

WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2000

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

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Brain Injured People, Resources and Support

From **Mrs Attwood** (241 petitioners) requesting the House to ensure that additional resources and support is provided to people with a brain injury and their families.

Micallef Property, Ebenezer

From **Mr Paff** (201 petitioners) requesting the House to call upon the State Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities, Hon Terry Mackenroth MP, to inquire into the involvement by Messrs Nugent, Pisasale and Quinn in denying the Micallefs a satisfactory solution to the flooding of their property at Lot 9/207 Ebenezer Road, Ebenezer via Rosewood and for the Minister to extend his inquiries to include relevant sections of the Ipswich City Council and its agents to determine whether the council has failed to act in discharging its duty of care to the Micallefs who are its ratepayers.

Petitions received.

PAPER

MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following paper was tabled—

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

Report on visit to New Caledonia from 31 October to 31 November 2000 and attachments.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Job Creation; Multiculturalism; 6th Battalion RAR

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.32 a.m.), by leave: This Government is meeting its election commitment to deliver new jobs and new industries to Queensland. There have been three great announcements this week, which give a clear signal that Queensland is the go-

ahead State—the Smart State where things are happening, with a can-do Government.

On Monday we announced that Woolworths will invest \$15m establishing a new Big W distribution centre in Warwick, creating 100 construction jobs and another 40 permanent jobs for that city. Yesterday the Deputy Premier and I announced major support for the Light Metals Industrial Park at Stanwell, near Rockhampton. This \$50m investment in multiuser infrastructure will trigger a \$4.6 billion investment boom in central Queensland over the next 10 years. That will lead to 2,500 direct jobs and a \$2 billion annual boost to Queensland's gross State product. That starts with the \$1.2 billion Australian Magnesium project, which on the strength of yesterday's announcement should begin construction next year. That means 1,350 construction jobs starting next year in central Queensland and 350 permanent jobs from 2003. This is about jobs, jobs, jobs.

This is the most significant major project that has been developed in this area in recent history in Queensland. This is about new industries, new metals and new opportunities. For the information of the House, I table the announcement issued to the Australian Stock Exchange yesterday, and I seek leave to incorporate in Hansard more details of this proposal, to save the time of the House.

Leave granted.

We are announcing today multi-user infrastructure support of \$50 million for a light metals industrial park at Stanwell in central Queensland.

This support, combined with Commonwealth assistance, paves the way for the Australian Magnesium project to become the first tenant of the Stanwell Industrial Park.

The \$1.2 billion AMC project will deliver 1350 construction jobs and 350 permanent jobs to central Queensland, adding \$400 million to our gross State product from 2003.

This heralds the beginning of a new industry for the new century in Queensland.

It builds on the largest and most accessible magnesite deposit in the world (north of Rockhampton).

It builds on world's best technology developed in Australia by CSIRO with Government support.

This technology has won the support of the Ford Motor Company and others who have already contracted more than half of AMC's 97,000 tonne annual output.

It gives Queensland the opportunity to develop a whole new industrial sector encompassing magnesium, aluminium and manufacturing components such as strong but lightweight car parts.

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu have estimated this new industrial sector in central Queensland could deliver \$4.6 billion of investment over the next ten years—

Creating 2500 direct jobs

Contributing \$2 billion a year to gross State product

That means a 2% boost to our annual economic output in Queensland.

This will transform the economy of Rockhampton and central Queensland.

It will create a sustainable economic structure, providing long term jobs for that region into the future.

It will help to generate a new era of economic growth for Queensland.

Mr BEATTIE: I turn to the third announcement. Today, along with the Minister for Transport and the local member, I will be laying the last plank of the railway walkway to celebrate this week's completion of the viaduct structure for the Airtrain Citylink. Anyone who has travelled to Brisbane Airport recently would have witnessed the remarkable progress being made in constructing the new rail link to the airport. The \$200m Airtrain Citylink project is right on track to be ready for opening on 8 May 2001. This is a shining example of the opportunities available in Queensland for private investment in infrastructure. It is a credit to Transfield, QR and the Airtrain Citylink team, as well as this can-do Government. The 8.5 kilometre viaduct consists of 250 concrete spans linking Toombul to the international and domestic terminals. The project will now focus on completing the track and ancillary services and the railway stations at the terminals. Commissioning of the railway can then take place in time for the start of rail services to the airport in May 2001.

This Government is delivering. We are delivering the infrastructure that Queensland needs to grow into the future. We are delivering new industries and new jobs to fulfil our commitment to attack unemployment. We are delivering on our promise to work in partnership with the private sector to create a new era of economic growth for Queensland.

In relation to other activities, tonight, along with other Ministers, I will be taking part in a celebration of our multiculturalism. Tonight, along with other Ministers, I will be presenting Queensland Multicultural Service Awards at a ceremony at the Parliamentary Annexe. We will officially recognise 13 people for their contributions to building our culturally diverse society. This year, 31 nominations were received for the individual category, 14 for the organisation and eight for the school

categories. The recipients have won Multicultural Service Awards because they have consistently promoted the improvement of community relations, provided assistance to migrants settling in their new country or combated prejudice and discrimination in the community. They are an inspiration to us all.

There is no issue like multiculturalism to better sum up what politics and leadership should all be about in Queensland—working together across cultural lines to create a better society for all of us. In fact, multiculturalism goes further. It celebrates our points of difference as something that can be appreciated and not just tolerated—something that enriches us. Since my Government won office in June 1998, amid One Nation's attacks on cultural diversity, we have come a long way. We have introduced our Multicultural Queensland Policy. We have moved to introduce racial vilification legislation in Queensland to counter racially motivated hate speech. We are providing support to Queensland's refugees through funding for the employment of a full-time caseworker at the Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care.

I also want to mention my Government's recent Recognition Statement of the Australian South Sea Islander Community. Our continued financial support of \$957,000 to fund 14 Local Area Multicultural Partnership Program workers is another way that we are helping communities to promote positive community relations. This is on top of \$1.3m in grants for projects, events and festivals promoting multiculturalism. There have been significant achievements across all Queensland Government agencies. There is still much more to be done, but we are determined to achieve it.

Another group of people deserving of recognition and commendation is the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. Tomorrow, on behalf of the Government and with the assistance of the Parliament, I will hold a "welcome home" reception, to be held on the Speaker's Green, following their period of service in East Timor. I met this regiment when I was in East Timor and I was impressed by the contribution they are making on behalf of this country and the United Nations. That service brought great credit to the individuals involved and to the Defence Force, but it was not without cost. There is great sadness at the death on 9 August of Corporal Stuart Jones, from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, who at the time was serving with the 6RAR group. His sacrifice brings home to us all the dangers which these people face daily and reminds us of the selflessness of their service. The 6th

Battalion will be marching down to Parliament—starting at South Bank at 12.30 p.m., marching across Victoria Bridge to George Street and turning right to march up to Parliament House, arriving here at 1.15 p.m. I urge all Queenslanders to get out tomorrow and show their support for this wonderful regiment.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Goodwill Games

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: As Australians continue to bask in the glory of the Sydney Olympic Games, Brisbane is preparing to host the most prestigious sporting event being held next year, the 2001 Goodwill Games. Queensland forged a reputation for hosting internationally acclaimed events with the 1982 Commonwealth Games and cemented it with World Expo in 1988. Our reputation will grow further when we host the cream of the world's athletes at the Goodwill Games next year.

It was my pleasure to recently announce with the Lord Mayor the next round of upgrades for Brisbane sporting venues and city beautification in preparation for the Games. Improvements include—

- a new athletics track, state-of-the-art scoring and timing equipment, lighting and communications upgrades for ANZ Stadium;

- an upgrade of the Chandler Velodrome;

- new timing and scoreboard equipment, ventilation and communications upgrades at the Chandler Aquatic Complex; and

- a communications upgrade at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre.

Meanwhile, work has started on a new \$2.25m athletics track for ANZ Stadium, which is due for completion in January 2001. All up, this latest series of improvements is worth \$5.5m as we prepare—and we are ready—for the Goodwill Games. It marks the most significant upgrade of Brisbane's sporting venues since the 1982 Commonwealth Games. We will present Brisbane at its best to more than 450 million households around the world and will benefit from our investment in our sporting infrastructure for many years to come.

I was also pleased to announce recently that, with the international force of Great White Shark Enterprises behind it and prize money of \$1m, the PGA is set to hold one of Australia's major golf tournaments, one of the great

international golf events on the world golf calendar. That will be taking place right here in Queensland.

Mr Speaker, to save the time of the House, I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement in Hansard.

Leave granted.

It was icing on the cake for Brisbane when I announced last week that our city had won the right to host the 2001 Goodwill Games Triathlon.

The event's reigning champion, Queenslander Loretta Harrop, gave her seal of approval to the decision by diving into the Brisbane River off South Bank.

The proposed course will utilise the city, Victoria Bridge and South Bank for cycling and running and the Brisbane River for the swim leg.

Our river and its beautiful surrounds will certainly provide a fantastic backdrop for the event.

And hosting a prestigious event like the Goodwill Games Triathlon proves the city's versatility as a host for multi-sport events.

It is also a fitting tribute to the Government, the Brisbane City Council and the community who have worked hard over the past decade to clean up the river and make it more accessible to residents.

We will continue to invest significant effort and resources into looking after what is one of our city's finest natural assets.

Goodwill Games organisers were fortunate to be able to choose from a number of world-class locations for their Triathlon, including submissions from the Gold and Sunshine Coasts.

At the end of the day, all of the bids were excellent. However, I am advised that in terms of cost, logistical fit with other games activities and spectator exposure, Brisbane was the clear choice to host the triathlon.

While I appreciate that there will be some disappointment from the Gold and Sunshine Coasts at this decision, the flow-on benefits in terms of potential business and tourism from the Goodwill Games will benefit the whole of Queensland.

The Gold and Sunshine Coasts in particular can expect an influx of people combining a trip to their beaches with attendance at the Goodwill Games. The Sunshine Coast will also benefit from CHOGM and the Gold Coast will have surf life saving as part of the Goodwill Games.

Queensland's reputation on the world scene for staging major sporting events has also been enhanced by the recent Honda Indy and the Asia Pacific Masters Games which is currently under way.

And now, arguably Queensland's greatest golfing export, Greg Norman, will join with

Queensland Events Corporation to stage one of this country's greatest golfing tournaments—the Australian PGA.

It's another world class event to move us further up the leader board for golf, tourism and major events.

With the international force of Great White Shark Enterprises behind it and prize money of \$1 million, the PGA is set to become not only one of Australia's major golf tournaments, but one of the great international golf events on the World golf calendar.

Greg is a great advertisement for Queensland all over the world.

His motivation in hosting this major international tournament is to give something back to Queensland and to Queensland golf.

The tournament will be with us in Queensland for at least five years starting from this year, with the first two years to be held at Royal Queensland Golf Club—where Greg started his career.

We will all be watching the tournament on Channel 10 from November 30 to December 3 and not only cheering loudly for Greg but for the success of the tournament as well.

Both the 2001 Goodwill Games and the Australian PGA will enhance Brisbane's excellent reputation as a venue for world-class events and a great place to do business.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Australian Magnesium Corporation

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP)
(Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade)
(9.43 a.m.), by leave: I rise to elaborate on this Government's success in creating the foundation for a light metals industry in Queensland. Stanwell Industrial Park will be to Australia's light metals future what Newcastle was to our steel industry. As the Premier said, a recent report by Deloitte predicts that Stanwell Energy Park will add more than \$2 billion to this State's gross State product. It predicts that the park will create almost 2,500 full-time jobs and flow-on jobs of more than 20,000. It also forecasted that Stanwell will attract no less than \$4.6 billion of capital investment.

We are talking about Australia's new home for new industries—industries like magnesium automotive components die-casting, magnesium alloy recycling, tool and die making, and specialist magnesium casting. These new industries will be vital to add value to Australia's traditional mining industry and will turn these old economy industries squarely into the new economy. Let me put it in money terms. Our research shows that four tonnes of

magnesite ore is worth \$160. It will produce a tonne of magnesium metal worth \$3,500. As foundry alloy, it is worth \$4,870. A tonne of automotive components from the same foundry alloy would be worth around \$14,000. That is 90 times the value of the raw magnesite. This Government is about positioning Queensland—creating the right environment like Stanwell Industry Park—to develop and commercialise those opportunities for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

Yesterday's announcement was a culmination of 10 years' hard work. It was conceived under the Goss Government and it has been realised by the Beattie Government. Shame on the Opposition, now embarrassed sitting across the Chamber—the non-believers—who played this down. But it is being delivered. They put the project in the too-hard basket. It was conceived under the Goss Government and it is being delivered by the Beattie Government. As far back as the mid 1990s, the former Goss Government had enough faith in building this industry—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is misleading the House. The project started under Joh Bjelke-Petersen, and I announced it in 1997.

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

Mr ELDER: The record will show that, whenever AMC makes public comment in relation to contributions from Government, it had nothing to do with the Joh Government nor the Borbidge Government. That will be the record of the company, not the record of the Opposition—a cracked record that shows failure from day one in this industry.

It was the former Goss Government that had enough faith in building this industry to pour \$5m into research and development. The Beattie Government committed another \$10m to establish the Australian Light Metals Centre to integrate the industry across both magnesium and aluminium. Let us not forget the Beattie Government's \$4m commitment to the Centre for Alloy and Solidification Technology Metals Manufacturing, or CASTMM, which was headquartered in this State and for which the Leader of the Opposition in Government withdrew funding. He did not fund it in his last Budget.

From here in Queensland, CASTMM will now have the job of developing key technologies that will substantially contribute to the growth and international competitiveness of Australia's light metal industries. This announcement has marked a new era in

industry in Queensland. I take the opportunity to personally thank the members of my department, the Department of State Development, for their efforts to make this industry a reality for the benefit of all Queenslanders, even though it had been knocked by the Opposition and even though it was too tough for the Opposition to deliver.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.47 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That so much of the Standing and Sessional Orders be suspended to enable me to move a motion without notice forthwith."

Motion agreed to.

FUEL PRICES

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.47 a.m.): I move—

"That the Queensland Parliament, recognising the extreme pressure on Queensland families and small businesses by the continual escalation of petrol prices, requests the Prime Minister, John Howard, and his Government to immediately give a commitment to Queenslanders that they will not further increase the fuel excise in February 2001."

Last night we had a debate, and the Liberal Party squibbed it.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The John Howard supporters can yell all they like, but the people of Queensland want some action on petrol prices.

The Liberal Party squibbed it last night. The Leader of the Liberal Party has a chance today: either he stands up for John Howard or he stands up for the people of Queensland. He has a choice. Look at the report in the Courier-Mail about last night. What a classic! Look at what happened. The article states—

"Dr Watson last night refused to be drawn on his position ..."

Does he support the 3c increase in petrol prices come February or does he not? What did he tell the Courier-Mail? He said that he refused to be drawn on his position.

What about all those battlers out there, all those people and families out there who are suffering, who are hurting? What about all the small businesses out there that are hurting?

What about all those people in the bush, in regional Queensland? And where does the Liberal Party Leader stand? He does not have a position! But it gets worse. The article goes on—

"Liberal Party sources said last night they understood Dr Watson's party room had formally agreed to a non-committal position."

But it gets better. How about this! It goes on—

"Asked why he had not formally opposed the motion, he blamed 'parliamentary procedures'."

Mr Foley: The Parliament's to blame!

Mr BEATTIE: The Parliament is to blame! The rules are basically this: if you don't divide, you vote for it. That is the position.

Either there is a split in the Liberal Party or the Leader of the Liberal Party is wimping out again. Today he has a chance. He squibbed last night, but now he has a chance. He can either stand up for the battlers and the people of Queensland or stand up for John Howard. Let us go through the issue. Petrol prices in Queensland have risen by 25% in the last 12 months. Motorists are now paying more than \$1 per litre in regional Queensland. It now costs well over \$50 to fill the tank of the family sedan. Does the Liberal Party Leader have a position on this? Not according to the Courier-Mail! He does not have a position. He squibbed. He would not speak on the issue last night. Not one Liberal Party member spoke on this issue last night—not one. They squibbed. Every single one of them squibbed. Why should the excise be frozen?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go. We can hear the supporters of the oil companies and John Howard yell. Those opposite do not support anyone in the bush, do they? They do not support families. They do not support business. None of them do. However, the Deputy Prime Minister supports increased fuel excise. The Federal National Party Leader supports this. Every single one of those opposite has betrayed the bush.

