power. These are people who form part of the 807 local residents from the Mackay area who have had opportunities under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program which would not be there if Dr Watson were Treasurer and the member for Caloundra were Minister for Employment, because they have consistently opposed these programs.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. I have not consistently opposed those programs, as the Minister himself acknowledged during the Estimates debate.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BRADY: The member for Caloundra gave lukewarm personal support—

Mrs SHELDON: Hence, I ask for the reference to myself to be withdrawn. It is untrue, it is false and I find it offensive.

Mr BRADY: I withdraw. The member for Caloundra gave lukewarm personal support. What is the point of that support if the Opposition, as a policy, continually opposes the programs? Her support does not mean anything. Her lukewarm contribution means absolutely nothing.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. The Minister might like to table any evidence of my opposing his programs.

Mr BRADY: The member for Caloundra does not even know her own party's policies. The coalition continues to oppose these programs on ideological grounds. It supports Peter Reith. There is no point in the member for Caloundra offering her personal support.

Electoral Fraud

Mr JOHNSON: I ask the Honourable the Premier: as a member of the ALP's administrative committee since 1996, why were no substantive efforts made to change the party's rules in ways that would discourage electoral fraud until he had no choice as a result of public exposure of events in Townsville?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. The basis of the question, of course, is untrue. I do not have the details with me today, but there are and have been a number of changes which I think have been referred to in the House by the member for Woodridge. Indeed, if I recall correctly, those changes embrace a number of conferences between 1996 and the present time. Indeed, I was instrumental, in particular at one of those conferences, in insisting that the rules be changed. Those rules were changed before there were any convictions. They were changed because I expect the highest possible standards.

So the truth of the matter is this: were there rule changes between 1996 and the present time to ensure that the matters referred to could never happen again? The answer is: yes. Was I involved in those changes? The answer is: yes. Was the member for Woodridge involved in those changes? The answer is: yes. Any rules, whether they are party rules or tax rules, require constant vigilance and constant changes. It is like the Tax Act. That is why there are sections like section 26A(aaa). Why? Because there is always some smartie who will want to get around the rules. We have to be vigilant to ensure that that does not occur.

I will make the point again: I will not accept in my party or in this Government

anyone who breaks the law, and they will go to jail. I have said it before. Anyone who breaks the law and who is found guilty will go to jail, jail, jail, jail, jail and jail. Compared with the standards of those opposite—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Look at them bellow! They are not used to honesty. I know that it is an affront to them because they are not used to honesty. When members opposite were in Government, all they did was seek to cover up. When the former Premier and the former Police Minister were before an inquiry—when all those matters occurred—they sought to cover up. There will be no cover-up under my Government; there will be a clean-up, and that is the difference. There will be a clean-up. I will not have any of those people in my party or in my Government, and we will not seek to cover up; there will be a clean-up. That is the answer.

I have no concerns about saying to the party, as I say to the community, that I will not tolerate people who break the law in my Government or in my party. These matters are ancient history, but it does not matter. Even though these matters relate to 1993 and council campaigns before my Government came to office—some of them date back five years before my Government came to office—it does not matter. We are going to clean it up. We will accept the recommendations of the inquiry and we will do something about them.

GST Impact on Small Business

Mrs LAVARCH: I ask the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: how are Queensland businesses faring three months into the Federal Government's new tax regime?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for the question because it is worth looking at the impact of the GST on Queensland businesses. As a State we have been building on our low-tax status, our well-trained people and our good location for bringing corporates into this State. In the two years that we have been here, we have brought tens of new corporates into Queensland. While we are trying to continue to build that corporate base and seek that support, Federal Government policies have been loaded against us in Queensland. I do not want to carp; I do not want to get into that whingeing mode that we see from the Opposition, but let me point out that interest rates are climbing. That is a Costello/Howard responsibility. The dollar is sinking. That is a Howard/Costello responsibility. What about the

price of fuel? Every Queensland Tory and every Federal Tory is sitting on their hands while the price of fuel is impacting on the State, and it is impacting on the constituencies of members opposite.

The one thing that members opposite cannot whinge about is the GST, because the GST was introduced by John Howard with their support. We were warning long and loud about the impact of the GST on business. Let me refer to Dun & Bradstreet. Its report on the September quarter reinforces every fear that we had as a Government about the impact of this on our businesses. It reveals a slump in business confidence across all indicators, that is, sales, profit, employment, selling prices and capital investment. The big concern is the exorbitant amount of time that business is now spending on complying with the GST. Small businesses themselves are complaining about the time they have to spend per month on GST. More than 70% of companies are spending between 10 and 20 hours plus on GST-imposed paperwork. That, as we always said it was, is an unacceptable impact on business.

But let me go further. Let me quote Dun & Bradstreet. I will not just use my words. Its report states—

"It would appear that many executives have climbed to the peak of the GST mountain and are less confident of the outlook for business on the other side.

It would appear that business anxiety relating to the possible effects of the GST has returned."

The report states further—

"The most worrying trend is that only a net 9% of employers are expecting to take on staff in the next quarter."

That includes December, when school leavers normally enter the workforce, and that will have an even more dampening impact. We will continue to raise the fears because the fears that we raised are now coming home in terms of the impact on small business. All of them are concerned about the impact of the GST.

On top of that, Federal Treasury is now reported to be warning that ongoing inflation, apart from the GST spike, will rise by 0.5% above the Budget estimate. So there are GST-related inflation impacts; there are interest rate impacts; there are falling dollar impacts; and there is the cost of compliance with the GST, which we always said would be an inhibitor to growth in this State. How about members

opposite doing something for people in Queensland rather than whingeing?

Mr W. Powell

Mr SEENEY: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: is he a member of the AWU faction? Was Mr Warwick Powell employed in his ministerial office when he held the portfolio of Mines and Energy in the previous Labor Government?

Mr McGRADY: The answer to the first question is: yes. The answer to the second question is: yes.

Tobacco Action Plan

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer the Minister for Health to the release of the Tobacco Action Plan and ask: how does the plan address the high number of indigenous Queenslanders who smoke.

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the member for the question. I know that she shares my concern about the rate of smoking by indigenous people, because it is about twice the national average, and it impacts quite severely on their health outcomes. That is why this Government is serious about tackling the rate of smoking among indigenous people, who already carry an unfair burden of ill health in our community. That is why the Tobacco Action Plan sets out the Government's commitment to the Indigenous Tobacco Control Project.

On Friday, 6 October in Townsville I announced the north Queensland trial of an Events Sponsorship Program. I am delighted to give credit to Gordon Tallis, the Rugby League legend and lifetime non-smoker, who was on hand to kick around the ball and also to kick off the strategy and promote the Government's message, "Smoking: it can cost us the game."

The program aims to raise awareness of tobacco smoking as a health issue for indigenous people and promotes a positive attitude towards being smoke-free through sporting events. This year \$50,000 is available in grants for indigenous community associations in the north. The program is as a result of collaboration among Queensland Health's Tropical Public Health Unit, indigenous communities, organisations in north Queensland and the Heart Foundation. Sport and Recreation Queensland and Queensland Health will administer the trial through the Townsville office of sport and recreation, and free anti-smoking resources including banners, signs, T-shirt, footballs, water bottles and

sports towels will also be provided as part of the grant.

I was delighted to have a role model such as Gorden, and he was thrilled to back the program and get the message across to indigenous people that smoking can cost them not only the game but also their lives. Young people in particular look up to sporting identities as role models and heroes, and Gorden's smoke-free lifestyle no doubt helped the Australian Rugby League team in its outstanding victory in the test match against Papua New Guinea on Saturday, 7 October. He assured me that a cigarette had never touched his lips.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! The time for questions has expired.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Electoral Fraud; Shepherdson Inquiry

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): Today I want to talk about the credibility of this Government, the credibility of the Labor Party and the Labor Premier, and their credibility in respect of issues of electoral corruption, job creation and the GST. But I want to take this opportunity to express grave concern at the admission, the extraordinary admission, this morning that two public servants have been taken off their duties within the policy section of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to provide taxpayer-funded legal advice to the Leader of the Labor Party.

The situation is that the Labor Party is represented at the inquiry. I have no problem whatsoever with the Premier having a ministerial staffer attending the inquiry, but I find it quite extraordinary and quite inappropriate that up to two public servants, who are charged and tasked with other duties, are being sent to the inquiry by the honourable member for Brisbane Central so that he can have free legal advice that presumably he can then feed through to the Labor Party.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. Those comments are untrue and they are offensive. Let me be very clear. I seek that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! The Premier seeks a withdrawal.

Mr BORBIDGE: What aspect is being referred to? I was merely repeating to the House what the Premier admitted during question time: that he had up to two people providing him with legal advice.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I did nothing of the kind. As usual, the Leader of the Opposition has misrepresented what I have said; he has distorted what I have said. What he has said is offensive and untrue and I seek that it be withdrawn in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Under the Standing Orders, I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the remarks.

Mr BORBIDGE: Is the Premier now saying that he misled the House during question time?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Surfers Paradise will resume his seat. It is standard practice under Standing Orders 119 and 120 that if a member finds something offensive or untrue and it is directed to him personally and that member seeks a withdrawal of the remark, there is no other option but to withdraw and not debate that issue with me. The member for Surfers Paradise may go on with his speech.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Parliament is plumbing new depths.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Until the member withdraws the remarks, he will not be permitted to go on with his speech.

Mr BORBIDGE: If the Honourable the Premier finds his answer in question time this morning offensive, I will withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I am quite happy to take up the member's 10 minutes and the time of the House. Until he withdraws the comments, I will not allow him to continue his speech.

Mr BORBIDGE: I withdraw. But, having made that withdrawal, I remind the House of the Hansard record and the answer to a question to the honourable member for Indooroopilly by the Premier this morning and the fact that we had an admission by the Premier that up to two officers from the policy section within his department have been attending the inquiry to provide him with legal advice.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. That is not what the record shows. I indicated that there was one person at the inquiry and from time to time that person changes shifts with another person. There is only ever one person attending.

Mr BORBIDGE: I accept the assurance given by the Premier that there have been two people rostered on, two public servants in relay, taken off their normal tasking duties within the policy area of the Premier's

Department to provide the Leader of the Labor Party with separate legal advice at taxpayers' expense which he can then feed through to the ALP.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. Those comments are untrue. These staff are simply to advise me as Premier. No material has ever been provided to the Labor Party or any other person. The remarks are untrue and I seek that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the remarks.

Mr BORBIDGE: If the Premier finds that offensive, I withdraw. I note that he is the Leader of the Labor Party, so presumably these public servants are not going down there for their health or because they like it; they are going down there because the Leader of the Labor Party, who happens to be the Premier, has told them to so that they can report to him in his capacity as Leader of the Labor Party as this stench of criminality starts to engulf his Government.

What we have seen from the Premier is an admission that taxpayer-funded public servants are complementing the role of the Labor Party by making sure that the leader of the parliamentary Labor Party has, at taxpayers' expense, legal advice available to him at any time he wants it.

That is what the Premier has said; that is what he has admitted; let it be a matter of the public record. I withdraw and I apologise to the Honourable the Premier if I misunderstood his answer in question time. I accept that he does not have two public servants down there all the time, but he has two on roster. He has one down there so that he can get, in his capacity as Leader of the Labor Party, appropriate legal advice.

The Government cannot have it both ways. It cannot have the Premier getting up in question time backing up the comments of the member for Woodridge that this has nothing to do with the Labor Party. The Premier cannot continue this masquerade of the three monkeys defence that he was secretary of the Labor Party for eight years, that he has been in this Parliament for 10 years, that he was a Minister for a period during the now potentially corrupt Goss Government, that at the time that he was the Leader of the Labor Party these particular matters were going on and, contrary to his assertions, they had not been finalised by the Labor Party conference until after the 1998 State election. He cannot have that sort of involvement and keep claiming the three monkeys defence that he saw nothing, he heard nothing and he said nothing, that

somehow he was an innocent bystander, that he was sitting on the veranda as this cavalcade of corruption went by. As this cavalcade of corruption went by, he was just an onlooker, he was just a participant not in the main game, but just some sort of observer!

There was a film recently that attracted a fair bit of controversy called *Eyes Wide Open*. I say to Premier Beattie that his epitaph will be "Eyes Wide Shut" because he did not want to see and he did not want to know. The fact is that anyone in the positions that he held would have known what was going on.

Mr Elder interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I wish to deal with a couple of other matters aside from the credibility or lack thereof of this Premier, his Government and his little AWU Labor mate who sits beside him interjecting.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the member for Callide said, I suspect that he is not trusting the interpretation of events down the road that are provided by the office of the Deputy Premier.

Let us have a look at the performance of this Government. We have heard a great deal this morning as this desperate Premier, this desperate Labor Party, try to shift the focus as they try to embrace the other element of Mr Beattie's political philosophy and that is that it is always someone else's fault.

He told us this morning about his job creation record. I want to comment on that job creation record because the Premier quoted me, but he quoted half of what I said. The facts are these. During the period of the previous National/Liberal administration, economic growth was 5.75%. The Budget forecast under this Government is 3.75%. We now have an Asian economic recovery. During the period of the previous coalition administration we had an Asian economic crisis. The simple, undeniable fact that Premier Beattie cannot run away from is that during the period of the previous coalition Government Queensland was pumping out 39% of Australia's new jobs. The simple reality is that, under Mr Beattie's administration, Queensland is creating fewer than 20% of Australia's new jobs. The rate of job creation under Labor is half.

But of course, how typical: those opposite blame the Federal Government, they blame the previous Government and they blame the GST. I have the intergovernmental agreement on the GST—the new taxation arrangements. Whose signature is on the agreement on

behalf of the State of Queensland? It does not read "Borbridge"; it reads "The Honourable Peter Douglas Beattie, Premier of the State of Queensland". His signature is on the intergovernmental agreement which he now decries. I am told that he was so keen to sign it that he knocked other Premiers out of the road in the rush.

Time expired.

Member for Clayfield

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): When the House last met, the member for Clayfield delivered an apology, or a one-minute correction, to the House with regard to the disclosure, or lack of disclosure, of donors to his campaign and his return to the Clerk of this Parliament in relation to his own pecuniary interests.

That statement was made after his personal explanation on 23 August when he claimed that "all disclosure requirements had been met". That was in response to my revelation that the member for Clayfield had not revealed the name or details of his Clayfield electorate staff account. In other words, the member deliberately misled the House, the Liberal Party and the Electoral Commission.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments offensive because I did not deliberately mislead the House. I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr MUSGROVE: I withdraw. The member for Clayfield has been caught red-handed, and after being smoked out over a period of months the best he could do was deliver a one-minute explanation in which he passed the buck to his campaign committee.

The House, and especially the member's own colleagues, will recall that he specifically denied that the Liberal Party had made a particular request regarding his fund-raising activities. That denial has been shown to be false and he has had to submit an amended return to the Liberal Party State Director.

Mr Elder: That must have hurt.

Mr MUSGROVE: That must have hurt. When I informed the former State Secretary of the Labor Party, Mike Kaiser, of this, he said that if anyone had been required to do that in the Labor Party that person would have been hung, drawn and quartered.

The member's statement on 3 October was—

"It has been brought to my attention that the committee's disclosure for 1998-

99 did not include details of some fundraising activities undertaken after the accounts were finalised following the 1998 elections."

With the greatest respect, what a load of absolute codswallop! The member for Clayfield, in his usual manner of showing great loyalty to his friends and colleagues, is trying to blame his campaign committee instead of accepting any blame himself.

He has been caught out not once, but twice. Firstly, he did not disclose details of fundraising in his electoral return as required by the Electoral Act. Secondly, he did not disclose in his return to the Clerk of this Parliament and, I suspect, the Electoral Commission, the existence of the Clayfield staff account. Having been caught out, the member could not even bring himself to tell the correct story. In his statement to the House earlier this month he said that he had "voluntarily" included the Clayfield staff account in his pecuniary interest.

Mr Elder: Voluntarily!

Mr MUSGROVE: Indeed, voluntarily—like a rabbit in the spotlight. What a load of absolutely transparent rubbish! The member has been pursued and pursued and was ultimately forced to 'fess up. The member for Clayfield only included the staff account in an amended return after I exposed his failure to declare it, and after he was formally asked questions about it in this place.

The member for Clayfield ought to be condemned for trying to blame his poor long-suffering campaign workers, or his committee, when everyone—especially everyone in the Liberal Party—knows that he has quite tight personal control over his massive fundraising efforts. The proof of that is to be found in who signs the cheques on the Clayfield staff account. We have his city council stooge, Timothy Nicholls, and stockbroker Alan Pidgeon, who incidentally is a member of the Liberal Party in the Ryan electorate—on the other side of Brisbane from Clayfield.

Mr Mickel: What about the member from Beijing—on the other side of the world?

Mr MUSGROVE: Time will tell, but I am not aware of anyone from Beijing being a signatory to the account. The member should have spared his long-suffering campaign workers the blame. They have had to put up with him haranguing them for hours about how badly treated he has been at the hands of the Leader of the Liberal Party and how no-one appreciates just how wonderful he is for the Queensland division of the Liberal Party .

The truth is that the member for Clayfield has been well and truly caught out and exposed. What is his response? His response is a half-hearted apology to the House, passing the blame on to anyone else but himself. I invite all honourable members to have a look at the amended disclosure document because it is barely readable and raises far more questions than it answers.

On the day before the House last met the member for Clayfield lodged an amended return with the Clerk. All honourable members have to comply with the requirements for disclosure. We usually do it in a way that is transparent, open and accountable. The member for Clayfield's disclosure does not indicate much at all. All it indicates is that he has very poor handwriting. The document is barely readable.

We now know that the account is called the "Clayfield staff account" not the "Clayfield electorate staff account" and not the "Clayfield member's staff account". Anyone making out a cheque to this account would believe that it would not be disclosed. It has no political connotation whatsoever. After all, it could be the Clayfield school staff account or the Clayfield Bowls Club staff account. It appears to have no political link whatsoever.

Every member in this place has a team of supporters and a campaign committee. That is standard practice in the Labor Party. In terms of my own re-election, I can tell honourable members that cheques will be made out to the Springwood ALP. It will be transparent. I presume that the National Party and the Liberal Party in my area will adopt the same practice. Every member, except one, will follow this practice.

There is no doubt the Prime Minister of Australia was indeed spot-on when he issued the edict to stop Federal Ministers raising funds for the member for Clayfield. He took this action after receiving complaints from many Federal Ministers and candidates who were missing out as the member for Clayfield went around knocking off every available dollar for himself. The member for Clayfield has been bleeding his party dry simply to back his own factional candidates not only in public elections but in internal Liberal Party ballots.

It gives me no joy at all to report to the House that the member for Clayfield has still not been totally frank and honest. I understand he has yet another account—the functions account. The member for Clayfield's latest fundraiser is a breakfast with former New South Wales Premier Nick Greiner. The invitation to the function states that cheques

should be made out to the "Greiner function", not to the Clayfield staff account. This is yet another device to hide funds—funds which ought to be disclosed.

Mr Elder: The Clayfield functions account?

Mr MUSGROVE: The Clayfield functions account indeed! I hope the member for Clayfield puts in another amended return and makes another apology to this House for yet another sneaky device to avoid proper political disclosure. Whenever he has a function the cheques are made payable to the so-and-so function.

Mr Elder: How much is in that functions account?

Mr MUSGROVE: I wonder how much is in that functions account. Cheques are to be made out not to the Liberal Party, not to the Clayfield Liberal campaign and not even to the recently disclosed staff account, but to the functions account! I challenge the member for Clayfield to put in a return to his party and to this Parliament—yet another forced disclosure and another example of his absolute contempt for the political process.

I ask also that the next time he makes a personal explanation he does not say silly things and attack me personally. He should not say, as he did on 23 August—

"... I totally and absolutely reject the defamatory and untrue innuendo contained in the member's statements ...

I urge the member for Springwood, for the sake of his credibility in Parliament and in the community, to refer"—

it to the appropriate authorities. He described them as scurrilous assertions. He said also that these funds do not provide him with any pecuniary interest or advantage.

Time expired.

East Timor

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (11.50 a.m.): I do not believe there would be one Queenslander who would not wish the people of East Timor the very best of good fortune in their quest for independent nationhood or any who would deny them the helping hand they deserve towards that goal. There is certainly no-one on the coalition benches who would be found in the empty, visionless vacuum of such a position. I am equally sure there is no-one on the Government benches who fails to understand the imperatives that drive Australia's policies towards the emerging nation of East Timor. I would find it hard to

believe there is anyone in this House who would put forward such unfathomable views.

I take this opportunity to place on the record the determination of Queenslanders everywhere throughout this State to contribute what they can to building East Timor and giving its administration—currently the United Nations, soon to be native East Timorese—everything they need to make the quantum leap from oppressed territory to independent nationhood. And Queensland is playing its part. I pay tribute to the effort, too, on the part of the business community, volunteers here at home and in East Timor, and to the Australian servicemen and women, many of them from Queensland or based here, who are still serving there, sometimes in harm's way. And the State Government deserves due credit and notice for its efforts on that score.

It is on that last point that I raise in the House today certain aspects of the Beattie Government's approach to East Timor that, I am sorry to say, are less than worthy. What worries us, and the people, is that the facility to be fanciful, at the people's expense, and to the direct cost of truth, is alive and well—thriving in fact—on the benches opposite. If the Premier wants to tell shaggy dog stories around his barbecue, that is between him and Rusty. I would have some advice for Rusty should he come to me seeking to put some balance into the rhetoric that must bounce around the walls of his otherwise pleasant suburban home. But from what I hear, Rusty seems to be a sensible dog. I am sure he has already made up his mind about the relative benefits of editorial over advertorial.

In my capacity as shadow Minister for State Development and Trade, I take a close interest in the business of exporting Queensland products and expertise, and in the benefits of increased bilateral and multilateral trade and investment that a proactive foreign presence can provide. There is no doubt about that. Therefore, I have watched with interest—and I am sorry to say, with increasing concern—the antics of the Premier in relation to Queensland's position in East Timor. That concern extends to the public positions the Deputy Premier has taken in the same area.

I was particularly interested in the response of the Deputy Premier to the energetic efforts made by north Queensland business groups, centred on Townsville—of all places; this might explain his lack of interest in coming to grips with actuality—when opportunities for mutual benefit arose in East

Timor last year. There was no response, that is, there was no response other than a belated and thoroughly reprehensible attempt to characterise those energetic businesspeople as carpetbaggers out to take advantage and make a quick killing.

At the Estimates hearings in August he then attempted to justify this supine position by suggesting that he had advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs that those who were seeking to get in first were in fact getting in the way and should not be encouraged—in fact, by implication, that they should be actively discouraged. So far as I have been able to discover, no advice of that nature exists. I invite the Deputy Premier to table any such official advice he has received. And I do not think he can. I would be prepared to lay a small wager that he cannot. I am certainly willing, in the bipartisan spirit in which Queensland's overseas relations have always been conducted, to stand corrected if he can pull a rabbit from his hat instead of the very dead chicken we have grown accustomed to. But we will leave the Deputy Premier there to cope as best he can with his feet of clay.

He has been gazumped by the Premier, who leapt at the chance in late September to jump into the Government jet and flit away to Dili. While he was there he was accommodated at the Paximus Lodge, a Queensland run establishment that, if his deputy is to be believed—as I am sure he would like to be—should really be named The Carpetbaggers' Inn. However, let us get to the real substance of the issue we on this side have with the Premier and his Government over East Timor in terms of Queensland's business presence there.

While he was on his fly-in, flop-out visit his office put out a number of media statements—the usual marvels of literary engineering. I lost count of how many, but one will do to illustrate the point. This one was issued with a Dili dateline on 29 September and headed "Queensland hatches East Timor market". It stated—

"Premier Peter Beattie has congratulated a Queensland company for establishing a joint-venture in East Timor which will help feed the population, provide 40 jobs and generate about \$6 million over the next three years.

'This is exactly the sort of initiative which the Queensland Government is encouraging,' said Mr Beattie, who is on a three-day trade and friendship mission to East Timor.

'Cairns-based Bingil Bay Poultry has entered into a joint agreement to establish a poultry farm in East Timor.

As far as we are aware, this is the first long-term business venture established between East Timor and Queensland.

I invite other Queensland companies involved in food production to investigate the opportunities that exist in East Timor.'

Bingil Bay has two Queensland farms with 86,000 birds and distributes eggs throughout Queensland through Coles, Woolworths and Franklins. It formed the joint venture with two Timorese businessmen who are residents of north Queensland and they were granted their permit to operate by the East Timor Transitional Administration this month. Bingil Bay will establish a locally producing poultry and egg laying farm to supply both the domestic East Timorese market and export to other countries.

Poultry will be sourced from both Australia and Indonesia. The operation will employ 40 farm staff and is expected to produce 70,000 eggs each day and 3,000 chickens each week.

Gough Plastics, based in Townsville, is an example of a Queensland firm securing opportunities in East Timor, including a \$250,000 order for its hybrid toilet system with the Australian Defence Force. The product was developed over five years as a joint project involving James Cook University and the National Capital District Commission of Port Moresby, PNG.

'This contract is further testimony to Queensland leading the way in providing much needed infrastructure to countries such as East Timor,' Mr Beattie said."

Everyone will want to congratulate these Queensland enterprises on their energy and activity and wish them well. Of course, the Premier, as head of Government, should do so, too. But Curtain Brothers has been operating successfully in East Timor since the beginning of the year. It has successfully completed two contracts with the Australian Defence Force and, by the time the Premier got around to raising even the hint of dust on the Dili airstrip, was involved with two long-term contracts. Paximus Lodge, where he stayed, is a joint venture that includes involvement with Curtain Brothers, Brice Engineering and Paxiquest. Gough Plastics, referred to in the press release, was one of those companies that entered East Timor as part of the Paximus

business visits late last year—before the Premier's visit—without any Government assistance and, if we are to believe the Deputy Premier, in the teeth of active Queensland Government disapproval of carpetbagger activity. The Deputy Premier used that term to refer to those businesspeople who had earlier visited East Timor. He claimed that the advice from the Commonwealth Government was that they had entered early and should not have been there; that they should have been discouraged.

In my research into the Commonwealth Government's involvement in this issue I was unable to find any indication of that advice to the Deputy Premier. Ten months ago they did not want to know them. Last month the Premier was all over them like a rash. What a sorry example of the sad and self-serving model of politics this sorry excuse for a Government prefers.

Affordable Housing

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (12 p.m.): Having a secure, affordable roof over our heads is a basic need that all Queenslanders strive to achieve. However, for many home purchasers and private renters in my local area and around the State, this basic need is becoming an enormous burden. In Australia, housing is generally considered to be affordable if it constitutes 30% or less of the household income. For many people in the private rental market, average weekly housing costs are rocketing up to as high as 60% of household income.

The lower cost end of the housing market is shrinking. In 1986 in Brisbane, it was estimated that 21% of our housing stock was low-cost rental. Ten years later that portion had slumped to 10%. Low-cost inner-city houses, flats and boarding houses have been bulldozed to make way for trendy, up-market apartments or have been renovated, bringing them into the \$200-plus average weekly rent market. This rejuvenation in itself need not be a problem; it can bring a positive facelift to the city—and it has done. The problem is that, in the absence of equivalent levels of low-cost private or public housing being established close to facilities, such as hospitals and workplaces, low-income families and individuals face a severe housing crisis.

Low-income families, including social security beneficiaries and the working poor, are driven out to the lower-cost houses on the outer fringes. They then endure higher fuel and travel costs and long trips to work. Many have poor access to health, transport and

other services. Many become isolated. We then have a high concentration of poorly resourced families, and life opportunities for those kids become limited.

The Archerfield electorate has a significant share of public housing, with around 500 or so public housing units in Acacia Ridge alone. Rather than suffering a stigma, public housing ought to be seen as an essential component of the housing market. In our past lives I and a number of my colleagues have had a departmental supported roof over our heads—and there is nothing wrong with us as a result. The Department of Housing and Project Services are designing and building top-quality homes, seniors units and other dwellings. They blend well into our community and are in high demand. Many more units of public housing are needed as increasing numbers of families and singles can no longer endure the high costs and insecurity that characterise the private housing market. On the last figures that I saw from the Stones Corner office, which covers part of my electorate, the average number of new housing applicants per month was 100 and there are more than 3,000 applicants on the waiting list in that area. The Social Action Office Queensland report into housing-related poverty revealed that 20.2% of Queenslanders live in poverty after housing costs have been deducted, increasing to a rate of 37.3% for young people under 25 years.

I have heard it said that the best form of welfare is a job and access to affordable housing. Someone needs to remind the Federal Government of this. It is boasting a \$13 billion Budget surplus while many people do not have a decent roof over their heads and enough food on their table. The Federal Government tends to be relying more and more on the old supply/demand theory that the private housing market will cater for people's needs. The Commonwealth funding for housing to the States under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement has been declining and will continue on this downward spiral. In 1999-2000, Queensland's share was \$182.5m. This will slide to \$177.1m in 2002-03. The Federal Government has preferred to line the pockets of property owners through rent assistance subsidies to low-income renters. I put my concerns about the declining Federal Government funding for public housing to my local Federal member, Gary Hardgrave, but in his written reply to me neither he nor the Federal Minister, Jocelyn Newman, acknowledged a problem with the declining CSHA funds or the increasing reliance on private rent assistance.

Mr Reeves: Disgrace!

Ms STRUTHERS: As the member for Mansfield said, it is a disgraceful act on their behalf.

Gary Hardgrave and Senator Newman have failed to acknowledge that, by pulling back CSHA funds from Queensland, hundreds of people would be left without a decent roof over their heads. Public housing commencements in Queensland declined from 700 in 1999-2000 to 300 in 2000-01. As CSHA funds drop, one real possibility is a reduction in housing stock from 50,000 units to 36,000 in Queensland over the next 20 years. Instead of recognising this decline, Gary Hardgrave dismissively stated in his letter—

"It should be recognised that in Queensland there is already substantial public housing stock."