Let us look at what will happen. Why should the excise be frozen? It will add 3c per litre in extra tax. The total Commonwealth take will reach 50c per litre. Honourable members should think about this: for every dollar of petrol people put in their cars, 50c will go directly into John Howard's pocket. What does that have to do with the oil companies? John Howard has been blaming the oil companies deceitfully, but under these arrangements 50c in every dollar will go to John Howard. He will

have his hand in the pockets of every Australian family, ripping out 50c every time they put a dollar of petrol in their fuel tanks.

While some State Budgets exclude the GST component from the CPI inflation factor, the Commonwealth has insisted on keeping it in order to perpetrate a big rip-off. The Prime Minister told the Premiers at COAG that the windfall was between \$500m and \$600m. There is no argument—absolutely no argument. The Prime Minister told me and every other Premier and leader in this country that he would gain a windfall of between \$500m and \$600m. What about the battlers? What about the families? What about the people in the bush? What about the people who are struggling in small business? He does not care about them, and nor does the Liberal Party. None of them care about ordinary Australians because they are out of touch. They ride around in taxpayer-funded limousines and could not care less. This is a tax on a tax on a broken promise. Who was the person who promised that there would be no increase—

Mr Borbidge: Absolute fraud.

Mr Rowell: You're a fraud.

Mr BEATTIE: Let us talk about the issue of fraud. I am happy to take the interjections. Those opposite claim that they represent the bush, but they are selling it out. In some electorates of members opposite petrol is worth \$1 a litre or more, and they could not care less.

Mr ROWELL: I rise to a point of order. I tabled a petition in this Parliament requesting the Premier to conduct a royal commission into the pricing of fuel. He absolutely ignored it. He has done nothing about it whatsoever—absolutely nothing.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Here we have yet another National Party member. Like the rest of them, he has betrayed the bush. Is it any wonder that people in the bush voted for One Nation? The lot of them betrayed the bush, and none of them have got any better. They have betrayed the bush. They do not stand for anyone other than themselves. They have ignored the bush.

Mr JOHNSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive. I find it a slur on me as the member for Gregory in relation to my stand on fuel prices, and I ask the Premier to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: No, it was not a personal attack on the member for Gregory.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I am not—

Mr JOHNSON: There are two sets of rules here, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Premier.

Mr JOHNSON: You let him—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! He has just withdrawn.

Mr JOHNSON: You let him do what he likes, but the rest of us on this side—

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

Dr PRENZLER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: John Howard lied to the Australian people—

Mr SPEAKER: I will allow the point of order in the background.

Mr BEATTIE: Let the record show that this is just an attempt to disrupt the debate.

Dr PRENZLER: I hope that the Premier, in waving his arms, is not including CCA in his comments about members deserting the bush, because we speak up for them on this issue.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: No, I do not, because they are basically irrelevant. The National Party has betrayed the bush. Every single National Party member has betrayed the bush. Talk about frauds! They should return their parliamentary salaries and their allowances, because they are here under false pretences. They claim to be worried about people in the bush, yet all they do is support John Anderson. John Anderson is the greatest supporter of the CPI increase. What we have learnt about the surplus is this: the surplus estimate will today be revised upward—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Why do members opposite scream? It is because the lot of them have a guilty conscience because they betrayed the people they represent. What a collection of frauds. The lot of them are here under false pretences. They have not spoken one word—

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Have they gone out hard on John Anderson? No. If John Anderson says that the petrol price should go up, what do those opposite do? They say, "Oh, yes, sir. Yes, sir. I've got to do what I'm told, sir." Every single one of them says, "Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I've got to do what I'm told, sir." And the Liberal Party is the worst of all. Why vote for the Liberal Party? Talk about a waste of a vote! Why would anyone vote for the Liberal Party?

It is in here representing John Howard. It does not represent small business. It does not represent families. It is in here simply representing John Howard.

Let us talk about the surplus. We now learn that the surplus estimate will today be revised upward from \$2.8 billion to \$6 billion. There are also strong rumours that the GST revenue estimates will be \$3 billion higher, but they will not be available until next month. John Howard brought forward the mid-year review due in December to the beginning of November so he could hide the full surplus. That is what he has done: he is hiding the full surplus. Why? Because he is trying to deceive the Australian people. In total, the surplus is not under threat. All we want is the windfall that the Prime Minister told me he had passed back to the ordinary motorist. That is it. It will have no effect on the surplus, but let us again look at the surplus. It could be \$9 billion—three times higher than estimated in the May Budget.

John Howard has lied to the Australian people. He promised that there would not be any increase in petrol prices as a result of the GST, and he has seen it happen. He has betrayed the Australian people. Queensland suffers more than any other State because of its regionalisation, because of the bush, because of the distance that people travel. We are the only party that has stood up to John Howard on this issue, and we will continue to do so.

Let us look at this very simply. The questions are these. Is the Liberal Leader here representing hurting families and businesses or is he here representing John Howard? Is he representing John Howard or is he representing hurting businesses, ordinary families and ordinary Australians? He squibbed on the debate last night. He will get a chance to vote on this issue today. We will even give him a chance to speak. He squibbed on it last night. He would not come into the Chamber. He now has an opportunity to say whether he stands up for Queenslanders or he stands up for John Howard.

Mr Mackenroth: You either support the rise or you do not support the rise.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Basically, does the member support the increase or does he not?

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Hinchinbrook: this is my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: Queenslanders are entitled to know. That is the issue. It is a very simple

question. Does he support the CPI increase in February or not? It is very simple. Queenslanders are entitled to know, and he cannot hide any longer. I have the wood on him. He has to explain to Queenslanders today, and he cannot run away from it anymore. Is he here to make a difference or is he here to make excuses? Is he here to make excuses? That is all he does. All he is doing is running away from representing ordinary Queenslanders. Do members remember what happened at the last State election in relation to One Nation? Those opposite sat on the fence. They ran away. They betrayed principles. Are they still sitting on the fence? Well, they are in relation to petrol prices.

What a wimpy performance. The member opposite would not even come into the debate last night. He would not participate in the debate and he then blamed Standing Orders or parliamentary procedures. He would not even stand up for Queensland. Let me make it clear: members opposite have their chance today. We will stand up for Queensland at every opportunity. We will not run away from the opportunity. Members opposite can sit on the fence, but we will stand up for Queenslanders.

Let me make this issue very clear: we will go out at the time of the next State election, whenever it is held, and we will campaign from one end of this State to the other against the Liberal Party and the National Party and their support for increased petrol prices, which have gone up 25% in the last 12 months. Members opposite can run but they can't hide. There will be a day of reckoning, and I just say to the people of Queensland: on this issue Liberal Party members have wimped it; they have squibbed it; they have done nothing to pressure John Howard; they have run away; they have made excuses; they have hidden; they have been cowards.

Battling Queenslanders—the families, the small businesses, the farmers—deserve politicians who will stand up for them. We are. We will stand up and fight for them while the National Party and the Liberal Party hide behind John Anderson and hide behind John Howard. None of the members opposite has any influence; none of them has tried to use any influence. They are basically an irrelevance. They have not fought for Queenslanders. For once in their lives they should have the courage to stand up for Queensland and stop wimping it as usual.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (10.01 a.m.): I formally second the Premier's motion. In so doing, I draw the

attention of the House to the extreme hurt that is actually occurring in the community as a result of escalating fuel prices. One has only to look at surveys of business confidence to understand that there are three factors which are really damaging economic activity in Australia today.

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr HAMILL: That is notwithstanding the bleatings of the member for Burnett, who really could not care less about fuel prices. He travels around only Brisbane these days. He does not get a chance to go up to his electorate.

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. I find that remark offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr HAMILL: Whatever he found offensive, I withdraw. But the facts are these. There are three factors which are damaging business confidence in Australia today. One is rising interest rates, being spurred by the GST. There are the paperwork and compliance requirements of the GST. The other factor which is really hurting industry, which is really hurting business and families, is escalating fuel prices. If Opposition members will not believe the Government on this, they should go out and talk to their constituents. My constituents say to me that fuel prices are hurting and that they are eroding the quality of life, the standard of living, of Australians today.

There is an ability to address the issue. It is true that we cannot control world oil prices. But what we can do is implore the Federal Government to reduce its tax take. As the Premier has said, out of every dollar that people spend putting fuel in their tanks, 50c goes to the Federal Government. The Federal Government can address the tax take, and that is what we are saying through this motion.

It is worth while having a look at the issue of excise. As of 1 August this year, 38.1c a litre is imposed by the Federal Government on every litre of fuel that Australian motorists put in their tanks. If the Federal Government goes ahead and reaps the windfall caused by the GST-induced inflation and further increases in the excise on fuel in February, then it will be over 40c a litre that the Federal Government is taking by way of excise—40c a litre! Yet the Opposition says, "You can't do anything about it." Well maybe, if the truth be known, the Opposition is not prepared to say to the Federal Government, "Do something about it." The very simple thing the Federal Government can do is to not take the extra cents per litre in February next year, not take the windfall at the

expense of the Australian public because of the GST-influenced CPI rise on excise.

What is also interesting is that the Federal Government made great play of the reduction in fuel excise effected at 1 July this year when it removed some 6.7c per litre from the excise that it was charging to make way for the 10% goods and services tax. When the figures are studied, what is found is that the Federal Government really did nothing in terms of its take in relation to excise; effectively all it did was wind back the extra excise that it had put on in 1997. That was excise that it was rebating to the States and the Territories. What we have seen consistently over the last decade, and certainly since the Howard Government has been in place, is that every year, twice a year, the excise goes up.

As I said yesterday, the fraud that was perpetrated on the Australian public by the Howard Government that the GST would not increase the price of fuel was exposed very, very clearly in the research paper that was being distributed by the member for Dawson in trying to refute the argument that the Federal Government has no control over the escalating price of fuel. The research paper states quite clearly that the 6.7c per litre reduction in excise was insufficient to compensate for the impact of the GST. As the Federal Parliamentary Library research paper states, "Consumers are worse off." What that means is that the Federal Government pulled a fraud, an absolute scam. It promised no increase in fuel prices because of the GST. What the research paper shows is that the GST has increased the price of fuel over and above the compensation measures, and it is consumers, it is industry, it is farmers and it is people in regional Australia who are bearing the cost.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr HAMILL: Members opposite sit here and seek to defend the indefensible. Not only do they condone the rip-off on fuel perpetrated through the goods and services tax, they are actually condoning the rip-off that the Federal Government is pursuing because it is using GST-generated inflation to further rip off the Australian public and Queensland motorists. Isn't it a very fine rip-off indeed—over \$600m, on the Prime Minister's own admission.

Surely the Federal Government could forgo the further increase that is set down for February. Surely the Federal Government could find in its heart some compassion for those who are suffering the burden of escalating fuel prices. Indeed, last night in the Parliament, most members of this Parliament—those who cared to participate in

the debate—shared the Government's view. We in fact supported the motion moved by the member for Gladstone and seconded by the member for Barambah. We believed there was a measure of bipartisanship in this place in respect of this matter. But no, no, no, that was not to be.

The position that was held to by the Leader of the Liberal Party was the very position which he had canvassed publicly but a few days ago. When challenged on the matter of the February hike in fuel excise, what did he say? "Oh, the Prime Minister would know best." That is the position of the Leader of the Liberal Party in this place. When he says things like that one would think he was still the Federal member for Forde. He has forgotten that he happens to be the Leader of the Liberal Party in this place. He happens to have forgotten that he purports to be a Treasurer in a future coalition Government. Yet he doesn't have a position on a matter which is so fundamental to the people of Queensland, so fundamental for economic activity in this State and so fundamental to his party having a position in the community.

Mr Seeney: Why don't you do something? Why don't you have a royal commission?

Mr HAMILL: The member for Callide says, "Why doesn't the Queensland Government do something about it?" We have done something about it. We have guaranteed that a full 8.354c a litre will go back to Queensland motorists, go back to Queensland industry and go back to those who use diesel, unleaded petrol and leaded petrol on Queensland roads. And we have implored the Federal Government to extend that benefit to all those who received the subsidy in respect of off-road diesel use when it was under the control of the Queensland Government. What has it done? Absolutely zilch! All members opposite do is come in here and make excuses; they make excuses for the Federal Government and they make excuses for why the Federal Government does not extend off-road diesel rebates to civil contractors. They blame everybody else other than their own Government's legislation in Canberra.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr HAMILL: As the Minister for Transport correctly states, by its failure to deliver the off-road diesel subsidy to civil contractors, the coalition Government in Canberra has increased the cost of civil construction to every local authority and every public authority in the country.

As a response to the question I posed about what has the coalition done in relation to fuel, nothing could be more eloquent than the question that was asked by the would-be Leader of the National Party, the member for Toowoomba South, when he was asking a question of my colleague the Minister for Fair Trading. He was actually drawing attention to what he called a substantial price differential in fuel prices in petrol stations on the Warrego Highway. Obviously, he must have noticed this as he was coming to and from his electorate. We have been saying there have been problems in petrol pricing for some time. It is good that the message has finally sunk in to the head of the member for Toowoomba South.

What did he do in relation to this matter? He actually asked a question about what was the Queensland Government doing to advantage Toowoomba motorists in relation to fuel prices. The answer is: we deliver a subsidy. What does the Federal Government do? It delivers a goods and services tax and increased excise! In other words, Labor in Queensland reduces the price of fuel; the coalition in Canberra increases the price of fuel.

Mr HORAN: I rise to a point of order. The Treasurer is misleading the Parliament. My question was what is the Government doing—

Government members: Ha, ha!

Mr HORAN: Sit down, sit down.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is this a point of order or not?

Mr HORAN: My question on notice was: what is the Government doing about the differential?

Mr SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, that is a debate.

Mr HORAN: What is the Government doing—

Mr SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, that is a debate.

Mr HORAN:—about the differential? Absolutely nothing! It walked away from it.

Mr HAMILL: I table the question that was put forward by the member for Toowoomba South and I reiterate the answer. What the Labor Government in Queensland does is lower fuel prices by delivering a subsidy to motorists. What does the coalition Government in Canberra do? It increases fuel prices to the people of Queensland! It increases fuel prices by adding the GST, it increases fuel prices by adding excise and it increases fuel prices to civil contractors by not

allowing them to obtain the off-road diesel rebate. The evidence is clear, and it is the coalition which stands condemned for its inaction in relation to this matter.

There is another furphy I wish to address and that is this claim by the Federal Government that, "Oh well, all the GST comes back to the States." Nothing could be further from the truth because what we have here is yet another sleight of hand by the Commonwealth in respect of funding. We know this year that, under the Commonwealth Government's tax reform arrangements, between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion was to be made up to State Budgets through Commonwealth Budget balancing grants. That was an impost or a burden that had to be borne by the Commonwealth to ensure that no State or Territory would be worse off because of the implementation of the goods and services tax.

What this means is that should the GST generate more dollars to Canberra the Federal Government is relieved of that responsibility to provide the Budget balancing grants. That means if the GST generates an extra \$2.5 billion this year the States and the Territories are no better off but Peter Costello and John Howard have an extra \$2.5 billion to play with, and next year it will be an extra \$3 billion to play with. It is about time the Commonwealth came clean on this. The Commonwealth is obtaining an enormous windfall through GST and also through excise. It can do something about the excise immediately; it can abandon the indexation of the excise in February.

But the people of Queensland are watching this and the people of Queensland are watching the member for Moggill. They saw the Liberal Party in Queensland squib the issue about whether it would exchange preferences with One Nation and whether it would sit in Government with One Nation after the last election. The Liberal Party did not have a position on that matter.

Mr Schwarten: Publicly they didn't state a position.

Mr HAMILL: At least publicly it did not have a position. But there are plenty in the community who know exactly what the Liberal Party was prepared to do if the whiff of ministerial leather was just too overpowering. Likewise, it is time for the Leader of the Liberal Party to stand up on the issue which is affecting the mums and dads and families right across this nation, particularly in Queensland where regional Queenslanders pay much more for fuel—and that is fuel excise.

The Leader of the Liberal Party cannot afford to not have a public position on the matter. He cannot afford to simply be the lap-dog of John Howard. Either he stands up for the people of Queensland or he stands up for the Federal Government. He either takes some responsibility here and becomes an advocate on behalf of the people of Queensland or becomes simply yet another apologist for the Federal Government.

The ball is squarely in his court. Many members have spoken on this issue and have exercised their vote on this matter over the last few weeks. It is about time we heard from the member for Moggill, the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.16 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

Government members: Ha, ha!

Mr BORBIDGE: I am sure that those opposite will be interested because this will be a test as to who is fair dinkum or not. They should listen carefully. I move the following amendment—

"After '2001' insert the following—

- '1. and calls for a royal commission into anomalies in petrol pricing in Queensland;
2. reaffirms support for the fuel subsidy scheme implemented by the previous coalition Government beyond the next election; and'."

So therefore to—

Government members: It's a rort.

Mr BORBIDGE: No.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BORBIDGE: The amendment continues—

" '3. calls on this Government to reverse its present policy of penalising farmers and businesses who are bulk end users.'"

Government members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The boot is on the other foot now. What we are saying is that, firstly, the Premier promised a royal commission but now he does not want one. Secondly, he is now saying he will not give a commitment that if he wins the next election the fuel subsidy scheme will continue and, thirdly, he is saying that the Government is prepared to penalise farmers and businesses in Queensland who are bulk end users.

If the Government votes against this amendment, that is precisely what it is doing. There will be no guarantee from the Premier that if his corrupt Government limps over the line at the next election the fuel subsidy scheme will remain in place. There will be no commitment from this corrupt Government that this Premier will honour his option of a royal commission. So this is no longer a test of the coalition, this is now a test for Labor in this State.

Before I address a number of these concerns, I want to draw to the attention of honourable members on the Opposition side that the Leader of the House has advised the Leader of Opposition Business that if this debate is not finished by 10.30, it will go into question time. What we have is a corrupt Government that will not front up to question time, that does not want to front up in terms of Private Members' Statements and that seeks to move a motion today but will then oppose an amendment by the coalition that would have kept it honest.

I want to deal with a few issues in speaking to this particular amendment. Some time ago, the Opposition called for a royal commission into petrol pricing in Queensland—something that the Premier, the leader of this corrupt election-rorting Government, can control if he wants to. The reality is that the Premier said at the time, "Well, if there is ongoing volatility in respect of fuel prices I am prepared to look at a royal commission."

Mr Horan: Six months ago.

Mr BORBIDGE: Six months ago, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition says. But what does the Premier do? He wants everyone else to have an inquiry except himself because he knows that a properly constituted inquiry into petrol pricing in Queensland would be examining State Government policy as well as Federal Government policy.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The member for Toowoomba South mentions the differentials between various parts of this State. On Monday, the Shell service station at Beenleigh was selling unleaded fuel for 75.9c per litre. The BP service station down the road was selling it for 76.9c per litre. Why? Why is it 10c a litre more expensive on the Gold Coast, or Brisbane, or Toowoomba, or a host of other areas across the State? Why do we have this differential? If Shell and BP can do it at Beenleigh, why can they not do it at Toowoomba, or Mackay, or the Gold Coast, or Brisbane?

I would have thought that that would have been a primary reference to a commission of inquiry in respect of the conduct of petrol companies and oil companies in Queensland. If, as the Premier and the Treasurer are saying, the root of all evil is the GST, why is it not a problem at Beenleigh? Why is it a problem in other parts of the State, but the oil companies can deliver pre-GST fuel prices for unleaded fuel down the road at Beenleigh—half-way between Brisbane and the Gold Coast on the M1? That is one area that a commission of inquiry could address.

Of course, the Premier does not want to do that. Following the Premier's logic, if the GST and the Federal tax reforms are really the primary concern in all of this, we must assume that those policies are responsible for the low fuel prices at Beenleigh. If we follow the Premier's logic, and the twisted logic of the net bet kid beside him, that is the only solution at which we could arrive.

Let us move on to the second part of my amendment, which is—

"... reaffirms support for the fuel subsidy scheme implemented by the previous coalition Government ..."

Mr Hamill: As you would have.

Mr BORBIDGE: No, no; I will come to that. This is the fellow who said that there were 60 tankers a day smuggling fuel over the border. This is the bloke who has—how many prosecutions? He could give an Internet gaming licence to a mate but he could not prosecute any of the 60 tankers that he alleged were crossing the border. He could not find one.

But I digress. The simple fact is that part 2 of my amendment says—

"... reaffirms support for the fuel subsidy scheme implemented by the previous coalition Government beyond the next election."

It is a matter of fact that the coalition introduced the fuel subsidy scheme. All we want from this Government is a commitment that it will continue the fuel subsidy scheme even in its present form because we know that this Government, this Premier and this Treasurer tried the richest political con that any Government had tried on the people of this State for a long time when they tried to do away with the 8.4c per litre fuel subsidy scheme and replace it with a shonky concession in respect of motor vehicle registration. We know that was their intent. We made the allegation at the time that if this Premier and this Government win the next election, the fuel subsidy scheme is at risk.

This is the opportunity for the member for Brisbane Central to prove me wrong by supporting this amendment, which takes absolutely nothing away from the motion he moved but requires a degree of accountability and a degree of commitment ahead of the next election by honourable members opposite.

Mr Mackenroth: And reintroduce the rorts.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Leader of the House says, "Reintroduce the rorts." No! What I am asking the Government to do is give a commitment to honour the fuel subsidy scheme after the next election in its current form by voting for this amendment. That is what my amendment says.

Those opposite talk about rorts. The fact is that the previous legislation gave the Commissioner for Stamp Duties all the power in the world in terms of entering premises, in terms of seizing fuel tankers and in terms of seizing records. What was the end result of two years of alleged rorting as far as this Government was concerned? Not one prosecution!

Mr Horan: Sixty tankers a day.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Government said that there were 60 tankers a day crossing the border, but it could not find one. Those opposite knew that they had to build up some sort of perception of rorts so that they could terminate the fuel subsidy scheme that was introduced by the previous coalition Government.

Mr Malone: They know about rorts.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the member for Mirani says, they know all about rorts. The Government has a PhD in rorts. That is what this motion is all about. We lose Private Members' Statements today and we lose question time. If the Premier and the Leader of Government Business—

A Government member interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Oh, dry up! If the Leader of Government Business in this place had had his way, we would have had 50 minutes of the Labor argument and about 15 minutes for me to respond. We are prepared to reveal and expose the absolute hypocrisy of this Labor Government in respect of fuel prices and in regard to the administration of its policies. We are more than happy to carry through on this particular debate so that honourable members opposite can have the opportunity to participate in a proper debate. I trust that we will not see the Leader of Government

Business exercising what will be a record-breaking gag of debates in this place.

The other issue covered by my amendment relates to the absolutely disgraceful way in which this Government has treated bulk end users. What we have is an assumption that a bulk end user in Queensland is a criminal.

Earlier, the Premier spoke about honourable members with fuel cards and with Government cars. The fact is that even if an honourable member in this place, just as anyone else in Brisbane or the urban areas of this State, tops up his car at BP or Shell where fuel prices are now lower than they have been for ages—and I would like to know why they are lower there and not everywhere else; but that is something the Premier could address if he wanted to—we get the benefit of the 8.3c per litre fuel subsidy straightaway.

If one is a bulk end user, one does not get that benefit. If one is a bulk end user, one subsidises the Treasury of Queensland, and then four times a year the Treasury of Queensland will remit in terms of one's private use. Coupled with that is a situation where we have a total administrative nightmare in respect of every retail outlet for fuel across this State. Instead of having a reasonably simple, easy system to enforce—and contrary to what the Leader of the House said, there has been no evidence of rorting, no prosecutions under the previous Government or this Government—the Government is now seeking to police about 2,500 service stations by way of doing a profile on them all, instead of trying to manage it at the distribution level where something like 170—

Mr Rowell: These are Beattie's tax collectors.

Mr BORBIDGE: Yes. The member who is increasingly famous lately, the member for Woodridge, was handing around little postcards before. This tanker is the Beattie tanker. It is another stroke of genius by the member for Woodridge. It is on a par with his "The coalition will sell the hospitals". That was his last effort in terms of postcards and postcard distribution. I would have thought that the member for Woodridge would have learned his lesson. However, we have the Beattie tanker.

But the other matter that I wish to address this morning relates to this dreadful GST and the way in which the new arrangements entered into by the State of Queensland are causing all sorts of dreadful problems for the wonderful Beattie Government. I have a copy of the Intergovernmental Agreement. Who

signed off with the Commonwealth in respect of the new arrangements? Whose signature is on the Intergovernmental Agreement? I have to admit that it is not Robert Borbidge's. The signatures on there are those of the Honourable James Alexander Bacon, Premier of the State of Tasmania; the Honourable John Wayne Olsen, Premier of the State of South Australia; the Honourable Richard Fairfax Court, Premier of the State of Western Australia; the Honourable Robert John Carr, Premier of the State of New South Wales—

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: No, the Prime Minister's signature is at the top. The Honourable John Winston Howard signed on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia. But whose signature is it? I wonder if honourable members opposite remember. It is the signature of the Honourable Peter Douglas Beattie, Premier of the State of Queensland. So the Premier moves a motion today to condemn an Intergovernmental Agreement that he signed on behalf of the State of Queensland. I can only assume that that incredible intellect on the Government side of the House, the honourable member for Chermside, has again written Labor's strategy.

In the time remaining to me, I just want to say that we accept that fuel is a major problem. We accept also that there are a number of reasons for that. Some of those reasons fall within Federal jurisdiction; some of those reasons fall within State jurisdiction. The Treasurer who tried to abolish the fuel subsidy scheme, the Treasurer who tried to abolish the 8.3c a litre subsidy, can interject all he likes. Sometime during the course of the day he, along with all his Labor colleagues, will be able to vote with us. We are prepared to accept the argument that they are putting forward in regard to the Commonwealth, provided they accept their responsibilities as well.

The simple fact is that if honourable members opposite do not support the amendment that I have moved, then the Premier will be welshing on a commitment that he gave when he said that he was prepared to look at a royal commission. Most importantly, we will be seeing a situation where Labor in this Parliament will be voting against a reaffirmation that the fuel subsidy scheme should continue in Queensland regardless of the outcome of the next election. We will be witnessing the Labor Party in this place continuing its unfair discrimination in respect of bulk end users, many of whom have been the hardest hit by the increases in fuel prices.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The member for Warwick referred to this allegation or this mentality that farmers are rorters. I remember the Treasurer saying that the wives of farmers will be driving their trucks into town to get the milk. That was another great achievement of the net bet kid.

If the Premier wants to kick own goals, that is his business. He has done so magnificently today. We are prepared to support that part of the motion which deals with the Commonwealth. The challenge now is for the State Government to support that part of the motion which, by way of the amendment that I have moved, deals with those matters within State jurisdiction that Premier Beattie, Treasurer Hamill and all the other honourable members opposite are in a position to support if they want to. It will be very interesting to see whether they are men of principle or whether they are just being political opportunists and hypocrites in an attempt to cover up their own electoral corruption and rorting, which is unfolding all over Queensland. If the members opposite want to make fuel the issue, then they should support my amendment and we can have a bipartisan response.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Moggill, I welcome to the public gallery students, parents and teachers of the Kimberley Park School at Shailer Park in the electorate of Redlands.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.37 a.m.): I formally second the amendment to the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I thank the Premier for giving me the opportunity to speak to this issue, because it is an important issue facing all Queenslanders and all other Australians.

The Premier quoted correctly today's Courier-Mail in which I expressed concern for the families and the businesses in Queensland and the rest of Australia in regard to rising fuel prices. There is absolutely no question that the people of Australia have been hurt by rising fuel prices. No-one on this side of the House, whether they be in the Liberal Party or the National Party, walks away from that. We understand that. That issue comes to us in our electorate offices, through parties and from talking to people. There is no question about that.

The Premier wants to make something of the Liberal Party's support for the motion last night. He ought to know the Standing Rules and Orders of this Parliament. He ought to understand that if we do not call for a division, then we are supporting the motion before the House. That is what the Liberal Party did. If we

do not call for a division on this motion today, it means that we support the motion before the House. It is as simple as that.

Mr Beattie: Where were you last night—hiding under the bed?

Dr WATSON: I do not believe that I have spoken to any 6 o'clock motion that the members opposite have moved, just as they generally do not speak to our motions. That is an irrelevant issue.

The Leader of the Opposition has issued a challenge to Government members. We understand the Standing Orders and how this Parliament works. We want to see the Government standing up for Queensland not only in terms of what is going on with the Federal Government but also Queensland issues. We want to see the Government supporting an amended motion to include things such as a commitment to the fuel subsidy.

Mr Horan: This could give Queensland motorists five times the amount that you're trying to get out of the Federal Government. Look at the price differential—10c instead of 2c

Dr WATSON: That is exactly right. The issue is whether or not the Government will support this. I sat in this place while the Premier argued that, if the Commonwealth did not have a royal commission into the issue of fuel prices, he would. Where is that promise now? We moved the motion in the Parliament? What did the Premier do? He squibbed and walked away from it. He argues that he is concerned for the people of Queensland, but when it comes down to his area of responsibility and what he can do about it, he walks away and does not have a royal commission—he does not have anything. He set up a spurious Petrol Price Watch Committee under the member for Woodridge.

Mr Springborg: An expert rorter.

Dr WATSON: That is right. He ought to be able to find rorting; he has had enough practice at it. But, of course, he did not find any in the ALP. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the card that the member for Woodridge passed around. He referred back to the time when the member put out that spurious card on the privatisation of hospitals. I looked across at the member for Sunnybank, the Minister for Emergency Services, who got up in this place and said, "Hang on. Not me. I didn't put it out." He said, "I wasn't going to get caught up in the AWU rorts."

Mr Borbidge: Was it authorised?

Dr WATSON: If it was authorised, we would not be able to tell that from looking at it.

The member for Sunnybank, the Minister for Emergency Services, indicated that he would stand by his principles and would not have anything to do with that. He argued that that was one of the reasons he was here. He knew that the member for Woodridge, as Labor Party State Secretary, did not have any principles on that issue. He is a member of the AWU faction; what else would we expect?

But let us talk about the position on fuel. Earlier this year, the Premier started to move on his 8.354c a litre fuel tax. Do honourable members remember that? I suspect it was not just his idea; the Treasurer, who seconded it, also had a hand in that fantastic debacle. He came in here expecting Queenslanders to be treated like mugs. He came in here and said that he was going to get rid of the fuel subsidy and reduce registration. Queenslanders saw through him then just as they will see through this.

Do members remember the headline "Beattie rethink on fuel change"? Do they remember what generated that? It was a cynical exercise on the part of the Premier and Treasurer to try to remove the fuel subsidy from Queenslanders and to increase the price of fuel to Queenslanders by 8.354c a litre. He was going to rip them off and put a small subsidy on registration. That is the issue. He attempted to rip the fuel subsidy off Queenslanders and mollify them through a cut to registration. That was his approach. He was found out. He was trying to treat Queenslanders like mugs, and they saw through him, just as they are seeing through everything else he does.

We saw the necessity for that when the Treasurer brought down the Budget. We knew what the Premier was trying to do. The only reason the Budget was in surplus was that he borrowed money. That was the reason he had a cash surplus; he was borrowing money. When the full financial statements came down, we saw how he was running this State into the ground, because he was increasing the costs of operating this Government on a day-to-day basis. He is doing exactly the same thing as Goss, his predecessor, did. He was running the same sorts of programs being run now. Slowly but surely he is grinding this State into deficit. That is what he is doing. He sought to remove the 8.354c subsidy simply because he was trying to cover up his bad management. When that did not work, what happened? The Treasurer presented a Budget in this place that would see borrowings of \$2 billion this

year—far more than has been borrowed over the past six—

Mr Foley: Ducking and weaving.

Dr WATSON: I am not ducking and weaving. The member is the one ducking and weaving.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. We cannot hear the honourable member.

Dr WATSON: There are \$2 billion in borrowings this year, rising from \$533m, I think it was, two years ago—rising because of his mismanagement. That is what the attempted removal of the 8.354c was all about. He did not get the fuel tax that he wanted so what did he do? He raided the electricity corporations.

Mr Springborg: Ports.