I ask: does Gary Hardgrave have a problem with more public housing? I ought to take him around my local suburbs to see the vacant lots where old public houses have been demolished to make way for new public housing and seniors units and other new dwellings. However, there is insufficient money for new construction on those blocks, so they remain idle and public housing waiting lists grow. Many local residents continue to ask me why those lots are vacant.

Gary Hardgrave and his Liberal Party colleague Senator Newman also overlooked the fact that rent assistance eligibility is tied to the social security system. Working people in Gary Hardgrave's electorate of Moreton and thousands of other working people around the State do not receive this benefit. In failing to challenge the housing policies of the Howard Government, Gary Hardgrave is letting down the people in his electorate. Rent assistance is effectively a subsidy that goes to property owners; it does not generate a larger pool of affordable, low-cost housing. As rents go up, the subsidy remains inadequate. Many people still cannot make ends meet and there is a bigger reliance on the Federal Government to provide more and more rent assistance.

If the private market was working well to address housing need, then we would be witnessing a boom in the building of low-cost housing, because this is where the demand is. But the opposite is happening: luxury high-rise apartments are the boom industry. In the main, private developers are focusing on the high cost, luxury end of the market, not lower cost housing. I commend Delfin for what it is doing in Forest Lake in my electorate. Delfin is offering some lower cost as well as more luxury developments, and it pays attention to

community amenity and facilities. Forest Lake is a model community with a great community spirit.

When in Government, the Sheldon/Watson money managers made a disgraceful decision: they gave the Federal Government a \$130m payment, straight out of the State Housing budget, as part of the debt reduction strategy. Most other States were sensible: they took a little slice from a number of portfolio areas—but not Mrs Sheldon and Dr Watson; they gave it all out of the Housing budget. With the declining Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement funds and the Sheldon/Watson bungle, Queensland has been left with the legacy of a major shortfall in funds for the construction of new public housing. With a declining Federal Government commitment to affordable housing, the Queensland Government faces an even tougher task. The last census estimated that there were 25,649 homeless people in Queensland, and the local Brisbane project carried out by John McCullough and others showed a disturbing level of homelessness around the Brisbane City area.

On my visit to Aurukun and Hopevale with the Minister last week, I was very distressed to see the critical housing need first-hand, with houses averaging 10-15 people per household in those communities. Our State Government has committed \$173m over five years for housing in deed of grant in trust communities and in Aurukun and on Mornington Island. That will enable the building of 700 new dwellings. \$50m is being spent on inner-city housing—within Brisbane—in the first term of our Government. The Department of Housing has signed off on the Community Housing Plan 1999. An outcome of this will be new partnerships between the department and others in meeting housing need, including options for raising off-Budget finance. Funds of \$78.5m and \$70.6m have also been allocated this year to upgrade existing rental properties.

Community organisations such as Queensland Shelter, the Social Action Office, QCOS and the Queensland Community Housing Coalition have been strong advocates on housing issues and have continued to call on the Federal Government to increase Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement funds. Their call has not been heard. Similarly, they have been calling on the State Government to allocate more funds to housing, including increased borrowings to boost the current depleted levels of public housing stock. Those organisations have also been active in pursuing alternative housing financing models, including joint ventures with

a mix of private and public support. All of those proposals to boost the stock of affordable accommodation in Queensland, including incentives to, and partnerships with, private developers to design and build lower-cost housing close to amenities, deserve high priority attention. The housing needs of all Queenslanders must be accommodated. We cannot rely, as the Federal Government prefers, on the private housing market and the private jobs market to provide secure incomes and a roof over everybody's head. They are failing our community.

Racing Industry

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (12.10 p.m.): Many in this House will know of my passion for and love of the racing industry and why I relish the responsibilities of being Opposition spokesperson. That is why I rise today to express my absolute dismay and frustration over two articles which appeared in Saturday's edition of the Courier-Mail. One article was written by Mike Colman and the other by Tony Koch. Both articles were highly critical of the administration of racing in this State. However, the most disappointing fact about these articles is that, in the main, they are just that—fact. What has prompted two political journalists, not regular racing writers, to pen such criticism? The answer is the lack of direction and leadership of this Government and the current Racing Minister when it comes to the future of the Queensland racing industry.

For those who missed the articles, let me quote firstly from the Koch article. Obviously Mr Koch had not been to the races for some time and had been invited to do so. In his article he states—

"What had gone was the crowds.
And the bookies. And the excitement."

He went on further to say—

"So where is the problem? It is in the administration of racing. It is this facet that needs flushing out and modernising. But the problems to be encountered are obvious. There are so many vested interests of people currently involved who do not, for selfish personal or business reasons, want any change at all."

The Colman article states—

"Anyone who doesn't know that Queensland's racing industry is a hotbed of political factions, personal agendas, infighting and backstabbing hasn't been studying the form."

These articles are a damning indictment on the Beattie Labor Government's direction as far as the racing industry is concerned. It is a sad reflection on the administration of racing in this State and, unfortunately, sends all the wrong messages to people in the industry who rely on it for their livelihood.

The articles also send a message to racing operatives in other States of Australia that Queensland, which once boasted a proud racing status, is fast becoming a backwater. I am not saying that the articles should not have been written. In fact, what was said in those articles is exactly the sort of thing that is being said openly in industry circles at the present time. What needs to be asked is what prompted the articles to be written in the first place, and the answer lies in the growing discontent by industry players not only in thoroughbred racing but also in the other two codes. The problem has been best described in some circles as the ongoing bitchiness within the industry itself. But that is only part of the problem. It also has to do with the expectation of benefits to Queensland racing from the TAB privatisation.

I supported the TAB privatisation. I supported the coalition's TAB privatisation deal when in Government but, unfortunately, that deal was scuttled by the incoming Labor Government and the industry was forced—or, more to the point, threatened and bludgeoned—to comply with a new deal which was described at the time as being "sound but tight". At the time, the offer was not tied to indexation to allow for inflation; it was just a flat fee for supplying product.

In the Colman article, former QPC chairman Craig Black went on to say—

"There is simply no money available from the TAB funding for major capital works ... But the industry has made the deal and we have to live with it."

The situation now is that both Brisbane clubs are approaching the Government, cap in hand, wanting money for capital infrastructure. Good luck, fellas! The Racing Development Fund is no longer available. It has gone, and so has any chance of the clubs being able to access funding specifically directed to racecourse development. That has directly contributed to clubs being forced to look for alternative development projects, which, in the case of Doomben and the BTC, involves other sports. That proposal has now led to anger among up to 80 trainers who see the project as the death knell of their businesses. I do not blame clubs for looking at alternative development in their respective complexes,

but how did we ever get to the ridiculous point at which the viability of some of the industry's most important players is being threatened?

Another issue is prize money. I will take last Saturday as a typical example in order to compare prize money levels between Brisbane and Sydney. We can forget Melbourne, because the Spring Carnival is under way. Naturally, with two Group 1s, two Group 2s and a Group 3 race on the program, the level of prize money on offer was as it should be. At Canterbury in Sydney there were just 78 acceptances for eight races. That figure was reduced considerably further with a number of scratchings. The total prize money for each race was \$40,000—\$27,200 to the winner. At Eagle Farm there were 98 acceptances for eight races, which was reduced to 82 with scratchings. Prize money ranged from just \$24,000 for four of the races up to a possible \$80,000 for the Super QRIS two year old race and \$50,000 for the Super QRIS three year old race. Thank God for Super QRIS! But, of course, each week there is no guarantee that those bonuses will be won. I would be very interested to see the TAB holds to compare Brisbane and Sydney last Saturday. On paper, Brisbane had the far better meeting but for a lot less guaranteed prize money.

Where are the great benefits to owners from a Labor Government-struck TAB privatisation deal? I have not even mentioned racing in provincial or country areas yet, let alone other codes such as harness and greyhound racing where prize money levels have dropped since TAB privatisation. So there is no money for racecourse development. Our prize money levels are still well below those of our southern counterparts. The two major Brisbane clubs are still at war with each other, as they have been since 1923. Everyone is complaining. There are damning articles in the Courier-Mail. To top it off, there is now a CJC investigation into the financial aspects of the Queensland Winter Racing Carnival body.

I am led to believe that there is still a Racing Minister in Queensland. It is time for the Minister for Racing to act before there is no racing industry left in Queensland. Surely the Minister can see the signs; the warnings are there. It is time that this Minister took a leaf out of her predecessor's book and started to kick a few heads. Right now there are a few craniums which need to be severely dented. If the Minister's response is to do nothing, then she is being very badly advised indeed. Where is the Government's vision for the racing industry? What happened to the Gibbs' blueprint that was supposedly going to Cabinet

before he took off for Hollywood? It seems that since Gibbs' departure all hell has broken loose in the racing industry in Queensland. This Government is on the nose with many people in the industry and will remain so until the next election.

I also want to comment briefly on the CJC investigation into the Queensland Winter Racing Carnival and the accusations against its General Manager, Kate Greer. In this House on several occasions I have sung the praises of Kate Greer for the work she has done in promoting racing, particularly during the various carnivals. I stand by those comments. It seems that I have a few allies, with almost every club expressing their support and admiration for the work she has done. If the CJC finds something, then action should be taken. I realise that the CJC must act on a complaint. There is no question about that. However, if it is found that there is no basis for the allegations, I think it is only fair that those responsible for the allegations should also be judged accordingly.

The promotion of racing is another issue which has been raised in the media of late. Whether the comments attributed to QTC Chairman Peter Gallagher in the Courier-Mail last week are accurate or not, I could not help but be amazed if any club fails to take advantage of newcomers to the races as a result of promotion, whether they be young or old. The job of promoters is to get people to the track. If a club cannot capitalise on that, then something is wrong. It is like advertising a business, getting a whole swag of people in the shop and not having a shop assistant to see to people's needs. When was the last time a club engaged someone to sell products of racing to groups of young people at the track who might otherwise be there simply for a social occasion? They should be teaching people how to put a trifecta on or put some bets on for them—sell the product. It might also be something that the beefcakes at the recent girls day out at Doomben could be encouraged to do.

With competition coming from off-course attractions and with dwindling crowds at the track, on the occasion a racing promotion is successful and people come to the racecourse the opportunity to get them back rests with the club. The current problems with the racing industry require leadership. If this Government is not prepared to show that leadership to the State's fifth biggest industry and fourth biggest employer, then I suggest the industry keep that in mind for when the time comes to register their vote at the next State election.

One thing those articles did reflect is that it is crisis time for the industry. At the moment, the talk is about amalgamating the two Brisbane clubs as part of a solution. I think exactly the opposite. Maybe a third Brisbane track with an all-weather surface would get the major players hopping around like fire walkers. That would set the cat among the pigeons, particularly if the private sector became involved. I am confident that solutions to the current problems can be found, but it will take some pain. Again I reiterate: if this Government is not prepared to do it then the coalition sure is, as we did under Minister Cooper in the last Government and as we will under a future Borbidge coalition Government.

Time expired.

Fuel Prices, Impact on Tourism

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (12.20 p.m.): I rise to alert members of the House to the serious signs of the impact of rising petrol prices on tourism, particularly in northern and western Queensland. While we know that increases in petrol prices are very hard on all of us—those in city areas with their cars, those in small businesses dependent on deliveries and trucking, and certainly those in areas more remote from the metropolitan areas who rely on road transport to bring even food to them—there is a particular segment of the tourism industry that is already feeling the pinch.

We know that tourism is an important industry to Queensland. Most often we hear about the number of visitors to Queensland as they are measured through our airports. I am pleased to say, in case honourable members had not noticed, that last week it was announced that Cairns airport was the only Australian airport to have double-digit growth over the last decade. That is indeed a fine record and evidence again of the rapid growth of tourism in far-north Queensland. That figure comprises domestic visitors to Cairns—those from places in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia—as well as international visitors from the countries of Asia, America and Europe. In a sense, this is a false measure of tourism to our fair State because it does not take account of the tremendous numbers who arrive by rail or by road, which are very hard to track.

It is particularly those travellers by road that we need to consider today in terms of the impact of rising petrol prices. They are most often referred to in the industry as independent travellers. That is because they generally travel in small groups or family

groupings and of their own accord, following their own itinerary. Members can think who in their own families might be those who would fall into this category of independent travellers.

Mr Sullivan: A lot of retirees.

Ms BOYLE: There are a lot of retirees. I thank the member for the interjection.

Mr Sullivan: During the winter months they head up to the north.

Ms BOYLE: They do indeed head north in the winter months. In fact, the ambition of many Australians from southern States is to drive to the tip of the cape and to look from that northernmost point of Australia across to Papua New Guinea. This is a very important section of tourism. Yes, they are generally retirees—older people whose children have grown and who can take the time, very often with a caravan behind them, to travel the east coast and sometimes further than that, right around the roads across to Western Australia and around Australia.

There are others, too. There are young ones who may have finished their education, at least for the time being, and who set off in small groups to explore this amazing country that we have. Frequently they find some work along the way, in fruit picking for example, and they take their time, contributing to the small communities in which they stay for weeks or months and discover this country that is theirs. These travellers also are generally known to avoid the big cities. They are not so much—not for long periods at least—visitors to Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane or even Cairns. They like to travel the country roads. They like to visit the small towns. When their numbers decline, the impact is not just directly on the caravan parks or the motels at which they might stay, it is also on small businesses in small towns stretched right across northern and western Queensland.

I will tell honourable members how severe the petrol price increases have been in the regions around Cairns. Some travellers who recently returned from their trip to the tip of Cape York told us in Cairns that they paid petrol prices as high as \$1.23 a litre. Of course they had not budgeted for such costs and the impact for them was such that they were going to have to hurry home rather than allow themselves the luxury of further exploration of Queensland.

Following their retirement, some good friends of mine have been off over these last six months, caravan in tow, around Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. They said that increasingly over these months they have found the roads

and caravan parks deserted. The independent travellers—the caravaners and the campers—cannot afford the petrol prices.

I have checked with caravan parks not only in Cairns but also in Innisfail, up in the Daintree and in Cardwell, and many of them are reporting that this season they have been 50% down on their usual numbers. The impacts for them are serious. The impact is also felt by all those small corner shops that provide the bits and pieces that people need to keep going—the food and the other supplies that these travellers would need from day to day as they pass through these small towns. My information is that the Olympics have probably contributed in a small way but that really it is petrol prices that are ruining this market.

We do need to care for the sake of the tourism industry. We do need to care for the sake of the small towns, which have few choices in terms of expanding industry at the moment and which rely on the extras that are provided by the tourists who pass through. We need to care, too, because our country is so huge and it will be to our detriment if people are unable to afford to travel it and to discover the great differences there are between the Kimberleys, Cape York and the Mornington Peninsula.

There is also the double-up problem. That is particularly because a lot of this market is made up of pensioners. They are people who, when they get their pensions, set aside an amount for rental and an amount for petrol and then attempt to live on the rest. But their information to me is that this is no longer the way. Now they set aside their rental and how much is essential for them to live on in the way food and other commodities and then see what is left for petrol. And the answer is not much. Even Cairns pensioners are saying that, rather than using their cars to drive in the urban area of Cairns, they are pausing and sometimes deciding not to go to events or not to go visiting because the price of petrol is so high.

I call on QBITIA, the Queensland Backpackers and Independent Travellers Industry Association, to take up this matter to alert all Governments to the impacts on independent travellers of these rising petrol prices. Cairns is fortunate to be home of the State president, Stephen Welsh, who has taken a leading role with the backpacker industry. I ask him and his organisation to also attend now to the independent travellers, who may not be so numerous in Cairns itself but who are very important to north and western

Queensland and, I am sure, other places in Queensland.

I stress the importance of the situation by confronting members with the news that petrol prices are going to rise further. The estimate is about 5c or so within the week. What does the Prime Minister say? How does he show the importance of this to his constituents right across Australia? He dares still to suggest that the calls for him to take action in relation to petrol prices are a campaign of Labor propaganda. In fact, however, the RACQ, through spokesman Gary Fites, has made it very clear that the Federal Government must take part of the blame and that there is indeed a GST increase, on top of what was promised, of at least 1.2c a litre. What about the Australian Automobile Association, which has backed us? What about the National Farmers Federation? What about Western Australia, which is not in fact a Labor State? South Australia also is calling for the Prime Minister's attention.

Apart from the likely 5c rise in the next week or so, we will be confronted in February next year—unless the Prime Minister and his coalition Government see the light and hear the messages from their constituents around Australia—with another 2c to 3c rise due to Federal Government excise. That is a rise that they do not need and which is impacting in serious ways right around this country.

As we talk in this honourable House, there is a Northern Australia Summit continuing in Katherine, one convened in fact by Mr Howard and the Federal Government. I hope that summit makes it very clear to the Prime Minister that there is no more serious issue across northern Australia than petrol prices, and that he does have the power—and we know he has the power—and numbers of choices for controlling the price of petrol and for cutting back the windfall which he professes to ignore.

I surely join with all honourable members in calling for the severity of this situation to be recognised, not only for the independent travellers but also for all of us—for pensioners and all those affected by rising petrol prices.

Time expired.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2)

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to

pay certain amounts from the Consolidated Fund to departments for the financial year starting 1 July 1999."

Motion agreed to.

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

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.31 p.m.): I move—

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

I rise today to introduce a supplementary Appropriation Bill for departments as stated in the Schedule attached to the Bill. The Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2000 provides supplementary appropriation for unforeseen expenditure incurred by departments in the 1999-2000 financial year.

For each department, the total amount mentioned in the Schedule is appropriated for the department for application to its departmental outputs, equity adjustment and administered items for the 1999-2000 financial year.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Watson, adjourned.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (No. 2)

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.32 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to pay an amount from the Consolidated Fund to the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service for the financial year starting 1 July 1999."

Motion agreed to.

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

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP)
(Treasurer) (12.33 p.m.): I move—

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

I rise today to introduce a supplementary Appropriation Bill for the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service for the financial year starting 1 July 1999. This Bill is consistent with recent convention and ensures that the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service's appropriation is separate from the supplementary Appropriation Bill for the other activities of Government.

The Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2000 provides supplementary appropriation for unforeseen expenditure incurred by the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service in the 1999-2000 financial year.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Watson, adjourned.

WORKCOVER QUEENSLAND AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.34 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996, the Building and Construction (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991 and the Industrial Relations Act 1999."

Motion agreed to.

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

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.36 p.m.): I move—

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

The proposed legislation contains amendments that will improve the operation of the workers compensation and building and construction industry portable long service

leave schemes. This Bill includes amendments that continue the well-planned and structured process to reform Queensland's workers compensation system, begun by this Government with the introduction of amendments early in 1999, and further clarifies the intent of the WorkCover Queensland Act. The Bill also amends the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act. The amendments contained in the Bill are the result of a review of that scheme's operations conducted in 1999. Finally, the Bill clarifies and confirms that an order of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission made in relation to a person employed in a labour market program made under the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 1991 is preserved under section 140 of the Industrial Relations Act.

Now to the highlights of this Bill. In relation to the WorkCover Queensland Act, the Bill establishes certain financial reserves that will be excluded from the calculation of WorkCover's solvency. This will allow the workers compensation scheme to operate an investment fluctuation reserve which will be used to help smooth premium levels in years where investment income is less than projected. Mr Jim Kennedy, who also conducted the review of the workers compensation scheme in 1996, recommended the establishment of an investment fluctuation reserve in the recent review of the experience based rating premium system. The WorkCover Board subsequently endorsed this recommendation.

For the protection of workers, the Bill makes compulsory payment for injured workers for the whole of the first day of injury. Some Queensland workers are covered by Federal industrial instruments that do not contain this entitlement. The intent of the WorkCover Queensland Act to provide Queensland workers with payment for the whole of the first day of injury will now be confirmed. The amendments will also ensure equity in the payment of ambulance transport costs for Queensland Ambulance Service subscribers and non-subscribers. WorkCover will now pay ambulance transport costs to the Queensland Ambulance Service when incurred as part of all claims. To maintain equity across the scheme these amendments will also ensure that self-insured employers may contribute to the costs of Queensland Ambulance Service ambulance transportation through the levy.

Greater flexibility will be provided by an amendment that allows for periodic adjustments to the self-insurer's levy, which

covers a self-insurer's proportion of scheme costs. This will result in adjustments to the levy rate that reflect actual costs. The levy rate will now be published in the Industrial Gazette. Additionally, the Bill reduces the level of the unconditional bank guarantee that must be lodged if a self-insurer elects to take an interim payment of their outstanding liability. The level of guarantee can be reduced because WorkCover continues to bear responsibility for any payment over the original estimation until the five-year reassessment.

The Bill will allow the WorkCover Board to consider applications for self-insurance from group employers who were licensed as self-insurers prior to 3 March 1999 and who as a result of business restructuring no longer meet the self-insurance criteria that applied at the time they were licensed as a self-insurer. The amendment also clarifies how changes in the membership of a self-insurance licence may be made, and the transfer of members between self-insurers. The amendments to the self-insurance licence conditions will take effect from 17 October 2000.

The operation of Medical Assessment Tribunals has been improved under the legislation by increasing the number of doctors appointed to these tribunals. Due to this increased flexibility, injured workers will be able to have their matters heard more quickly. This Bill also makes beneficial amendments to the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act. The Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Authority, now known as QLeave, has been operating for eight years. Consultation with industry stakeholders and a careful review of the Act has identified key areas in which QLeave can better serve the building and construction industry as a whole.

These amendments include the provision of clearer definitions of the "building and construction industry" and "eligible worker", which will alleviate restrictive limitations and clarify the intent of the legislation. It will widen the eligibility criteria to ensure building and construction industry workers are equally entitled to register and benefit from the portable long service leave scheme.

Under these clauses, safety officers and forepersons in the building and construction industry, who were previously excluded from the scheme, will now be eligible to register. In addition, apprentices and trainees indentured by State or local governments will be able to have that period counted towards their service record if they move into private sector employment on the completion of their indenture.

In line with recent determinations made by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, these amendments seek to provide flexibility in the provision of long service leave entitlements for workers in the building and construction industry.

The current legislation allows for a pro rata leave payment of 8.67 weeks' leave after 10 years of service. The amendments will allow the worker to take an equivalent cash payment after 10 years. The amendments will also offer a pro rata benefit after the equivalent of seven years' service if the worker dies, or intends to permanently leave the industry. A part-time worker provision for a pro rata benefit will also be offered for those with seven years in the industry and at least 1,155 service credits accrued if the worker dies or intends to permanently leave the industry.

The portable long service leave levy is currently payable prior to the lodgment of a development application. For many projects, there can be a considerable delay between the lodgment of an application and issue of a permit to build or construct.

In response to industry concerns, the Bill postpones the time at which the levy must be paid. This will now take place prior to the issue of a development permit, which more closely aligns payment of the levy to the commencement of work.

With added clarity and additional benefits being implemented, it was considered timely to increase the responsibilities associated with the scheme. Penalties for breaches of this legislation will be increased to 40 penalty units and officers of QLeave will have the widened function to secure documents and information from individuals and companies to ensure compliance. These amendments will ensure that QLeave can achieve the most effective and equitable long service leave scheme possible and add value to the industry by providing efficient ancillary services in fee collection. These amendments can be made by utilising QLeave's strong financial position and surplus, while maintaining the levy at no higher than its current rate of 0.075% for the next 13 years.

Finally, there is an amendment to the Industrial Relations Act to ensure that orders of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission relating to a person employed under a labour market program made under the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act are preserved under the Industrial Relations Act. The remaining elements of the Bill are consequential in nature.

The Bill contains amendments to the workers compensation and building and construction industry portable long service leave schemes that build on the Government's commitments to improve the fairness and operation of both schemes for both workers and employers in Queensland. I therefore commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Sheldon, adjourned.

CRIMES AT SEA BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (12.43 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to give effect to a cooperative scheme for dealing with crimes at sea, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (12.44 p.m.): I move—

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

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (12.44 p.m.): This Bill will be Queensland's part of a new national scheme of State and Commonwealth legislation that will simplify and modernise the criminal law applying to offences committed at sea.

In Australia, the criminal law applicable to an offence committed at sea is currently determined by reference to matters that include: the ship's location; its intended destination; the domicile of the persons on the ship; the citizenship of the persons on the ship; and other matters.

The laws that apply to an offence may overlap and the laws of the various States are sometimes inconsistent. There are also problems with enforcement. For example, I understand that the 1984 America's Cup regatta off the Western Australian coast demonstrated some of the potential problems with the current state of the laws of the various jurisdictions. There were on that occasion

many spectator craft, all from different countries and all anchored beyond the limit of the territorial sea. It would have been problematic for the police in that State to identify the applicable law had an offence been committed on one of the vessels.

The general outline of the proposed scheme will be as follows—

Within 12 nautical miles, the law of Queensland will apply by force of this Bill. This area will be referred to as the "inner adjacent area".

Beyond 12 nautical miles and out to 200 nautical miles or the outer limit of the continental shelf, whichever is the greater distance, the law of Queensland will be applied by force of the law of the Commonwealth. That area will be referred to as the "outer adjacent area".

The same situation will apply in each of the other States and the Northern Territory as well.

Generally, the laws of criminal investigation, procedure and evidence of the Commonwealth and States will apply to investigations and in judicial proceedings conducted by the police or in the courts of those jurisdictions. This will permit, for example, South Australian procedural and evidentiary provisions to apply in proceedings conducted in a South Australian court for an offence against Western Australian law, should that need arise. A State's laws relating to criminal investigation apply in the "inner adjacent area" and elsewhere as may be determined by intergovernmental agreement.

The Bill will also repeal section 14A of Queensland's Criminal Code. This provision operates to extend Queensland criminal law to vessels and persons connected with Queensland out to 320 kilometres—essentially 200 nautical miles.

Section 14A adopted an approach different from that of some other States, which have legislation that determines applicable law by reference to matters that include whether the vessel was on a voyage between places within the State. This provision will now be redundant as Queensland law will apply out to this distance without the need for that connection. Under the scheme, there will also be special rules for offences committed beyond the 200 nautical mile limit of the adjacent area for Australia or on or from a foreign ship.

The consent of the Commonwealth Attorney-General will be required for the scheme in relation to such offences. As noted, there will also be an intergovernmental

agreement between the Commonwealth, the States and the Northern Territory. This will relate to enforcement responsibilities.

There is an appendix to the Bill containing an indicative map, showing the various adjacent areas that I have been describing. This will assist those using the legislation to understand it more readily. The Bill, however, will prevail over the map in the event of any conflict between them.

This national scheme was an initiative of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. That committee first looked at the matter in 1991, following the 1990 report of the Australian Law Reform Commission on Criminal Admiralty Jurisdiction and Prize. Since that time, the Solicitors-General of the States and the Northern Territory, together with the Parliamentary counsel's committee, have had input as well.

The various jurisdictions involved have been progressively passing the required legislation since the end of 1998. The Commonwealth's legislation was passed this year and it was our intention to wait until the Commonwealth's legislation was in place.

There has also been consultation in this State with the current and former Directors of Public Prosecutions and the Queensland Police Service, together with a range of other affected departments. Once this new scheme is operational, the various jurisdictions with responsibility for Australia's vast coastline will have modern legislation suitable for the new millennium.

With the extensive tourism and recreational activity that occurs in areas such as the Great Barrier Reef, this will be an important initiative for this State. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 6 October (see p. 3600).

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (12.50 p.m.): I am disappointed with the contents of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which is before the House today. Stakeholders have devoted hundreds of hours of work to this project in relation to the regional forest assessment and it has all been wasted. We should have had legislation based on social, scientific and economic assessments. However, that has not been

done. What we have is nothing more than a political decision to lock up the forests.

The Explanatory Notes to the legislation make it quite clear that the signatories to the agreement were the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, the Queensland Conservation Council, the Wilderness Society and the Queensland Timber Board. The first three groups mentioned are very oriented towards conservation. The Timber Board is striving for survival and is interested in obtaining long-term contracts. I believe the Timber Board had very little choice in this matter.

One must remember the people who live and work in the forest, whether they be graziers, beekeepers or local communities. We must also consider the bushwalkers and the recreation users. Those people have not had a say in the framing of this legislation. Perhaps the Minister could explain what input he alleges those people have had.

We do not have an RFA. The Commonwealth Government will not, and should not, recognise this as an RFA. It is nothing more than a political stunt. It does not fulfil the objectives agreed to by the States and the Commonwealth in the National Forestry Policy Statement.

Mr Welford: Yes, it does.

Mr HOBBS: No, it does not. The Commonwealth Government does not recognise this legislation. The Minister knows that the Commonwealth has refused to fund it. The Queensland Government is locking up 425,000 hectares of State forests. That action is totally irresponsible. There is no need for the Government to do that. The JANIS target for the conservation of regional ecosystems can be achieved by having a smaller area of our forests taken out of production.

The Government could have adopted a better method in deciding what is required. The coalition is prepared to suggest positive alternatives, namely, continued and ongoing access to Crown native forests for the timber industry; the maintenance of total and individual wood supply allocations for the life of the RFA, supported by a tradeable 25-year wood supply agreement; the addition of approximately 300,000 hectares of Crown forest reserves to achieve the JANIS target for the conservation of regional ecosystems, not the 425,000 hectares that the Government is talking about; a hardwood plantation program consistent with Plantations Vision 2020 to supplement wood supply from a Crown resource rather than replacing it; enhanced silviculture to provide improved forest

management and productivity of the Crown resource and quality of regrowth; continued access to Crown native forests, except in scientifically proven environmentally sensitive areas, for other compatible forest industries such as grazing, beekeeping and recreation; legislation to guarantee resource security; the abolition of the State Government's first right of refusal on wood supply allocations or mill sales; right-to-harvest legislation for private forest owners; a transparent and accountable tender system to provide fair access to all sawmills for Crown timber supplies; and an industry development plan that pursues better resource use, more competitive costs structures, improved processing technology, value adding and environmentally friendly use of by-products.