Dr WATSON: Yes, I am coming to that. He took 95.39% of their after-tax profits. That is what he did. Not satisfied with raiding the electricity corporations, he started to raid the ports. But he still was not satisfied. Having raided the ports and the electricity industry, what else did he do in that Budget? This is something that was not discussed. He put a tax on beer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Could we return to the subject of fuel?

Dr WATSON: This is all about fuel prices.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No.

Dr WATSON: Mr Speaker, just bear with me; you will understand why.

What did he do? He then put a tax on beer of 1c a can or a bit more. What was his excuse when he was caught out? He said, "We're going to use that to subsidise fuel prices." His excuse was, "We put a tax on beer and we're using it to subsidise fuel."

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the Standing Orders on relevance. Next he will be on about Christmas. When is he going to talk about petrol?

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

Dr WATSON: I just did. I just said that after he abandoned his fuel tax—I think this is about petrol—he decided to raid beer. All beer drinkers in Queensland are now having to pay for his failed subsidy program. That is what is happening. Following his changes to the fuel subsidy, I have not heard him say, "I will give the cent a litre back to the beer drinkers." He has collected that. Government members are a bunch of hypocrites. Not only did he do

something about fuel and beer; he also tried to sneak through an increase in electricity prices. Do honourable members remember that?

Mr Seeney: Three per cent.

Dr WATSON: It was 3%. It was timed to go up on 1 July. Do honourable members remember that? This is from the open, honest and accountable Government.

Mr Borbidge: They are going to blame the GST.

Dr WATSON: They are going to blame the GST. They were going to impose a 3% price increase on every energy user in this State to pay for it.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Dr WATSON: This is all part of the GST; the Minister got it right. The Government was trying to do these things under the guise of the GST. Government members love to come into this place and attack the Federal Government over the GST and demonise the GST. But they are taking advantage of it. They are going to take the money from the GST revenue and use the introduction of the GST on 1 July as an excuse for raising prices for no other reason than increasing revenue. I understand the issue with the electricity industry. The Government has given them 3% extra simply because it knows that its policies over the past couple of years of ripping out the dividends has left them short of cash for maintenance and so on. That is what this is all about.

I notice that the Premier took a point of order earlier about relevance. I did not see anyone worrying about relevance when he talked about One Nation. I did not see anyone taking a point of order on that. This is a wide-ranging debate under the rules set down by both the Premier and the Treasurer. The member opposite raised issues which were, at the most, tangential to the issue of fuel prices. We have already challenged the Premier to have a royal commission into what can be done in relation to this issue.

What we are seeing today is a cynical exercise on the part of the Government to try to divert attention away from the issue that is plaguing this Government. Everyone knows the issue that is plaguing this Government is the fact that a number of members on the other side of the House are potentially facing jail, jail, jail. This is the latest diversion.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Dr WATSON: As the Leader of the Opposition says, one fifth of the Government has been named at the inquiry.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will resume debating the motion on fuel prices.

Dr WATSON: The Premier is not willing to get up and support—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will get back to the motion.

Mr Springborg: The Treasurer was on GST compliance.

Dr WATSON: That is exactly right. The Treasurer does not know what he is talking about.

It is interesting that the Premier and the Government are obviously running scared. They have adopted a mechanism to try to avoid question time today, and I guess they have succeeded. If they were not worried about it, they could have moved this motion after question time.

Mr Hamill: It's too important.

Dr WATSON: It's too important— yeah, right! It is another diversion, and the Treasurer knows it.

I want a guarantee from the Premier that we are going to come back in December. Are we coming back in December—yes or no? Are we going to have that sitting week in December—yes or no?

Mr Beattie: What's that got to do with petrol?

Dr WATSON: No Parliament in December? This Government is running scared. I ask the Leader of the House: are we having that sitting week in December?

Mr Mackenroth: If we had a lot of work to do, we wouldn't be doing this debate.

Dr WATSON: So we are not going to have that week. Not only are the members opposite running away from question time now—running scared; they are running away from the Parliament next week. Is that what they are doing? Is Parliament going to sit in December?

Mr Beattie: If we have business, we sit. If we haven't got business, we don't sit.

Dr WATSON: So we are having that week, are we? Can the Leader of the House guarantee that?

Mr Borbidge: The Minister for Local Government is going overseas on Friday. He should just give it away.

Dr WATSON: We will see whether we do sit that week.

My understanding is that the members opposite are running scared: they are running away from question time, they are running

away from the Parliament. That is the reality. We understand that. The Premier is the one who has the problem. He is the one who cannot get a vote of confidence. They are all his members who have been named before the Shepherdson inquiry. He is running scared, and he ought to be running scared. I noticed that the Treasurer spoke earlier about business confidence.

Mr Hamill: Do you know where it's going?

Dr WATSON: Yes, it is going down. If we look at the latest poll survey by the QCCI, what do we see? We see that, for the past year, most Queensland businesses surveyed by the QCCI blamed the fall in business confidence in Queensland on State Government policy. In the last month it was negative 12%. I am glad to see that someone has a copy.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Dr WATSON: I did not need to have a copy; I remember it because it struck me as significant. I have been watching the negative influence of State Government policies on business confidence in Queensland for the past two years.

Last month business confidence was at negative 12%. It has blown out from negative 6%, or something. When I talk to people in the business community I realise that no-one has any confidence in the State Government's policies. They have no confidence in the members opposite because they are the ones who have been increasing payroll tax; they are the ones who have increased the cost of workers compensation; they are the ones who are allowing workers compensation fraud by failing to prosecuting people; they are the ones who have allowed prosecutions for workers compensation fraud to fall by 60%. If they talk to the business community, the members opposite will discover all of this. They are the ones who have changed the industrial relations policy in this State. It is their policies that are causing significant problems in Queensland. So much for the arguments that the Treasurer puts forward! The latest evidence suggests that it is this State Government's policies that are causing significant problems here in Queensland.

Mr Foley: What are you going to do?

Dr WATSON: The Attorney-General keeps asking that question. I have stated quite clearly that the Liberal Party supported the motion last night. There was no need for a division. The Liberal Party will support—

Mr Hamill: That's not what you said in the paper.

Dr WATSON: We supported it by definition, and we will be supporting this amended motion that is before the House today. The critical issue is: what are Government members going to do about this amendment? That is the critical thing. There is no problem with respect to—

Mr Hamill: So you've got a position now?

Dr WATSON: I have always had a position.

Mr Foley: Tell us.

Dr WATSON: The position of the Liberal Party last night was quite clear. We supported that motion, and we will support the amended motion today. The question is: will members opposite support our amendment? No, they will not, because they do not have the strength of their own convictions. They are gutless when it comes to doing anything about it.

Time expired.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.57 a.m.): I move—

"That, under Standing Order 109, the member for Moggill's time be extended to enable him to inform the House of his position on excise."

Motion agreed to.

Dr WATSON: The Liberal Party will be supporting the amended motion. The original motion states—

"That the Queensland Parliament, recognising the extreme pressure on Queensland families and small businesses by the continual escalation of petrol prices, requests the Prime Minister, John Howard, and his Government to immediately give a commitment to Queenslanders that they will not further increase the fuel excise in February 2001."

The amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition states—

"After '2001' insert the following—

1. and calls for a royal commission into anomalies in petrol pricing in Queensland;
2. reaffirms support for the fuel subsidy scheme implemented by the previous coalition Government beyond the next election; and
3. calls on this Government to reverse its policy of penalising farmers and businesses who are bulk end users.'."

The last part of the amendment to the motion calls on the Government to reverse its present policy on penalising farmers and businesses who are bulk end users. Let me remind the House why bulk end users have a problem. Bulk end users have a problem because in the Senate the Labor Party and the Democrats are blocking the passing of that amendment. The coalition went to the election with a promise that the fuel excise on diesel would be taken over by the Commonwealth and that the reduction would be passed on to all diesel users, whether they be on farm, off farm, bulk end users or whatever. What is the problem? The problem is that the Labor Party and the Democrats stopped that going through. If those opposite want to do something about diesel prices for bulk end users, they should tell their Labor Party colleagues in the Senate to allow amendments to pass. They should talk to Labor Party senators and get them to agree to an amendment to ensure that all diesel users get the full amount of the excise reduction. That is a reasonable position.

Mr Springborg: That's what's proposed.

Dr WATSON: Yes, we proposed it. The Labor Party rejected it. When it is given the opportunity to do something, it fails every time. It is all talk. It tried to get rid of the fuel subsidy in Queensland and believes that a fuel tax in Queensland should be imposed. However, that proposal failed because of the outcry from the public.

Mr Borbidge: It had the TV ads done.

Dr WATSON: Yes. How much did that add up to? Some \$400,000 of taxpayers' money was wasted. If those opposite want to take action in relation to diesel, they should get Labor senators to agree to pass the amendment. The Labor Party is the problem on this issue. If it had agreed with it to begin with, then bulk end diesel users would not have a problem. I have made it clear that the Liberal Party will be supporting the amended motion before the House.

Mr Borbidge: Will they be supporting the amendment?

Dr WATSON: Yes, will those opposite be supporting the amendment? Will they establish a royal commission into the anomalies of petrol prices in Queensland?

Opposition members: No!

Dr WATSON: Will those opposite do that? Can we get a commitment from those opposite? How many members opposite will support that?

Mr Horan: At the end of the day, they couldn't find 60 tankers a day.

Dr WATSON: That is exactly right. They said that 60 tankers a day were going south.

Mr Seeney: They couldn't prosecute one.

Dr WATSON: How many prosecutions have been made?

Mr Seeney: None—ever.

Dr WATSON: Yes, none. Where is the evidence of the rort? Those opposite make assertions, but they never back them up. But where are the prosecutions? What have they done? We support the Government's establishing a royal commission. This motion calls on the Government to establish a royal commission. Those opposite are squirming at the prospect of a royal commission. Where is it? The motion also calls on the Government to reaffirm its support for the fuel subsidy scheme implemented by the previous coalition beyond the next election? Will it do that? No! It has no evidence whatsoever of the rorts it has alleged.

An Opposition member: They want to abolish the scheme.

Dr WATSON: Yes, they want to abolish the scheme. Those opposite came up with a harebrained scheme to get rid of the subsidy and replace it with cheaper registration. Will they support that or not?

Mr Beattie: David, we just love you, mate.

An Opposition member: Plastic Pete.

Dr WATSON: Plastic Pete; that is what the Premier is. The amendment also calls on the Government to reverse its present policy of penalising farmers and businesses who are bulk end users? Will it do that? What kind of commitment will it make?

Mr Beattie: The Deputy Premier will have an appropriate statement about the amendment in a minute. It's all sorted out. Don't you worry about that.

Dr WATSON: It is all sorted out; that is very good. We will be interested to hear what the response is.

Mr Beattie: Do you want more time?

Dr WATSON: I will take as long as the Premier wants. Those opposite are the ones who brought this debate on. They obviously want to run away from question time. They are the joke. They are the ones running away from Parliament. I will go through the whole process again, no problem. I can go back over all the concerns we have with the Government's position and the things it has done over the

past 12 months to wiggle and worm its way out.

Mr Beattie: Poor old David, all those marginal seats.

Dr WATSON: Mate, you are the one who is in trouble on this, and you know it.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Dr WATSON: I am fine; the Premier can relax.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Dr WATSON: We are still waiting for the Premier's personal commitment on these aspects. Will this House meet in December? I am waiting for his personal commitment on that, too. Will we meet in December?

Mr Beattie: Petrol prices, petrol prices, petrol prices.

Dr WATSON: The only thing that is relevant over there is jail, jail, jail. That is why the House will not come back in December, because those opposite do not know what is going to happen in the next two weeks of the Shepherdson inquiry. We know that is why the Government does not want to come back in December.

Mr Beattie: What are you doing about it?

Dr WATSON: The member opposite will have a hard time pressing that argument from jail, jail, jail. I would like to see members opposite in jail arguing about fuel prices. That would make a great poster: members opposite arguing about fuel prices from jail, jail, jail. This motion today is nothing but a diversion.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (11.08 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"That all words in 1 be deleted;

That in 2 the words 'implemented by the previous coalition Government' be deleted;

That all words contained in 3 be deleted."

We will support the scheme. We will continue our scheme. We will give those opposite that commitment. We will do just that, but the rest of what has been raised have been red herrings. If I have ever heard an excising speech, I have just heard one—the member for Moggill just excised himself out of the leadership of the Liberal Party. Apart from us on this side of the Chamber, the only member smiling throughout the whole half hour speech of Dr Watson was the member for Clayfield. The member for Clayfield could not

take the smile off his dial during the whole half hour. What we had was half an hour—and I think I will use his own words—of squirming like a worm on speed. In half an hour we got not one answer to the very simple question that we posed in the original motion, which every member of this Parliament should support. That proposition is simply this: everyone in this House supports the concept that Queenslanders should not suffer from any further increases in fuel excise. It is a fairly simple question to which anyone can answer yes or no. But what did we see in a whole half-hour from the Leader of the Liberal Party? Did he say once, "I oppose John Howard"?

Government members: No!

Mr ELDER: Did he say once, "I support personally the proposition"?

Government members: No!

Mr ELDER: What he said was, if you listened carefully, "We will support the Queensland Parliament"—the Queensland Parliament—"recognising the extreme pressure"—not the member for Moggill, not the Liberal Party. What we had was half an hour of squirming like a worm on speed.

Mr Quinn, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, is up next. Let us see whether during that contribution from a member of the Liberal Party—and it will probably roll through the entire Liberal Party—he says, "I do not support John Howard." Let us see whether the words can drop from their lips. That is the question. Members opposite can go over the red herrings about royal commissions; they can go over the red herrings about the coalition's previous petrol scheme. Its previous petrol scheme was a downright rort, and the rort was brought to the attention of the Government through the fuel companies. They confirmed the rort. They said that \$60m goes across the border.

Mr Beattie: That's the Borbidge rort.

Mr ELDER: That was the Borbidge rort, and that is what he wants to go back to. We will not, but we give a commitment that we will continue our scheme until after the election. So there is the commitment from us that we will look after every one of the industries, small businesses and families in the electorates of members opposite.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I know the Deputy Premier is well briefed on rorts, but I find that reference to "the Borbidge rort", when his Government could not prosecute anyone, to be offensive, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr ELDER: Mr Speaker, with due deference to you and the sensitivity of the Leader of the Opposition, I will withdraw. But he is not bad. He does not mind throwing them in this Chamber, but he never cops them. He does not mind turfing them, but he never likes copping them. The fact of the matter is that those were the words of the fuel companies; they described it as a \$60m rort. Queensland Treasury's review of the scheme basically said that the figure was more like \$100m. Mr Borbidge wants the Lismore City Council to run its entire fleet on Queensland petrol and for us to pay for it and for Queenslanders to pay for it. That is what he wants to go back to.

I was amused when the Leader of the Liberal Party held up the laminated front sheet of the Courier-Mail. I am pleased that he has laminated it. He said, "Look, this is what the Government has done. It changed its mind." The Leader of the Liberal Party is right, and does he know why? I will let him into a little secret, and it is only a wee little secret: there is an issue out there in every one of those electorates. I would have been as sure as night follows day that the polling in the member for Moggill's party would tell him what that was. I would have thought as sure as night follows day that the polling in the National Party would have shown what it is. It is called fuel prices, and it is called GST, and it is called the impact of GST on fuel prices.

If the Leader of the Liberal Party thinks for one moment that that is not the key issue in the electorate, then he cannot read his own research, and neither can the Leader of the Opposition. But I can read my research. I know exactly what is hurting every member opposite out there, and this is really simple for them. This is not a hard question, even for the member for Crows Nest. This is not too tough at all. If members opposite have their constituencies at heart, if they have at heart the interests of those in their electorates who operate in industry and those who live there, then this is really simple: they just need to agree with us and others in this Chamber that the Federal Government should freeze the inflationary impact on excise that will come in February in order to stop it, to reduce its impact. But members opposite will not do that.

Mr Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr ELDER: That would be a rather interesting debate, being a Liberal candidate in a three-cornered contest for the seat of Cunningham. It will be really good to see how that develops and the positions taken by the various parties. I know what we will be saying; I

have a feeling I know what those up the back on the grassy knoll will be saying. It will be a really interesting conflict between the Liberal Party and the National Party in a three-cornered contest in a seat such as that.

A claim was made that question time has been wasted. It is as simple as this: members opposite could have resolved this issue by saying yes or no and they could have had their question time. So members opposite should not come at us and say that they could not have question time. They could easily have had question time. All it took was an acknowledgment that they would support the motion. The simple fact of the matter is this: I like seeing the Leader of the Liberal Party on television being unable to explain his position over the course of half an hour. What it should illustrate to every Queenslanders is simply this: he cannot be trusted. He either supports John Howard or he does not; he either stands up for Queenslanders or he does not. He can make a very simple case of this with a yes or a no, and he did not do it at any stage during his half-hour.

I challenge the Leader of the Liberal Party directly to stand up and answer this question now: is John Howard right or is John Howard wrong?

Mr Bredhauer: Here's his chance.

Mr ELDER: Here is his chance. I will forgo a minute of my time to give the Leader of the Liberal Party an opportunity to answer this question: is John Howard right or is John Howard wrong? His silence is condemning. His silence shows the duplicitous position that he takes. This is simple. The Leader of the Liberal Party either supports the proposition or he does not. If he does not, then from this day forward, everyone in Queensland will see where the Liberal Party stands on fuel prices and where the Leader of the Liberal Party stands on fuel prices. Every Queenslanders can look down the barrel of that television set and see that the Leader of the Liberal Party in this State supports John Howard, supports the increase in fuel prices, supports the increase in excise and supports the whack on Queensland small businesses and Queensland families. If anyone can see him on television, they should watch him squirming in his seat and trying to interject.

This is really simple. This merely requires a yes or a no from the Liberal Party in this State. What we are seeing is silence, and his silence on this issue is condemning.

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP)
(Minister for Transport and Minister for Main

Roads) (11.18 a.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Deputy Premier. It was easier to drag a Malaysian container vessel off the Great Barrier Reef than it is to drag a view out of the Liberal Party about the fuel excise. The Leader of the Liberal Party had 30 minutes in this Chamber this morning, but did we hear him utter once his position on the fuel excise? The answer is no. We have had a succession of Liberal and National Party Federal backbenchers stand up to John Howard one after another and say they oppose the increase in the fuel excise, but what do we get from the Liberal Party in Queensland from the member for Moggill? We get nothing but flipping and flopping from one side to the other, and no indication of where they stand on the fuel excise. No indication!

Does the Leader of the Liberal Party support John Howard increasing the fuel excise in February? Let the record show that the Leader of the Liberal Party in Queensland could not answer—he could not even provide members of Parliament with an answer. He cannot even say yes or no. The Courier-Mail has it right today; he does not know where he stands on the fuel excise and the Liberal Party in Queensland does not know where it stands on the fuel excise. Let me tell members that the reason—the only reason—why the National Party has been complaining is the rot that it is about to perpetrate today in relation to the road funding package. An amount of \$1 billion is going to be pork-barrelled into coalition electorates to save its bacon at the next Federal election.

In the Fraser Coast Chronicle of 14 November John Anderson, Federal Transport Minister, said that most of the money would go into coalition seats. Let all the members opposite hear the words of the Deputy Prime Minister—

"They are not all coalitions seats but most of them."

The money is going to be pork-barrelled into coalition seats. In April 1999 I sent the Deputy Prime Minister a 10-year National Highway Strategy pointing out where Commonwealth money should be spent on National Highways in Queensland. He has not given me the courtesy of an acknowledgment or a reply to my correspondence, because the members opposite are going to spend the \$1 billion pork-barrelling coalition seats to try to save their skins in the lead-up to the next election. The \$3 billion surplus that they will achieve through the fuel excise which will be announced by Costello today will be pork-barrelled into coalition electorates and it will be

used as a war chest for the next election campaign.

Queenslanders are paying and paying and paying again for the fuel excise and the GST. They are paying the GST, they are paying the higher cost of fuel excise and they are also paying for things like a 13% increase in taxi fares caused by the GST and fuel price increases as a result of John Howard's fuel excise rip-off. Insurance premiums went up. Do insurance premiums go up because of the GST? Yes, they do. The taxi industry has had to put up its prices by 13% to pay for John Howard's GST. What about the poor old bus industry? The bus industry is on its knees because of the GST and the fuel price increase.

Let me tell the House that the Federal member for Blair, Cameron Thompson, wrote to me the other day asking what I am going to do for the bus industry, which is reeling from the fuel excise increase, which has seen the price of diesel go from 60c to 90c over the last six months. A Liberal member of Parliament writes to me and asks me what I am going to do about John Howard's fuel excise rip-off! Well, let Cameron Thompson go and ask the Federal Treasurer what he is going to do about the fuel excise rip-off that has brought the bus industry in this State to its knees.

Mr Hamill: He helped "Aunty" Joan get where she is today.

Mr BREDHAUER: Mr Thompson used to work for the member for Caloundra who, when she was the Treasurer of this State, was the architect of the scheme that put in place the "BP Bob" rorts on fuel. \$60m a year was going—

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive. It is untrue. There was no rort. The rort was when Mr Net Bet tried to bring in a fuel tax and then removed the subsidy, and the Minister for Transport knows all about that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I ask the Minister to withdraw.

Mr BREDHAUER: I withdraw. Would the member for Surfers Paradise hold up that prop for me? Has he still got that prop—the laminated front page? Could he hold that up for me? Obviously he enjoyed the decision of the Government so much that he had it laminated. I just thought I could use it in my speech as well. Apparently it has gone.

The member for Caloundra introduced the scheme that saw Queensland taxpayers' dollars being driven across the border into the coffers of the Lismore City Council.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. I would like the Minister to table this information—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Caloundra will resume her seat.

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

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am not going to allow members to remain standing while I am on my feet.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. I find the statement inaccurate, untrue and offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr BREDHAUER: I will withdraw it.

Our taxpayers' dollars were being driven over the border to the Lismore City Council to subsidise the cost of fuel in New South Wales. Do members opposite know why they could not be prosecuted for doing that? Because under their scheme it was legal; under their scheme there was nothing wrong with it. They allowed the Lismore City Council to operate as a bulk end user, taking subsidised fuel by the truck load out of Queensland to subsidise the ratepayers in Lismore at the expense of taxpayers in Queensland.

"BP Bob" wants us to put the money back into the pockets of the oil companies, back into the pockets of the multinationals. The next time you pull into your friendly green and gold service station and you pour money into the pockets of the BP proprietors, tell them "BP Bob" sent you. Let me tell honourable members that when it comes to pick a box—the money or the box—we have "BP Bob" over here, but down in Canberra Peter Costello will take the money every time. He is sticking it in his back pocket at the expense of the taxpayers of Queensland.

I listened very carefully to the speech by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Surfers Paradise. We had 30 minutes from the member for Moggill. Did he once give us a position on the fuel excise? No! Did he once tell us whether he supports John Howard jacking up the fuel excise in February? No! In 30 minutes he did not. When honourable members get the chance, they should read the speech by the Leader of the Opposition. For 17 minutes he rabbited on about his old scheme—"BP Bob's" fuel rort—which he would like to see reinstated so that he can tip bucket loads of money back into the pockets of the multinational fuel companies.

It took the Leader of the Opposition 17 minutes to get to the point where he actually acknowledged that the people of Queensland

were hurting as a result of the fuel price increases. Do members know why? Because sitting in the comfort of his place on the Gold Coast he does not care about the punters in the member for Gregory's electorate. He does not care about the punters in my electorate or the member for Bundaberg's electorate—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. At least I go to my electorate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BREDHAUER: Sitting in the comfort of his Gold Coast motel room, do members think that the Leader of the Opposition cares about the people in the member for Tablelands' electorate and how much they are paying for fuel? I see the member for Tablelands shaking his head. He knows how much he cares. Does he care about the member for Fitzroy and the punters in his electorate? No, he does not. The member for Fitzroy might note that the member for Surfers Paradise was complaining about the fact that down on the Gold Coast they have to pay 79c a litre for fuel. Well, the lucky people on the Gold Coast! Motorists pay \$1.06 in the electorate of Fitzroy. It is \$1.25 in the member for Gregory's electorate. It is over \$1 a litre in my electorate. It is about time the rort stopped. The Opposition should support the amendment that has been moved to the motion by the Deputy Premier so that we do not have the increase in fuel excise in February and we put the money back into the pockets of the ordinary mums and dads of Queensland.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): I move the following amendment to Mr Elder's amendment—

"That Parts 1 and 3 of Mr Borbidge's amendment be reinserted".

The reason for this amendment is quite simple. At the end of the day, this Premier, who runs around Queensland—"Plastic Pete", who is pretending to be all things to all people—does not want a royal commission. What we are saying today is that, by virtue of our amendment, and then our amendment to Mr Elder's amendment, we will support the Government's motion. Not only that, we will also support the call for a royal commission in Queensland. We have taken on board the concerns raised by the Premier and his group of charlatans opposite, who seem to be so concerned about the terms of the second part of our amendment which states in part "reaffirm support for the fuel subsidy scheme". Those opposite seem to be upset by that section of the amendment which reads

"implemented by the previous coalition beyond the next election".

We will take that out of the amendment. We will make this matter simple. This is about the Government and all members of this Parliament putting their names to this motion and saying that they are prepared to support the continuation of the fuel subsidy scheme beyond the next State election. We have received no commitment in that regard from the Premier or the Treasurer. That is what today's debate is all about.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House, because the Government is committed to subsidising fuel well past the next election and into the future. I ask that those comments be withdrawn. They are offensive because they are disparaging to the Government.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! There was no reference to you.

Mr HAMILL: There was.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did not hear it, I am sorry. You have made your point. I call the member for Warwick.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The issue is quite simple. Why would the Government want to remove that section of our amendment that states that this Parliament should support the fuel subsidy scheme? Actions speak louder than words. The Treasurer has made his position quite clear.

What problem does the Government have in supporting the Opposition's amendment which starts with the words "reaffirm support for the fuel subsidy scheme". There is no problem in that whatsoever.

Mr BREDHAUER: I rise to a point of order. Just to make it clear, the assertion by the honourable member for Warwick that the Government has deleted the words "reaffirm support for the fuel subsidy scheme" is incorrect. For the edification of the member, that is not our amendment.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I accept what the Minister says, but the issue is that the Government must support the subsidy. It is imperative that the Government also supports the establishment of a royal commission in Queensland. It is also important that this Government supports bulk end users in this State. Bulk end users have been vilified and attacked by the Labor Party.

In Parliament this morning we saw the Deputy Premier being forced to move a motion to support the Premier. He attempted to dig the Premier out of the mire in which the Premier found himself earlier this morning. The

Premier came in here with what he thought was a very good idea and he has been slated. I have not seen such behaviour from a Government since some years ago when the member for Keppel stood up to move a motion with regard to support of the bush children's scheme in Rockhampton. The guru on the other side, the Leader of the House, took on the honourable member for Keppel. We saw between 20 minutes and half an hour of complete and absolute slating of the Government. Today, we are in the same type of situation.

This Government does not want a royal commission. It also does not want to support bulk end users who have an administrative hurdle to jump over in regard to this particular scheme. The Government is running away from Parliament in December. Today the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party called on Mr Beattie to give a commitment that the Government would have question time and run Parliament in the first week in December, which is a scheduled sitting week. We have received no commitment from the Premier on that matter. We seek a categorical guarantee that the Parliament will sit during that week.

It is quite clear that the Government is running away from what is unfolding at the Shepherdson inquiry. Those opposite are running away from the problems which are engulfing this Government in the electorate. This Government does not want to come back to Parliament in the first week of December. The simplest thing for the Government is to give a categorical guarantee that we will come back here in December and we will have question time. We need to do that because it is necessary that we keep this Government accountable for its actions.

We also need a guarantee that tomorrow members of the Government will not come in here and pull another stunt and seek to close down question time. Those opposite are running away like dingoes with their tails between their legs. They are not prepared to stand here and debate that issue.

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General will cease interjecting.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would like the member for Southport and the member for Warrego to stop interjecting. Interjections should be reasonable. I believe interjections have reached the stage of being

unreasonable at the present time. I cannot hear the member for Warwick.

Mr SPRINGBORG: This Parliament can adopt a bipartisan position. We have said that we will support the Government's motion. We do not quibble over concerns about fuel excise and calls on the Federal Government not to proceed with the fuel excise increase. We have no worries about that whatsoever. Dr Watson said that at least three or four times. Honourable members opposite are unable to understand that.

When the Premier moved his motion, those opposite made it quite clear that they did not want to hear any mention of the Opposition's involvement in the subsidy scheme. We are happy to support the motion, however, we want to see a royal commission. We also want to see bulk end users taken into consideration. Service station operators will be faced with one of the most onerous administrative processes ever.

Anyone who has spoken to service station owners understands the problems they have in their accounting process. A short time ago the Treasurer talked about business activity statements and GST compliance. These people have not seen anything yet. They are saying, "How are we going to put in place an accounting system that puts a GST on something and no GST on a subsidy system?" The Treasurer is expecting service station owners to ask someone who has a 44-gallon drum on the back of his truck whether he wants it at a subsidised or unsubsidised price, depending upon whether it is to be used on road or off road. He is also expecting bulk end users to carry their administrative costs for three months. If they owe the Treasurer anything, they have to pay within a week; if the Treasurer owes them something, it will take three months for them to be paid. They are going to carry \$80,000 or \$100,000—in some cases even more.

Farmers have not been accused of indulging in rorts, but the Treasurer is expecting them to install fuel meters on their diesel tanks. When they fill up the tractor they have to write it down. When they fill up the farm ute they have to write it down. When they fill up the farm truck they have to write it down. If a farmer has a four-wheel diesel motorbike—and there are some of them around—the same situation applies. Those opposite do not care about these things.

Mr Horan: You drive across the farm and then you have to go down to the paddock across the road. Then you have to count the mileage between off road and on road.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I understand that the Treasurer is moving towards installing a GPS system so that he can track everything that farmers do. He will be happy when that happens. That is the sort of nonsense that we are seeing from this Government.

I was intrigued when the guru from Woodridge, who has had a very illustrious career, started wandering around the Chamber earlier. He was carrying some sort of postcard. I looked at it, and my first impression was that written on the truck was "Townsville AWU". A little lady with a horrified look on her face was saying, "The AWU is at it again." Mr Kaiser was poking his head out of the truck and was saying, "This truck is not big enough to hold all the rorted votes." I think that is probably correct. The member for Woodridge, who was ALP State secretary when the Goss Government lost office, took the Goss Government from one of the biggest margins a Government ever had to no margin at all. That is extra special. The member for Woodridge managed to preside over that situation.

What did Labor do in response? The member for Woodridge, who now has a real question mark over his credibility, is now heading the Petrol Price Watch Committee that is looking at rorts. He should be able to track one down. He could not track an elephant through snow when it comes to ALP votes, but when it comes to tracking down the petrol companies he is right on their hammer. So far his contribution has been a postcard, a refusal to adopt a royal commission in Queensland and a refusal to speak out on behalf of those people who are going to be affected by the bulk end users scheme.

This Government talks a lot about openness, transparency and honesty, and the Premier clutches his heart and wrings his hands. He also manages to do a forward somersault with a backward pike at the same time. It is quite extraordinary to see. Just to show what a sham this whole process has been, a little while ago we wrote to the Premier and in that letter made a very simple freedom of information request. We wanted to know about all briefing notes, memorandums and correspondence—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. I am going to make a general statement about the rest of the debate. It appears that it is going to be a long debate. I think the motions and the amendments are quite clear. There has been some levity given to both sides, but I am going to insist on relevance. The Shepherdson inquiry is not relevant to this debate.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Callide to apologise for reflecting on the Chair, or else I will name him under Standing Order 124.

Mr SEENEY: I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. I seek a point of clarification. The Government used instances in which it accused the Opposition—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I am just saying that some general comment has been made. I want the debate to return to the motion. It is a very simple request. Relevance is fundamental to debate, so I am asking everybody to be mindful of relevance, and I will be strict on both sides. We will run the debate that way.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am a little concerned because I do not know what brought that about. I am not talking about the Shepherdson inquiry. My FOI request was to do with all documents that the Premier's office had prepared relating to the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not relevant to this debate. That is all I am saying.