That is a far better model than that which has been produced by the State Government. All the Minister is doing is locking up the forests. He has denied forest users the ongoing use that they had in the past. The Minister has broken his commitment to those people. It is an absolute disgrace.

We all know what happened with Fraser Island and Maryborough. An enormous amount of money was paid to the community in an effort to rectify the abandonment of the forest industry in that area. However, it did not work. The money was simply poured down the drain. Those millions of dollars could have been used for productive purposes. The Government is trying to do the same thing here, but on this occasion it is trying to get the Commonwealth Government to fund it. It is no wonder that the Commonwealth Government has refused to fund it.

How will this country be maintained if it is locked up? The Government is unable to maintain the areas presently under its control.

Mr Lester: It's disgraceful, what's happening.

Mr HOBBS: As the member for Keppel says, it is disgraceful.

Our national parks system is falling down around this Government's ears, mainly because those opposite have been trying to lock up as much country as possible. The Government does not have the resources to manage these areas. What action will be taken in regard to firebreaks and maintenance? This is totally irresponsible behaviour.

We all know what happened with the bushfires in the United States. The areas which are proposed to be locked up by this Government will one day burn from boundary to boundary. Undergrowth will build up in these

areas and we will not be able to control bushfires. This Government is making the situation worse because it does not understand anything at all about forest management or the rural industry. The Government's chosen environmental track has been proved in the past to be the wrong track.

We need to be able to work our forests with good reforestation plans. Our forests are a renewable resource. Our forests can be sustainably logged for many years. It is not necessary for the Government to lock up the forests.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister points out that the RFA protects jobs and the precious native forest. Under this legislation jobs will be lost. It is simply using words to say that our precious native forest will be protected. This legislation will lead to irresponsible management and will allow unsustainable use of the forests, particularly in relation to reduction in the girth size for logging purposes. This legislation will offer no advantage to the millers or to the forests.

The millers were obviously anxious to try to achieve some form of long-term contract. They had no security because of the uncertainty surrounding the industry. They were desperate for a long-term program. The Minister is offering the industry nothing in the way of a professional RFA. The graziers and the recreation users of our forests have also been let down by this Government.

The beef industry in Queensland is our second largest primary industry. It is worth over \$1.2 billion at the farm gate. Our forests are an important contributor to the beef industry, supporting operations which are often managed in conjunction with the timber industry and other forest users. Some 43,000 head of cattle are grazed on the 412,000 hectares of Crown native forests within the south-east Queensland RFA area. The area comprises some 295 grazing term leases which vary up to 30 years in duration.

The Minister is not giving those people any security. He is going to put them into a holding tenure and then crack them off. Government officers are up there now trying to negotiate with various people about what will happen with their tenures. The Minister cannot come in here and say that he is not doing that; he is. We know that, because the public servants are telling us what is happening.

There are also tourism and recreation users. South-east Queensland native forests support myriad recreational activities, including bushwalking, picnicking, trail riding, endurance riding, pony clubs, four-wheel driving and

camping, just to name a few. Families, groups and clubs from all walks of life from all over Australia recognise the unique values of the Crown forests and gain immense enjoyment from visiting and pursuing recreational activities in these areas.

The tourism industry has an established interest in south-east Queensland forests and will provide opportunities for rural and regional communities as demand for forest-based tourism and recreation activities continues to grow. The south-east Queensland comprehensive regional assessment estimates that 7.6 million visitor days are spent in State forests and national parks every year, with 1.8 million of those attributed to forests. The CRA estimates that tourists make up about one million of the total visitor days to the south-east Queensland region, with the remainder made by the residents of south-east Queensland.

There are also other industries, including the honey bee industry. The south-east Queensland native forests are also essential for the honey bee industry. State forests and timber reserves in the south-east Queensland RFA area have been estimated to account for more than 40%, or 1,700 tonnes, of honey and 17%, or 15,700 tonnes, of queen bee production. In addition to honey production, the industry makes an important contribution to the agriculture and horticulture industries via crop pollination.

I believe this legislation is flawed. I do not support it in any way. Amendments need to be made to this legislation to make it workable. This RFA is an absolute disgrace and the Minister should be ashamed.

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

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (2.30 p.m.): The Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill raises a number of important issues. In relation to the southern Queensland RFA proposal, there have been concerns about job prospects, forest planting activity and ensuring that over time forests are available for an industry that will be dependent on them. Agreements have been struck with the sawmillers. Those agreements will provide them with a degree of security. All businesses need security. In relation to Boral's Nandroya mill, I note that when I drove past it the other day there were very few cars parked outside. That mill is being wound down, which is of enormous concern to the community. That mill has provided job opportunities in the area for a long time. The mill's former work force is now employed by Main Roads and the council. I understand

some of its former workers are still looking for employment. In the current economic environment jobs are not easy to find, especially in that area.

In the future, if a mill within the areas under the agreement wishes to sell out it will have to go to the Government first. The Government would have the first right of refusal in relation to the purchase of a mill. Of course, that depresses the price of milling operations and the return to the owners. When a milling operation ceases, what will happen to the workers? Will the same thing happen to them as happened to the workers at Nandroya? What of workers who think they have security under this agreement and who subsequently find that the operator of the mill cannot continue? Will they face the prospect of having to look for another job?

The 25-year time frame for plantation forests needs to be examined. To some degree this aspect is unknown. We are not certain how long it will take for these trees to reach a stage at which they can be milled. The size of the trees may create some limitations. Pinewood forests grow rapidly, but hardwood forests grow much more slowly. If within 25 years those trees do not reach the stage at which they are suitable for milling, there will be a question in the transition period as to what will happen in native forests.

I believe that to some extent the Bill is politically motivated. Extreme pressure is being applied by a number of vociferous environmental groups. A lot of recreational forest users do not seem to have been given adequate consideration. Other speakers have mentioned four-wheel drivers, trail bike riders and people who ride horses through State forests for recreation. We are not certain of exactly where those recreational activities will be able to be conducted. For example, in the past young children might have been able to ride a horse along the trails in those forests close to their home. In future, if they have to travel some distance they might become dependent on their parents for transport.

Mr Lester: It's a right that's being taken away.

Mr ROWELL: That is exactly right. I am pleased the honourable member raised that point, which I was going to make anyway. People will no longer have the same access to these forests. That is of concern, because recreational activities are important to many people, be they young or old.

I wish to compare what is happening now with what happened when parts of north Queensland were World Heritage listed. I am

aware of the downside when timber and milling operations are closed. Under the Hawke Government, then Senator Richardson visited north Queensland and announced a cessation of logging in World Heritage areas. That was done purely for political reasons; it was done to win votes. I do not think Richardson cared about the forests. In fact, he demonstrated that sometime later. He saw a political opportunity and he took it. It was decided that in areas that had been logged selectively for probably over 100 years logging would no longer be allowed to continue. However, those areas, where only about two trees in an area the size of a football field had been logged every 40 years, were still sufficiently good enough for World Heritage listing. There was some doubt about the sincerity of the whole operation.

Some 1,000 jobs were lost throughout north Queensland when that area was World Heritage listed. A number of mills between the tablelands, Innisfail, Ingham and further afield were no longer able to mill timber and provide their valuable product and diverse job opportunities for people in those areas. In addition to the mills closing, for example, the hauling contractors and the people who brought out the logs, harvested them and put them onto trucks were also denied jobs, and towns suffered. If we look at the 2.5 to 1 ratio, which is a fairly acceptable ratio for jobs, we see that those districts lost a lot of support industries that had been dependent on the timber industry.

Queensland foresters were acclaimed as being some of the best in the world. A number of them went overseas and assisted many countries to plan their forestry. They did an excellent job. The Minister wants to refer to the forestry—

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr ROWELL: I am talking about the World Heritage area.

Other facilities came into question once those areas were designated. I wish to speak very briefly about communications. In that part of the world there is often a need for towers, dishes and so on in order to facilitate communications. I hope that what we are doing through this Bill will not create similar problems to those I have seen recently in north Queensland.

The coastguard wanted to put a repeater station on top of Mount Bowen on Hinchinbrook Island but was not allowed to do it mainly because of the aesthetics. If somebody climbed that 3,000-odd foot peak, got to the top and said, "Well, blow me, here is

a communication tower", it would be a let-down to them. People who may risk their lives were not considered, because they wanted to put a VHF transmitter tower up there.

It could have been hidden in different ways. I know that in many areas of the world those sorts of things can be made to look like trees. There could be a little box at the bottom which just looks like the stump of the tree and the branches could adequately act as antennae, but we could not do that. So they went to two or three other islands such as Gool Island and Pelorus Island and installed a couple of facilities when one would have done the job adequately.

I would also like to talk about Powerlink. This situation may arise in south-east Queensland when transmission lines have to go through this new natural resource area of national park that is going to be created. At present there is a great deal of reluctance by the Wet Tropics Management Authority to consider keeping the same alignment of a transmission line. Powerlink is proposing to go through an area of canefields and put in these towers and create new easements and new difficulties for people in getting around the towers, thus devaluing their properties when they could simply continue it on the existing alignment and adjacent to the current powerline.

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr ROWELL: It will fit. It can fit. Can the Minister tell me what they are going to do when they take the transmission line from Innisfail up to Cairns? The same situation applies there. There is a 132,000 volt line coming right down from Kareeya, going through Innisfail and going up to Cairns. Eventually we have to replace the whole lot of that with a 275,000 volt line in order to get adequate power into Cairns. We will then have to decide what we are going to do in that region from Innisfail up to Cairns to replace that 132,000 volt line with a 275,000 volt line. If it can be done there, it can be done in the rainforest. I believe there is determination from us to do exactly that. We can put in towers that go over the top of the canopy and we can plant trees underneath. Then there would be no interruptions as far as the animals and the other things are concerned in going across that cleared area that exists at present.

Tully/Millstream is another one that was denied to us because of a World Heritage listing. It would have been an excellent project which would have supplied something like 600 megawatts of power—clean, green energy. Despite all that, we were not allowed to go

ahead with Tully/Millstream. If anybody had attempted it, enormous difficulties would have arisen. I am extremely concerned because it would have been a good project and it would have provided good, clean energy for Queensland.

I would now like to talk about tourism. Tourism was considered to be a panacea as far as this area is concerned. When the World Heritage listing took place, people talked very widely about having ecotourism, about the fact that people who were losing their jobs in the timber industry would go into ecotourism. However, the draft plan lacked the support for doing that type of thing in this region and it was extremely disappointing. Not only did the people lose their jobs, but the capacity to generate other activities and other industries was denied.

The people from the Wet Tropics who actually did it were very inexperienced in terms of understanding what the region was all about. I think one was a Canadian who had been here for 18 months and the other person had been in north Queensland for only about two years. We received very little support to get the tourist industry up and going in the wet tropical region. We could have built walking tracks; we could have done lots of things. In fact, there were existing roads there. The road from the top of the Kirrama Range across to Ravenshoe is now overgrown. The culverts left from the timber industry are in disrepair. I think that it would have been an excellent place for walking tracks or for four-wheel drive activity so that people who were disabled—people who could not walk these areas—could have driven along that road.

The H road was another very interesting road because it went from the Tully Gorge up to Millaa Millaa. That road was built by the electricity authority some time ago during the period when the Kareeya power station was built. The disastrous thing—and I mean disastrous—that happened to that road was that the electricity authority, Powerlink, decided that it would bulldoze a hole in the middle of the road. I find it very interesting that no punitive measures were taken against the electricity authority for the work it did there. That road was very serviceable, very useable, and it would have allowed the development of a great area for tourism.

In relation to the road to Wallaman Falls, a road that has been built up over a period of time in various stretches, we saw the ridiculous situation in which gravel was brought some 300 kilometres from Charters Towers to Ingham because it matched the colour of the

surrounding soils, and damned me if it did not turn black, anyway. We go to all these pedantic lengths to implement strategies to ensure that we do have something that matches the local aesthetics and environment that all the green people can feel warm and fuzzy about, but the next thing we find is that it was not of much benefit and the whole concept was a waste of time.

I want to speak about the Dalrymple track because it has some similarities as far as horse riding is concerned. The Minister might laugh about horse riding.

Mr Welford: What's this got to do with the RFA? None of this has anything to do with the RFA.

Mr ROWELL: I am going to draw the comparison because it is going to be very doubtful as to whether people will be able to ride horses in this new national park concept that the Minister is creating for south-east Queensland. I want to let people in Parliament know what happened as far as the Dalrymple track was concerned because it has the similarities that I want to talk about.

This track had been there for some 100 years. This was a track that was used by the first settlers who came into the district, who came in the ships to Cardwell and then went over this track—it is a gap in the range—and went through to the Valley of Lagoons and all these areas. It might be strange to the Minister, but 100 years ago they used horses to go over this area. People wanted to do exactly the same thing now, but they were told, "No, you cannot ride horses in a national park", despite the fact that people had been riding horses along this road for almost a century. The Minister should listen to me because he does not know what life is really all about. He comes from a closeted environment and he has some very definite views about issues. There is no doubt about that. He laughs about them and he thinks that it is a great joke. But people who want to do this type of thing are going to be denied the opportunity. The reason that they were not able to use this Dalrymple track was that some seeds might grow in the horse manure that are not natural to the national park or to the World Heritage area. However, horses, have been traversing that area for 100 years.

Mr Welford: You were in Government for a couple of years, weren't you. Why didn't you change the policy?

Mr ROWELL: This all occurred after we left Government, when the members opposite got back into Government. Up to that time and during the Goss era this was happening and

nobody was concerned about the fact that people could ride a horse through that area. In fact, some of the great trail riders were intending to use it.

Hinchinbrook Island is another area. The people whom the Minister administers act like God there. They get in helicopters and they drop incendiaries on top of the mountains at Hinchinbrook Island. They do this because they want to burn the rainforest out a bit. They do not want it encroaching on the wet savanna areas—those environments they want to create biodiversity with. They acted like God as far as those particular areas are concerned.

I recall that during September four or five years ago Hinchinbrook Island was on fire. It was going up in smoke. Surely the Minister remembers that he opposed Port Hinchinbrook and that he was adamant that the development should not go ahead. Hinchinbrook Island is not near Port Hinchinbrook; it is across the way. However, there was so much smoke from the island that it chased people out of Cardwell during the school holiday period. These are the kinds of things that happen because of the decisions of those warm and cuddly people in the Minister's department. This will touch Port Hinchinbrook—

Time expired.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (2.50 p.m.): I rise to participate in the consideration of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, the latest step in implementing the Government's so-called plan for south-east Queensland's forestry industry. It was interesting to listen to what the member for Hinchinbrook had to say about some of the things that happened in north Queensland regarding World Heritage listing. The people of south-east Queensland can be assured that the same twisted ideologies and the same nonsensical results will be visited on them. The agenda is being driven by a Minister who is a zealot, who has no understanding of the practicalities of the situation and who laughs at issues brought to the attention of this Parliament by the member for Hinchinbrook. However, that will be the very real result of the twisted ideology that this Minister purports to bring forward again with this legislation.

This legislation is about implementing an agreement signed by the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, the Queensland Conservation Council, the Wilderness Society and the Queensland Timber Board. The agreement was not a regional forest agreement. The agreement bore no relation and very little relevance to the scientific

analysis that has gone on over a long period to establish a sustainable yield of commercial timber from south-east Queensland's forestry reserves as part of the regional forest assessment process agreed to with the Commonwealth Government.

The Queensland Government plan and this legislation are the continuation of an agenda to achieve a strategy to completely end logging in native forests and to put an end to the native forest timber industry. This legislation is the latest step in achieving that strategy. It is aimed at making it as difficult as possible for a more sensible Government to reverse that strategy in the future. There is no scientific reason why logging in the native forest reserves of south-east Queensland should end or that a sustainable timber industry based on those native timber reserves should be destroyed—no scientific reason at all. There was no scientific reason identified in all the studies conducted as part of the RFA process that justifies a complete end to logging.

This legislation establishes a new land title for the 425,000 hectares that the flawed plan of this Labor Government is determined to set aside from the productive timber industry. It establishes a title called a forest reserve, which has become widely known in the industry as a national park in waiting. The land title established by this legislation is, by its own definition, limited to a five-year life span. It supposedly allows for all existing uses to continue other than commercial logging. In effect, because of the five-year life span of this title, at the end of which the land will become part of one of the protected areas, these existing uses face the prospect of not being able to continue past that five-year cut-off.

In point of fact, the objectives and management relating to forest reserves clearly establish that—

"It is the Parliament's intention that each area of land dedicated as forest reserve will become a protected area as soon as practicable after its dedication."

In effect, that means that the existing uses on that land—be it recreational, grazing, beekeeping or whatever—will certainly cease after five years and could very well cease much earlier than that in line with the Minister's intent outlined in the statement I just read. This legislation supposedly allows for the preparation of 425,000 hectares for conversion to national park estate.

It is worth noting at this point the complete inability of the Labor Government to adequately fund and manage the area of

national park that already exists in Queensland. To suggest that this additional area of 425,000 hectares can be adequately managed under an interim land title and successfully converted to national park is quite clearly shown to be absurd by the Government's record in managing the national parks it already has.

However, the most concerning aspect of this legislation is encompassed by the part that it plays in the overall strategy of implementing the so-called forestry agreement. Much has been made by the Deputy Premier in this Parliament of the Government's success in convincing the sawmillers of south-east Queensland to sign 25-year timber supply agreements with the State Government. Indeed, this is often promoted as a major success of the negotiation process. In reality, these 25-year timber supply agreements represent a financial time bomb for a future Queensland Government. The reason that these agreements are so financially dangerous is the contingency clauses they contain to cover the eventuality of the Government being unable to supply the amounts of timber to the mills that are stipulated in the agreements.

Almost everyone in the timber industry with any practical experience or knowledge of south-east Queensland forests will freely express the opinion that it is almost impossible for the required amounts of timber to be supplied for 25 years from the areas of State forest left outside the reserve system. In the almost inevitable eventuality of the Government being unable to supply the timber stipulated in the 25-year agreements from the areas remaining outside the reserve system, the contingency clauses in the timber supply agreements will be invoked and compensation will be paid according to the contracts with the timber mills.

By all accounts, those clauses and the compensation they allow are very generous indeed. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the generosity of those contingency clauses has been a major factor as to why the Government has been successful in getting the timber mills to sign up. However, that generosity represents a financial time bomb for future Queensland Governments. It solves the immediate problem for the current Government in that it allows 425,000 hectares to be reserved. It has encouraged the mills to sign the agreement and it solves the Government's political problem. However, it represents a huge financial impost on a future Queensland Government if and, more likely, when that timber supply cannot be delivered in the future.

The current Minister and the current Premier will not be around in five years, 10 years or 15 years when that inevitable failure to supply occurs. However, the contracts that they have written to achieve their 425,000 hectares of reserve will have to be honoured by a future State Government. That is where this legislation fits into the overall strategy. The only alternative for a future State Government to the debilitating contingency clauses in the timber supply agreements and their generous compensation payments would be to revoke the reserve areas to allow access to the timber supplies that are undoubtedly there. This legislation is designed to make that revocation as difficult as possible.

In terms of the process necessary for revocation, the so-called forest reserves will be the equivalent of national parks. The only way that those areas can be revoked under this legislation is by a regulation passed by the Legislative Assembly of which 14 days' notice must be given. That is essentially the same process as is required for the revocation of a national park. In terms of tying up the timber resource on those areas, this legislation makes them the equivalent of national parks.

I contend that that is the very purpose of this legislation. Its purpose is to attempt to prevent the reversal of the Government's decision to reserve 425,000 hectares of State native forest from timber production. In that respect it will fail, because no matter how difficult those revocations are, they will be done. The very purpose of this legislation is to prevent that reversal, to make it difficult, to prevent the revocation of any part of that area even though everyone in the industry knows and, I believe, the Government knows that at least part of that area will need to be made available for timber production if the 25-year timber supply agreements are to be met by the State Government in the future.

This Minister and this Government have no intention of honouring all of the 25-year timber agreements that they have entered into with the sawmillers in south-east Queensland. They know that it is impossible to honour those agreements from State forest land left outside the reserve system once they have set aside 425,000 hectares. They know that it will be a problem for some future Government to meet the compensation payouts demanded by the contingency clauses of those agreements when the timber volumes are no longer available to sustain the native forest industry. They have been able to deliver a short-term win for their green supporters in achieving a reserve area of 425,000 hectares. They talk long and loud about a sustainable future for

the native forest industry, which they very well know is unsustainable. However, in so doing, they have cynically and knowingly set a financial time bomb for a future Queensland Government that will impact on future Queensland State Budgets and thereby on every Queenslanders.

The coalition will be moving a series of amendments to this legislation. That will give the Government a chance to demonstrate its true intentions. The alternative plan we have developed in conjunction with the Commonwealth for south-east Queensland State forests requires a reserve system of an additional 300,000 hectares, rather than the 425,000 hectares that the Labor Government is proceeding with. Our alternative is a true regional forest agreement.

An increase in the reserve system of 300,000 hectares would also identify enough native forest to sustain the existing timber industry. It would give the timber industry the security it needs to ensure its future and it would ensure the conservation of significant areas. It would, as I said, be a true regional forest agreement under the original concept and it would be an agreement that would deliver to all stakeholders, unlike the alternative this Labor Government is seeking to shore up with this legislation—an alternative that it knows can never deliver on its promises.

This legislation is not based on science, just as the Regional Forest Agreement was not based on science. Let us not forget that the Regional Forest Agreement set out to establish the sustainable yield from south-east Queensland's forestry reserves. It set out to establish for all time, to put beyond doubt, the sustainable yield. Out of the whole process, which reportedly cost \$11m, we never got that proposed Regional Forest Agreement. Instead we have a shallow agreement, signed by three conservation groups and a representative of the Queensland Timber Board, which has determined that logging will end in State forests—not for scientific reasons but to satisfy an agenda, to satisfy a philosophy that has been driven to the exclusion of all scientific evidence by the Left Wing of the Labor Party and the zealot who is the Minister. It is an agenda that is being supported and promoted by the so-called conservation movement to bring about what for it has been a long-term strategy. It is an erroneous strategy that is based on the complete misunderstanding of what logging does to native forests. It is a strategy that is based on the assumption that logging somehow destroys forests forever and that those areas are somehow removed from

the forestry reserve—that they disappear once they are logged.

Shutting down the native forest timber industry is like shutting down a productive factory. It is like shutting down a factory that can go on producing forever. Our native forestry reserves can be a non-polluting, regenerating factory that, if correctly managed, will be producing quality timber products for many generations to come. Indeed, that is the very reason they were designated as forestry reserves in the first place.

Selective logging does not destroy forests, it allows forests to regenerate. Queensland's forests have never been clear felled and no-one has ever suggested that they should be. Generations of practical forestry management backed up by scientific study indicate that the forests of south-east Queensland can be selectively logged on a rotational basis varying between 10 and 20 years, depending on the species involved. That means that every 10 or 20 years the commercial sized logs can be removed from these forests to produce quality timber products. The trees that are left will continue to grow to maturity and in their turn produce quality timber. It does not mean that a tree will grow from a seedling to a mature tree in 10 or 20 years. Removing the commercial sized logs gives an opportunity for the younger, immature trees to grow to maturity—an opportunity they would not have in unlogged forests, simply because of the dominance of the mature trees. In that respect, this reflects what happens in nature.

Once that concept is understood—once that reality is accepted—it is not hard to understand how hardwood forests can continue to produce quality sawlogs in perpetuity, as they have done for the last 100 years. The only question is: at what level can they be logged? What is the sustainable level of sawlogs that can be produced from a particular forest region? That is what the Regional Forest Agreement set out to determine. That is what the \$11m was spent for.

The Regional Forest Agreement process was well on the way to establishing that sustainable yield by scientific analysis. Then it was derailed and disrupted by the election of this State Labor Government and the whole process was hijacked by the extreme conservation movement. Instead of a Regional Forest Agreement that has integrity, that is based on science, that guarantees the future of the Queensland hardwood timber industry and that ensures adequate areas will be

reserved, we have a political deal that achieves none of the original aims of the RFA process but seeks to appease the extremists in both the Left Wing of the Labor Party and the conservation movement. It is a deal that is impossible to deliver in reality.

It is widely accepted in the timber industry by many practical timber managers that it will be impossible to deliver 25 years of continued supply of quality sawlogs from the areas that are left outside the reserve system. We should never forget that the agreement calls for nearly a million acres—425,000 hectares—to be locked up now, to be excluded from logging. The remaining State forest reserve has to, under the terms of this legislation, provide sufficient timber to give the existing mills security of supply for the next 25 years. That is increasingly being seen by forestry people in the field as totally impossible.

Already moves are being made to harvest more intensively those areas that are still available to the timber industry. That is undesirable from a timber production point of view, but it is in response to this much trumpeted agreement in an attempt to produce as much timber as possible from the remaining areas. Those areas outside the reserve system are already being logged far too intensively, and the agreement has been in place for less than two years. They are being logged far too intensively in order to try to delay the inevitable—to try to delay the time when the Government will have to default on the 25-year timber supply agreements.

The legislation we are considering today is designed to make it as difficult as possible for a future Government to expand the area available for commercial timber production, because it sets up this land title that does not allow logging and then makes it very difficult to revoke any land transferred to that title. Meanwhile, the reserve areas are to be locked up and declared off limits to a wide range of traditional users quite apart from the timber industry. That process of exclusion will proceed between the passing of this legislation and the five-year cut-off date that is inherent in the Bill.

Recreational users such as trail bike riders and four-wheel drivers will lose access to these areas. More importantly, so will grazing leaseholders and beekeepers. This legislation specifically states that leases will not be renewed as they expire. That raises the question of what will happen to the infrastructure that the subsequent leaseholders have established—infrastructure such as fences, yards and watering facilities, which constitute a major proportion of these

grazing leases. I know from experience in my electorate that restrictions are already being placed on those leaseholders within the proposed reserve area to make the conduct of their grazing businesses much more difficult. That is a problem that is currently being faced to some extent by all holders of forestry leases, not just those who fall within the proposed reserve area.

There is increasing anecdotal evidence that the grazing leaseholders outside of those proposed areas are having their activities curtailed in a range of ways, particularly involved with the siting and maintaining of infrastructure. However, the leaseholders that are under greatest threat are those who hold grazing leases over land that has areas suitable for plantations. Very often this is the area of former scrub country that has been cleared and represents the only real valuable area on the lease from a grazing point of view. The grazing leaseholders face the prospect of losing access to the little bit of good country that is on the lease and being left with the remaining low-value country. Understandably, they are seeking some compensation for that loss.

Quite apart from grazing leaseholders, other leaseholders face major losses if and when these leases are terminated. A number of rifle ranges and gun clubs are located on forestry land outside the reserve area. Even there they face an uncertain future. There is surely a moral obligation to include these leaseholders in the future use of State forest areas. There is surely an obligation on the part of the Minister to put an end to the uncertainty that so many of them face.

There is also a clear obligation on the part of the Minister and the Government to ensure that, if it is decided that leases are not to be renewed, previous leaseholders should be fully compensated for their loss, especially in respect of the value of their infrastructure that becomes obsolete. That principle undoubtedly applies to grazing leaseholders, rifle clubs and all other users of State forest land. It is a principle of basic fairness that the Minister should adopt.

I call on the Minister to give those leaseholders that assurance today. He should give an assurance here in Parliament that they will be compensated for the losses they will incur as a result of changing uses of State forest land. He should give grazing leaseholders the assurance that they will be compensated for the infrastructure that makes up the major part of the value of their lease. He should give the rifle clubs and gun clubs,

such as the ones in Biloela in my electorate, an assurance that they will be given compensation for their infrastructure, which may have even been established by voluntary work. A very admirable set-up has been established in Biloela by people working in a voluntary capacity. Now there is uncertainty with respect to their continued operation on that forestry lease.

Given this Government's record on compensating other land-holders whose rights it has removed, it is understandable that forestry leaseholders are somewhat apprehensive about their prospects. Given this Minister's track record in compensating other land-holders who have been affected by legislation put through this House, it is understandable that these people, who face the prospect of losing access to forestry leases and to the infrastructure they have established on those forestry leases, are somewhat concerned and somewhat apprehensive about their prospect of getting compensation. I call on the Minister today to put that point beyond doubt. When he stands up to reply to this debate, he should put that point beyond doubt and give those people the assurances they are seeking and which they deserve under any sense of fair play.

In conclusion, the whole process relating to the native forests of south-east Queensland has been characterised by the same deceit and dishonesty that has become a trademark of this Government, the same deceit and dishonesty that has been such a trademark of this Minister with a range of legislation that he has introduced to this House. This legislation is no different. It is deceitful and it is dishonest and it should be defeated, and the coalition will be voting against it.

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—CCAQ) (3.10 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. There are a number of concerning issues within this Bill. However, my main concern is the lack of recognition for recreational activities within State forest reserves. My colleague the member for Caboolture touched on this subject during the last sitting. Many people will be affected by the tying up of these forest reserves, including four-wheel drive owners, motorbike riders, horse riders, shooters and bow hunters. They are entitled to access to these reserves.

The Minister wants to tie up 425,000 hectares. My main concern is that the Minister's department cannot control the reserves and national parks for which it currently has responsibility. It is beyond me

why we need so many of these national parks. Many of the national parks across the State do not warrant being characterised as such. One in particular comes to mind. I do not know whether the Minister has ever visited the Ellis River and Mitchell River national park. The place is one huge pig-infested dust bowl. There is not a beautiful thing about it. The only thing that I have seen that has any quality about it is the crossing. For the graziers around the area, it is a nightmare because it is just a habitat for dingoes and feral pigs which continually raid their properties and retreat back into the national park. The same can be said of many parks across the State.

A wise politician—

Government members: Who? Name the person!

Mr KNUTH: Someone who was much more wise than any of the Labor members—this person definitely was not a member of the Labor Party—once said to me, "If you enter politics, whatever you do, never impinge on people's recreational opportunities." The Minister is making a huge mistake with this Bill.

Ms Struthers: Are you talking about drugs?

Mr KNUTH: It has nothing to do with drugs. Labor members pretend to look after the battler. The battler's only enjoyment is their recreation. I refer to four-wheel driving, horse riding—

Mr Schwarten: So you oppose the closing of the barramundi season, do you? Well, that's interfering with people's recreation.

Mr KNUTH: No, people can still catch them. We have no problem with that.

Mr Schwarten: You can't eat them.

Mr KNUTH: People can still let them go.

Mr Nelson: Tinaroo dam.

Mr KNUTH: The member for Tablelands mentions Tinaroo dam. People can keep them there.

I will return to the Bill. The Minister would be quite aware that when his department tried to pull down a number of beach huts in the Burdekin electorate, the greatest outrage ever witnessed in the Burdekin took place.

Mr Schwarten: The National Party did it in Mr Lester's electorate.

Mr KNUTH: I do not care about the National Party. I am making a point to the Minister. We had 460 people turn up at the first meeting we held. That is because this Government, once again, attempted to

impinge on people's recreational opportunities. The Goss Government tried to do it with recreational fishing. It tried to close down national parks to recreational fishers.

Mr Rowell: Fishing in national parks.

Mr KNUTH: That is it. What happened? There was a huge backlash. I believe to this day that was the major reason for the Goss Government's collapse.

Mr Rowell: 2,000 people.

Mr KNUTH: There were thousands at the meeting in Townsville. The Minister is making a huge mistake in not allowing recreational users in forest reserves. I am trying to warn the Minister about this. I do not know why I am doing it. I should just let him make a mistake from which we will benefit, but I am trying to save the pain of a lot of my constituents and a lot of other constituents across the State.

Mr Schwarten: How about recreational bulldozing?

Mr KNUTH: This is all recorded in Hansard, and there will be plenty of people reading it. If members opposite mock recreational users of these reserves, let it be on their own heads. I am making a valid point here. We are talking about people's recreational pursuits.

The Labor Party claims to represent the battler. I have been a battler all my life. I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth. I got into politics. I represent the battlers in my electorate, and I fight for their recreational rights. They respect me for that. If the Government attacks their right to pursue recreational activities, it will go down.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr KNUTH: I am making a valid point. I am merely asking the Minister to listen to what I am saying. He must continue to allow people to make recreational use of forest reserves. He cannot take that away from them, because where will they go? We are seeing more and more national parks being set aside. We are seeing the expansion of cities and the development of new subdivisions. Whereas once people had large areas available to them for recreational purposes, that is no longer the case. If the Minister removes the right of people to access forest reserves, where will they go?

Recreational activities support many industries. They create jobs. People buy four-wheel drives; people buy cars; people purchase horses. The Minister may think I am talking through my hat, but I warn him that this will come back on him in a big way. We all remember the backlash against the

Government's attempts to limit recreational fishing. The Government cannot touch people's recreational activities. They are more important to them than work because they involve family. The Government cannot touch people's beach huts because they are a very important part of some people's lives. That is all they have. They do not enjoy the same facilities as those who live in southern Queensland and some parts of northern Queensland. This applies especially to rural areas, because this move will affect rural and regional areas. The Minister must understand that this is all that some of those people have.

My main objection to the Bill is the move to tie up more land. As I said before, if the department cannot manage the current national parks, why create more? They are a problem. I live at Mount Elliott. It is a national park. Every day on my way to and from the office, I either hit a dingo or a feral pig or see them get run over. They are out of control. If we cannot manage the existing reserves, why create more? The idea of setting aside national parks and reserves was to protect something of magnificent beauty. However, some of these areas are not magnificently beautiful, and they are becoming a burden to the people around them.

When I was working at Ravenshoe—and my colleague the member for Tablelands was probably in school then—Senator Richardson came to declare the place a World Heritage area. The member for Hinchinbrook will probably recall that the people of Ravenshoe had a sign across the street which read, "The Government says that our rainforest is so beautiful, they have decided to make it a World Heritage area, even though we have been logging it for over 100 years." That sums it up. There was sustained management of that forest. It employed a lot of people; it was the substance of the town. Even after 100 years of logging, it was still such a beautiful area that the Government considered it was worthy of World Heritage listing.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr KNUTH: That is right. Senator Richardson went to Ravenshoe to close down the forest. He expected all the workers to greet him and hug him and say, "Good on you, Senator Richardson; what a wonderful thing you are doing here." What happened? He got jobbed in the head, and he wondered why.

Mr Nelson: He was nearly lynched.

Mr KNUTH: He was lucky he never got out of his car, because he would have been lynched.

The Government is encroaching upon people's livelihoods. If the Government takes away a person's livelihood and their recreation, it will wind up in a lot of trouble. There is an old saying: never touch wine, women or song. That is what it comes back to: entertainment and sports—

Mr Schwarten: I've never heard that.

Mr KNUTH: I have just told the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing. I have just educated a teacher.

Mr Schwarten: I go to church and sing all the time.

Mr KNUTH: I am just letting the Minister know now.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! While we are talking about singing Christian songs, I would like to take a brief break and acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Toowoomba Christian School.

Honourable Members: Hear! Hear!

Madam Deputy SPEAKER: Would the member for Burdekin continue, please.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr KNUTH: Believe me, there will be no blaspheming on my part. I am making a valid point and I pray that he listens to what I am saying. He could get down on his hands and knees. I am saying that this is a valid point. I am pleading with the Minister for Environment and Heritage to listen to what I am saying about people's recreational activities. This Minister cannot take away their right to enjoy their recreational activities in these reserves.

Mr Nelson: He can, but it is wrong.

Mr KNUTH: The member for Tablelands is quite right on that; it is morally wrong. He can do it, but I guarantee he will pay for it. The Minister probably does not care, I do not know.

I notice that the member for Keppel has proposed some good and valid amendments. I will be supporting those amendments and the City Country Alliance will support those amendments. I hope that the Minister studies and considers the amendments. It is all in the Minister's hands; he has the numbers, but I hope that I can go back to my constituents and say that he has made the right decision on this issue.

There are some valid aspects to the Bill; I am not saying the whole Bill is wrong. There are a number of points I do not agree with, but what I am encouraging the Minister to do is to consider the rights of people to enjoy their recreational activities. I do not know what the

Minister's past is; he probably did not enjoy recreational sports. I did.

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr KNUTH: I would believe that the Minister probably does. I thank the Minister for agreeing to visit the Burdekin. It will be his first visit to the area. For a while I thought he was worried about putting his feet in the Burdekin, but I now know he is coming up, and that is great.

Mr Welford: I am looking forward to it.

Mr KNUTH: I am looking forward to meeting the Minister up there.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr KNUTH: I really would love to take the Minister barramundi fishing. I do not know if he has ever done it before but I would love to take him there, because then he would understand what people in my part of the world enjoy.

Mr Welford: That is another thing on the list of your illegal activities.

Mr KNUTH: It is not illegal; it is totally legal. It is only illegal if the Minister makes it illegal.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could the member for Burdekin return to the topic, please.

Mr KNUTH: It is part of the Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, because what I am trying to do is show the Minister what people enjoy in that part of the world. Madam Deputy Speaker, you are from our part of the world. North Queensland is a great part of the world. Hopefully one day it will be a State, but I will get off that topic right now.

I will not talk any further to the Bill and I will not condemn it because, after listening to and considering the statements I have made and after taking note of the amendments that the member for Keppel has proposed, the Minister may change his mind. So I will leave it at that.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang—LP) (3.24 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. There are numerous recreational uses for State forests and numerous representative bodies seeking an input into the process of developing this and other types of legislation. I have spoken to some of these groups over the past couple of years. There have always been issues relating to the State forests and other Crown reserves in my electorate, which is in the hinterland of the Gold Coast. As more than half of it is State forest or some form of Crown reserve or national park, I deal with issues of this type all

the time. I am speaking to the recreational users of the hinterland all the time.

Of course, my constituency is there as well, and a great proportion of my electorate uses those resources regularly and very much enjoy it. That is why it is so important that I rise to speak to this Bill; I am certainly very concerned about what seems to be happening here. It is not so much what is written in the Bill, it is what is not written in the Bill and the potential for an agenda to be set that will detrimentally affect my electorate.

This Bill is also very important because my electorate provides recreational facilities and services not only for the hinterland and for the Gold Coast generally but also for a lot of tourists. My electorate contains the Nerang State Forest, Lamington National Park, Purlingbrook Falls, Springbrook and all of the back area at the top near Beechmont—although Binna Burra lodge is in the electorate of the member for Beaudesert—and at the back of Numinbah. All those areas are very much affected by this legislation. I have spoken to a lot of the representatives of these areas, especially the Gold Coast representatives of the different groups, over time as the level of concern has increased consistently due to the lack of consultation over the past 12 months. What really concerns them is that there is clearly an agenda that the conservationists have taken control of. They fear that the result of that will be very much at their expense.

What clearly seems to be coming out of the consultation process is that, if this agenda does eventuate, recreational users will be a lot worse off across-the-board. I know that the Minister has made a personal commitment to no net loss of recreational use, but he will not be the Minister forever; the mechanisms have been put in place to gradually erode that recreational use. This concerns me because a lot of what has been spoken about is clearly putting an agenda on the table; it seems that this is legislation by stealth. If the Minister was to try to put in place legislation that had some wholesale limitation on recreational use there would be such a hue and cry from the community that it would force the Minister not to proceed. So what we see is, as I said before, legislation by stealth.

A good example of this is the way that the fishermen's huts in north Queensland have been dealt with. When there was resistance from the local community, which became particularly stressed over the issue, we saw the department pull back on the agenda; it put things on hold. But the moment that the local

communities and the interest groups who had the advantage of using these facilities relaxed for five minutes, the bulldozers went in and down went the fishermen's huts.

Mr Rowell: That happened on Moreton Island.

Mr CONNOR: It has happened across the State. It seems that the intention is that no-one should enjoy himself. That seems to be the way the agenda is going. All these recreational places are to be preserved for future generations but no-one is allowed to use them.

If I refer to my past it might possibly explain why I am particularly concerned about areas of recreational use. A bit over 20 years ago I moved to Queensland from the Manly/Warringah area of Sydney—the best move I ever made. The Manly/Warringah area was settled by my parents' generation. It was a holiday destination on the northern beaches of Sydney. In my early youth it was a great place to live. Gradually, over a period of time, the hinterland area of parks and Crown reserves in Manly/Warringah had their recreation uses reduced.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr CONNOR: I used to go to Brookvale oval all the time. I played Rugby League a couple of times at Brookvale oval. The Manly/Warringah area was unique because it was the home of Nat Young and a number of other world-class surfboard riders. The beaches played a very important role in the community.

The hinterland areas were also important. For example, I want to refer to the Narrabeen Lakes. Narrabeen Lakes had been used for decades for waterskiing. It was all part of a water conservation plan. About 30 years ago the State Government decided that it would become involved in so-called consultation with interested parties, namely the local residents and the waterskiers of the area. Those people made it very clear that they were quite happy for waterskiing to continue. Narrabeen Lakes was one of the very few places left in the Manly/Warringah area where one could still waterski. As I understand it, the only other place was Pittwater. With the increase in water traffic and the like, Pittwater became too dangerous for waterskiing.

Within a short time, the conservationists took control of the agenda and waterskiing was closed down. That meant that residents had to travel to central New South Wales, northern New South Wales or western New South Wales in order to waterski. More and more recreational uses were withdrawn in the

Manly/Warringah area. Opportunities for pushbike riding, horse riding and trail bike riding were reduced over a reasonably sustained period of time. The baby boomers of that area—one of whom was myself—found that we had to travel to central New South Wales or further north for recreation purposes. Eventually, we did not return to Sydney.

Every now and then I return to the Manly-Warringah area of Sydney and I am aware that very few members of my generation are still residing there. Most of them now live in central or northern New South Wales or on the Gold Coast of Queensland. Lack of recreation facilities was one of the main reasons why people moved out of Sydney. Scores of my colleagues in Sydney moved to the Gold Coast as a direct result of the lack of recreation facilities. I might add that, as my generation moved out of the Manly/Warringah area, it was evident that the parents followed shortly after in an attempt to maintain family ties. As a result, the whole demographics of the community changed.

The same type of agenda is being pushed in my electorate in the hinterland of the Gold Coast. We have already seen an attempt to restrict waterskiing on the Nerang River. Twice in the past eight years that subject has been put on the agenda, and twice I have consulted the people who are supposedly the worst affected in the area. The Department of Transport identified the people who were close to the area involved. I undertook extensive consultations with residents up and down the river and I found that the people, with one or two exceptions, were as one and were totally in favour of retaining waterskiing in the area. Why? The reason is that most of those people were waterskiers and had moved to the area in order to be able to waterski. The people moved into this area so that they could take advantage of that recreational pursuit.

People moved into the hinterland of the Gold Coast to take advantage of the facilities available. There is an economic aspect to this matter as well because a lot of tourists come to the area to avail themselves of the facilities. They come to the hinterland to pushbike ride, to horse ride and to trail bike ride. If we restrict those activities, not only do we restrict the reasons why people move there in the first place; we also restrict their sporting, cultural and social ties. Many of their social activities are built around such outdoor recreational pursuits.

This move is part of the agenda of a very small representative group. It is not the agenda of the wider community. As I look back

on my time in the Manly/Warringah area, I am aware that it was a great area in which to grow up. We had beaches, we had waterskiing and we had a healthy lifestyle. I hope that the up and coming generation in the hinterland of the Gold Coast is able to enjoy the same sorts of pursuits. I hope that my grandchildren will receive the same benefits that my children received in the Gold Coast hinterland.

Mr Rowell: What about Oakey Creek and those areas where there is fishing?

Mr CONNOR: I mentioned the aspect of fishermen's huts earlier. I know that it is a slightly different issue, but the same situation applies. Whilst I do not have fishermen's huts in my electorate, for obvious reasons, we find that the same agenda is involved. It is a case of trying to reduce activities within recreational areas.

There is always some reason why things have to be restricted. When one looks at a particular instance, there is always some protected species or some minute piece of pollution that needs to be considered above all else. If we continue to look at that minutiae and look at that individual situation on its own and forget about the broader picture and its impact on the lifestyle of our society, we will kill the essence of the community. As I said, this is more than just a recreational issue; it is a social and community issue.

I urge the Minister—I plead with him—to take these sorts of things on board. As I said, I do not want my kids to have to move away.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (3.40 p.m.): This is a very sad day for all Queenslanders. The Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is a piece of legislation that attacks people's rights to recreation, that is, their rights to undertake activities they have undertaken in many cases for decades. This legislation attacks their rights to recreation. This legislation is all about some 425,000 hectares of forest reserves that the Government proposes to transfer over to national parks of various types and descriptions. Those national parks come under a range of names—national park (scientific), national park (recovery), national park (conservation park), national park (forest reserve). But they are all national parks. There are five different categories of national park. At the end of the day we are talking about a transfer of an area of land across from the forest reserve into national parks of various types and descriptions.

I note that the Minister says that in addressing the issue there will be no net loss. However, although he has said there will be no

net loss, he has been very careful not to indicate what that means. Is he saying there will be no net loss around Queensland in total? I am sure that is what he means at the end of the day. It is little use for the Minister to take away land, for example from Brisbane Forest Park, which borders suburbs of Brisbane and which at the moment might be used by recreational users, and putting in its place land several hundred miles away that people can use for recreational purposes, for example, for horse riding.

Land like this has been set aside now for decades—long before this Minister was around. I remember being part of the group that had the vision and helped to establish the Brisbane Forest Park. We know that this Government is not about vision; it is about nothing more and nothing less than ideology. There can be no other reason for it. The Minister has given no real indication why the Government is proposing to take this course of action. It is being done for the sake of ideology. The Minister has an opportunity to change the whole way in which people go about their recreation. The Minister still has an opportunity to change course. However, this legislation was rushed in here to be debated in the middle of the night. Out of the blue the Minister decided to bring forward this legislation

Mr Rowell: Half past 11.

Mr BEANLAND: Yes, at about 11 or 11.30 on a Thursday night the Minister rushed in this legislation to be debated in order to get it through. The fact is that this Government was prepared to rush it through. Time and time again we see that this Minister does not have the courage to come in here during the normal hours of business—during the day—to debate legislation. We have seen this Minister bring on legislation to be debated in the middle of the night.

Mr Lester: They wanted to take it right through.

Mr BEANLAND: The shadow Minister, the honourable member for Keppel, informs me that this Minister and this Government wanted to debate it through the night. They wanted to ram it through in the wee hours of the morning—probably 4, 6, 7 or 8 in the morning. That is what this Minister was prepared to do to get this legislation through. And it is little wonder; today the Minister did not have the courage to go out and face the protesters—the people who were not properly consulted.

Mr Welford: Yes, I did.

Mr BEANLAND: No, the Minister did not. He was not out there today consulting with

them at all. He did not have what it took to go out and talk to them today.

Mr Welford: Watch the news.

Mr BEANLAND: We will see them on the news harassing and heckling the Minister, because he did not address their issues today at all. He failed. He has had weeks to address these issues, yet he did not. If one looks at the consultation process, one sees that the people at the grassroots level were not consulted in relation to this issue at all.

Mr Lester: They cheered me when I went out there.

Mr BEANLAND: The member for Keppel informs me that they cheered him when he went out to address them today, but that was not the case in relation to the Minister. He skulked out there today with his tail between his legs, and that is what we will see tonight on the news. I thank the Minister for reminding me of what we will see on the news tonight—the Minister skulking around with his tail between his legs. He had to be dragged out there.

In respect of the lack of consultation, I am reminded of a letter that I received from a group with an interest in horse riding in forest areas. I will read that letter, because it contains a number of pertinent points. This letter was addressed to a number of Government members, including the Premier. It states—

"Thank you for the reply from your Chief of Staff. He mentioned that the issue was in the hands of the Minister, Mr Welford. We have had responses from several of the Ministers in Cabinet but not Mr Welford."

Interestingly, the very Minister responsible did not have the courtesy to reply. The letter continues—

"So we would like to ask you again about the future that we have as horse riders who presently use state forest in the pursuit of our recreation.

The thought of any of the lands presently tenured as state forest being transferred to the NCA with its five tenures and the token Forest Reserve, which has a maximum life of five years is of considerable concern.

The government's standard response of being interested in all stakeholders offers little consolation when our meetings with representatives of the DNR give us no confidence that areas that are presently available to horse riders and other recreationists will continue to be so in the future.

Is the Government condoning and encouraging horse riders to pursue their recreation on the roads and verges?

Mr Welford has stated on several occasions that his main objective throughout the RFA—now the SEQFA—is to remove logging from native forests.

Is it the Government's intention to remove certain forms of recreation from the native forest areas as well?

The transfer of State Forests to the Nature Conservation Act management leaves little room for our kind of recreation.

The general public, including recreational users, would be more confident of the Government's care of these stakeholders should the current area of State Forest be transferred to the permanent tenure of Forest Reserve (remove the sunset clause). This would provide for a greater range of means of access than the National Park categories specified under the NCA amendments. Most tenures of National Park are usually special areas set aside with specific management criteria usually because of its sensitive ecological status or iconic value.

Of the 425000 hectares identified for transfer, how much really satisfies National Park status and management?

During Mr Welford's second reading speech for the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2000 he explained the new tenure of the National Park Recovery. This tenure caters for the land destined for National Park status—but much of this land is currently covered with plantation trees! Following their removal and subsequent regeneration with native forest how can it be possible for such land to be upgraded to National Park?

Current management of National Parks in Queensland does not allow entry by horses. Are there any changes to legislation proposed to increase the range of recreational activities permitted within National Parks to include horse riding?

If not there are many Queenslanders who will have little safe opportunity to continue with their recreation. It is no doubt obvious in this day and age that leisure pursuits are crucial to the wellbeing of the individual. In addition many Queenslanders receive considerable income from the costs incurred by those

involved in such recreational activities in terms of vehicles and maintenance for the transport of horse and rider, fuel, associated items e.g. those provided through Produce Stores.

Queenslanders need their recreation and safe areas in which to enjoy their leisure pursuits. The change of tenure of State Forests to National Parks will severely restrict access to areas that have previously been enjoyed.

When the Bill goes for voting please consider the changes that we need. Thank you."

There are a number of questions raised in that letter that the Minister has not seen fit to answer previously. We look forward to reading in Hansard the answers given in the Minister's reply. There is a range of issues of concern not only to these people but also to a number of other people right around the State who have not been consulted let alone consulted adequately—they simply have not been consulted at all—in relation to this matter.

Those people want some answers because they believe that they are being short-changed—and I agree with them—in relation to this particular piece of legislation. It certainly trammels the rights of thousands of Queenslanders who are currently using those areas. Many of those areas were set up over decades to enable people to enjoy not only recreational pursuits but also the breathing space on the edge of urban areas, and of course Brisbane Forest Park is one of those. The visionaries responsible for the Brisbane Forest Park and other such sites who were in Government at the time, the former National/Liberal Governments of the day, went to great lengths to set them up. Now that vision is being crushed by this legislation following little or no consultation whatsoever. It is quite obvious from those comments that the Minister has not been out talking to those people.

It seems to me that, whenever we get this sort of legislation, the Labor Party idea of consultation is always starting with a number of Government departments. That might be nice for the Government public servants in the Government departments, but it is hardly considered consultation with the interest groups in the community. It is hardly consultation with the community at all. Then when it moves to the community groups, I notice that they are largely conservation groups. Sure, they do have a role in this matter, but there is only one real group that I can see as a recreation reference group. That

group might be covering for a number of recreation groups, but at the end of the day it is purely one peak body. There is a whole range of recreational groups within that which should have been consulted and which have not been consulted at all.

Mr Welford, as the Minister responsible, should have been personally out there consulting. After all, what other way is there to consult than to consult with those groups in their own cities, towns and suburbs around the State? That is real consultation. We hear a lot about this Government going out to Community Cabinets. What a farce those Community Cabinet meetings are! Yet again it has been proved that those Community Cabinet meetings are a farce. I remember there was one up in the Kurwongbah electorate or in the Pine Rivers Shire not so long ago. Sure, there would have been people wanting to go there and talk about this in large numbers, but they were obviously not given the opportunity to be made aware of the meeting at the time. If they were—and quite a number of people went and talked to the Minister—he obviously has not addressed those concerns because quite a large number of people still have concerns. Even with little notice, people have been able to rally against this matter, because it really strikes at their rights and at the heart of their concerns about the use of those forest parks.

It is quite clear that we have not received answers from the Minister to date. There is still time and opportunity for this Minister to change his mind instead of locking up Queensland's national parks. We know that the Government is currently not prepared to allocate sufficient funds for maintenance of the current national parks. That goes for national parks whether they are in tourist areas or in recreational use areas. Whatever area of the State they are in, the Government is providing inadequate funding.

I constantly receive letters from my constituents who visit various national parks around the State complaining about the fact that there is not adequate maintenance. My colleagues in the National Party constantly receive similar complaints from land-holders, farmers and graziers in the vicinity of those national parks about the number of feral animals that are overrunning those areas, and of course the number of weeds that are taking over those areas as well—and noxious weeds at that! The Government simply does not have the resources to undertake the maintenance work that is currently required. Yet the Minister is going to add to those woes considerably.

I think this is a very important point. It is very easy to acquire land for national parks; that does not require a lot of nous or a lot of effort and energy. The Minister simply gets someone to draft a Bill and then he comes in here to this House and introduces it or he can do it by way of the other process we see occurring from time to time—by regulation. However, it does require a lot of effort to go out there and ensure that the right maintenance is being undertaken, to ensure that the feral animals are not running rife and overtaking those national parks and to ensure that noxious weeds are kept to a minimum. That simply is not happening. The problem has been raised in this Chamber a number of times in the past—I am far from the first person to raise it—yet the Government continues down this track.

There are little or no additional funds provided. In fact, in the past this Government has at times cut back on funding for maintenance in those areas. We are not getting the services that are necessary and needed to keep those national parks in a respectable state. We know that many of the facilities in national parks that are frequented by tourists are in dire need of maintenance. A lot of the seating, tables and a whole range of other facilities in those areas are just simply collapsing and they are not being maintained at all.

There has been no indication at all that additional funding is going to be made available for this particular area. I see a number of statements in the Explanatory Notes. There are reasons for the Bill, objectives of the legislation, the way in which the policy objectives are to be achieved in the Bill, alternatives to the Bill and an assessment of the administrative cost to Government. I notice that, under Assessment of the administrative cost to Government, it says that there will be no administrative cost as it will continue to be administered by the existing agencies. It carries on as though there will be no additional costs at all. It says—

"Required funding has been determined at \$16 per hectare. This figure has been agreed to by Treasury and foreshadowed in budget estimates."

Of course, as we have said in the past, that is another example of this Government giving with one hand and taking away with the other, because the funding is totally inadequate currently and at this rate it is going to be totally inadequate in the future as well. The necessary allocation of funding for the maintenance of national parks generally in this

State is woefully inadequate. By the Government's own indication here, it is going to continue to be woefully inadequate indeed and not catch up at any time in the foreseeable future.

There are a number of very valid reasons why the coalition is very, very concerned about this legislation. I look forward to hearing the Minister answer the questions I asked about matters that were raised in a letter written to me. I think they are very legitimate questions and I think some consideration needs to be given to the other issues which I and other speakers have raised in this place, because the Government is getting further and further behind when it comes to providing sufficient resources in order to maintain national parks. There is no point in the Minister saying that there is going to be an extra \$16 per hectare provided. That is not keeping pace with the needs of those national parks at all. In fact, it is allowing the situation to go from bad to worse. That is simply not good enough for Queenslanders. In decades past we have taken great pride in the work and the upgrade of our national parks and the way in which national parks have acted as recreational areas not only for the public but also for tourists.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (3.57 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2000 introduced into this House by the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources. This Bill has been introduced as a result of the regional forestry agreement. This agreement was signed on 16 September 1999 between this Government and so-called stakeholders in the forestry sector.

Let us have a look at those stakeholders for a minute. Who were they? I can tell honourable members who they were. They were this Government's greenie mates of the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, the Queensland Conservation Council and the Wilderness Society. Of course, those groups would only proudly support sustainable forestry in this country—ha, ha! Those groups have supported a Government that will totally devastate our forestry in this State, particularly our hardwood forestry. In doing so, all they do is aid the rape and the pillage of the forests in the countries to the north of Australia, such as New Guinea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesian areas. Who was the other partner in this now infamous forestry agreement? It was none other than the Queensland Timber

Board, a board which supports only the major sawmillers and ignores about 70% of the family sawmillers in this State.

There is no doubt that this Bill is nothing more than a way to ensure that the 425,000 hectares of State forest and timber reserve land identified in this now infamous regional forest agreement is transferred into a tenure which will block it up forever so it can never be tapped into. In his second-reading speech, the Minister claimed that as a part of the RFA process all aspects of State forest and timber reserve lands in south-east Queensland were assessed and that the primary outcome was an assured timber yield over the next 25 years. I put it to this misleading Minister that nothing could be further from the truth.

There is not and never will be an assured timber yield at the levels necessary to sustain the timber industry over the next 25 years in this State, nor can any guarantees be set in concrete. However, this Government seems to be able to imply that it can give an assurance that hardwood plantations will start to yield timber after 25 years. The current drought ravaging our State, particularly the south-east corner, is testament to the fact that this Government does not have a clue about what happens in the bush.

Those stands of timber allocated under this now infamous regional forest agreement consist only of small logs, some as little as 40 centimetres in diameter at chest height, and of species that in many cases are totally unsuitable for their end application, that is, hardwood timbers. This Minister knows and has always known that his actions will lead to the complete destruction of the hardwood timber industry in south-east Queensland as we know it today. This mindlessly grinning Minister does not care about Queensland's timber industry, its workers or the small country communities that depend on the industry. All he cares about is his own comfort and the stock in the Strangers Bar surrounded by many hardwood timbers from around this State. It is pleasing to see that today the Minister appears to be unaffected and in full control of his mental processes, unlike the last time this Bill was debated in this House.

In his second-reading speech, this shameless Minister went on to mislead the House by saying—

"The end result of this process"—

that is, the RFA process—

"was an agreement welcomed by all the stakeholders, an agreement that protects jobs, regional communities and south-

east Queensland's precious native forests."

This is nothing but a barefaced, blatant lie. The Minister knows only too well that there is no way that all stakeholders welcome the so-called agreement. He only has to look at what happened at the time with the small sawmillers and the way the community reacted to him.

Mr WELFORD: I rise to a point of order. I find the repeated remarks of the honourable member suggesting that the process that has been involved here is deceitful, that I have been deceitful and that anything I have said is a lie totally untrue and offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kaiser): Order! The member will withdraw the remarks.

Dr PRENZLER: If the Minister finds what is true deceitful, I will withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Has the member withdrawn? I did not hear him.

Dr PRENZLER: I said I withdraw. The Minister talks about consultation with the stakeholders of these agreements. This Government talks about its continual consultation with Queenslanders in any legislation that affects them. I believe that to be rubbish. The Minister for Natural Resources will not even answer letters from concerned members of organisations and other people in the community, let alone allow them into the consultation process.

Mr WELFORD: I rise to a point of order. I find that proposition untrue and offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Did it relate to the Minister personally?

Mr WELFORD: The honourable member said that I refused to answer correspondence. That is untrue and I find it offensive. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to withdraw.

Dr PRENZLER: I will have to withdraw if the Minister says that that is untrue, but I have many letters in my office which say it is not. However, I will withdraw.

I believe that this consultation process has not achieved what it set out to do. It is not in the best interests of the community. It is only in the best interests of some select minority groups whom the Minister happens to support. I believe that the only agreement reached here was one between a corrupt Government and an unrepresentative industry body that acted out of the self-interest of its larger members and a wild assortment of feral

Leftist greenie groups who are unfortunately able to make up in noise what they lack in numbers. The Minister should tell the people who have written to my office and to whom he did not respond why he did not respond.