Mr SPRINGBORG:—fuel subsidy scheme. Mr Deputy Speaker, could you at least exercise sufficient leniency in order that I might read my own FOI request, for goodness sake? My request was for all briefing notes, memorandums and correspondence prepared by public servants and received by the Premier relating to fuel pricing, the fuel subsidy and the establishment of the operation of the petrol price watch; all correspondence received or generated by the director-general in relation to fuel pricing, the fuel subsidy and/or the establishment of the operation of the petrol price watch; and all correspondence prepared by the Premier, the director-general or any staff involved with the petrol price watch that has been prepared by Mike Kaiser, MLA. That has cost me a minute. The reply that I received stated—

"Search results

A search was conducted of the records management system and physical searches"—

that means they have had a bit of a trawl around for all the gear they have—

"were conducted of the Office of the Director-General, the Office of the Deputy Director-General—Policy, the Environment and Resource Policy area, the Economic Policy area and the Cabinet Secretariat.

Our search revealed that three files contained documents falling within the scope of your FOI application. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet holds a total of 185 folios that relate to your request."

That is not a problem. The letter states further—

"Access decision and reasons

I have decided to grant you full access to four folios. I have also decided to refuse access to 181 folios."

This is an open and accountable Government! The letter states further—

"Details of my decision are set out in the attached schedule. The date of my decision is 23 October 2000."

Okay, a couple of documents were released. I will concede that. We received four documents. Firstly, we got access to a letter of 29 June from the Cabinet Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition. We got access to that! So this is an open and transparent Government. Secondly, we got access to a letter of 19 June from the Office of the Leader of the Opposition to the Department of Premier and Cabinet—something that we could have photocopied ourselves in our own office. This is really getting to the nub of this! Thirdly, we got access to suggested terms of reference for a petrol prices inquiry. Wow! Also we got access to one of the Premier's briefing notes of 3 March when he was heading out to Roma. Everything else was denied on the basis that it was Cabinet in confidence or part of the deliberative process.

That really goes to show that from the outset this Government has been completely covering up this whole process. If there was any evidence of systematic rorting of the fuel subsidy scheme, they would have been out there prosecuting people. Quite clearly, there has been a petrol price differential between Queensland and the other States of between 8c and 10c a litre. So if there are problems with petrol pricing—and I have no doubt there are—they are not related to the fuel subsidy scheme. If there is any demonstrable evidence out there, then surely it must be possible for even this Treasurer to track down 4,000 trucks a year.

This Government has been running away from this issue. A moment ago the Honourable Minister for Transport stood up and said that petrol prices were impacting upon bus drivers. Do members know what is impacting on the bus drivers? It is this Government, because the Minister for Transport has cut their

kilometre rate, because he says that they will be able to share in the benefits of the Federal tax reform scheme. There are letters that state that. The contribution of this great guru opposite, the member for Cook, has been to cut about \$18m out of Main Roads. He has gutted Mains Roads across the Darling Downs. So that is his contribution to putting money into infrastructure in Queensland. The members opposite deserve to be judged by that.

I have always said that I am concerned about fuel prices. I drive around my electorate and I know the cost. In my area petrol is not 76c a litre as it is on the Gold Coast Highway; it is 96c a litre and \$1 a litre. In the electorate of the honourable member for Gregory petrol prices are even higher. So that is what the people out there are putting up with. The members opposite do not really care, because the Ministers have their limos and their BP fuel cards and they are quite happy. They come into this place with mock—

Mr Robertson: As you do.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes, I have a fuel card, but I appreciate—

Mr Robertson: No, you're part of it.

Mr SPRINGBORG: My wife still has to fill up our vehicle at \$1 a litre to take our kids to school, which is an extraordinary distance. So the members opposite come into this place with all of this mock sympathy and start to carry on.

Where does Mr Beazley stand on this issue? Is Mr Beazley saying that he wants to freeze the fuel excise? He is a former Federal Finance Minister. Keeping in mind that the automatic indexation came about as a consequence of the Keating Labor Government, where is Mr Beazley on this issue? Is he going to cap the fuel excise? He has not said that he is going to cap it.

Mr Malone: He was one of the guys who brought it in.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Mr Beazley sat there. He has been deaf and mute. People would ask, "So? What is the difference?" Instead, Mr Beazley is out there talking about rollback—whatever "rollback" means. How is that going to impact upon people? When the Federal Government responded to the call from the Queensland National Party for more money to go into roads, Mr Beazley said that our rural roads are fine. Any non-Government member, any Independent member, any CCA member and, hopefully, any Labor member would also understand that rural areas have some significant issues. However, Mr Beazley does

not think that there are issues that should be addressed. So what is Mr Beazley's stand on this issue?

Mr Horan: He is pork-barrelling.

Mr SPRINGBORG: He stands for pork-barrelling.

We know the Treasurer's form. He talks about sympathy. However, he is the bloke who tried to close one third of Queensland's rural railways. Did that hurt? It hurt a lot! The koala tunnel in the Redlands electorate hurt. Not only did it hurt the Government; it was going to hurt a lot of people, as well as the koalas. There was also net bet. This guru's idea was to introduce a fuel tax by abolishing the subsidy scheme and reducing the rego cost but then basically jacking it back up over a period. The Treasurer was also responsible for the uniform allowance and spoke about farmers' wives going into towns in cattle trucks to pick up the milk. Those comments really go to show the understanding of this Treasurer and this Government on this issue.

We are prepared to support the Government's motion, but we want the Government to be prepared to support a royal commission that will get to the bottom of the things that it does not want to get to. A royal commission will be able to show why we no longer have a price differential between diesel and unleaded fuel when traditionally diesel has had a price advantage of 10c a litre. We have seen a significant shift in that price, to the disadvantage of diesel. They are the sorts of things a royal commission would uncover. However, as the Leader of the Opposition said, the Government does not want a royal commission because it is scared that its own policy position and its own actions are going to be exposed. I think that, by its very actions, the Government has been exposed for its lack of sincerity.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I am going to call a member from this side to even it up.

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Speaker, they were dozing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am calling the member for Merrimac. The Whip informs me that a page has been found in the members' reading room. There are no identifying markings on it. Somebody might be missing a page. For the sake of convenience, we will leave it on the Speaker's table.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.50 a.m.): I second the amendment moved by the member for Warwick, Mr Springborg. This

morning we have seen just another one of the stunts by the Labor Party in a desperate bid to shift attention away from some of the real issues facing the Government. Much has been made of the Liberal Party position as to whether or not we support a freeze on the next rise in fuel excise due in February 2001. Anyone who can read the motion put before the House last night, anyone who has even a rudimentary understanding of parliamentary procedures, knows the position of the Liberal Party and all honourable members on this side of the House. Let me read again the motion that was agreed to, and not dissented from, in the House last night. It stated—

"That this House calls on Prime Minister Howard and the Federal Parliament to recognise the negative impacts on rural and regional Queensland, indeed all Queenslanders and all Australians, of the escalating fuel prices being experienced and freeze the fuel excise CPI price rise expected in February 2001."

That went through without a dissenting voice. Is there anything about this motion that members opposite do not understand? Do they not understand the meaning of "freeze" and "CPI"? Do they not understand that, by agreeing to the motion going through without dissent, everyone on this side—Liberal, National and Independent members—supported the motion? What is it that they do not understand? Where is the voice?

Mrs Edmond: Where were the Liberals?

Mr QUINN: The motion was agreed to. We all agreed to it. We, the Liberals, are members of the House. We agreed to it. What is it that members opposite do not understand? That highlights that this whole thing is just a stunt. But, further, what about the motion this morning, which stated—

"That the Queensland Parliament, recognising the extreme pressures on Queensland families and small businesses by the continual escalation of petrol prices, requests the Prime Minister, John Howard, and his Government to immediately give a commitment to Queenslanders that they will not further increase fuel excise in February 2001."

We have said that we will support that part of the motion. What is it about our position that members opposite do not understand? Government members have said, "You're not saying anything about fuel excise, tax and other things." What is it that they do not understand? They are silent. The reason is

that this is just another stunt by the Labor Party to railroad us away from the real issues.

Mr Malone: To get away from question time.

Mr QUINN: Yes, to get away from question time, soak up the time of the House and close down Parliament in December and not come back—to do everything they can except face the real issues.

As I said, this is a stunt and it reeks of hypocrisy. Why does it reek of hypocrisy? We have only to go back and look at the previous positions of the Labor Party on this issue over a long period. The first instance that has come to my attention was in 1990. The Labor Party was in State Government and the Federal Labor Party was in Government in Canberra. Keating would have been Treasurer at that time. At that time, in this House, Mr Stoneman, who was then the member for Burdekin, came into the House to move a motion without notice. Under the Standing Orders in those days, we simply had to seek leave to move a motion without notice.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I said earlier on that I will demand relevance.

Mr QUINN: It is relevant.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! It is not relevant to speak about parliamentary procedures. The member will return to debating the motion and the amendments.

Mr QUINN: With respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, the motion relates to fuel prices and excise.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! So that is relevant to this motion?

Mr QUINN: Yes, it certainly is.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Okay. Let us hear it.

Mr QUINN: In those days, as Mr Deputy Speaker knows, we could not give full expression to the motion, we simply had to seek leave to move a motion without notice. Mr Stoneman managed to get this part of it out—

"That this Parliament requests the Federal Treasurer to set aside all windfall fuel price excise revenue."

The question was put. What was the result? The Labor Party in Government used its numbers to defeat the motion. All of the coalition members voted that the motion be debated. This was back in 1990, when Mr Beattie was sitting opposite. In 1990 the fuel price and fuel excise issue was first mentioned in this House. What did the Labor Party do?

They ran away from it. They would not debate it.

Mr Davidson: Who did Mr Beattie vote with?

Mr QUINN: I wonder with whom Mr Beattie voted.

Dr Watson: And who Mr Hamill voted with.

Mr QUINN: And Mr Hamill and everyone else. That is the first example of their hypocrisy on this issue.

Moving to the present day, there was a shambles when they tried to impose a fuel excise on Queensland motorists. The proposition was put forward by the Premier and the Treasurer that the subsidy scheme should be abolished, with 8.3c a litre being put back on the price of fuel and a trade-off in terms of registration fees. What reason was given? The scheme was being rorted! We calculated that, for the scheme to have been rorted to the extent the Government was claiming, 60 tankers a day would have to have been crossing the border. That is 420 tankers a week and 20,000 tankers a year going from Brisbane through the Gold Coast or along one of the western highways over the border.

Mr Seeney: Couldn't find one.

Mr QUINN: They could not launch one prosecution. They could not do anything about the 20,000 tankers churning up the highways. We would have been repairing the highways 24 hours a day, if 20,000 tankers were going across the border. But there was not one prosecution.

Again, we saw rank hypocrisy. The best one was the Premier standing up and saying, "We want the Commonwealth Government to implement a royal commission to find out why prices are high", knowing full well that he had the power under his own jurisdiction to do exactly that. What did he do? He ran away from it again. He did not want to have an inquiry into petrol price rises in Queensland. This was just another passing bandwagon that this populist Premier wanted to leap all over. If a bandwagon comes to Queensland, this Premier is all over it like a rash.

That is what this is all about—shoring up a populist Premier. Irrespective of what the issue is and irrespective of his position in the past, he does not worry about hypocrisy, humbug or anything else; if it is a way to get his photograph or name in the paper and his face on the television, he will jump on board. We have only to look at other issues such as Telstra and bank fees. They go on and on. He will leap on board issues he has nothing to do

with or very little control over. And when he does have something to do with it—

Mr Beanland: He runs.

Mr QUINN:—he will not do anything about it. He will run a mile when it comes to actually doing something about it. He should not come in here and say he is concerned, because he has the power to do something about it. He can have his own State-based royal commission to investigate why the anomaly is occurring. But does he want a royal commission in this State? Not a word! Silence is golden. They are not fair dinkum. They are using this issue for cheap political purposes. That is all they are doing. They are not fair dinkum about this.

If this Government is genuine, it will support the Opposition's amendments to this motion. If it is not genuine—I suspect it is not; and the evidence is there that it is not genuine, that this is just another diversion from the real issues confronting this State and that this is just another issue to hide its pathetic performance on a whole range of issues—of course we will see it defeated. They do not want a royal commission. They do not want to find out the facts of the matter. All they want to do is raise the issue, scurry away under a rock like rats and let someone else try to work out solutions to the problems.

What we have seen here this morning is the moving of a motion in the House, the Opposition moving reasonable amendments to it, the Premier realising that he has kicked an own goal, and the Deputy Premier coming scurrying back in trying to save the ball from going into the back of the net by moving another set of amendments. What is going on here is just a farce.

Mr Springborg: Sounded like a good idea at the time.

Mr QUINN: It sounded like a good idea at the time, but it has backfired, like a lot of other things that have gone on in this House in the last week or so. It looks good—

Mr Braddy: Smoked you out.

Mr QUINN: Smoked us out? We were never in hiding. We were on the record last night as having agreed to the motion. Where were we hiding? Again this morning we have said that we will agree to the motion. Where are we hiding? Nowhere! Again, just plain hypocrisy is exposed.

The amendments that we on this side of the House have moved to this motion deserve to be supported. If they are not, the hypocrisy, the humbug, the dishonesty of the Government will be there for everyone to see.

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (12 p.m.): I rise to support the Government's original motion and its amendments, because I cannot see how anybody in this House could possibly object. Let us forget the waffle and all of the filibustering and nonsense that we have heard simply so that members opposite could cover up the fact that they did not have one new question to ask this week. They have been taking up time of the Parliament which could have been better used than by going on with all this nonsense and filibustering. Let us forget all that and go back to the original motion, which says—

Mr Slack: You are filibustering.

Mrs EDMOND: The fly-by member for Burnett would not know the cost of petrol in Bundaberg because he never goes there. It is a long way from South Brisbane, isn't it?

The motion is a very simple one. There was no need for all the silly nonsense that we have heard from the members opposite. The motion says—

"That the Queensland Parliament, recognising the extreme pressure on Queensland families and small businesses by the continual escalation of petrol prices, requests the Prime Minister, John Howard, and his Government to immediately give a commitment to Queenslanders that they will not further increase the fuel excise in February 2001."

How could anybody in Queensland object to that motion? Could anyone in their heart of hearts object to that motion?

I have to admit to having a soft spot for the member for Moggill. He is in the neighbouring electorate out in the beautiful western suburbs of Brisbane. He is part of the illustrious class of 1989, and he has also filled me in on the gerrymanders that created the seats of Mount Coot-tha and Moggill and a lot of the shenanigans that continue to take place in the western suburbs in relation to the Liberal Party. He is an inoffensive chappie.

Mr Seeney: How relevant is this?

Mrs EDMOND: Unlike the member for Callide, the member for Moggill is an inoffensive chappie. But today's speech is the funniest I have heard in the whole 11 years that I have shared with the member for Moggill in this Chamber. After 30 minutes we still had no position on this issue from the member for Moggill.

Mr Seeney: That is not right.

Mrs EDMOND: He was given ample opportunity. He was given an extension of time. We would have given him a double extension of time if there had been any indication that that would have made it clearer. But he is not upright, he is not prone, he is not semi-prone. The only position that we could ascribe to him is that of supine—so supine that the Federal Treasurer and the Federal Prime Minister, Mr Howard, can walk right over him. It makes it easier to walk over him. But more than that, he is now more elusive than the scarlet pimpernel. They seek him here, they seek him there. In fact, they seek him everywhere. But he stands in this House and sincerely asks us to accept the position that, when he is silent, when he is invisible, when he cannot be found, when he cannot be heard, he is in agreement with us.

It is ironic that, while the member for Moggill is invisible, unheard of and unsighted in the debate—except when he is actually asked to take part and is given extra time to do so—the backbenchers opposite are asking the Government to intervene and to do things to ameliorate the effects of the increasing petrol prices. Honourable members should just look at today's Notice Paper in which the member for Charters Towers, by way of a question on notice, asks the Government to increase the subsidy to patients because of the effect of increasing fuel prices. This is not an isolated incident. I get a regular stream of these—

Mr Rowell: What's causing the increase in the prices?

Mrs EDMOND: The member will be saying that I should increase funding for this one or that one because of the effect of petrol increases. The answer is quite simple: the State Government has brought in subsidies to cater for petrol increases. Every time the member tells somebody to write to me about it, I write back to them and I point out that this Government already gives them an 8.3c per litre subsidy on their costs over and above the 10c per kilometre petrol subsidy. The State Government funds all users of petrol in Queensland. If the member for Hinchinbrook does not understand that, we will get someone to put it in words of one syllable.

Every time he tells somebody to write to me and ask for increased funding because of the rising petrol prices, whether it be for patients, domiciliary nurses or ACAT teams up in north Queensland, I write back and tell them that they should be contacting their Federal member and the Prime Minister and asking them to put a cap on petrol excise. The

member for Hinchinbrook is one of the best at calling for something to be done, but he does not bother raising it with his Commonwealth mates. And they also call on Queensland Health to increase funding because of the impact of the GST!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! This is getting away from the debate.

Mrs EDMOND: I understand that this is about fuel excise, but there are a number of increasing costs on Queensland Health that the State Government is being asked to deal with and not the Federal Government. I ask: is that a reasonable proposition?

Rural Queensland is the area that is most affected by this. I would have thought that those wimps opposite would have been out there getting their Liberal colleagues to put some pressure on Canberra, instead of just rolling over all the time.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mrs EDMOND: I know that the member for Gregory has spoken out, but he has not said anything to his colleagues.

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Quorum formed.

Mrs EDMOND: It is very disappointing that only two members of the Opposition have the slightest interest in reducing the cost of fuel to the people of Queensland, particularly the people in rural Queensland. I think that is an indictment in itself.

Much has been made of agreements signed and the figures that were given then. I can assure honourable members that the figures given at the time of the signing of those agreements were given by the Commonwealth, and were clearly misleading. We have to ask why the Commonwealth Government clearly wanted to mislead the States over the funding that would become available through these measures.

I know from the Queensland Health experience that the Commonwealth Government cries poor and says that it cannot afford to fund a number of things, for instance, the Health Outcome Cost Index, or HOCI. The Commonwealth Government says that it cannot afford to give Queensland Health—the people of Queensland—the amount that it agreed to, yet it is now talking about a \$5 billion surplus. The Commonwealth has so much money that it does not know what to do with it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am going to ask for the final time that the Minister for Health return to the motion. I have said that I am going to be even-handed. I am asking the Minister to return to the motion. We are not debating Health; we are debating a motion and some amendments to that motion. The debate is about fuel, fuel excise, royal commissions and bulk end users.

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is the extra funding from the fuel excise which is loading the coffers in Canberra and which makes it possible—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to get back to the debate. I will not allow her to continue in that vein.

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Deputy Speaker, that is exactly the point of this debate. On the one hand, the Commonwealth Government is starving the States of funding it has agreed to whilst on the other hand it is ripping funding from the States through increases in fuel excise which then have to be subsidised by the State. It is a double whammy to all players in this State, to the people of Queensland and to those providing services in Queensland. It affects people in relation to health. Those people trying to access a doctor, hospital care and so on have to pay the escalating price for fuel each and every time. It has a significant impact on service delivery in health.

With the increase in excise funding that the Commonwealth is receiving, it could afford to pay the full HOCI it agreed to in all written agreements. It could afford to pay Queensland the \$50m shortfall in nursing home subsidies. It could afford to pay the \$60m a year highlighted in a Senate inquiry that Queensland is underpaid in the MBS and PBS payments. The Commonwealth says it cannot afford to, but clearly with a slush fund of \$5m being generated from the fuel excise it can afford to. More importantly, the people of Queensland should demand that they are represented and that the Commonwealth Government is made to pay that account.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (12.11 p.m.): There are quite a few amendments before the House; I support the original motion before the House. I also support the Opposition amendment. By virtue of the fact that I support those, I support the third amendment also. Therefore, I support all of them. However, I do not understand what the problem is. When I talk to farmers and people in the street in my electorate, they all say that the fact they are paying too much for petrol is upsetting them. They are paying \$1 a litre, 97c a litre or \$1.06 a litre depending on

the day of the week, while people in Brisbane and the Gold Coast pay 79c and 80c a litre. These price differences have always existed, but when petrol reached the \$1 a litre barrier it started to hurt, especially in north Queensland where one has to drive long distances to get anywhere. It is 75 kilometres of steep roads from my home to Cairns. It takes more fuel to get up the Gillies Highway than it does to drive on 75 kilometres of flat land. Everybody knows that. The operators of trucks carrying produce to and from the tablelands have to pay for fuel as well.

Therefore, fuel prices are the key issue for people in north Queensland, regardless of whom I speak to and regardless of their political colour. I speak to diehard Labor voters. I speak to greenies. I speak to those who vote for the National Party. The simple fact is that they are all saying the same thing: we are paying far too much for fuel even though we take oil from our own reserves. Something like 60% of the fuel used in this country is taken from our own reserves, yet under the world parity pricing scheme we are paying world prices for it.

I have heard all the arguments from both sides of the Chamber, but it is absolutely ridiculous that we are debating this motion today. My family, all the families living in my street in Malanda and all the families living in the area I grew up in have always voted for the Nationals. From the day I could vote I, too, voted for the National Party. When I was in Victoria and there was no National Party, I voted for the Liberal Party. I have been a conservative voter all my life.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr NELSON: I have not just been let down; I have been devastatingly let down. The first thing that let me down was firearms laws, and this is relevant because it gets to the heart of this matter. I am not a gun nut, but I get as much pleasure from shooting as the next person.

Mr Knuth: They support firearms—

Mr NELSON: The member for Burdekin raises a valid point. It was not so much the fact that firearms were taken away but the fact that we could be betrayed in such a manner by a party which has represented us for so long. No matter how much I am glared at by members on this side of the House, the issue which will come home to roost at the next election is fuel pricing. People who have voted National all their lives are saying that, if a conservative Government can do this, what will a socialist Government do? However, it is bad enough that a conservative Government is doing this

to us. It is bad enough that the Prime Minister was not happy with screwing the bush twice, but now he wants to do it a third time with petrol prices.

Mr Knuth: We need an alternative.

Mr NELSON: We certainly need an alternative.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I have been tolerant of the member for Tablelands. I know he is trying to make a point, but I think he should get back to the motion before the House.

Mr NELSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, in deference to you, I will come to the point, but everything I have said so far has related to fuel prices. Fuel prices drive everything. How much people pay for fuel relates to how much they will pay for a gun, food and so on. Everything comes down to how much people pay for fuel. The cost of moving things around the State all comes down to the price of fuel. That is the main reason for price hikes in items like bread, milk and food. Every single facet of our day-to-day lives is affected by fuel prices. The reason for these problems is that we are paying far too much for a commodity. For example, countries like Indonesia pay less than half the price we pay for fuel.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr NELSON: That occurs regardless of what the member for Hinchinbrook wants to say.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr NELSON: I am not talking about England; I am talking about countries in South-East Asia. England is on the other side of the world. The problem with people like the member for Hinchinbrook is that they say one thing in north Queensland but say a completely different thing here.

Mr ROWELL: I rise to a point of order. I ask for that statement to be withdrawn. It is totally incorrect.

Mr NELSON: I withdraw.

Mr ROWELL: I will be going up to his electorate next week to make sure that he is well aware of what I am saying there.

Mr NELSON: That is a perfect example of people like the member for Hinchinbrook and National Party candidates running around my electorate saying that they are going to do all these wonderful things. What happened when the National Party had a Minister up there? He could not deliver jack. He got voted out because he could not deliver jack. That is why he got voted out, and the member knows it. It is no good telling the people that the National

Party will stick up for them when he knows it damn well cannot. That is why we do not have Tully/Millstream and that is why he got voted out at the last election. The member damn well knows it and has not changed his colours yet.

The Nationals should have come in here, supported this motion and stuffed the Liberals out the door like they were supposed to, which is what people like me voted the National Party in to do. It has not done it. The simple fact is that people like me who have voted for the National Party all their lives will never vote for it again. I will die before I vote for the National Party again. People can only be sold out once. I would rather vote for the devil than vote for the Nationals, and members know that.

There are many people in my electorate who feel exactly the same way. Regardless of how many people here get returned at the next election, regardless of how many Federal members get returned, regardless of the fact that the party I was voted in for is now defunct, the simple fact is that the feeling that brought that party about still remains. People can only be sold out once. This made me so angry that it is why I am here today. It is the only reason I am here.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr NELSON: I would have been quite happy to stay in my previous employment for the rest of my life—

Mr Seeney: You sold her out.

Mr NELSON: This scumbag here is probably the prime cause for the hatred, because this man is the ultimate politician. He does not care less about anything except for his parliamentary pay packet.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The word that the member used was unparliamentary and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr NELSON: I withdraw.

If nothing else can be a wake-up call to this Parliament, it should be the fact that people where I come from are speaking out on this matter. It is not just people where I come from but people throughout Australia. We have seen the Western Australian Government say something about this and a Western Australian Liberal do something about it.

The fact of the matter is that this hurts the Queensland conservatives more than anything else, because in this State we have a proud tradition of having a National Party dominated Government under people like Sir Joh. I tell you right now that on my wall in my office I have a picture of Sir Joh, because he was a

man who understood these sorts of issues, regardless of what Labor Party members say and regardless of what some of the National Party members who sold him out say. He was a man who came into this Parliament without education, without degrees in economics and all that sort of stuff. Regardless of what people think of what he did, he ran this State like a well-oiled machine for 32 years. This State was one of the richest States in the Federation. Regardless of politics, people must admit that under Sir Joh this was one of the richest States in the Federation and was capable of great things. It could outclass States like Victoria and New South Wales simply because it had a strong mining background, a strong agricultural background and the cheapest fuel in the country. You could drive from one end of this country to the other, but in Queensland you would pay the cheapest fuel prices.

Mr Kaiser: You still can.

Mr NELSON: I know that.

Mr Seeney: Thanks to the National Party.

Mr NELSON: No—and this is where the member for Callide has to think long and hard about what he says—thanks to the old National Party, because as soon as Mike Ahern got in here, things changed dramatically, and they did not change for the better. As I said, regardless of whether I or any of the people around me are re-elected—because everyone has seen what sorts of dirty tricks can be played in terms of preference deals and all that sort of stuff—a message has been sent.

Mr McGrady: Would you give me your preferences?

Mr NELSON: Vote 1, and that is the way it should be. Nothing should illustrate that more than what is occurring in America at the moment. I do not want any preferences; I am not interested. Don't even bother. Just going off the point for a second, my message now is: don't even bother coming near me. I am not interested. Do what you like.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): The member should not allow interjections to waylay him from his speech. We are talking about fuel.

Mr NELSON: Those rogues!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will protect the member from that.

Mr NELSON: My overwhelming anger on this subject could be no further highlighted than the fact that, from time to time, I am basically forced to vote with the Government. I must remind members that I am not a National Party member; I am not a Liberal Party

member; I am not a member of the ALP. I am not a member of anything any more, because the party I supported left me. I did not leave it; it left me because of problems it had. Being a person of my word, being the person that I am, I had to do what I had to do, and I have been justified in the decisions that I made earlier in my term, regardless of what these people think. If they think for a second—

Mr Seeney: Pauline got you the job and you were the first out the door.

Mr NELSON: Pauline did not get me anything. My hard work and the hard work of those parliamentary members from my former party got me elected. If what the honourable member suggests were the case, we would have 89 members of One Nation in this Parliament. If the member seriously believes that—

Mr Seeney: You wouldn't have even got the vote without her.

Mr NELSON: Sir Joh got the member for Callide where he is. He certainly did not get himself there, because he is a joke. That fact can be highlighted no better than when we stood out the front of this Parliament in support of the dairy farmers. This joke to my right would not support the dairy farmers. He knew he wanted to, but he could not support them. The member for Callide left it up to me and the member for Barambah because he could not support them because his party would not let him. He was shut up, nailed to the floor and told to behave himself.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I now ask the member to return to the debate. I know some members are enjoying this contribution, but I ask the member to return to the subject of the debate.

Mr NELSON: I will come back to the point. The point of the matter is that when you are a member of a political party that you know is going down the wrong track, sometimes you speak out. Fuel prices is one such important issue, and we have seen certain members say things about fuel prices because they come from country areas; they know exactly what they are talking about when they are representing their constituents in the bush, and that is why they will continue to get the support of the people in the bush, because they are trying their hardest to represent them.

When you are a member of a party that you know is going down the wrong track on a subject like fuel prices, and when that frustration is palpable and you want to say something about it but you know you cannot because you are affiliated to the party that you know is hurtling down the wrong track on this

subject, you get frustrated and you come out and say things, and that is why day in, day out we hear points being raised about certain members saying this and certain members saying that. The Federal member for Dawson is one of them; the Federal member for Kennedy is another. You know these people are frustrated; you know these people are angry; you know these people can see their party hurtling down the wrong track; you know that deep down inside they feel exactly the same way as you do, but through loyalty you do not speak out.

There is nothing wrong at all with loyalty; in fact, it should be encouraged. But there is nothing more poisonous to this world than misplaced loyalty, and there is nothing more dangerous to society than following people like our hopelessly inept Prime Minister down the path of destruction for no apparent reason other than that you signed up and joined some wonderful political institution that can no longer help itself but blindly follow a coalition that is no good for the country, that is driving it into the deck.

I stood at a meeting in Mareeba and watched the 2IC of our nation, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Anderson, tell farmers a whole heap of things. Many questions were asked about the problems we are having as a society. But I watched him stand there and basically snub off those people. The member for Hinchinbrook was there; he will know full well what the Deputy Prime Minister did and did not say. He snubbed them off. He said things like, "We need only 30,000 farmers in real terms." The Deputy Prime Minister, the Leader of the Federal National Party, said those things. I then stood up and asked the Deputy Prime Minister, "As the 2IC of this nation, if you can't be held accountable for our problems, who can? Your party has been there for six years. If you can't be held accountable for our problems such as fuel, if we can't come to you as the Deputy Prime Minister and say that there is a problem with fuel, who can we come to? You were elected to represent the rural parts of Australia. If we can't come to you, who can we come to? What do you want us to do?" We have a proud tradition in this nation—

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr NELSON: I expect that from the Labor Party; that is why I do not hold it against them. They are my opposition. I am a conservative; they are socialists. Marxism killed 30,000 people in China in three years. I expect it of them.

The point is that we have a proud tradition in this nation of finishing wars but not starting them. We have a proud tradition in this nation of not resorting to violence and not resorting to any other method but democracy in voting to solve our problems. But this is a problem that is not going away. You can destroy what was, at the last State election, 25% of the people by undermining, by fighting, by doing all sorts of things, but when you drive people underground; when you give them no further choice; when you give them no recourse for their actions because you will not change your ways regardless of how the people scream, regardless of what the people want; when you go to central party meeting after central party meeting and hear people saying exactly the same thing; when you walk up and down the streets of the country towns in this State like Atherton, Mareeba, Ayr, Home Hill and Rockhampton; when you walk around this State, like members of the National Party used to, and hear this time and time again, eventually one day you have to do something, because if you don't and if you continue to go down the path that we are currently following; if you continue to make people pay \$1 a litre for fuel; if you continue to drive—

Mr Johnson: Our fault again?

Mr NELSON: I am not blaming the National Party entirely, and I said that right at the start. But as a voter, as a conservative, who else can I vote for? What am I supposed to do when we are let down on subjects like that? What are we supposed to do?

I watched my uncle and my father go off to party meetings when Gilmore was the Minister. Nine times out of 10 he would not turn up, and National Party members know it is the truth. What were they supposed to do? They turned around and said, "Well, we have to get somebody to do something about this", and I am referring to the Tully/Millstream situation. You cannot do this to people. Eventually, one day, you have to stand up and fight for them.

To get to the point: to me, this motion presented a chance for the National Party to say, "Yep, why not? Let's give John Howard a slap. Can't hurt. It's what the people want." Regardless of what the member for Callide thinks, it is exactly what the people want. As I said, I will support the amendment because I think that there has to be something said. No-one has got clean hands on this issue, but here is a chance for us to do something. Let us not pussyfoot around with amendment after amendment. Let us get it done and let us as a State put some pressure

on the Federal Government like we used to. Queensland has always been a State that has been able to put pressure on the Federal Government and make it bend. That is the sort of State we have always been. Let us stick to that and do it here, because this man who calls himself our Prime Minister is driving us into the deck and he has not even tried to hide it. Do not get me wrong, we need funding for our roads, but he has not even tried to cover up the fact that he has taken the money away to spend it to try to get himself re-elected at the next election.