Mr Schwarten: He just said he did.

Dr PRENZLER: He will have to tell them. I will get them to write to him again to say thanks for the letter they did not get.

There has been absolutely no consultation with the Queensland public who will be directly affected by this Bill. It is high time that this Government and its bumbling, incapable Ministers woke up to themselves and realised that they have responsibilities to the people of Queensland as a whole. I repeat: it is high time that Ministers of this Government realised that they have responsibilities to Queensland as a whole. One such responsibility is to present themselves in this House in a sober condition so that they can adequately represent the people whose taxes keep them in the manner to which they have become accustomed.

Our native forests should be protected and used. Rational thinking and planning can achieve both those things. It is interesting to note that proposed section 70F (1) states—

"A forest reserve is to be managed to do the following—

(b) provide for the continuation of any lawful existing use of the land."

How can this be so, since it is obvious that the intent of this Bill is to remove the ability of any person or organisation to continually use existing forest reserve in its current capacity? The Bill then goes on to give several examples of a pre-existing lawful use, such as apiculture, foliage harvesting, recreation, salvage timber harvesting, grazing, maintenance of existing roads and mining. With those examples one could almost start to think that this legislation was not too bad after all. But think again! Look for the sleight of hand for which the Labor Party is so renowned. This magnanimous gesture applies only to that land tenure designated as "forest reserve". This particular category will only exist for a period not exceeding five years. Proposed section 70J (1) and (2) states—

"The chief executive must review each forest reserve to consider the most appropriate class of protected area for land in the reserve.

The review must start as soon as practicable after the dedication of the forest reserve."

Does this mean that, in practical terms, as soon as this legislation is proclaimed the process of moving land from forest reserve tenure to the various protected areas proposed will happen quickly and all pre-existing lawful use will be excluded from the newly designated areas? Does this mean that no horse riding, no trail bike riding, no beekeeping, no four-wheel driving and other recreational pursuits will be allowed to continue?

According to the Minister, all of those concerned organisations which made representations to him were consulted. That is not what they have been telling my office. Some of them are saying that they did not even get a reply. In my opinion, this Bill is simply another cave-in to the extremist minorities to whom this Government continuously panders. There is no doubt that this Government is into deals. It will deal with anybody if it thinks that there are votes in it for its inner-Brisbane heartland. Timberworkers, trail riders, hikers, beekeepers, tourism workers and councils have all been sold down the river by this slimy excuse for a Government. None of these people or groups got a look in. Many say that they were not consulted. Many say that they were not even listened to. The Minister has a different opinion to that, but that is what they have told me. Obviously, they have told members on the other side of this House the same thing. One only had to listen to the contribution given by the previous speaker in this debate. He read letters from those concerned people who were not, in their opinion, consulted.

The Minister should be warned that many of these groups do live in the Brisbane area. Many of these groups need areas of wilderness in which they can pursue their chosen hobbies or recreational activities. There is a now lot of evidence to support the fact that people residing in large cities and towns need access to wilderness areas to maintain healthy living standards. They need to get away and to get into nature. It is our opinion that this Bill will aid the exclusion of such pursuits. This Minister, who has so little regard for this House and for his constituents that he had the hide to present himself in an inebriated condition the other night, still maintains that all stakeholders welcome the regional forest agreement.

Mr WELFORD: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks utterly offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Dr PRENZLER: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will withdraw that. I also draw his attention to a Standing Order which says that members cannot refer to the state of other members in the House.

Dr PRENZLER: I withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has made a number of remarks along those lines. I ask the member to refrain from making those sorts of remarks.

Dr PRENZLER: In relation to what, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: In relation to the state of other members in the House.

Ms Spence: Read your Standing Orders.

Dr PRENZLER: I thank the Minister for the advice. I will refer to them.

Mr Schwarten: There is not one shred of decency in you whatsoever. You are absolutely disgraceful.

Dr PRENZLER: I thank the Minister for his guidance.

Mr Welford: No-one can tell when you're sober.

Dr PRENZLER: I thank the Minister for his guidance, too. May I go on, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have the call, yes.

Dr PRENZLER: I believe the Bill before the House is a deliberate attempt to ensure that a large section of south-east Queensland land is tied up permanently and that certain areas will no longer be accessible to the general public. The Bill will prevent many people enjoying what they have enjoyed for many years.

Eight years ago the Commonwealth Government brokered an agreement that became known as the National Forestry Policy Statement, which attempted to set out some guidelines for the way our forests were to be used and cared for into the future. While I do not necessarily agree completely with all the points in that statement, the general idea of reaching an agreement on how things will be done is to be highly commended. I believe that this is now being subverted to a certain extent and that the national forestry policy is being used as an excuse for a land grab of incredible proportions simply to placate the noisy minority in the greenie groups. We will see what the voters have to say about this at the next election.

I believe that the Bill as proposed by the Minister is nothing more than a serious land

grab. It seeks to take this 425,000 hectares of State forest and timber reserves—it is well over a million acres in old terminology—and completely lock them away from the general population. It panders to the indigenous policies of this Government at the expense of the wider community. The end result is that another 425,000 hectares of national park could be created. This completely excludes the use of the land for the recreational pursuits that are so essential to the wellbeing of our communities.

I can see now what will happen. A large proportion of south-east Queensland will become overgrown with noxious weeds, suckers and grasses and overrun with feral animals. That is happening through many of our parks and regions already. All this will eventually lead to huge fire fuel loads in those parks. I believe that a disaster of the magnitude we saw around Sydney and in the Blue Mountains not so many years ago will occur. Because the Government pandered to the minority groups, huge bushfires not only threatened lives and homes but completely destroyed large tracts of wonderful bushland. At what cost to our community is this going to happen?

The Explanatory Notes state that administrative costs will be \$16 per hectare. At that rate, the cost of 425,000 hectares will be \$6.8m a year. Unfortunately, I have to agree with the member for Indooroopilly and state that this is nowhere near enough to look after our national parks. \$16 per hectare is \$16,000 per 1,000 hectares. That will not even pay the salary of one ranger to look after it.

There is no doubt that with good silviculture and forestry practice agreements we could have maintained a good forestry timber reserve in our south-east. These forestry reserves, if handled and managed well, would have led to a sustainable timber industry. The 425,000 hectares identified under the RFA will eventually be listed as national parks. That will do nothing to maintain our timber industry.

As I mentioned before, countries in South-East Asia are being pillaged by timber-getters. A lot of that timber has been imported into Australia. By tying up our own reserves we are virtually assisting in the rape of the environment in other countries. These reserves will be tied up forever and, despite the many figures that have been presented to the House, there is no way in the world that plantations will provide all that timber. I do not believe that will ever happen. It will only

happen if we start taking over some of our good agricultural land for the growing of trees.

Droughts and fire will thwart the possibility of presenting good timber sawlogs in 25 years. The current drought is one of the most devastating in south-east Queensland. To see that we only have to go out to the farming communities. I have looked at timber plantations in my electorate and I can say that the growth of the trees is stunted. One might say that they are in a state of hibernation. Some of them are even dying. Some of the large stands of existing forest on the mountains are now dying. Unless we take over some of our large irrigation areas for growing timber, I do not believe we will be able to produce sustainable timber from forest plantations in 25 years. I refer also to the water management Bill that will take pride of place in many irrigation areas.

A number of amendments have been foreshadowed to this Bill. They seek to preserve recreational pursuits in these areas. I have spoken to a number of the people who have drafted these amendments, and we agree with them. We will be saying so during the Committee stage. We will be opposing this Bill in its present form.

We have to look after the recreational groups. They have asked us to. They have said that they have not been represented and that they have not been listened to. I think we owe it to them to preserve their rights. These recreational pursuits must be able to continue. People must be able to enjoy the wilderness God gave us. It should not be locked away and kept for the minority groups who believe it should be locked away. It should be, and can be, used sustainably. It has been proved in many countries throughout the world that it can be done.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (4.17 p.m.): This Bill and others like it are always going to be contentious in communities because we all have different opinions about and different ideas on nature conservation and the issues that surround it. Regardless of other members' opinions, the electorate of Tablelands, which I represent, is the most scenically spectacular part of Queensland. The area of Cairns and its hinterland represents ecological diversity that is unsurpassed in the rest of this State. The only other area of this State that could come close would be the Lamington National Park. Even that does not have the biodiversity that the rainforests on the Atherton Tablelands have, nor does it have the scenic beauty of the areas many members

in this House have alluded to—areas around Ravenshoe, Millaa Millaa and Malanda—

Ms Boyle: Or the interesting and diverse people who live there.

Mr NELSON: Yes, or the very interesting and very diverse people who live there. One of the interesting points raised in the House by other members relates to the type of people who live in the Ravenshoe area and their use of the rainforests within the Palmerston National Park, or whatever they call it now, and the areas around it. Many members have alluded to the simple fact that timber-getters have been going into these timber areas for in some cases 100 years and taking timber out on a sustainable basis.

It is a bit of an urban legend in Ravenshoe that when then Senator Richardson was narrowly escaping lynching in that township he actually gave a speech about the pristine rainforest whilst standing on the stump of a 100-year old tree that somebody had cut down. The point is that he was talking about an area of land that has now been heritage listed, yet it was heritage listed after it had been sustainably logged.

Mr Lucas: I think that is hypocrisy rather than urban myth.

Mr NELSON: I do not know if it is true or not, but many people have put it to me that he gave his speech from a stump of what he thought was a naturally fallen tree.

The point that has been raised with me by many people who worked as timber-getters in the rainforest areas around the tablelands and in the Cairns region is that they used to be able to go into those areas and take timber and not damage the ecology, or they did not damage it to the extent that it was excluded from heritage listing at a later date. That is an undeniable fact. These areas are heritage listed. I drive through them daily. The member for Cairns and the member for Barron River would also be able to testify to the fact that these areas are now heritage listed. But they were logged up until the stage that they were heritage listed. That is a very interesting point. As far as I know, Fraser Island is in the same position. The member for Maryborough just made that point.

As far as I am concerned, we have to learn a lesson from that. The fact is that these areas can be sustainably harvested and maintain their integrity as a naturally beautiful place and as an area that can be of cultural and natural value in the future. That can be done if you have a certain amount of knowledge and a certain amount of person-power to do it. The simple fact is that this issue

is not addressed on many occasions when people consult radical organisations such as the green groups that run around proclaiming to have a complete and utter monopoly on commonsense when it comes to managing the rainforest. I know quite a few of those old timber-getters. Some of them are well into their eighties. They know a hell of a lot more about the rainforest than some of these greenies could ever hope to know.

Dr Clark: Some of those people said they were being logged in an unsustainable fashion. You just don't know.

Mr NELSON: The member for Barron River is correct. I have no doubt that some parts of that country were logged in an unsustainable manner. I have travelled through those parts, and that is true. There are parts throughout Australia that have been logged in a very unsustainable manner by unscrupulous people who were doing it for complete and utter financial gain. But when you are talking about the hardwood timber areas such as red cedar and the areas where I live, they can and have been logged sustainably in the past, and that is the truth. That is undeniable, because they were heritage listed, and one does not heritage list something that does not have a natural heritage value.

One only has to read through the documents that came under heritage listing to see why these areas were heritage listed. If someone compares those areas to the ones that were logged, they will see that they are exactly the same. I ask anyone who can disprove that to stand in this House and say so. That is what has been put to me, and my research shows that that is the truth. Maybe the Minister can make a statement on that, because it is the truth. These areas were sustainably logged in and around Ravenshoe, and then they were heritage listed. That is why people ended up losing their jobs. I have no doubt that those people lost their jobs, because I have spoken to them personally, and they have taken me to the areas that they logged right up until the closing date when they could no longer log.

I am entering into this debate out of a sense of wanting to try to get somewhere, because the point is that we do need—and this is where I would totally agree with the member for Barron River—to look after our natural environment, because it is what makes our part of the world beautiful; it is what makes our part of the world the special place that it is. If we do not maintain our environment in a very careful manner, we can lose it, because it

is also very delicate. Even though those rainforests are magnificent, tall, amazing structures that are totally awe inspiring when you walk through them, they are incredibly delicate and they can be destroyed at a moment's notice.

One perfect example of this would be Lake Eacham. Many members have been there, and it would come as quite a surprise to some people that it used to have a township around it. The area was mined for gold and was completely clear felled. There were no trees around Lake Eacham. I have the photos in my office if people would like to see them. I will email them to anyone who wants to see them. Lake Eacham is once again a national park that is completely forested.

Some of the most beautiful forests in the area are to be found around Lake Eacham, and they have attracted wildlife such as cassowaries, which are highly endangered in the areas in which we live. However, that land has been restored to a level at which it can be included in a heritage listing register. I am not saying that we should clear-fell forest because we can replant it in the future. What I am saying is that in many cases when conservationists campaign in what starts out as an earnest and rightful attempt to maintain our environments, they sometimes get a little bit too carried away in their agenda.

A point that the member for Barron River might like to dwell on is the fact that at one stage many greenies very much derided the Skyrail project. I remember them chaining themselves to trees protesting against that project. Yet now it is winning awards because it is an environmentally friendly tourist venture that is doing wonders for Kuranda and Cairns. This is the point that has to be made when we are talking about nature conservation. There are groups whose agenda may be righteous, but they go about it in the wrong way, and their manner is totally exclusive of any other opinion. As with most socialist organisations, they have to work in a vacuum because they cannot accept any criticism of their agenda.

My point is that in considering a sustainable way of managing our natural resources—and this Government has made that one of its main focus points in rural and regional areas of Queensland—everyone has to be included in that agenda, not just one or two elements. Natural resources exist for a reason. The very name of the portfolio should suggest to us that these things are natural resources; they are resources that a State can use to generate wealth. Wealth can be generated from a national park in the form of

tourism. Again, the national parks in the tablelands and in Cairns and its surrounding areas are a perfect example of the way a natural resource can be used to generate wealth, yet not use it to generate a primary resource or a primary industry in doing so. That is true, and I will not debate that.

As I said before, there are some areas that should be untouchable and should be prevented from ever being logged. Those areas would include places that need to be protected because of especially significant species or species that are endangered. But when we are looking at the areas that do not come under that category, there is a buffer zone where we have areas of natural resources that can be sustainably logged and provide income not only in the form of immediate jobs and security for people in industries but also income for the State into the future. This has to be taken into consideration.

It is no good locking up natural resources for a future that we may not have, because what we are doing by locking up our natural resources and taking away people's ability to work and their ability to develop a corporate knowledge of how to sustainably log a rainforest is guaranteeing—and this is where the Minister should really think about it—that in 10, 15, 20 or 50 years' time those resources will be used in an unsustainable manner, because the particular State or country will have become so destitute because of the lack of access to natural resources that it will have to take those natural resources in order to gain some sort of income for itself. These are issues that are not being addressed by carte blanche restrictions placed over natural resources.

The Government is not addressing the fact that by impoverishing industries now, it is guaranteeing that their future will be unsustainable. No matter what we do now, in the future our natural resources will dictate how much wealth this State will have. That is in fact happening right now. States and countries are judged on the level of natural resources to which they have access and the fluidity of them and how much they can put onto a market. One only needs to go as far as the stock market at the moment to see gold prices and the Australian dollar and all these issues that are affecting us, but they are mainly being generated by our ability to take out our natural resources and market them in a sustainable manner.

I think there are some very laudable points in the Bill. It is beyond a shadow of a

doubt that we need to have areas of natural importance or ecological importance reserved so that the ecology of the area can be maintained in the future. That is a given. But at the same time something needs to be done to look at how to manage those resources so that we get the best out of them on both scales. I will outline a perfect example of how we can do that. Given the technologies that we have now—biotechnologies and the replantation of forest areas, etc.—one thing that is happening a lot in north Queensland is that people are replanting whole blocks of their land with trees, whether it is a 50-acre block or a 100-acre block. They are encouraging those trees to grow—let us say, for example, it is a predominant species of red cedar—so that they can use them in the future as an asset that they will be able to log and sell and pass on to their children as almost a form of superannuation.

For example, if it is a 100-acre block, it puts 100 acres of good land under trees—trees that are native to the area, trees that will attract native animals to come and live in them and trees that will be able to be used to absorb carbon and all those sorts of things. They are trees that will be very, very beneficial to the environment in which they are planted. That, in my opinion, is an excellent thing to do. I know plenty of people who have done this. The idea is that in the future they will be able to go into these blocks—for example, the 100 acres of red cedar mixed with other species growing there—and either take a tree here and there and sell them to supplement their income or, as I said, sell it as a block as a sort of superannuation policy.

The growing of timber is an excellent example of an excellent way of using a natural resource. All we have to do is look at this building we are standing in. Nowadays the cost of taking the timber used to build buildings like this would be incomparable. To build an entire house out of red cedar now would be nigh on impossible, but 50 years ago it was the done thing because red cedar was much more readily available than it is now.

What I am saying is that we can have these areas of rainforest; as long as they are managed sustainably and looked after by the right sort of people they will be able to be logged into the future. The taking of one red cedar tree out of an area to thin that part of the country is something that happens naturally, anyway. The member for Barron River has left the Chamber, but she would be able to give testimony to the damage cyclones do to these rainforests. One only needs to drive from Mareeba to Cairns to see the

damage caused to rainforests. The Police Minister would probably not agree with me because, in his opinion, cyclones do not cross the range, but one needs only to drive down that part of the road to see the damage that a cyclone has done there in removing a massive amount of timber, timber that will be very hard to replace within the next 50 years.

Another issue I want to raise in relation to this Bill—it is the prime one for me—is the managing of our natural resources and national parks as they stand at the moment. It does not take a brain surgeon to realise that some of these areas, for example some of the areas on the cape like the Heathlands National Park and the Lakelands National Park, are immense areas to cover. There are huge stretches of national park and it would take teams of people to manage and keep them properly.

I have provided a letter to the Minister about the culling of pigs in national parks, an issue that has been raised by all members who have spoken in this debate. Feral pigs do more damage than any logger could ever do in a million years. In some cases they do as much damage as a bulldozer. Again, I offer any person here who denies this fact a free airfare and a drive in my car to show them some of the damage pigs do in my electorate. It is immense. Feral pigs are like little bulldozers going through natural rainforests. Not only do they do that, but they destroy clutches of cassowary eggs.

Mr Reynolds interjected.

Mr NELSON: For the member for Townsville it would be a bus fare.

The point of the matter is that these things need to be addressed. The management of our national parks is very important. Maybe if he was in another arena the Minister might agree with me that more money needs to be spent on the management of our national parks to make sure that the rangers not only have the abilities to manage these areas but also the resources to do so. There was a suggestion—it is not my suggestion, it is an idea borrowed from South Australia—that the sporting shooters clubs of Queensland would be able to help in cleansing some of our national parks of this horrid pest, the feral pig. That would be a very good idea, especially when we are looking at the whole idea of managing these national resources at the best level.

At the moment I do not believe that our national parks are sufficiently manned and I do not believe that the manpower there has the expertise to do the jobs that are asked of it.

Much more training, much more time and much more effort must be spent on maintaining the national parks and areas of heritage listing that we already have. I have been to parts of the Palmerston that are now completely choked with lantana that were not choked while loggers were in there. That is because loggers would take a day or two off in every six to cut down lantana patches and to shoot pigs inside their logging area. This is not fiction; it is fact. They would look after the areas that they logged because their livelihoods depended on it. If they destroyed the natural ecology they would not be able to log trees in that area in the future.

Again, if the Minister or anybody else on the other side of the House would like it, I will take them to talk to the people I have spoken to. It would be very enlightening for them to do so. As far as I am concerned, these people are the ultimate conservationists because they have derived a livelihood from maintaining a forest that could produce giant red cedar trees or giant kauri pines. Their very livelihoods depended on the health of that ecosystem. That is something that the radical elements of the green movement do not understand, or do not want to understand. Locking an area of forest away will eventually destroy it, whether it be choked with weeds or choked by feral pests.

Again, all it would take would be a short trip through the Palmerston or any of those other areas of north Queensland that were locked up by Senator Richardson to see the damage that is done by lantana and feral pests such as pigs and cats. I again encourage anyone to go and do that, because ultimately it is not good enough to lock these areas up and say, "Here we are. We have set aside this massive block of land. Aren't we wonderful? Isn't this a great thing for our future?" It will not be a great thing for our future unless it is managed properly. It will not be a great thing for anyone if it is managed inadequately or if it does not have sufficient funding allocated to it so that it can be a natural resource 100, 200 or 300 years from now. Whether that natural resource is used for tourism or logging, the issue is the same.

Having said that, I would like this issue to have been debated in a more professional manner but, unfortunately, people have conflicting ideologies. Suffice to say that ultimately the people on the ground are the ones who will suffer, like they did at Ravenshoe and like they do in other areas in the State. This Bill is not helping anyone; it is certainly not helping our prosperity as a nation. It is poor nations that destroy their

environments because they cannot afford the luxury of environmentalism. We are—or were—a wealthy nation and this has enabled us to protect our environment. But we will not continue to be a wealthy nation if we stop our people from being able to use our natural resources in a professional and wise manner. By doing that, we are inevitably condemning our natural resources to extermination because we will end up a poor nation that cannot afford the luxury of environmentalism.

Time expired.

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (4.37 p.m.): I have some reservations about this Bill, the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2000. The theory sounds all right—let us set aside another 425,000 hectares of State forest for the ultimate nature reserve.

But there are questions that need answering. For example, will the setting aside of this land be beneficial, or will it prove to be worse for conservation than that which already exists? I believe that to date insufficient funds have been made available to maintain our existing national parks, let alone declaring more that in the long term will not be able to be maintained at all. When land is under lease, it is the responsibility of the lessee to maintain fire, weed and feral animal controls. If this is not carried out consistently, we will have more problems than currently exist.

The Minister's second-reading speech clearly states—

"Unfortunately the Federal Government has consistently refused to accept the historic outcomes contained in this South-east Queensland Forest Agreement and has not contributed one cent towards its implementation."

I ask: why would the Minister expect to see an attitude change by the Federal Government? I ask the Minister: can he guarantee that funding will be made available to maintain these nature reserves indefinitely?

I am all for conservation, but a realistic approach must be taken that will continue to ensure that all user groups are able to be catered for. There is no point in locking up vast areas that will not be accessible to the community for recreational or some commercial uses. With proper planning and management the environment can be preserved in pristine condition in conjunction with human use.

By tradition, Australians are an outdoor people and we should encourage these recreational pursuits. Sun, surf, bush,

barbeques and camping are all family activities and should be preserved along with our environment.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (4.40 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill in order to raise with the Minister a number of issues that have been raised with me. I also want to mention a couple of issues that exist in my electorate.

In his second-reading speech the Minister referred to the current protected area which consists of 448,000 hectares. This area consists of 53 national parks and 89 conservation parks, including the World Heritage areas. I do not believe there would be one member in this Chamber who would argue that Queensland has a lot of unique and very special environment that needs to be protected. We must ensure that we do not degrade these areas. We must enjoy and value these areas for their uniqueness.

This Bill proposes to transfer into what I have termed an interim holding category another 425,000 hectares of State forest and timber reserve land. If the land that is proposed to be transferred is of the quality of the land that is already being held—and that is not necessarily Wet Tropics rainforest or dry littoral, but also the fringing forest near the coast—there are a number of different areas of conservation that deserve to be protected because of their diversity.

My concern is that the areas that are currently protected, such as national parks and conservation areas, are themselves suffering to a degree from an inability to manage them appropriately. That is not a slight on the current Minister; it is a challenge to any Minister in this portfolio. Land held in some sort of protective category requires constant vigilance.

In my own electorate we have Kroombit Tops and a couple of other national park areas. The fires that go through those areas are often started in the adjoining forest areas. In some instances the fires start because people have unprotected camp fires. In other instances, fires start because matches and cigarette butts have been thrown out of the windows of cars. In some instances, the fires have been the result of controlled burns that have got out of hand. The ability of the department to manage the national parks is a real challenge. There are other areas of Kroombit Tops that people desperately want to access. They want to access the area responsibly, but they cannot because there is

no management plan in place for those areas to be publicly accessible.

I am concerned that adding an area—albeit in a two-staged program—to these highly protected areas is going to even further challenge the resources of the Minister's department. The danger of having such a large amount of land—whether it is a national park, a protected area or an interim holding—is that, at a time when it cannot be accessed by the community, there is a risk of plant infestation causing great problems. In this instance I refer to listed weeds and weeds that we know cause a problem but which are not yet listed. These weeds are prolific growers and they will take over some areas.

We heard about the destruction caused by feral pigs in the north of the State. Problems are also caused by brumbies, rabbits and other animals. These animals take over our protected areas. Without management plans, these animals will create further problems.

The Government of the day is greatly assisted in the management of weeds in national park areas and forestry areas because farmers have leases on those properties. The farmers are charged with the responsibility of managing the weeds. If after five years the leases are removed, that responsibility will revert to the Government. We return to the argument of lack of resources.

A number of representations have been made to my office over a number of years about the prospect of the recreational use of Government land being restricted. We have a number of different recreation uses, including trail walking, horse riding, motorbike riding and four-wheel vehicle driving. Each of those groups has a different impact on the environment.

In the main, recreational walkers have a very low impact. These people are lovers of the environment; that is why they are out there. They are very careful people. I know there are exceptions to the rule, but basically what they take into a conservation area they also bring out again with them when they leave. These people are very good monitors of the environment.

Walkers and horse riders in these forestry areas act as monitors for the department and advise departmental officers of problems that they encounter. These problems could include such things as inappropriate behaviour of people visiting the forestry areas. This could include growing illicit material under cover in forestry areas. It could include such problems as landfalls and rock falls and the existence of

noxious weeds. These monitors assist the department in many ways in managing the properties that are already under the Government's control.

I acknowledge that there are some uses that have the potential to significantly degrade vulnerable areas. Trail bike riding and the use of four-wheel-drive vehicles in inappropriate areas can cause damage. That is a management problem for which every Government is responsible. Where vulnerable areas are seen to be suffering from human involvement, those areas need to be separated either by fencing or by notices stating that the area is at risk and that that particular activity is no longer permitted. That does not necessarily mean that there has to be a wholesale change of use, particularly when we consider the quantity of land that is being considered in this Bill.

The Minister has announced that certain activities will not be precluded in the first transition of this measure. I refer to the apiary industry, foliage harvesting and other recreational uses. In his second-reading speech the Minister also stated that grazing and mining will not be precluded in the first transition. The management of grazing and mining are very specific issues. The conservation of some areas precludes the activities of grazing and mining. However, such things as beekeeping, foliage harvesting and low-impact recreation can often be of assistance in the management of Government land.

I know that a number of people harvest seeds and these people render a great service to our nation. They collect seeds from every species of tree that they can find in our hinterland and on our coast in order to ensure the survival of the species. These people cover huge distances. They have little to show for their efforts in the sense of tangible assets other than a collection of small seeds. They collect seeds because of their love for our diverse country.

I wish to put on record the concern of recreational horse riders in my electorate about the impact that this Bill could have perhaps not immediately but over the next 5 to 10 years. Last week a representative from the horse riding group visited my office. She is a very responsible lady. She grew up in the hills at the back of the electorate and is certainly not someone who would damage the environment. She is a custodian of the National Trail. Her group, the group at Monto and the group in Rockhampton ride around the Kroombit area regularly. Their concern for

continuing access is not a concern born out of a wish to degrade or harm the environment; it is their wish to continue with that recreational use because they love that environment. They have expressed to me their wish that that access be continued not just for five years or 10 years but for years into the future. They are concerned that over time this Bill will preclude that access.

I can remember writing to the Minister and his predecessor some years ago about the continued access by recreational users of forestry and national park areas in this State. I checked the reply again last week. It stated that the Minister would have regard to the special needs and concerns of all stakeholders in this matter. Valid concerns are held by people whose main focus is environmental conservation. It is the responsibility of the Government to strike the balance between locking up the environment and protecting it whilst still ensuring that those of us who contribute to its upkeep financially and in other ways retain access to it.

I put on record the strong and real concerns of people who responsibly access our national park, forestry and other land of various designations. They want to continue to access that land in a responsible and wise manner. They are most concerned that this Bill, in its current form, will in the short term preclude their access.

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—IND) (4.51 p.m.): In addressing this ill-conceived Bill I wish to concentrate on the Minister's second-reading speech and the incorrect and misleading statements therein. It is amazing how different situations and events can appear from the airconditioned steel and glass confines of a Government office and a secure salary than from the hard realities of the working world of careful land use, silviculture and grazing and an environment in which it is increasing difficult to support a family. A Chinese proverb states that the best fertiliser for land is the footprint of its owner. In the case of the land under discussion, the owner is the Queensland Government. Over the past 10 years the footsteps of the Queensland Government have become harder and harder to detect.

We currently have a QDPI forestry group which can no longer undertake the maintenance of its forest reserves and has increasingly relied on SGP holders in areas subject to grazing leases. We have a DNR severely lacking in experienced resource management staff. We have a Parks and Wildlife Service that cannot fulfil its

responsibilities. National parks are now frequently a district liability and are full of weeds, dingoes and pigs which harass their farming neighbours through infestation, predation and destruction of crops.

I have recently harvested my cane crop. Pigs reduced the yield from 20 tonnes to 10 tonnes per acre. In the meantime, the local DNR adviser, in spite of DNR publications about controlling wild pigs, gave the wrong advice to canefarmers and limited their access to 1080, the DNR's recommended poison. The QDPIF south of Gympie has given up trying to control groundsel. Every south-easter brings us a cloud of seed courtesy of this neglect and restriction of funds. The DNR manager for the Maryborough region limits organised dingo baiting whilst our calves are being maimed or killed because, in his opinion, there are no dingoes in the national park close to us. Of course, it is not his calves or his cane being damaged. He works from 9 to 5, and dingoes are nocturnal; the two never meet.

The Minister claims that he has ensured security for the forestry industry. I do not know who is telling him this. I invite the Minister to spend a week in the Maryborough district and in my office. The constant phone calls I receive from all over south-east Queensland do not reflect a forestry industry which feels secure. In fact, the reality is very much the opposite. The Minister is surely aware that one of his own staff has challenged the validity of the modelling and that shortages of certain timber products, such as long poles, are already evident. Currently, most mills are still trying to process the sawlogs cut from private land in a panic due to the uncertainty of this legislation. Consequently, he is being cushioned from the sawlog availability position.

The Minister claims that there was comprehensive consultation. There are four highly organised groups of SGP holders in south-east Queensland: one near Gin Gin, the Gaeta group; one in the Maryborough forestry district; one at Kilcoy, the High Mountain Group; and one at Widgee. All of these groups have written repeatedly to the Minister or his advisers as requested and asked for consultation. With what result? Not one reply! How can the Minister claim that he has consulted when he has so blatantly ignored people?

The Minister claims that the end result was an agreement welcomed by all stakeholders. I am starting to suspect that not only are the Minister and his advisers out of touch with reality and with the stakeholders but that there is also a need for an interpreter. I

know that three companies are reasonably satisfied and I know that one sawmill has invested on the strength of 25 years' security. But daily I receive phone calls from stakeholders who are very unhappy. I receive calls from people who have lost their jobs and do not know any other job.

The Minister says that this Government has protected Queensland's precious native forests. The dry sclerophyll forests of south-east Queensland are not highly productive. In fact, they are lowly productive, with a low carrying capacity of both domestic and indigenous livestock. But we have farming families who have been practising silviculture for three generations in this country and they are now sustainably harvesting more sawlogs than when they started three years ago. They are prepared to leave habitat trees and make other concessions. But the Minister and his advisers will not listen to these practitioners. The experience of the advisers living in Brisbane is more instructive than that of these people, who work with trees usually seven days a week!

Currently, the Minister's officers are talking to SGP holders at Kilcoy. They are suggesting that there is a need for increasing fencing to protect creeks yet are reducing leases to five or seven years. Schoolchildren can work out that it is uneconomic to erect fencing on low carrying capacity country and to expect to recover the expenditure in seven years.

The Minister went on in his speech to say that there is tremendous goodwill amongst stakeholders to work towards positive outcomes. Apart from the companies mentioned before, I have not met one stakeholder who thinks that the current outcomes are positive, and nor have I met one ordinary timber industry stakeholder who bears the Minister goodwill. I challenge the Minister to come to Maryborough for a meeting with the stakeholders I rub shoulders with every day.

The Minister claims that he has provided certain protection for the native forests. Has the Minister taken into consideration the possibility of an outbreak of a wild, hot fire, as has happened before in some areas? And now the Minister is increasing the area over which it can happen again, causing the destruction of timber and wildlife, including endangered species. Currently, Fraser Island is in that predicament.

As other speakers have covered a broad spectrum of issues, I will now conclude by asking the Minister: when can we expect to see him visit the forestry areas of our district

and when will he personally talk to stakeholders face to face? I think I can guarantee that they will be polite and they will gladly take the time to teach him something of the science of practical, sustainable silviculture, which will readily create jobs and not bandaids. Should he do this, his reputation may change. People will forgive him for being hoodwinked as long as he is prepared to listen and learn. Let us see his footprints on this forestry land that he claims he cares so much about.

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (5 p.m.): It is obvious from the number of members who have risen to speak to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill today that the perceived impact of the Bill is causing a great deal of angst among the general populace. Unfortunately this Bill is ill conceived, although the Minister's intent must be acknowledged. As with many Bills brought into this House, due consideration to, and use of, the knowledge which is available did not occur. The Minister claims to have undertaken consultation with all of the relevant bodies, but in many instances we see the minority groups apparently in total control of the agenda. The Minister says that he has listened to the relevant groups. With all due respect to him, I have to ask: did he actually hear what was being said?

The knowledge of the long-time residents in the area is often dismissed—knowledge which has been built up over hundreds of years through flood, fire and drought conditions, the knowledge which has allowed the possessor to survive in industries and conditions which would see the average person in this place wither and die. The regional forest agreement dismissed the knowledge of the experienced for the theorists' recommendations often to the detriment of the industries involved and the general public.

I would like to quote from some correspondence I received, and I dare say all members received the same. It states—

"The government's standard response of being interested in all stakeholders offers little consolation when our meetings with representatives of the DNR give us no confidence that areas that are presently available to horse riders and other recreationists will continue to be so in the future.

Is the Government condoning and encouraging horse riders to pursue their recreation on the roads and verges?

Recreational users are requesting ongoing access to the retrospective holding of State forest area pre 1998 and

to have that holding increased in the future.

We know that it is necessary to manage such a resource carefully to ensure it will be available to use in the future and to ensure the ecological sustainability of these areas.

But the Government should now consider the sustainability of the recreational users who participate in these legitimate recreation activities in State forests as a balance to their own hectic modern day living.

It would appear Mr Welford has taken advantage of parliamentary privilege by providing incorrect information when he claims in the second reading speech of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2000 that the end result was an agreement welcomed by all.

We can comment as representatives of a group of stakeholders that this is not so."

Some local government concerns—and there have been an awful lot—are as follows. The Queensland Local Government Association has expressed the view that communities are already experiencing an economic decline in many rural areas. The development of the RFA and similar legislation has been identified as another example of a process or initiative that will have a negative impact on the economic situation of predominantly rural communities. It has also been recognised that the impacts on the employment base within local communities will be significant, and the association seeks State Government support to ensure there is no loss of employment as a result of this legislation.

Councillors have also expressed concern about the impact that this legislation will have on existing council planning schemes that are currently being drafted to include recreation and open spaces. The impact on grazing leases and other non-timber forest uses in council rate bases is unknown and, as such, is creating uncertainty within local communities, especially for land-holders. Councils have also expressed their concern about the impact of this on their rate base. Councils maintain that the forests have been sustainably managed to date with the existing sawlog timber allocations that have been applied.

There has been particular concern expressed as to why there is a need to transfer the management of forest reserves into national parks when, as reinforced by councils, they already manage it in a sustainable

manner. The social issues have been addressed only in terms of losses of positions in the timber industry, and the additional job losses in the cattle grazing and apiary industries and in the tourist and recreational industries have been ignored. As grazing leaseholders generally pay the council rates, the effect of the reduction in the local government resources should be addressed also.

The forest grazing leaseholders have for generations maintained the noxious weeds and controlled the build-up of combustible material that threatens our State forests every fire season. With the intended closure of vast areas of forest, the proliferation of the noxious weeds and the building up of this combustible material will conceivably incur more damage in the long term than anyone could possibly imagine. It has to be asked of the Minister: what plans has he put in place to combat both of those major problems of the future?

The Minister must also realise that this will be a huge financial burden to any State Government of the future and that by reducing or eliminating grazing leases altogether he has removed from the Government a very valuable resource of voluntary labour. Such concerns from recreational councils, local government, grazing leaseholders and other recreational user groups belie the Minister's assertion that the end result was an agreement welcomed by all.

During the RFA process two major concerns of leasehold graziers in south-east Queensland were a lack of security of tenure and the management of leased country. As was often stated, the invasiveness of the eucalypt in south-east Queensland open forest grazing country is equivalent to the invasive nature of cypress in the south-west. As the unmanaged regrowth in both areas fails to create any marketable timber, the possibility of a joint venture arrangement between the State Government and leaseholders would greatly enhance the value of the natural regeneration. So the Minister can see that everybody who is in communication with me—and apparently most of the members of this House—is unhappy with the proposed legislation.

I would like to read from a newspaper clipping headed "Farmers 'at war' over vegetation". It states—

"Queensland's peak rural group has declared it is now in open conflict with the State Government over its vegetation management regime.

Queensland Farmers' Federation president Richard Armstrong said this

week it was time for landholders to take a united stand against Government action which was patently unfair on country people."

It goes on-

" 'It is not as if the Government can't find the money if it is serious about vegetation management.

The question is one of priorities,' Mr Armstrong said.

'There are plenty of public dollars for dubious projects like football stadiums and footbridges over the Brisbane River.

The Government has made no serious attempt to see how its legislation will hurt individual producers ...' "

I rise to ask the members of this Government to be big enough to admit that they have made an error of making too much haste in promoting and tabling this legislation, especially when the groups involved do not agree with the Minister that there has been proper and due consultation with the very people on whom this legislation will have the ultimate and perhaps the most devastating of impacts. There is no-one who does not believe that the issue concerning the protection of our vast ecological resources is of utmost importance and needs addressing. No-one denies it at all. There is not a farmer, a grazier or a member of the general public who does not understand the necessity for conservation.

Recreational users generally value their recreational facilities more than any other person who does not visit those forests or reserves regularly. It is not they who generally light the match that devastates vast acreages, nor is it those who live near or make a living from these areas; it is the ignorant, often thoughtless, visitor from larger towns and cities who leaves their damaging imprint on the landscape. It is time that this was addressed appropriately and with due consideration given to all parties. It is because I do not believe that has been done and because of the will of the people of my electorate that I oppose this Bill.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (5.09 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2000. In the Minister's second-reading speech, he provided a range of assurances to all Queenslanders, and in particular to Queensland recreational forest users, that detailed that negotiations with forest stakeholders would occur before any decision would be made to restrict current public access to State forest land. I certainly will be watching this Government to ensure

that the Minister's assurances to all Queenslanders on behalf of this Government will be honoured in full—not just a token commitment, but in full with fair and reasonable outcomes acceptable to current forest stakeholders.

While I am prepared to support this Bill, I take this opportunity to put on the public record that I certainly have some concerns and reservations about this Government's ability to provide sufficient State forest land at appropriate locations in this State to satisfy the demands of Queensland's recreational forest users. Notwithstanding those concerns, I am prepared to allow this Government the opportunity to follow through on the Minister's assurances of detailed negotiations with forest stakeholders.

Queensland's forests are the property of all Queenslanders and, as such, should be accessible to all Queenslanders on a reasonable scale. I also take this opportunity to call on the State Government to ensure that appropriate facilities are provided in our State forests to enable all Queenslanders to be able to experience the wonderful Queensland asset of which they are all joint owners.

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (5.10 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It was made clear that a number of members simply do not accept that the RFA should be supported. It is understandable then that, in the context in which they simply do not accept the RFA, they would not accept any legislation necessary to implement it. For that reason, a number of members of the Opposition will undoubtedly oppose this legislation.

This legislation simply provides a statutory basis for the first stage in implementing the south-east Queensland forest agreement—an agreement which, by any measure, is the most successfully resolved forest agreement anywhere in Australia. Nowhere else in Australia has there been a broad range of stakeholder support for a forest agreement than that achieved in Queensland. The Opposition knows that, particularly the National Party. For that reason, it does not want the Government to receive credit for this forest agreement. That is why it is playing spoilers. That is why it is seeking to sabotage the agreement and undermine the confidence that all the major stakeholders have in the agreement.

As a number of members indicated, this legislation provides for a process of environmental assessment and management planning for the 400,000-odd hectares to be taken out of logging in the first instance. This provides Queensland with the unique opportunity to create a mosaic of protection for conservation values and facilities for recreation and tourism which are unparalleled in any other part of southern Queensland. It is an opportunity to create the great southern forest of south-east Queensland. In 50 years' time, the residents of south-east Queensland will look back and say that this was an extraordinary legacy for any Government to leave to the Queensland community—a natural landscape with a range of recreational opportunities from passive recreation in high conservation national park areas right through to conservation parks and other recreational tenures which will be determined in the course of discussions that are currently proceeding with stakeholders on the conservation side and other stakeholders with other interests, whether they be grazing interests, beekeeping interests, flora collection or recreation.

I should clarify a number of concerns raised by a number of members. As a number of members have pointed out, I have indicated previously that our Government intends to maintain as broad an opportunity for recreational activity as possible. In terms of how this will be achieved, the process is a logical and simple one. Looking at each of the areas in the 400,000 hectares to be taken out of logging, the process will now proceed in a way that is not dissimilar to the management planning undertaken for national parks or State forests in the past by identifying those areas that are of special conservation significance and respecting them as such and ensuring that an appropriate level of recreation or other use occurs in them. If they are of high conservation value, then it is only natural that more passive forms of use will be provided for in those areas. If they are less sensitive in conservation terms, then more intensive recreational uses will be available. Appropriate tenures will be established for that purpose.

The process of consultation has been not only long and extensive but also very open. It is extraordinary to hear members continually make—as some Opposition members did, and some former One Nation members did it almost serially—without any substantiated basis the false assertion that consultation had somehow been limited or truncated. The reality is that the RFA process was established initially by the previous Government. I continued all the consultation processes established under

that arrangement. There was a steering committee to oversee the social impact assessment, the JANIS environmental assessment criteria and a range of other issues. In addition, the Forest Recreation Reference Group was established to represent all major recreational groups in Queensland. Outdoor recreation right through to four-wheel drive, trail bikes and horse riding are represented on the Forest Recreation Reference Group, which I established specifically to assist in implementing the RFA and to meet the needs of recreational users.

In the course of the RFA process before the agreement was finally reached, the member for Logan went to numerous places throughout the South-East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement area and met with regional communities. The member for Maryborough ought to be ashamed of himself for suggesting that there was not adequate consultation in his area. The member for Logan went there on numerous occasions, but not once did the member for Maryborough turn up. That was also the case for other areas where consultation occurred. The reality is that, quite frankly, I know of few other processes in which people involved in local or regional communities have had more opportunity to have a say than in the resolution of the regional forest agreement process.

When it comes to respecting the rights of recreationists, contrary to the deliberately false assertions of members of the Opposition, I have made myself available to the Forest Recreation Reference Group. I have communicated with a number of other splinter groups who, for various reasons relevant to them, do not regard themselves as adequately represented on the Forest Recreation Reference Group. I was more than happy to talk with the people who presented themselves at Parliament House today to raise their concerns. Indeed, two of the people who today were most active in their advocacy on behalf of the group at the gates of Parliament House are themselves on the Forest Recreation Reference Group.

I have to say with some concern that it would be nice if those two people were as constructively involved in activities on the reference group specifically established for their input as they were in stirring up malcontent, misunderstanding and false fears among some of the people outside Parliament House today. Many of those people have legitimate concerns. Those concerns deserve to be addressed. I responded openly and sincerely to those concerns at the gates of Parliament House today. As was evidenced by

some of the contributions made by members on the opposite side of the House, there are always a small number of people who seek to play politics in these issues for their own personal reasons but who do not seek to assist the community to constructively engage in resolving the issues.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this legislation is to provide for an interim holding tenure into which the areas secure from logging will be placed under the Nature Conservation Act. The areas, as they are assessed on a forest by forest or park by park basis, will then be allocated appropriate tenures. It is true that some will go into national parks. It is true that some will go into conservation parks.

It is also true that some of those conservation parks will have higher and more intensive forms of recreational use available to them than will others. Horse riding will not be excluded from some conservation parks. Management plans can be developed for conservation parks that specifically provide for specific kinds of recreation. Some recreational uses are incompatible with one another. There are some horse riding groups that do not want trail bikes blazing past their horses on the same trails. Those sorts of sensible, rational planning arrangements need to be sorted out.

Contrary to assertions by certain members opposite, Daisy Hill State Forest and the Brisbane Forest Park will not be subject to changes in current access arrangements for recreational use. As occurs currently in State forests, from time to time certain areas are closed off and then reopened, according to the management needs of the forest, to ensure that certain areas are not overused or degraded. Subject to those normal management arrangements, there will certainly be no restriction, arising from this Bill or any other administrative changes, that will affect Daisy Hill State Forest or the Brisbane Forest Park.

Some concerns about the five-year sunset clause were raised today. The reason for that sunset clause is purely technical. It was my preference that there not be a sunset clause necessarily, but the Office of Parliamentary Counsel made it clear that in drafting legislation it was not possible to have a tenure which operated only on an interim basis unless a sunset clause made clear that the tenure was an interim tenure. The reason for its being there is purely technical.

A secondary reason for the sunset clause is to indicate to the bureaucracy that these things must be resolved at least within five

years. For the life of me I cannot understand why it should take that long for the tenures to be resolved but, out of an abundance of caution and to ensure proper time is allowed for consultation in some of the areas that might require further discussion and negotiation, we have allowed five years for that process to occur.

The sunset clause is not in any way a device to terminate any of the existing uses in those areas being transferred to forest reserve. It is simply a technical clause required to be inserted in legislation for any tenure that the Government, as a matter of policy, wants to be a temporary tenure. It may be that, once the negotiation process allocates those areas that will be carved out for certain recreational users and other areas that will be carved out for other uses, a tenure such as forest reserve or, as I have flagged in the past, forest park will be inserted into the legislation on a permanent basis to cater for various categories of use.

The reason we have not resolved that now is that we are not sure what range of tenures will be necessary. We know what a national park is and roughly what can occur in a national park now in terms of more passive uses. We know that a conservation park under the Nature Conservation Act does allow us a fair bit of flexibility to allow things such as horse riding and perhaps some other activities. It may be that we want a further tenure. Whether it is forest reserve or forest park I think must await the discussions that the Forest Recreation Reference Group and the other groups are involved in. I will be happy to take their advice on any other tenures that are suitable or appropriate for the full range of recreational tenures to occur.

In closing, I make it abundantly clear that one of the opportunities the forest agreement process presents us with is an opportunity to provide secure access for recreation in a way that did not occur when logging was occurring in those areas. There were many times that areas were closed off to recreation while logging was occurring. Now that logging will not occur in this first batch of areas to come across to forest reserve, the opportunity presents itself for us to set aside areas which will be secure for future recreation and for low-impact infrastructure development, either for recreation or associated tourism activities.

Notwithstanding the criticisms and the 1970s rhetoric of certain members of the Opposition, the reality is that, as has occurred in far northern Queensland, the planning of these natural landscapes for recreational and tourism uses creates much greater value both

in economic and social terms for the communities of the region than did the logging industry that occurred in them in the past. As has occurred in far northern Queensland, there will be many more higher value use opportunities for these forests than was the case in the past.

Not only will secure opportunities for recreational use and sufficient areas for the full range of current recreational uses be determined by this process; in 20, 30 or 50 years' time the people of southern Queensland, from Gladstone to the border, will look back on this initiative and recognise that the great legacy this Government left the people of south-east Queensland is a protected, high-value, high conservation area for recreational and community use that is unparalleled, apart from the Wet Tropics of north Queensland. Of that legacy our Government is fully entitled to be proud. We will not be deterred from delivering that legacy to the people of Queensland by the spoiling, negativity and whingeing of certain members of the Opposition.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time-put; and the House divided—

AYES, 45—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Briskey, Clark, E. Cunningham, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Turner, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

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 3, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr LESTER (5.38 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 6, after line 14—
insert—

'Amendment of s 5 (How object is achieved)

'3A.(1) Section 5(c)—

insert—

'(iv) their previous and potential uses;'

'(2) Section 5—

insert—

'(h) Recognition of interests of recreational forest users

- Recognition of the interests of forest users in protected areas for the purpose of recreation;
- The cooperative involvement of recreational forest users in the management of protected areas.'."

The Beattie Government has made a conscious decision to pursue the addition of areas of Crown forest to a reserve network using the Nature Conservation Act when clearly there was ample provision to do so under the Forestry Act. This is a decision which reflects the Beattie Government's blinkered philosophy when it comes to environmental issues, that is, "lock it up and throw away the key". The Opposition does not support the use of the Nature Conservation Act to establish these interim reserves, but we recognise that the Government has the numbers and the Government has decided to pursue this course of action. That said, we have attempted to work within the parameters imposed upon us to improve this Bill and all its implications for those Queenslanders whose livelihoods and lifestyles are so heavily reliant on the future of our Crown forests.

The object of the Nature Conservation Act is, simply, the conservation of nature. The Opposition is of the view that the object does not now provide sufficient scope for the sensible and scientific management of the Crown forest. As the object and the provisions set out to achieve that object currently stand, the Act effectively discounts the previous and potential use of forest reserves and other areas. This amendment seeks to recognise that these areas have been used by people and are still being used, and, accordingly, takes the interests of those people into account.

Effectively, we are seeking to introduce a human element to this Act with this amendment and with the rest of our amendments. The Government is attempting to deny the human interaction with the publicly owned forests. We are seeking to restore the rightful recognition of that human element. The first part of this amendment simply adds a

requirement that the management of protected areas should include some regard for their previous and potential uses. It acknowledges that forests have been used for a range of purposes, and it provides recognition of that fact. As section 5 provides—

"The conservation of nature is to be achieved by an integrated and comprehensive conservation strategy for the whole of Queensland that involves, among other things, the following:"

So we are not seeking anything outlandish. All we are seeking is that the previous and potential uses of the forest be one of those things that should be considered in the development of conservation strategies.

The second part of this amendment seeks to add a new object, again to recognise the human interaction with the forest for a group of people who have, until now, been effectively disregarded. The recreational users are ordinary people like you and me who enjoy the use of public forests. It is a group that is growing in numbers as more and more people come to appreciate our Crown forests and the joys of the various nature-based recreational activities that are undertaken in forests. The second part of the amendment simply seeks to recognise the interest of recreational users and to provide for their cooperative involvement in the management of protected areas. The section already provides for the interests of Aboriginal and Islander people and of land-holders. Our amendment would also provide for the legitimate interests of the recreational users.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to support the amendment moved by the member for Keppel. At the outset, can I place on record how disappointed I am at the response that the Minister gave in his reply to the large number of addresses made in the debate on the second reading of this legislation.

Mr Lester: A bit flippant, wasn't it?

Mr SEENEY: As the member for Keppel says, it was a very flippant response to what was a very genuine contribution made by a large number of members on this side of the Chamber raising very genuine concerns on behalf of a large number of constituents across south-east Queensland.

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Let the record show that the Minister responds flippantly again. That is typical of the Minister's response to very genuine concerns that have been raised by a large number of people on this side of the

Chamber. Many Opposition members took particular care to outline in some detail during the debate on the second reading the concerns that are very genuinely held by a broad range of people who have an interest in the forests of south-east Queensland. Despite being given ample opportunity to respond to those concerns, despite being given ample opportunity to allay some of those concerns in his reply, the Minister chose—as the member for Keppel quite rightly pointed out—to respond in a very shallow and flippant manner. That is regrettable and it makes a mockery of what the debate in this Chamber is all about. It makes a mockery of this Parliament and it makes a mockery of the Minister's role. It is the brutal reality of this place that the Minister has the numbers to carry the vote in the second-reading stage. That is the brutal reality that we all understand, but the Minister has some responsibility to respond legitimately and in a fair dinkum manner to some of the concerns that were raised by members on this side of the Chamber, members who raised concerns on the part of the constituents they represent and members who raised very genuine concerns about issues that have been the cause of much angst and much concern to a broad range of people across south-east Queensland.

I turn now to the amendment moved by the member for Keppel. I hope that the Minister can find it within himself to make a genuine response to this amendment because it seeks to insert into the legislation various wordings and sections that guarantee that the Minister will do what he has said he will do. During the debate in the public arena he said that he would do all of these things that this amendment seeks to put into the legislation. He said to the forest users outside this Parliament today that he would consider them. All of these reassuring words are easy to say; all of these assurances are easy to give. It is easy to stand up in Parliament and say, "Don't worry about it. Everything is all right. I am a nice fellow and I will look after you all and we will make sure that there is no net loss", and all those fine-sounding words that the Minister and so many of his colleague are so good at using, but when it comes to the crunch the people of Queensland quite simply do not trust the Minister for Natural Resources. They quite simply do not trust him because of his track record.

This amendment moved by the member for Keppel seeks to ensure that this legislation gives people confidence that they will be considered. It seeks to give people confidence that the assurances that they have been

given, that the fine-sounding words and the, "Don't you worry about that" will be carried through, will be given some legislative backing—they will be given some teeth—so that the people can be assured that the concerns that they have quite legitimately brought forward and the concerns that the Minister has tried to address with his shallow assurances have been addressed to the extent of being included in the legislation.

As the member for Keppel said, this amendment seeks to recognise the people and to recognise the people's right to continue to use the State forest areas in the way that they traditionally have. It seeks to recognise that they are a legitimate part of the equation and it seeks to give them the standing of being a legitimate part of the consideration, a legitimate part of the decision-making process. At the moment that is not the case. At the moment this legislation concentrates on the conservation values. It concentrates on the green perspective and it completely ignores the people. It completely ignores the people who have for many years—for 100 years in some cases referred to by the member for Hinchinbrook earlier this afternoon—been making use of those forests in various ways. People using the forests for recreational uses or business uses, such as grazing leases and beekeeping, and a whole range of people who have had very genuine uses of the State forests for a long time now find themselves totally ignored by this legislation. They find themselves totally ignored and they find themselves depending on shallow assurances from a Minister whom they simply do not trust and whom they have very good reason not to trust.

This amendment seeks to give them something meaningful that will reassure them. If the Minister is fair dinkum about the assurances that he has been giving, if he is fair dinkum about some of the shallow words that he has stood up and mouthed here in the Chamber and in the public debate and if he is fair dinkum about some of the things he said outside Parliament today to the people who came to protest, then what he can do is stand up in a moment and say that he accepts this amendment. He can accept this amendment and give some legislative backing to some of the words that he has been saying both here and in the public debate up until now.

I very much doubt that he will be prepared to do that; but if he is not, then he should make a legitimate attempt to explain why he is not, rather than continuing to adopt the flippant approach that we saw in his response to the second-reading debate. I look forward to

the Minister's response to this amendment. I look forward, most of all, to seeing him accept the amendment and recognise that people do matter in this legislation, that there is an opportunity in this legislation to consider the previous and potential uses of the forests, to consider the whole issue of State forests and their uses and their management from a wider point of view than just the deep green perspective. I look forward to the Minister accepting this amendment and acknowledging that people do matter, that people are part of the decision-making process, that the people who have used the forests of south-east Queensland will continue to matter and they will be considered in the decision-making processes in the future.

I look forward to that, but I doubt that I will ever see it happen. Failing that, I look forward to the Minister explaining to this Chamber in a meaningful and sincere way why he is not prepared to give some legislative backing to the shallow assurances that he has been giving to the Queensland public. I hope that we do not again see the type of flippant response that we saw from the Minister during the second-reading debate.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Mickel): Order! Before I call the member for Caboolture, there is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Order!

Mr FELDMAN: I stand on behalf of the City Country Alliance, which actually will be supporting this amendment moved by the member for Keppel. I do not have to go into our reasons for supporting it too deeply because last Tuesday, the first Tuesday of the most recent sittings, I tabled a petition of 5,155 petitioners, stakeholders, as the member for Callide just said, everyday people who go out there and use these forests and parks for their recreation, something they have enjoyed, as he said, for the past 100 years. This amendment will enshrine in the legislation their previous and potential uses. It recognises, as the Minister failed to do, that these people are stakeholders. These are people who from day one should have been consulted on the regional forest agreements when they were first mooted and contemplated. Instead, they were forgotten and they were treated as people less than the constituents of ours that they really are. The Minister himself failed to recognise this fact and disregarded them. They were basically late inclusions in the process after it was finished. Those people did not like being disregarded. They wanted to show the Minister that they did not like being put on the scrap heap and being told at a later stage how much

of the forest they may or may not use. They wanted to be included in the process. This amendment recognises them as they should have been recognised—as proper stakeholders in the use of the State forests.

We are talking about changing the tenure of those reserves which people have used, are still using, and which they love to use. Their children look forward to using the reserves long into the future. This amendment gives these people what they are seeking. We ask that the Minister adhere to the commitment he gave in the public arena. It is one thing to say something in a public arena; it is another to come in here and make a commitment to the people of Queensland that there will not be a net loss of recreational access to State forests when the tenure is changed.

It is not a matter of providing pieces of forest which are miles from anywhere and which people have no chance of accessing. That sort of action would destroy people's chances of enjoying such recreation. The inability of people to access these areas will lead to a loss of their particular activity or sport.

The member for Keppel's amendment includes the following—

"Recognition of the interests of forest users in protected areas for the purposes of recreation;

The cooperative involvement of recreational forest users in the management of protected areas."

It is a matter of getting together with these people and working with them in looking after the State forest or national park. This will enable the people to become part of the environment and look after it in the same way as the young students did at Bribie Island.

We must recognise what people have done in these areas with regard to maintaining the forest areas and maintaining their interest in the area. None of these people have damaged or destroyed the environment. Such accusations have been levelled at these people. It is a nasty allegation to make about people who have enjoyed being in the area. People enjoy going to these areas and being out in the open air.

The Minister would be remiss if he did not take into account the very good amendment that has been moved by the member for Keppel. This amendment enshrines the principle of looking after the State forest and the recreational users of the State forest. It is enshrined in the legislation here in the Parliament where it counts. This would mean

that such people cannot be disregarded as they have been in the past by this Minister.

We must stand up for our constituents and for the people who have faith in us. If we do not do that, we are not doing the job that we were sent here to do. The amendment moved by the member for Keppel enshrines that principle and says to the people who use our State forests, "We value your input. We value your use." We know that we have a resource that the people of Queensland value and love to use. These are the people who go into our State forests and look after the tracks and the areas in which they ride.

A lot of these recreational activities are well away from housing estates where such activities could possibly annoy residents. We know the problems that horse riders experience in having to ride in city areas. The users of our State forests look after the forests and deserve to be treated as stakeholders. The amendment moved by the member for Keppel recognises their value and the value of their input.

On behalf of those 5,155 petitioners, I implore the Minister to recognise their value and their input. I ask the Minister to take this amendment to heart and give it bipartisan support. It is a very good amendment.

Mr NELSON: It is very important to conserve our natural heritage, and especially areas of ecological importance. It is important because people use these areas for recreation. The areas are also used for such things as tourism and the promotion of an environment that we can all enjoy.

I ask the Minister: what is the point in locking up areas in conservation agreements or national parks if people are not afforded the ability to enjoy recreational activities in these areas? As the worthy amendment moved by the member for Keppel states—

"Recreation in a protected area means the non-commercial use of the area by individuals or groups for leisure purposes."

I do not see how that could possibly interfere with the natural heritage of the area as long as it is done in a responsible way.

As the member for Caboolture said, in most cases these people are already using these areas responsibly. It is ludicrous to suggest that horse riders or bushwalkers can inflict the same amount of damage in a park as clear-felling with chainsaws. By allowing people to enter our national parks we are educating them in the fact that these areas are ecologically important and are of natural

beauty. Secondly, we are allowing the people the opportunity of expressing their appreciation of our national parks.

In some cases people are allowed to contribute to the upkeep of the parks by paying fees for access to the parks. If people are going to be restricted in their ability to carry out activities in our national parks, we are going to limit the ability of our parks to recoup some funds by way of camping fees and so on.

I am aware that the Minister enjoys bushwalking and recreational activities. I remember watching a special program on television where the Minister participated in a walk through Lamington National Park. I am amazed that a Minister who is known for his concerns for the environment would want to restrict people in their access to these areas.

I can understand such concern with regard to a mangrove swamp that could sustain heavy damage from people acting in an irresponsible manner. Even that problem has been addressed in many areas of Queensland by the construction of boardwalks that allow people access to sensitive areas. This is the whole thrust of environmentalism.

I am not an environmentalist, but we must protect our endangered areas. We must educate people on the importance of these areas and of the ecological need to develop them. We are not going to be able to do that by erecting barrier fences and saying, "This is an area of rainforest, but no one can enter it. We are going to lock it up and hopefully it will stay the way it is. In 300 years' time we can come back and look at it from a great distance and think that it is all wonderful."

National parks should be completely interactive. A good example of this is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. This is an area of incredible environmental sensitivity. The marine park is accessed by tourism on a grand scale but very little damage is done because in most cases where tourists are accessing the reef their activities are very well controlled. The operators who are running these ventures know that their livelihood is dependent upon the coral not being destroyed. Therefore, they make sure that the tourists are very careful.

Of course there are some breakages. It is impossible to prevent fins from breaking a bit of coral here and there. People go to the marine park to view the beauty of the reef. As a result, they try to be as careful as possible. The interaction of tourism has made the Great Barrier Reef one of the most important assets of this State because of its access for

recreational use and because of its environmental sensitivity.

Progress reported.

CONFIDENCE IN MR SPEAKER

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6 p.m.): I move—

"That this House has no confidence in Mr Speaker."

Mr Speaker, what is the basis of our complaint? It is simple. I cannot say that this Labor Government of which you are part was not fairly elected. But similarly, Government members from the Premier down cannot say that they were, and that is the great issue before the people of Queensland at present. The issue is whether Labor cheated its way into office and, having cheated its way into office by corrupting the electoral system, by fraud and by deceit, whether we have seen unfair protection to rorters and corrupters provided by the Chair. Mr Speaker, when we look at the history—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Just one moment. Just speak generally, do not refer to matters before the commission.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I did not.

Mr SPEAKER: Okay.

Mr BORBIDGE: You are maintaining the reason why we are moving this particular motion tonight. You have already taken close to a minute off me in accusing me of something that I simply did not do.

Mr Speaker, in the old days when Parliament was evolving the Speaker was the king's man. Mr Speaker, unfortunately in Queensland in the year 2000 not much has changed. The Speaker is the ALP's man. The Speaker is the Premier's man. The Speaker is the AWU's man. What we have seen is one rule for Labor and another rule for everyone else. We have seen contradictory rulings from the Chair that have made it close to impossible for the Opposition to do its job and, as a result of that, the Parliament has become a farce. And the Parliament has become a farce, Sir, because of your conduct in terms of the proceedings of the Parliament. You have ruled questions out of order but then permitted the answers. You have ruled some questions in order and others out. You have told me that I cannot ask the Premier whether he can confirm that as parliamentary leader of the ALP he has served on the administrative committee of that party since early 1996 and during that time has taken part in the approval

of corrupt membership applications. Mr Speaker, there was no reference to the inquiry.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: And now we see it: they are going to stop us from even having our say during this debate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will observe the rules of the House.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition is incorrect. What he said is dishonest and untrue, and I seek that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier asks that it be withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, as I understand it, under the rules of the Labor Party you serve on the administrative committee and the administrative committee approves the corrupt memberships that have been placed before it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This debate is not going to bring the House into disrepute. You have just been asked under the Standing Orders of this House to withdraw. You know the Standing Orders of the House. I ask you to withdraw, and without any other comment.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I withdraw and I again say that your conduct tonight is the very reason why we are moving this particular motion. Mr Speaker, if you want to participate in this debate, leave the chair—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is a reflection on the Chair, and I ask you to withdraw that.

Mr BORBIDGE:—put the Deputy Speaker in the chair and speak—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is a reflection on the Chair, and I ask you to withdraw those words.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, this whole motion is a reflection on the Chair.

Mr SPEAKER: I asked you to withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: You are not fit to be Speaker of this Parliament.

Mr SPEAKER: Under Standing Orders, I ask you to withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I withdraw. Mr Speaker, I would suggest, Sir, that if you want to participate in this debate you do not do so from the chair, you do so as the member for Redcliffe and allow someone else to preside over this particular issue. Mr Speaker, let us look at some of the other

crimes against the Parliament that you have been guilty of over the last few days.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is a reflection also.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not tolerating that sort of behaviour.

Mr Hobbs: That's what it's about.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Warrego under Standing Order 123A. That is a reflection on the Chair. I ask you to withdraw it. That is untrue and it is offensive.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I am entitled to do so in a motion of no confidence.

Mr SPEAKER: It is untrue and offensive. I have committed no crime against the Parliament.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, if you find it offensive—

Mr SPEAKER: You withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE:—I withdraw.

Mr Speaker, you denied the honourable member for Crows Nest his right to come into this Parliament and vote in contentious divisions where otherwise you would have had to have used your casting vote. What we have seen has been a deliberate attempt by you, as the AWU member for Redcliffe and as the Labor member for Redcliffe, to stifle debate in this place, as you have sought to do tonight, when there are issues relating to the most fundamental aspects of the democratic process.

I would like to remind honourable members of comments made by the Attorney-General, Mr Foley, in this place when he was in Opposition. He said in regard to Speaker Turner—

"It would, with great respect, be a travesty of justice if this Parliament were to be silenced merely because the Criminal Justice Commission, which is a creature of this Parliament, had embarked upon that inquiry."

The comments of the Attorney-General! You, Sir, have not even allowed us in this place to canvass issues that have not been the subject of evidence before the commission of inquiry. You have prevented one of my members from voting in this place when they were entitled to—something that I suggest would be a contempt of the Parliament and probably the first time there has been a contempt of the Parliament by a serving Speaker.

It is no wonder that the media feel as strongly as we do on this issue. I quote the

words of Matthew Franklin in the Courier-Mail in regard to your performance on these issues and your inconsistencies in the chair. He stated—

"If it was an indication of Hollis's understanding of the level of fairness required of a Speaker, then Hollis is a dud and a planned no confidence motion against him ought to be passed unanimously."

Similarly, the Courier-Mail editorial stated—

"Mr Hollis must have known he faced a rowdier-than-usual parliamentary chamber, and it has to be assumed he prepared accordingly. But his performance this week has been so bad no Queenslander can have confidence in him."

Those were not my words but the words of the Courier-Mail. I commend to you, Mr Speaker, and to the Premier and his Government the words of Tony Fitzgerald in terms of the commission of inquiry, his recommendations and his observations on the proper role of Speaker. He stated—

"Any Government may use its dominance in the Parliament and its control of public resources to stifle and neuter effective criticism by the Opposition.

This can be prevented by mechanisms such as an impartial Speaker. Because of its necessary numerical strength the Government in a parliamentary democracy is obviously able to change or ignore the rules. In these circumstances the authority and neutrality of the 'referee' is of critical importance. The Speaker cannot afford to adopt a partisan role either voluntarily, or in order to retain the confidence and support of the Government party. If the Speaker enters the arena, there is a risk that Parliament will not be able to make the Government accountable."

Mr Speaker, you are guilty. You have betrayed the spirit of Fitzgerald, as the party that you serve and kowtow to has betrayed the spirit of Fitzgerald. And even in this particular debate tonight we find your involvement from the chair in seeking to stifle the Opposition from doing its job a further indication as to why you are unfit to hold the office that you do.

Mr Speaker, your obligation is to make sure the Parliament works. Your obligation is to make sure the Executive is held accountable. Your obligation is to make sure that members have the right of parliamentary privilege and

free speech. Your first obligation is to the collective members of this Parliament. It is not to the Government. It is not to the Labor Party. It is not to the AWU. Mr Speaker, it is a shame that you have decided that your allegiances are elsewhere than to the institution of Parliament itself. It is a shame that you have betrayed the principles of Fitzgerald. It is a shame that you prevented a member of Parliament from voting in this place when he was entitled to do so and then turned around and sought to blame Hansard for your own mistake.

Time expired.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.10 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It is now beyond dispute that the ALP has routinely corrupted the electoral roll. The Shepherdson inquiry has also been told that the ALP corrupted the Electoral Commission. Now we find that the ALP has effectively corrupted the Parliament of Queensland.

The Speaker has applied his rulings with a capricious partisanship that has belied any semblance of political impartiality. He has actively conspired with the ALP to shield Labor members from the blowtorch of public scrutiny. We have seen him day in, day out looking to the Treasury benches for direction on how to treat the coalition's questions. It comes as no surprise to anyone in this House that the Speaker is a key member of the Deputy Premier's team in the corrupt AWU faction. This is not the first time the Speaker has shown his political colours. In June, we revealed that the ALP was using his office as a campaign headquarters for the Government Whip and member for Chermide, another member of the AWU faction.

An Opposition member interjected.

Dr WATSON: There is absolutely no question. We have got it. The ALP's list of Labor candidates showed that the Whip's campaign director was none other than the Speaker's office manager, Stirling Hinchliffe. The document we released at that time showed that Mr Hinchliffe had been running this campaign out of the Speaker's office for at least six months.

Mr Elder: You are pathetic.

Dr WATSON: That is what their documents show. Mr Hinchliffe was caught red-handed. He was caught out using the office phone, the office mobile, the office fax machine and the office computer for party political business on the taxpayers' time, at taxpayers' expense. Without any other

consideration, those actions alone constituted a gross contempt of this Parliament and a blatant misuse of publicly funded resources.

A Government member interjected.

Dr WATSON: We released them at the time. There it is, out of the Government's own ALP records. There it is: the telephone number—work and home—the mobile number, the fax, the email. They are all there in their own documents.

The political neutrality of the Speaker's Office is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. It is a fundamental principle of this Parliament. Mr Hinchliffe crossed the line and should have been sacked on the spot, but the Speaker refused to act. In fact, he went in to bat for his factional lackey. He took the view that a little bit of corruption did not matter when the Government had the numbers. Given the growing mountain of evidence against AWU operatives, we cannot discount the possibility that Mr Hinchliffe may have been engaging in suspect activities similar to those being investigated. We have to recognise the possibility that the Speaker's office may have been used for the purposes of electoral corruption. That might at least explain the Speaker's heightened sensitivity on this particular subject.

Mr Elder: This is just an absolute disgrace.

Dr WATSON: It involved phone numbers, mobile numbers and email.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I find those words about the Speaker's office being used for those purposes offensive and I ask you to withdraw, because it is a reflection on the Speaker.

Dr WATSON: Mr Speaker, if you find them offensive, I will withdraw. However, I said that you have to recognise the possibility. I did not say that you are or were involved.

Government members interjected.

Dr WATSON: It is important. Which members of the AWU faction are clean? Those questions are legitimate public questions, particularly when they concern the institution of this Parliament. Whatever the extent of Mr Hinchliffe's conduct, it was clearly conducted on behalf of the AWU faction of the ALP with the full support of the Speaker himself. This goes to the very heart of our democratic process.

On the last day of sittings earlier this month, we saw the Government protecting the Speaker as he had protected it. We saw the Leader of the House use the ALP's numbers in the House to rip up Standing Orders and

gag debate on a long list of individual dissent motions arising from a full week of arbitrary and capricious rulings made without neither rhyme nor reason.

The Government has good reason to protect this particular Speaker. He has a long track record of protecting Labor members. He has a long track record of acting as the Government's gatekeeper on matters of legitimate concern and privilege—matters that should have been referred to the relevant parliamentary committees for bipartisan consideration and adjudication. He has a long track record of relying on the Government's numbers to uphold his rulings in favour of the Government.

It has been a very long time since the Queensland Parliament was subverted by a more compliant, more partisan, more biased Speaker. This Speaker is a throwback to the bad old days of the "moonlight State".

Time expired.

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (6.14 p.m.): I rise to oppose the motion, and I do so with some degree of sadness because tonight we have seen the most disgraceful—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, here they go again. They have set out to disrupt the Parliament. There has been a clear strategy. Here they go. Listen to them; they are disrupting the Parliament. In the past two sitting weeks, they have attempted on every occasion to bring this Parliament into disrepute.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go. Listen to the interjections. I say to the people of Queensland tonight: listen to the Opposition seeking to scream and hail down Government Ministers who cannot even get an opportunity to speak in this House. Mr Speaker, is it little wonder that the Opposition is seeking to disrupt your office here? They are doing it for crude political purposes.

Mr Speaker, what we saw tonight from the Leader of the Opposition was a cowardly attack on you as Speaker and it was done simply for crude political purposes to not only bring this House into disrepute but also to try to use this House for crude political purposes, and that is all.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here they go again. The Leader of the Opposition is interjecting.

Mr Beanland interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Indooroopilly!

Mr BEATTIE: I sat here and listened in silence to the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here they go again. I cannot even be heard.

Mr Johnson interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: The Opposition's performance is so bad in this House—listen to them; we cannot even hear ourselves think. Listen to them; they are at it again on every occasion. We cannot even hear ourselves think in this debate. They are interjecting. They have come in here and they have chanted. They have had a deliberate strategy—

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here they go again, Mr Speaker.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Let the record show that the Opposition is disrupting and trying to bring the House into disrepute. Let the record show that through this—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go. The member for Toowoomba South is bringing the House into disrepute. Let the record show that at every occasion the member for Toowoomba South again—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toowoomba South will cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: They simply try to cry down Government Ministers because they do not want to let them speak. They are trying to censor our contribution in this Parliament. They are trying to stop the Government—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide will cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: Whether it is the member for Callide, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party—the Leader of the Opposition is not prepared to lead on these issues. When Speaker Turner was in that chair, I had discussions with him—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Unlike the Premier, I have never accused him of thieving public funds—

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

Mr BORBIDGE:—and he talks about standards!

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

Mr BORBIDGE: He should look in the mirror—

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

Mr BORBIDGE:—and see what he is doing to this place.

Mr BEATTIE: Here he is again. The Leader of the Opposition is bringing the Parliament into disrepute.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here they go. They are interjecting, crying down Government Ministers. The Leader of the Opposition takes—

Mr Seeney interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Let the people of Queensland know that this Opposition has had a deliberate strategy to wreck this Parliament. It has had a deliberate strategy—

Mr Springborg interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Here they go—the Deputy Leader of the National Party. Every time Ministers get to their feet members opposite seek to bring this Parliament into disrepute.

Mr Quinn: Say something of substance.

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

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have already warned the member for Callide under Standing Order 123A. You will now leave the Chamber under Standing Order 123A(3), which means you can come back to vote. Remove yourself.

Whereupon the honourable member for Callide withdrew from the Chamber.

Mr BEATTIE: There is no substance to this whinge from the Opposition. That is the truth. The whole debate has centred around the fact that the Opposition has sought to disrupt this Parliament. In terms of media

coverage of this Parliament, I think it is about time that we heard both sides of the story, not just the story of the attacks on you, Mr Speaker. Let us have some fairness in the reporting on how the Opposition has deliberately pursued a strategy to wreck the Parliament of Queensland. Let us have some fair reporting. We have had none.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warwick! That is my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is seeking to wreck my contribution. Mr Speaker, let us be really clear about this. You have simply ruled the way that Speaker Turner did. Did we accept what Speaker Turner did? Yes, we did. Did we seek to go out and wreck the Parliament? No, we did not! We accepted the umpire's decision. The Leader of the Opposition will never accept the umpire's decision. All he will seek to do is to wreck this Parliament. I will be telling the people of Queensland from one end of the State to the other that the Leader of the Opposition is nothing but a wrecker of this Parliament.

An Opposition member: Time's up.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go. Let the record show the disruption of my speech.

Time expired.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (6.20 p.m.): I rise to support you, Mr Speaker, and condemn this motion of no confidence. I want to go back to what I said in debate on the dissent motion the last time Parliament sat. I want to reiterate words that have been uttered in this Parliament—

"It is the advice of the Crown Solicitor and the Clerk that the CJC is such a court. I will not countenance any dissent on this matter. Honourable members can raise it as a substantive motion, otherwise I will treat it as disrespect for the Chair."

I go on to quote—

"In response to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I have ruled that the particular matter is sub judice. The Leader of the Opposition has the right to take anything before the commission of inquiry. I have ruled that reference to that matter is sub judice and that it is out of order for that matter to be discussed in this Chamber."

Finally, I go on to quote—

"It will be seen that the Solicitor-General's opinion is that whilst it is a matter for the discretion of the Speaker, who is personally charged with the responsibility of evaluating whether any particular discussion should take place in the House, if statements are to be made in the House which would adversely reflect on the position of particular individuals and specifically would suggest guilt of criminal offences, then in view of that point, the sub judice rule would be relevant and the Speaker would be entitled in exercising his discretion to prevent such statements."

For the benefit of those opposite who have found it hard to grasp the intricacies and complexities of this issue—and each and every one of them has—the first quote was from Speaker Fouras, the second from Speaker Turner and the third from Speaker Hollis. They have been consistent in terms of their rulings regarding sub judice in relation to matters before CJC inquiries—consistent! We accepted the rulings of Speaker Turner at the time. The difference is that those opposite will not accept the rulings of Speaker Hollis.

It is obvious that there has been consistency in rulings and that the interpretation of this Speaker was no different from the interpretation of Speaker Fouras and no different from the interpretation of the former National Party Speaker, Speaker Turner. The only conclusion one can come to for this motion before the Chamber tonight is what those opposite have been doing since day one—playing politics. From day one they have played politics on this. We were far more respectful to Speaker Turner than those opposite have ever been to Speaker Hollis in relation to issues such as this. Those opposite have taken every opportunity to walk into this place and smear. I do not think I have seen a worse example of that than the performance of the Leader of the Liberal Party this evening. For the member to smear in the way he did was absolutely disgraceful. If he had the courage of his convictions—and I know he does not—he would walk outside this Chamber now and give the gentleman the opportunity to contest what he says. He would give himself no credence in this, would he? He would not.

There is one person in this House who will face a defamation action because he jumped far too quick when he defamed a poor, innocent person who works in the Premier's office, and that is the member opposite. He should give the person he has defamed in this place the opportunity to do the same, but the

member opposite has the intestinal fortitude of a flea. He will not do it. Two years ago he was an unknown in this Parliament, and now he is an unknown throughout Queensland. The essential difference is that he is prepared to smear people, and that is all it has ever been about.

I would not turn to the Leader of the Opposition for any standards, because he sets low standards in this place and he fails to achieve them every time. He has shown no leadership on this issue from day one. He has been prepared to put up with people smearing from day one. He is prepared to run with it himself. His contribution in the debate tonight was nothing but a vicious and personal attack on the Speaker. There was nothing about the Speaker's ruling in his contribution. It was a vicious and personal attack and should be seen by everyone in this Parliament and everyone in Queensland as just that. I suggest that members of this House and the public go back to look at his performance to see just how vicious it was, just how personal it was and just how politically vindictive it was in terms of the venom of its delivery. It always has been, because he set some of the lowest standards and he always—

Time expired.

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA) (6.25 p.m.): Mr Speaker, I wish to preface my remarks this evening on this motion of no confidence in you by saying that I was told to never get personal in this place, but tonight I have to throw that out the window. Maybe I will regret it, but I will take that chance. When the Opposition agreed to your appointment to the very important and exalted position that you now occupy, we did so with certain expectations. We expected you to follow in the steps of the former Speaker, the Honourable Neil Turner, and to show compassion, impartiality and a respect for your very high office. The Opposition and others in this House were prepared to overlook your past. We were prepared to give you a fair go. We were prepared to overlook the fact that in your previous career as a prison warden you carried out your duties with an attitude that had scant regard for the requirements of such a demanding job.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I find that offensive and I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr VEIVERS: I withdraw. Mr Speaker, we were prepared to forgive and forget, but you showed a very distasteful side of your character when you told a female ABC news reporter, "Piss off, you bitch."

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is untrue, incorrect and offensive and I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr VEIVERS: I withdraw. Mr Speaker, you have proved beyond all doubt the old adage that you can take the man out of the gutter but you cannot take the gutter out of the man. In a very short space of time, you have lost—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I find those words offensive and I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr VEIVERS: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. You have lost the respect of the media and even the respect of the parliamentary staff. If those opposite were fair dinkum, they would be saying the same thing. Yes, even members of the staff of this Parliament describe you in terms that I could not repeat in this Chamber. One certainly has to question your claims to the Speakership when political writers, as has already been pointed out, point to your total lack of impartiality. You have become known as the Captain Hook of Australian Parliaments—the dishonest pirate with a patch over your right eye because you cannot see them on that side of the Chamber, you only have one point of view and you see us on this side of the Chamber.

Your inability to be impartial and to show a bipartisan approach in your position is totally lamentable. Hate is a very strong word, Mr Speaker, but I can tell you that you are hated both inside and outside this House. Those who do not give way to such strong feelings simply regard you as a joke. They certainly feel that you are not deserving of any support whatsoever. Your antics, your attitude, your smile as you have sat members down for no reason and your total disregard for the rules of fair play have resulted in not only disdain for you as a person but also a lowering of morale through all levels of this House. The tragedy of this, unfortunately, is that your lack of regard for your high office is a reflection on all members of this House, and that is very sad indeed because most of us have a very high regard and respect for the office to which we were elected by our peers. We have regard and respect for the rules and for the institution of Parliament.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: Quite frankly, they have lost you, because you have no regard for the Parliament either. I have had the privilege of playing for my country. I know what it means to adhere to the rules, to play fair and to have respect for the institution one represents. The people who were part of that institution—of that team—were people with intestinal fortitude, sound judgment and a sense of very

fair play—something you do not have at all. You have none of these qualities, Mr Speaker. No self-respecting team would give you the job of carrying the drinks or even carrying the oranges.

It is a sad fact that people who are failures in their job, people who lack self-respect and who have no respect for their position, often hide their inadequacies behind a bullying attitude. You, Mr Speaker, show all these traits. No-one likes a bully. You exhibited that distasteful quality in regard to the female reporter I mentioned earlier and you have continued to show it from the Speaker's chair during question time—over and over and over again—when you have sat down members on this side of the House when they were asking legitimate questions regarding what was going on in certain places. You do not deserve the support of Parliament and I strongly support the motion of no confidence.

Time expired.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (6.30 p.m.): I rise to express my support for the Speaker and my vehement opposition to this scandalous and disrespectful motion. I express my disgust at the volleys of vile personal abuse that have come from the Opposition against the Speaker.

The case for the Opposition is put on two limbs. Firstly, it is argued by the Opposition Leader that the Speaker has been guilty of actual bias. The Leader of the Opposition asserts that there is one rule for Labor and another rule for everyone else. The second allegation is made, surprisingly, by a person who should conduct himself far better in this Chamber—the Leader of the Liberal Party. He alleges that this is part of the corruption of public institutions. These are two extremely serious allegations. These are allegations that go to respect for lawful authority. They are allegations that should not be made lightly and for which there should be evidence put before this Chamber.

What is the evidence that is advanced? What we see in the way those opposite have put their case is a process of deceit and misstatement. I turn to the artful dodger of misstatement, the Leader of the Opposition. He seeks to avoid the one simple truth that runs through this whole controversy, namely, that the ruling by Mr Speaker with respect to sub judice was in identical terms to the ruling of 3 April 1996 of Speaker Turner, which was in identical terms to the ruling of 19 February 1991 of Speaker Fouras.

I well recall the ruling of Speaker Turner because I argued against it. As I told the House on the last occasion, I agitated that very point. I refer to the passage that the Leader of the Opposition deceitfully, as is his usual practice, quoted out of context. But I welcome the fact that he quoted it. I welcome it because it illustrates that this very point was agitated before Speaker Turner and he rejected it. That is to say, what this hypocrite who stands opposite alleges is that the current Speaker has adopted the very same statement of the sub judice rule as was adopted by Speaker Turner. That is the only evidence that is before this House. He argues that there is one rule for Labor and another rule for anyone else. The statement of the rule was exactly the same under Speaker Hollis as it was under Speaker Turner. We have not heard tonight—

Dr Watson: Not the application.

Mr FOLEY: Those opposite are changing their ground now. It is the application of the rule now. Before it was a complaint about the rule. Once the evidence on that is demolished, those opposite then shift their ground. It is characteristic of the deceitful practices in which those opposite have engaged.

I reserve a stronger condemnation for the Leader of the Liberal Party. He has come into this Chamber and alleged what is in effect the process of being a party to the criminal offence of corruption. This honourable member said that he could not discount the possibility of corruption. Well, he should know, and the people of Queensland are entitled to hear evidence. What is the case here? We have not heard a shred of such evidence. What we have heard is a vile outpouring from the member for Southport of accusations against the Speaker. I have never seen such disgraceful tactics on the part of members of this Chamber. Every schoolchild knows that one should have respect for lawful authority, and that should include the Speaker.

Time expired.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang—LP) (6.35 p.m.): I rise to speak to this unprecedented motion of no confidence in the Speaker. I will look at the significance of my statement that it is unprecedented. I checked with the Parliamentary Library and I have a report from it to this effect. It states—

"It appears that no such incident has occurred previously in the Queensland Parliament.

The following historical reference books were checked in order to ascertain this:

... 'Three Decades of Queensland Political History 1929-1960';

... 'The Government of Queensland';

... 'Queensland Politics 1859 to 1919'; and

... 'The Office of Speaker in the Parliaments of the Commonwealth'.

No occurrence of such an incident is documented in any of these texts.

Further, the Table Office was consulted on this issue. Their advice was that no such incidence had previously occurred either.

There have been numerous Motions of dissent against rulings of Speaker brought against Speakers throughout Queensland's parliamentary history, however, this is not to be confused with a Motion of No Confidence. A Motion of Censure on Speaker arose in 1949, but this failed to eventuate. Details of this incident are contained in 'Queensland Political History' ..."

I refer to this. The motion states—

"That this House has no further confidence in Mr. Speaker on the grounds—

'That in the discharge of his duties he has revealed serious partiality in favour of Government members; that he has acted more as a mere instrument of the Labor Party than as an appointed custodian of the rights and privileges of members, and as the upholder of the dignity of this House.'

That happened in 1949. Does it sound familiar, Mr Speaker? It states further—

"That he has displayed serious lack of ability to interpret correctly the standing orders of the House and gross incompetency in his administration of parliamentary procedure."

That is almost exactly how the Courier-Mail described this Speaker. So in some ways what we are dealing with here is unprecedented, but the motives behind it are not.

I will now recap the situation that led to this no confidence motion. The member for Moggill asked the Deputy Premier whether he employed Lee Bermingham. That question was ruled out of order on the grounds of sub judice. Yet today the same question was asked of the Minister for Mines and Energy and it was not ruled sub judice. The question was allowed. Not only that, two questions after the question asked of the Deputy Premier was

ruled sub judice, a Dorothy Dixier was asked, and guess what? The Minister was allowed to answer it! I then sought to raise a matter of privilege suddenly arising, and I was sat down. If that is not partiality, I do not know what is.

Then we had a ludicrous situation. A question asked of the Minister for Tourism and Racing by the member for Caloundra was also ruled sub judice, yet the Minister answered it after raising a matter of privilege. That was not ruled sub judice. Then we had the equally ludicrous situation of the member for Woodridge rising later the same day and going on at great length, debating what you, Mr Speaker, had ruled previously as sub judice.

I table Saturday's Courier-Mail. It goes on at great length and details all the major players.

Mr Littleproud: The rogue's gallery.

Mr CONNOR: Exactly. The rogue's gallery of down the road. I can table this article, but I cannot talk to it. If I read any word from what anyone else in Queensland can read on any day of the week, I am sat down. It is sub judice. It is ruled out of order. I cannot even speak on it, but I can table it.

I can also table this little document. All it does is detail everything that has been said in the media over the last two or three weeks. It does not say anything new. But if I mention one word of what has been said in the media over the last two or three weeks, I am sat down or my comments are ruled sub judice. The whole situation is ludicrous. The examples that we have seen of the Speaker's rulings over the last two and a half weeks are totally outrageous, and they bring this House into disrepute. They lower the dignity of this House. As a result, we have little chance of ever raising the standards of this Parliament.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): Parliament must have the respect and support of the wider community to ensure its continued relevance. Ben Chifley, a great Australian PM, saw Parliament as a fulcrum of our democratic process. He said—

"Members should not forget that in the life of a democracy it is important that the public should respect, not necessarily a party, but the Parliament. Everything we do to destroy that respect is a death blow at democracy itself."

This motion of no confidence in Speaker Hollis moved by the Opposition Leader will in no way add to the dignity and authority of the Queensland Parliament. Unfortunately, this first ever no confidence motion in a Speaker of the Queensland Parliament will greatly

enhance the level of cynicism about the effectiveness of our parliamentary proceedings and thus our democratic processes. Mr Borbidge is no Ben Chifley.

The issue that led to this debate was the Speaker's interpretation of the sub judice convention. I was a member of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee that reported on the sub judice convention in July 1997. A submission was received from then Premier Borbidge which stated—

"I am of the view that the Issues Paper does not demonstrate the need for a review of the sub judice convention ... (which) is generally no more restrictive than elsewhere."

The 1976 convention said, inter alia, that current proceedings before a royal commission should not be referred to in motions, debates or questions. On this basis, the Solicitor-General advised me, in 1991, as the then Speaker, to rule as sub judice statements made in the House during the CJC travel inquiry which would adversely reflect on the position of particular individuals and specifically which would suggest guilt of criminal offences on the basis that a CJC inquiry is like a court or royal commission and should be treated as such. Borbidge in 1997 agreed with this, but in 2000 he screamed "censorship of Parliament" and "a denial of free speech" when Speaker Hollis ruled on the basis of the 1976 sub judice convention—the current convention. What a shocking double standard the Opposition Leader exhibits.

I have no problem with members moving dissent from a Speaker's ruling, although this is grossly overdone by members opposite, but this no confidence motion sets dangerous precedents. There has been only a handful of no confidence motions in Speakers in Westminster Parliaments in the whole history of Westminster. Moving such motions is like throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It is a blatant political attack on the integrity and impartiality of the Chair. Furthermore, it makes it extremely difficult for the Speaker to sustain a working relationship on a day-to-day basis with the Opposition.

I remember once speaking to a group of members of the House of Commons. I asked whether they ever disagreed with their Speaker's rulings. They said they sometimes did. I then asked whether they moved motions of dissent. They said, "Never, ever." Even when they disagreed with the ruling of the Speaker, they said their Speaker must have had some special reason for ruling that way. That is the Westminster system.

After Speaker Hollis made his sub judge ruling on 3 October, the Opposition Leader asked a question of the Minister for Local Government—the first question after the ruling—which Speaker Hollis correctly ruled sub judge because the question implied alleged conduct which constituted a criminal offence. Mr Borbidge at no stage accepted the Speaker's ruling. He made comments such as, "There is no reference to the Minister for Local Government"—there was. He made statements like, "This matter has not been canvassed"—an irrelevancy. "This is censorship of the Parliament"—an example of political grandstanding. After the Speaker said he had ruled that way, Mr Borbidge asked cheekily, "Is that your ruling? I then give notice of dissent." He had no intention at all of respecting the Chair. He had no intention at all of honouring the dignity and integrity of this Parliament. He is the destroyer of parliamentary process. What the member for Southport did before is a disgrace that we will all have to live down. No wonder there is cynicism about our Parliaments.

From press comments on Mr Borbidge's position it is blatantly clear that he never intended to play the game of this Parliament. He never intended to do as we did with Speaker Turner. We can say this for Speaker Turner: his rulings were never beyond debate, but we on this side respected the Chair. We decided that we would accept his ruling on the MOU. I think tonight we are adding to the cynicism; we are adding to the disgraceful situation of bringing down our parliamentary processes. It is shameful, because there is no doubt at all—it is self-evident—that sub judge is a denial of parliamentary privilege. It is the only denial of parliamentary privilege we have. That is in our Constitution; we are entitled to have it. But that denial occurs through a convention that Mr Borbidge wants kept. It is a convention that I would like to see changed—let us be honest about that—because it would remove the Speaker from being the meat in the sandwich. I think we should change it, but Mr Borbidge does not want to change it.

Time expired.

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (6.45 p.m.): I support the Opposition's motion of no confidence in the Speaker. I certainly support the Leader of the Opposition, as well as the Leader of the Liberal Party and other speakers on this side of the House. It is not just members of this Parliament who are having a say and being heard on this particular issue. The people of Queensland are also having their say. We happen to represent

those people. The Opposition is just as legitimate as the Government. We too are elected representatives, and we are entitled to a fair go and fair play—something that we have not seen in this place from you, Mr Speaker. Speaker after speaker on this side has reiterated that fact. That is going into the record of this Parliament forevermore—something that you should have thought of long ago, Mr Speaker.

We regard a motion of no confidence as very, very important. It is the most serious allegation, and it is one of those things that happens very rarely. I could say that it should have happened to you long ago, Mr Speaker, for the treatment that you have given me. The fact is that I have represented this Parliament for a darned sight longer than you, and I have seen some Speakers go through, but never have I seen anyone as biased, prejudiced and full of hate as you are for members of this side of the Parliament.

Mr Sullivan: That's a disgrace.

Mr COOPER: It is absolutely true. Mr Speaker, I sincerely hope that you have apologised to those people in Hansard whom you falsely accused; you certainly got it wrong.

As far as the people of Queensland are concerned, the position was stated very well in the Courier-Mail and in other media across the State. It is not a secret; it is all around the State of Queensland that you, Mr Speaker, do not have the confidence of the people of this State. You will get it tonight because the numbers will work your way. We know that. We know how it works. But you will go down as the worst Speaker in the history of the Parliament. You certainly do not have the confidence of the people of Queensland. It is one of those things that will wear on you as time goes by. You are a lackey of the Premier. You are a lackey of the ALP. As far as we are concerned, you have corrupted your office.

Mr Speaker, when we heard the Premier speak tonight, he did not say one word of substance in defence of you. He just went on and on in his usual way, started playing the violin and then tried to appeal for this sense of so-called fair play. But never once did he put up a defence for the Speaker. It was the same pathetic performance as we saw about 10 days ago in this Parliament, where he was simply not up to the job.

I want to make something very clear in terms of respect. Mr Speaker, we do have respect for the position that you hold. Whichever side of the Parliament we have been on, we have always had respect for the position you hold. It is not as though previous

Speakers have always had our total confidence; nevertheless, we have had to wear it, as Labor members have had to wear it, depending on who was in the Chair. When I first was elected, John Warner was the Speaker. He was a straight, honest to goodness, decent person given hell by Labor members when they were in Opposition. Nevertheless, he was an upright, fair and decent person, as were Mr Lingard, Mr Powell and certainly Mr Turner, who did have the respect of this Parliament. Very rarely did those Speakers throw anyone out of the Parliament and deny them their rights. Certainly the member for Ashgrove, Mr Fouras, was different in that regard, because he certainly piled a lot of us out. But no-one has come close to being as bad as you, Mr Speaker, in terms of your bias.

Mr Speaker, you are brazenly and unashamedly biased. You display a leering grin when you look across this side of the Chamber. Members opposite might think this is a small thing, but every time that the zero is displayed on the timekeeper, we are sat down immediately. Members opposite are allowed to continue with their speeches. That is just one small example of the bias that niggles and nags away at members on this side of the Parliament. Respect has to be earned. Respect has to be commanded. Respect cannot just be demanded by the bullyboy tactics that you employ. That is why we do not respect you, and we never will. Mr Speaker, you have lost our respect. We travel on through Parliament after Parliament after Parliament. No-one will forget.

Mr Speaker, I always try to see good in people. I have tried to see good in prisoners, in members of the ALP and in people on this side of the Parliament. There is always an element of good in everyone. I will not make that mistake about you because I have not seen any good in you that anyone could possibly work with. You have let this Parliament down. You have let the people of Queensland down and you are going to sit me down right now, I can see that.

Time expired.

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (6.50 p.m.): What we have seen with this motion is a political stunt by an Opposition that has no regard for the traditions of Parliament and no respect for the parliamentary process.

If Opposition members truly had no confidence in Mr Speaker when they moved the motion last sitting week, they would have debated the motion then and there. How can they say that they have no confidence in the

person running the Parliament when they continue with other legislation, another 6 o'clock debate, another day's sitting and only now bring on the debate.

Their actions speak louder than their words. Their actions show that this most serious of actions in the Westminster tradition has been taken light-heartedly by a flippant and disrespectful Opposition. This no confidence motion is just a political stunt. It is a cynical and cheap act by a weak and morally bankrupt Opposition. Their mock indignation is shown to be the fraudulent facade that it is by their decision to hold this debate 12 days after their supposed grievance.

As has been pointed out by previous speakers to this debate, this is the first time that a motion of no confidence in the Speaker has been debated in the Queensland Parliament. Members of the press gallery have long memories and they can recall the dark days of parliamentary practice under Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Yet even in Joh's day when the Parliament was considered a laughing-stock among Australian Parliaments and when successive Speakers were under Joh's thumb, no Labor Opposition moved a motion of no confidence. Successive Labor Oppositions that suffered under Bjelke-Petersen's oppressive handling of the democratic process still retained sufficient respect for the parliamentary process to the extent that they did not move this strongest of procedural motions.

At no time during the 33 years of oppressive National/Liberal Party Governments did the Labor Opposition stoop to the low level that we see today with the Borbidge/Watson/Springborg coalition. This coalition is a disgrace. Its members have no respect for the Parliament and no respect for the serious disrepute into which they hope to draw this 49th Parliament. If we had any doubt about that, their efforts tonight emphasise their lack of respect.

The basis of moving this motion relates to Mr Speaker's application of the sub judice convention. Let us look closely at that convention and at how Speaker Hollis applied it. As explained by previous speakers in this debate, Speaker Fouras took legal advice from Crown Law and explained to the House how the sub judice convention would be applied in the Parliament. Speaker Turner, from the following National Party Government, applied this convention in exactly the same manner. Members of the press gallery will recall that when a former Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee considered this issue, the Premier of the day,

the member for Surfers Paradise, Rob Borbidge, gave his support for the way in which the sub judice convention had been applied by Speakers Fouras and Turner. Yet when Speaker Hollis applied this convention in exactly the same manner, the morally deficient coalition tried to defy Mr Speaker and acted to disrupt the House. Simply to gain a political advantage and to score short-term political points, the Borbidge/Watson/Springborg Opposition changed its tune. It did its parliamentary backflip. This coalition Opposition has no regard for the conventions of Parliament. Its members operate from the basest principles of expediency and political grandstanding. They believe that they are born to rule and that they can defy and ignore rules when and where they choose.

As Whip, from where I sit here in the Chamber I could see the sustained disruption of proceedings by the Opposition. We saw the same format of questions asked by the Opposition members, knowing that they were contravening the sub judice convention that had been spelt out by previous Speakers and reiterated by the current Speaker. We witnessed the coordinated calling out by members opposite to disrupt question time at a time when the cameras were rolling. We knew that they were here for a performance, for an act, for a charade. We knew that they wanted to disrupt the Parliament and they acted that way. We saw the cowardly calling out from behind hands to disrupt Mr Speaker when he was already speaking to another member opposite who had been calling out.

I am sad to say that the member for Southport tonight really disappointed me. I did not think that I would see him playing the man in that way. I think it is a sad day for the member for Southport.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Southport will withdraw those words. They are unparliamentary.

Mr VEIVERS: I withdraw.

Mr SULLIVAN: I think that Mr Veivers—
Time expired.

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

AYES, 42—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalglish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

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

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (7.01 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Confidence in Mr Speaker

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (7.01 p.m.): We have just seen quite an extraordinary circumstance where, in the first no confidence motion against the Chair in the history of the Queensland Parliament, Mr Speaker has had to use his casting vote to save himself.

I respectfully suggest that, if Mr Speaker has to do that, he should resign. The simple fact is that to use a casting vote to save himself demonstrates that the only people who now support Mr Speaker in this place are members of the Government—members of the Labor Party—who are now in full and total survival mode as the stench of criminality descends around this Government as a result of revelations that are being made by people inside the Labor Party against the Labor Party.

What we now see is a situation where there are serious questions as to whether this Government cheated its way into office. There have been serious questions as to the conduct of the Parliament. Let no-one misunderstand: tonight, it was not just the Leader of the Opposition, it was not just the Leader of the Liberal Party; it was every non-Government member in this place, including the honourable member for Nicklin, who put the Government into office and who was responsible for making Mr Beattie Premier, who felt that the Speaker of this House was no longer worthy of support.

The Speaker can claim on his casting vote that he has the confidence of the House. The fact is that when one uses one's own vote to save oneself it is pretty clear that there are major problems. No Speaker can properly function when half the Parliament does not want him, when half the Parliament feels that

he has done the wrong thing and when half the Parliament feels that his performance has been such that he no longer should be the custodian of the rights and privileges of members in this place.

No-one should underestimate the seriousness of what has occurred. No-one should underestimate that the member for Brisbane Central now leads a scandal-ridden Government and that the Speaker holds office tonight because of his support for that scandal-ridden Government—a Government and a political party that may well have cheated its way into office in this State.

We heard all this nonsense tonight about the bad old days of the Fitzgerald inquiry. Let us look at the number of questions that were permitted by the bad old Speakers of the Joh era in terms of the Fitzgerald inquiry.

Mr Springborg: A full royal commission.

Mr BORBIDGE: A full royal commission. The then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Goss, was permitted 33 questions; the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr Burns, was permitted 14 questions; Mr Warburton, four; Mr Yewdale, two; Mr Gibbs, two; Mr Davis, one; and Mr Hayward, one. How many questions were the then Labor Opposition permitted under the so-called bad old days of the Bjelke-Petersen Government in respect of the Fitzgerald inquiry? Fifty-seven questions! These were questions directly relating to the Fitzgerald commission of inquiry, directly relating to indemnities in respect of the inquiry and the conduct of the inquiry—directly relating to almost every aspect—and indemnity from prosecution for police officers. It goes on and on. This is a huge document where, under the so-called bad old days of the Joh Government, Labor could ask the questions that this discredited Speaker and this discredited Government will not allow the Opposition of the day to ask.

In my view, the member for Redcliffe now has no option. He has saved himself, his position, his salary, his car and his perks of office on his own casting vote on an issue, I would suggest, in which he had a pecuniary interest. He should go. He no longer warrants the support of the House.

Time expired.

Fuel Prices

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (7.06 p.m.): The Leader of the Opposition can go on and on trying to beat up a scandal, but rising fuel prices are the biggest problem facing Australians today. The Leader

of the Opposition supports a Prime Minister who continues to say that he cannot do anything about it.

In my electorate, for years spiralling and fluctuating fuel prices have been a major concern to Bundaberg motorists, and all we ever hear are those same excuses from the oil companies. The Petrol Price Watch in Bundaberg showed that unleaded fuel was 82.9c a litre when the GST was introduced on 1 July. Three weeks later, motorists in Bundaberg were paying up to 91.1c—9c a litre more. Today in Bundaberg, unleaded fuel varied in price from 85.9c per litre to 93.9c per litre—a difference of 8c per litre on the same fuel on the same day in the same regional city. This has nothing to do with world prices.

Spiralling petrol prices are causing havoc throughout our communities—to motorists, business and industry. Recently, Queensland Canegrowers said that rising fuel costs were having a crippling financial effect on the State's canegrowers and that uncontrolled fuel prices are hammering another nail in the coffin for those growers and harvesting contractors who are already stretched to their financial limits.

Last week, a small crops grower in Bundaberg said that diesel was now costing him \$1.06 per litre and his diesel fuel bill is now \$270 a week more than it was a month ago. This same crisis exists throughout Australia. The Federal Government should move quickly to listen to the thousands of petitioners who are calling on it to hold an inquiry into petrol prices. Early in September the Courier-Mail reported—

"Brisbane's dream fortnight of low petrol prices ended yesterday as oil companies 'forced' the costs of unleaded fuel back towards last month's record highs."

That report went on to say—

"BP led the charge early yesterday by withdrawing price support to service stations"—

forcing petrol up 7c per litre. The report went on to say—

"By lunch-time the other major companies had followed BP's lead."

Did this price hike of 7c per litre have anything to do with global oil prices, the average price of crude or barrel prices? No! It had everything to do with making massive profits by rorting prices for Australia's motorists and Australia's service station operators and it had everything to do with charging as much as they could get away with.

In fact, independent price monitors Fueltrac said that the high prices "could mean the oil companies believed motorists had stopped watching the prices". We have all heard the cries from oil companies and the Federal Government that world prices bring about the rises, but that is not so. Certainly, the GST has added to the problem and oil prices do influence market prices, but there is something very wrong when in August one Bundaberg service station was forced to pay 92.9c a litre for unleaded fuel while another was selling it for 84.9c—over 6c a litre cheaper than his competitor could buy it for. Until recently, Bundaberg's new discount outlets were being supplied by Shell tankers yet were selling fuel cheaper than the Shell service stations.

A full national inquiry is long overdue. It is time that oil companies were made to operate with transparency. It is time they had to face up to why they are manipulating prices and why they are mercilessly sending service station operators to the wall and closing them down, with the staff being paid off, as happened in Bundaberg recently.

Questions must be asked about why some oil companies are supporting their service stations and helping them to compete while others are flatly refusing to. How can oil companies justify the different cost prices to different service stations with special deals being offered to some? How can they possibly now be considering another 5c rise? A full inquiry is long overdue and it is the responsibility of the Federal Government to do something about it.

Mr W. Hayward

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA)
(7.10 p.m.): Tonight I rise to take up the plight of a young man who cannot speak for himself. However, I am going to relay his impossible lot through his mother's heart. Wayne Hayward is a young man lying motionless in his home in Longreach, nursed around the clock by his beautiful and adoring parents—Jake and Jocelyn. These two people have had more than their share of heartaches. Jake, a Vietnam veteran who suffered horrific war injuries, is now on a TPI pension. All these years they have totally devoted their lives to and made enormous sacrifices for their son, Wayne.

Tonight I wish to quote an article that Jocelyn wrote, but I also bring to the attention of the Parliament this evening the maiden speech of the member for Thuringowa, Mr Ken Turner, in which he spoke about people who

are less fortunate than ourselves. In that speech, which I commend to the Parliament, he touched on those less fortunate than ourselves. Jocelyn's letter, headed "It doesn't matter", states—

"This was written to give you all an insight into the struggles we have experienced since Wayne became ill, but it probably doesn't matter because unless you have walked in our shoes you have no idea.

We chose to sacrifice our lives totally to give Wayne the loving nursing care he so rightly deserves, he didn't ask for this illness, we didn't ask for this role. I guess our love for Wayne is stronger than our will to live an easy life.

It doesn't matter how many times you have to struggle, beg, fight and wait in line for eighteen months for a suitable wheelchair, just so you are able to take your son for a walk and hope he lives long enough to experience the joy of using it!!

It doesn't matter if they tell you your son is terminally ill and will die (Wayne was 6 years old)—he doesn't fit between our guidelines so go elsewhere!! (Wayne is now 27 years old).

It doesn't matter when things get a bit tough and you are told to put him in an institution with the others and get on with your life ... He is our life!!

It doesn't matter that in the early years when all we needed was a disposable nappy and you ring around different departments and you are told there is no such thing. Then suddenly some firm decides to take a trip out west and what do you find, well some large disposable nappies that have been around for years.

It doesn't matter when you are told there is no suitable equipment for your son. Then by chance you meet someone who is from the city who has nursed and cared for the disabled and what are you told about, the fall out chair and the shower trolley!!

It doesn't matter about the high cost of equipment for the handicapped as your needs are greater than the worry of money and your bank balance!!

It doesn't matter if you have to pay extra because your son can't sit up in a standard wheelchair and all you desire is the best possible chair for your son so he is comfortable!!

It doesn't matter when you order incontinence aids and you are told 'Oh we are being centralized, we are a month behind in our mail and we only read our mail every second Friday, we haven't come across your order yet so it will most likely be another six weeks, so in the mean time just go and buy them from the firm that supplies them'!!

It doesn't matter when you receive your son's wheelchair you must go and take an additional loan and get further into debt just so you can have a suitable vehicle to take your son for a drive or maybe the holiday he has never had.

It doesn't matter how many forms you fill out and get nowhere ... if you are given any special favours you lose the richness and learning of suffering.

It doesn't matter that by your own choosing you save the government \$100 000 plus each year because you nurse your loved one at home.

It doesn't matter if you would like a family holiday—you just go separately anyway.

It doesn't matter if you decide not to give us anything because we will carry on regardless.

It doesn't matter because when it all boils down love conquers all and we wouldn't have it any other way.

Wayne is a gift from God as any handicapped person is and they have a right to be treated with dignity, love and compassion. We are so thankful that we have been able to look after him at home despite the struggle and the heartache we have experienced, with very little support from the government, look are we beginning to think like all Government Departments ...

It really doesn't matter!!

I walked a mile with pleasure
she chatted all the way
I learnt nothing from all she had to say ...

I walked a mile with suffering
never a word said she
but oh the things I learnt
when suffering walked with me."

The author of that poem is unknown. I express those words of Jocelyn Hayward this evening because what Jocelyn Hayward is trying to say through her words could make somebody else's life a lot better, given the unfortunate circumstances that Jake and she have been subjected to over the past 21 or 22 years. This

is an unfortunate situation, but the love, care and compassion displayed by this beautiful Christian family in Longreach highlights to all of us that we should get on with our lives and reassure those less fortunate than ourselves, not just pay them lip-service.

World Teachers Day

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP)
(7.15 p.m.): This evening I rise to say thankyou to a group of professionals in our society who undertake the most important job in our society—teaching. I hope that all honourable members will join with me in celebrating World Teachers Day on 27 October. Unfortunately, we will not be in the House on that day, but I am sure that all honourable members will celebrate with me and thank those teachers who have touched their lives.

World Teachers Day is a UNESCO initiative launched in 1994 to celebrate the world's largest and most important job and to highlight the excellent work of classroom teachers. Excellence in teaching can be measured by teachers' seeming innate understanding that all students are special and that they all have special needs to be met. Students come from a range of cultures within our diverse Queensland community.

Central to the role of all teachers are five principles of learning and teaching. Effective learning and teaching is founded on an understanding of the learner. Effective learning and teaching requires active construction of meaning. Effective learning and teaching enhances and is enhanced by a supportive and challenging environment. Effective learning and teaching is enhanced through worthwhile learning partnerships. Effective learning and teaching shapes and responds to social and cultural contexts.

Understanding the learner is a role at which teachers excel. When teachers present a lesson using different strategies and through different media, they cater for the multiple learning styles of children. When teachers integrate children's ideas into a lesson, they are catering for the interests of the learner. When teachers recognise and cater for the intellectual, emotional, social, physical, ethical and spiritual needs of students, they are providing the foundations for developing active and informed citizens. By understanding the learner, teachers are able to help students actively construct meaning. When special education teachers plan cooking activities, they enable students to participate in a variety of formal and informal social and cultural interactions. When primary teachers sit down

one to one with students to explore their writing, they are helping students reflect critically on their own knowledge, action, processes and assumptions. When teachers provide a supportive and challenging environment, they are enhancing the learning and teaching processes. When teachers visit museums, parks and environmental centres, they provide experiences that use schools and their wider communities as contexts for learning. When teachers take time during evenings and holidays to cooperatively plan, implement and evaluate programs, they are providing continuity of learning.

Developing worthwhile partnerships is integral to developing excellence in teaching. Today, classroom teachers are leading the way. When teachers talk to parents about their child's achievements, they are reinforcing the notion that all parties have a stake in a student's learning. When special education teachers develop individual education plans, they are showing how important it is to have the support of the teachers, parents and students to achieve goals. When teachers develop intervention activities for students at risk, they are sharing the responsibility for the outcomes of that student.

Helping students to engage in changing societal and social contexts shows how the teachers of Queensland want to develop active citizens. When learners experience classroom practices that recognise their diversity of gender, ethnicity, ability and culture, students see teachers developing themes and activities that are inclusive of all. When teachers expose students to the skills of debating, discussing and inquiring, they are developing skills in students that will allow them to challenge discrimination. The multiple roles that these educators undertake only further reinforce Queensland's vision of contributing to a Smart State.

Later this month, as I said, I hope that all honourable members will help to celebrate World Teachers Day with me. Our society owes our teachers a debt of thanks, recognition and support. The nurturing of children is the foundation for the continual improvement of our modern world.

Time expired.

Alternative Fuel Sources

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—CCAQ) (7.20 p.m.): The Premier raised a valid question with the City Country Alliance this morning during question time, that is, what is the City Country

Alliance doing to bring about lower fuel prices across our State? The Minister for Mines and Energy knows quite well that I have written him a letter regarding liquefaction of coal. I have also written numerous letters regarding the subject to various Federal politicians and Ministers for their information.

I believe that the Federal Government and the State Government are not doing enough to look at alternative fuel sources on our own doorstep. For instance, we hear time and time again of certain politicians jumping up and down trying to score political points on the need for research into ethanol. They keep saying that we need to research the viability of an ethanol industry. Why on earth do we need to research the viability of ethanol when Brazil, which produces billions of litres of this every year, has already done it? Most of the vehicles in Brazil run on a 28% blend, while some vehicles run on a 100% blend of ethanol. Surely a simple trip over to Brazil would give us ample knowledge and the technology that we need. After all, it was Australian canefarmers who taught the Brazilians how to grow sugar competitively. Surely the Brazilians would give us the information we need in return.

Another aspect of ethanol production is the need for regulation. The same politicians who are pushing the barrow of ethanol are also pushing the barrow of National Competition Policy. It is this National Competition Policy that is calling for the removal of, and is removing, all forms of tariffs and regulations. Unless any future ethanol industry is regulated, it will face disaster from fluctuations in oil prices. This is what happened in Brazil when the oil barons lowered the price of oil so that it was under the cost of ethanol production, which left the sugar cartels of Brazil stranded with millions of tonnes of sugar. So what happened? They dumped the sugar on the world market to get rid of it, which caused the world sugar price to plummet. This is why any future ethanol industry must be regulated: to protect the jobs and investments of farmers who expand into ethanol production. Unless we regulate it, it just will not work. The only way it can be regulated is to first review at least some of the terms and conditions of National Competition Policy.

The other great alternative is our own onshore oil reserves, which are a lot larger than people think. I know the oil barons are paying off the major parties to implement policies that protect them. That is obvious from the huge donations seen around election time. But it is time that Governments put consumers first and developed a moral conscience. These

are people's livelihoods that they are playing with.

Australia has extensive coal reserves to make liquid fuels. During the 1980s the Commonwealth Government provided approximately \$20m for research into coal liquefaction. However, low oil prices in the early nineties led to the termination of this work. The current high oil prices should be stimulating renewed commercial and Government interest in coal liquefaction, but it should be the Government leading the way. I was under the illusion that only one type of coal can be used for coal liquefaction. However, contrary to the Minister's letter of reply, I have discovered that all coal can be used for liquefaction. High grade coal can deliver five barrels of light and medium crude per tonne of coal for around US\$25 a barrel. That is far under the current world oil price. These statistics are substantial and can be backed up by the major oil companies, such as Exxon.

I am challenging the Beattie Government right here and now that if it is fair dinkum about producing lower fuel costs in this State it should put up the money for coal liquefaction and ethanol production and start leading the way. The cost of production is under the current world oil price, so it is very viable and cost effective and offers competitive fuel prices for our domestic use while creating domestic jobs and self-reliability. There should be no ifs or buts from the Government on the subject. The technology is here; the viability is now here; the information is available. It should do something.

Zoe's Place

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (7.25 p.m.): I am constantly heartened by the great enthusiasm and support of my community in Mount Ommaney for Zoe's Place. The Zoe Reed Little Bridge House Association was formed four years ago to raise funds for Zoe's Place, which will be situated in the heart of the Centenary suburbs. I am proud that the State Government has provided the association with the land to build Zoe's Place via a peppercorn lease arrangement on 0.8 hectares of land in parkland opposite the Mount Ommaney shopping centre.

This year Zoe Reed would have been 18 years old. It was her wish and the dream of her parents that Zoe's Place be established to provide respite for children with life limiting illnesses. Pamela Barker, President of the Zoe Reed Little Bridge House Association, has been driving this project steadily forward. Zoe's father, Nigel Reed, has participated in a

number of local fundraising activities in the local Centenary community, including the now annual Oktoberfest organised by the Centenary State High School P & C. Nigel will literally walk the earth to ensure that the Zoe Reed hospice becomes a reality.

The building plans are now in the process of approval with the Brisbane City Council. The association has made a decision to put demountables on the site to allow the community to participate sooner rather than later. Pamela Barker keeps the local community informed via a regular newsletter circulated in the area. I have had many residents inquire about volunteering work, and already 12 volunteers have completed their training, with many matched with families.

I pass on my congratulations and thanks to all those involved for giving their energy and talents towards this great cause. Volunteers will be rewarded by what they will achieve for children with life limiting illnesses and their families. They will act in accordance with the philosophy of Zoe's Place, which aims to provide a better quality of life for children with life limiting illnesses, improve support for parents and carers and give attention to the needs of siblings.

Recently the Brisbane Lions Soccer Club donated \$50,000, and many other clubs and organisations have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars towards Zoe's Place. The Commonwealth Bank Staff Charity Fund provided \$54,000 to enable the association to commence the Outreach Family Support Services and employ a manager.

Zoe's Place is the first of its kind in Queensland. It is unique and complex because of its many facets. It aims to keep families together during the tough times and provides services for respite; family support; counselling, including attention to siblings; and palliative and hospice care for the total family with a child who has a life limiting illness—a child, who was once a happy, energetic, vital child like Zoe Reed; a child who often so rapidly is drained of that vitality through an illness that has the capacity to tear a family apart.

Nothing can explain the pain that is suffered by that child. Why take a life so young? What have they done that is so very wrong in their lives that they are being seemingly punished in this way? The parents are on edge and live day by day. They cannot plan for the future because they have to get through this day. Everything and everyone else can wait till later. Zoe Reed understood all this. She became all-wise in her sufferings.

Nothing escaped her attention, but her life slipped away. Zoe understood the need for a break, the need to get away, the need to temporarily think of something else other than sickness, drugs, pain and the needless end of a young life. Life goes on with the approval and love of the terminally ill child. This was Zoe's wish, and her parents will ensure that the dream becomes a reality in Zoe's loving memory.

As the local member and a member of this inspirational organisation, I will continue to support it and encourage the local community to participate in the good it is trying to achieve. I wish Pamela Barker every success and look forward to the commencement of this hospice in the heart of Centenary.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.29 p.m.