I welcome the road funding, but I fear that the Prime Minister is not listening. I fear that the Prime Minister might get re-elected because he built a two-lane highway between Atherton and Mareeba, but he has not listened to the main point. He has forgotten. Coalition members ignore that at their peril because I know thousands of people like me—and there must be thousands more out there—who are hurting. I beg the coalition parties—Mr Borbidge, Mr Beanland and Dr Watson—to get on the phone to the Prime Minister and tell him that this is not acceptable.

Time expired.

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Sunnybank—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (12.31 p.m.): I rise in support of the motion moved by the Premier. Can I just say before expressing my grave concern and alerting the House once again to the impact of rising fuel prices, particularly on volunteer emergency services, I make reference to the speech of the member for Tablelands. The member for Tablelands knows that since he has come into this place I have opposed just about everything he has ever said, but in due deference to him, I have to say what we just witnessed was perhaps one of the best speeches that I have witnessed in this place. It went to the very heart of this matter. To see the members like the member for Callide, the member for Gregory, the member for Hinchinbrook and others squirm as he went right to the heart of the problem of the impact of fuel prices in rural Queensland was a delight to watch. I will give him due credit for that, because he is quite right; the National Party did lose the plot. The fact that he is here today is proof that those opposite have in fact lost the plot. This is what this motion is in fact all about.

Look at my own portfolio of Emergency Services. I have risen in this place on numerous occasions expressing concern about the impact of rising fuel prices on volunteer emergency services—the rural fire brigades, the SES, the surf-lifesavers and

others—85,000 volunteers across Queensland. What did we do? When we recognised the problem, we took action. What does the National Party want to do when it has been dragged into this debate embarrassed by its own ineptitude and impotence in relation to this issue? It wants to set up a royal commission. It does not want to deal with it straightaway. It says, "Let's book some more lawyers; let's throw plenty of money in to pay outrageously priced lawyers in a royal commission."

What we do is get on with the job. That is why last month I set up the rural fire task force to look at this particular problem of the impact of rising fuel prices on our rural fire brigades. Because, as members opposite would know—if they ever in fact go back out to their electorates—this year we have suffered one of the busiest bushfire seasons in our history. In one weekend alone just over a month ago we registered two and a half thousand fires in south-east Queensland alone. And who turns up to those fires? Our rural fire volunteers! And how do they get there? They have to take their trucks. What goes into the trucks to get them there? Fuel!

When I sent out a letter to our rural fire brigades telling them what this Government was doing to alleviate the stress that rising fuel prices had on them, I received this letter back from the Secretary/Treasurer of the Roadvale Rural Fire Brigade, from the electorate of Lockyer, I believe. It might just be instructive for the members opposite to listen to what a person in rural Queensland is saying about rising fuel prices. The letter states—

"Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter dated 20th October highlighting your Government's concern at rising fuel costs & the financial & administrative burden of the GST. You mentioned that brigades who budgeted for fuel at 70-80c a litre are now paying over 90c a litre. Well, that was last week! The current price ... at the pumps in Boonah is \$1.025 a litre—and we use two litres just getting there to fill up.

Roadvale brigade budgets for 1000 litres of fuel to run it's two appliances per year and the cost of that fuel has risen by \$225 since June. ... (During the recent fires, the trucks travelled approx. 1600 Km)."

In one month they exceeded by 50% what they usually budget for in a year. The letter continues—

"Rural brigades use fuel for other reasons than 'filling up the tank'. Drip

torches ... in chainsaws as well as pump motors. The continuing rise in the cost of fuel is raising some concern & we look forward to the Queensland Government's initiatives to keep the costs to volunteer units down—as opposed to the auxiliary brigades who, I understand, don't pay the excise.

The impost of the GST on brigade administration is another matter & the closure of the Commonwealth Bank in Boonah hasn't helped. The meanness of the new tax system has been highlighted by the fact that all the information required by the ATO is accompanied by reply-paid envelopes. Now that we've reached the business end of the deal, the BAS comes with an envelope that requires a stamp.

Your initiative in sending your letter to me personally—as opposed to just addressing it to the Secretary—is appreciated & the brigade looks forward to your continuing involvement with us."

There it is, one of the real people who are out there doing it for Queensland as a volunteer of a rural fire brigade putting in one letter what this debate is really all about. It is about rising fuel prices, about the impact on our volunteers—our volunteers who turn out at every hour of the night or weekend to look after their own community and who are getting no relief from the Federal Government. Of course the only thing they do get from the Federal Government is this new tax system, which just adds to the paperwork and the burden on our volunteer groups. And, as the author of the letter says, at the business end of the deal after all the advertising has gone away they start sending stuff out and they cannot even shout a rural fire brigade the cost of a stamp. That is exactly how heartless this Howard Government is. That is why we are having this debate here today and that is why when we hear members like the member for Tablelands speak about the National Party forgetting where it has come from, it really hits home. I was sitting here and I was watching their faces. I was watching their jaws drop as they were thinking, "We have lost it. We cannot respond to what the member for Tablelands had to say."

I was reminded earlier on that the word of the week appears to be boondoggle. In fact, I was listening earlier this morning to the speech by the Liberal Leader and I was reflecting on the meaning of "boondoggle", which I understand is a small, insignificant piece of work. I thought: doesn't that sum up the

Leader of the Liberal Party nicely? What a boondoggle! His presentation here today was absolutely pathetic. He was given an extension of time. At no time would he breach his own party solidarity to come clean with the people of Queensland and admit that Howard has got it wrong.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: I hear the interjections of those opposite. What asinine objections they are. When are they going to stand up in this place for the people they represent? I am wondering at this point in time where my opposite number is. It has been three weeks since he has asked me a question in this place. He cannot even ask me a question on notice each sitting day, but when we are having a discussion about the impact of fuel prices on rural fire brigades, where is he? Absolutely nowhere to be seen! Just like when the alternative Leader of the House called for a quorum, who was missing? Just about every member of the Opposition. Where was the Opposition's support for its own amendment? The reason we did not have a quorum was that no members opposite were here, just as we have the absent member for Mirani, who goes around trying to pick up whatever scraps he can of any little bit of scandal in Emergency Services. When will he come into this place and deal with substantive issues like the impact of fuel prices on rural fire brigades, on the SES, on lifesavers and on every other volunteer arm of my department? Frankly, he does not care.

Last month I set up my own rural task force to inquire into the impact of rising fuel prices and the GST on rural fire brigades. I did something that those opposite never did. I immediately ensured that every fire brigade in Queensland had access to the Queensland Government petrol card. Do honourable members know when that system was introduced? That system was introduced in 1984! This is the only Government that has ever gotten off its butt and put the application forms in front of the rural fire brigades so that they could obtain some immediate relief. It sounded like a good stunt when those opposite brought it in, but they did absolutely nothing about it. This is an example of the type of practical help that this Government undertakes to give.

My rural fire task force is reporting to me this Friday. The task force will supply me with a list of recommendations on how we can provide further practical assistance to rural fire brigades. That is what being in Government is all about. That is what getting on with the job is

all about. What is the Opposition's solution—setting up a royal commission. Great! Fantastic!

Those opposite sit there mute and absurd because they know that this Government gets on with the job. We give practical assistance at the time when organisations are hurting most. All those opposite want to do is set up a royal commission and hire expensive lawyers. A royal commission would probably report in six months or a year. Meanwhile, rural fire brigades and SES units under the Opposition's stewardship would be closing. The gulf between this Government and those opposite is immense.

Each and every member opposite was nailed by the member for Tablelands. I look forward to seeing the reception that honourable members opposite receive when they visit the tablelands, because the 35,000 farmers will probably be joined by the 85,000 emergency service volunteers in this State. These people know that the Opposition did nothing. As evidence of that, the coalition introduced a fuel card subsidy for emergency service groups in 1984, and what did I find when I became Minister? No-one had ever applied for it! Those opposite stand condemned by their own inaction, and that is why this motion should be supported by every single member in this place.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (12.42 p.m.): What a charade we have just seen from the Minister for Emergency Services. The Minister grandstanded in the House this afternoon. People on the Labor Party's backbenches must be squirming in their seats, thinking, "What a poor excuse we have for an Emergency Services Minister." There are some very good people there.

I know that the Leader of the Liberal Party is not presently in the Chamber, but it was absolutely appalling to hear the character assassination by the Minister because of his size or some other characteristic. We are all different people, but we all have qualities. I say to the Minister for Emergency Services, as he gutlessly walks out of the Chamber, that he should show some understanding of other people. I just cannot believe what happened.

We are considering the motion moved earlier today by the Premier. We are also considering the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition, and the amendment moved by the Deputy Premier to that amendment. The one thing that we have to consider is the motion that was moved by the honourable member for Gladstone yesterday and which was debated in the House last

evening. That motion received the total support of every member of the Queensland Parliament. Not one member voted against the motion. All honourable members agreed that the Federal Government must freeze the excise increase in February 2001.

Today we are dealing with the same issue on which we all agree. Members opposite have contributed to this debate and have asked, "Where does the Liberal Party stand? Where does the National Party stand?" We stand for a royal commission so that we can see how we can address this issue and assist motorists, the manufacturing industry, transport operators, farmers, miners, the fishing industry—the whole bit. The Government's attitude indicates a cover-up. The Government wanted to dispense with question time so that the Shepherdson inquiry would not be mentioned in the House. This would allow the Government to cover up the bad behaviour of some members opposite.

I will touch on a couple of issues which have been raised by members opposite today and by the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade yesterday. Yesterday the Minister criticised the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, for his \$1 billion road infrastructure package. If the Deputy Premier is going to criticise that package, he is a damn hypocrite. I say very sincerely that that is exactly what he is.

I have here a media release issued by the Premier of Queensland, the Honourable Peter Beattie, on 28 August 2000. The headline of the press release is "Feds should devote fuel excise windfall to Qld roads". Did honourable members opposite hear that? I will repeat it: "Feds should devote fuel excise windfall to Qld roads". The first paragraph of the media release states—

"The Queensland Government is calling on the Federal Government to devote a large portion of its windfall from fuel excise on improving key parts of Queensland's road infrastructure.

'It should also forgo the next increase in fuel excise which will be driven up by the GST and is due in February,' said Premier Peter Beattie today."

The first part of that media release concerns more funding for Queensland roads. The Deputy Premier criticised the Federal Government's package. The Transport Minister also criticised the package. It will mean more dollars for Queensland roads. The money has already gone and cannot be returned to motorists. However, this is a fair way of compensating motorists. The package will

address the problem of the downturn in road infrastructure that we have seen in this State over the past few years.

When I became Minister for Transport in 1996, I was told by some very prominent people in the Department of Main Roads that during the Bjelke-Petersen regime Queensland was building and maintaining 800 kilometres of roads per year—building new roads and upgrading existing roads. Under the Goss Labor administration that figure dropped to 200 kilometres a year. That was a State disgrace. Whilst I was Minister for a little over two years the coalition Government managed to increase the figure to some 400 kilometres a year. At the same time, we increased Main Roads funding by \$250m a year and built the Pacific Motorway. The motorway has been completed and is a wonderful example of infrastructure and engineering design. I give credit to the people who built it.

The Minister for Transport and the Deputy Premier say that the money is not available to be devoted to road infrastructure. The coalition Government found the necessary \$750m to build the motorway. The construction of that motorway was of paramount importance. That money was new money. The Labor Party is now in Government and the Main Roads Department budget has decreased. The money for road infrastructure is not there. The funding for the RIP has decreased. A lot of the funding for road infrastructure is Federal funding and in many instances that funding has already been spent.

Those opposite do not have the honesty and integrity to stand up and say, "That is a Federal component. This is a State component." John Anderson announced the infrastructure package on Monday, but those opposite will not give credit where credit is due; they criticise for the sake of criticising. The Government has adopted a negative approach. I say to the people of Queensland that the Opposition will be highlighting this matter at the next election. I refer to one part of the press release that the Premier released. It states—

"It has only been the increasing contribution of the State and local governments that has meant that the overall level of funding for roads in Queensland has not fallen in the last few years."

The only reason why that has happened is that the National/Liberal coalition Government added that component to road funding in this State while we were in Government for those two and a bit years. The press release states further—

"As well as widening, rebuilding and realigning roads, it will be necessary to upgrade some bridges if roads are to carry higher mass limits."

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! Can I ask the member to relate—

Mr JOHNSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am relating it. I will come back—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have five minutes.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker. Just give me a bit of a go. I am telling the real truth here; you will get only the truth from me.

We are talking about money that comes out of fuel excise that goes back into roads. We are talking about the high cost of fuel in Queensland and in other States of Australia which is subjecting us to increased costs in other areas. The Government is saying that the money should be going back to roads. The money is going back to roads. But the members opposite have been critical. I think that is very poor statesmanship, or whatever they want to call it. I think the Government should be saying to the Deputy Prime Minister, "Yes, this is a very good thing." Can we be positive? Can we be progressive and go to the Prime Minister and say, "Listen Prime Minister, listen Deputy Prime Minister, this is how we see it. Can't we work through it together?" The Premier and the Deputy Premier have never done that.

All the Premier wants to do is come in here and boost his own ego and promote himself. He is a one-man band. He does not even give his Ministers a go.

Mr Palaszczuk: Fair go, Vaughan.

Mr JOHNSON: No. The Minister for Primary Industries is one Minister who does not get a go. We saw what happened with the dairy industry, of which the Minister for Primary Industries is the custodian. We saw the same thing happen in relation to many other industries in this State.

I call this document a blame document because of the poor economic management of the former Transport Minister, who is now the Treasurer. The Treasurer and this Government have now put the impost on the many service stations around this State to collect the 8.354c a litre and to return that to the appropriate authorities. I have to say that that is just another impediment to the cash flow of their businesses and a further impediment to their operations. It will push their overdrafts through the roof. There would not be too many businesses anywhere in the country that do not have some sort of

overdraft facility these days. This impost is certainly a further impediment to those businesses.

Another thing that the members opposite have to be aware of is the policy on which they came to Government, that is, the 5% unemployment target. The increase in fuel prices will certainly lead to an increase in the unemployment rate. When costs go up, the Government has to find ways of addressing that.

Mr Palaszczuk: What is the National Party policy on fuel prices?

Mr JOHNSON: The National Party policy is this: we will hold a royal commission to analyse and evaluate the situation in this State. The Government is in the driver's seat, yet it has done nothing whatsoever about it. All the Government has done is pass the buck. It has blamed the cross-border haulers. The Treasurer even named one of those haulers in this House, and he named the wrong person and the wrong company. That was a serious blow to the commercial integrity of some of these operators, and most of them are very good operators.

I said in this House last night that, at this very moment out in my electorate in the far-western town of Bedourie, unleaded petrol is \$1.16 a litre and diesel is \$1.25 a litre. If the people of Brisbane were subjected to those sorts of fuel costs, they would go stark raving mad; they would go off their heads. The only time that this Government said anything about fuel prices was when they started to rise up around 85c or 90c a litre and then climb up to close to \$1 a litre. That cost then started to bite residential people in urban Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and the south-east corner. For years people in rural, regional and remote Queensland have been subject to high fuel prices. It is something that we have always had to contend with.

However, we now have a situation that is out of control. That is why the member for Gladstone moved that motion yesterday about fuel prices. I am very proud that I supported that motion and spoke to it. It was about getting the Federal Government to freeze the excise come the CPI review in February 2001.

Today, the Transport Minister stood in this Chamber and talked about the impost of rising petrol prices on public transport and how they are leading to increased taxi fares. Rising petrol prices are not applicable only to those operators. I point out that it was this Government that reduced the subsidy to school bus operators. That shows how hypocritical some members opposite are.

It is all very well for the members opposite to stand up in this place and try to regain some of the credibility that they have lost in their electorates because of the innuendo about them at the Shepherdson inquiry. I say to those members opposite that this issue should not be made into a political football. This is a social issue and a business issue and it has to be addressed by honest, fair dinkum men and women who represent the 89 electorates in Queensland in this Parliament. Today, the Government has a perfect opportunity to take advantage of a situation and show leadership. The Premier can demonstrate that leadership by announcing the holding of a royal commission into the anomalies and problems that exist in relation to fuel prices in Queensland.

This morning, the Leader of the Opposition stated in this House that the price of unleaded fuel in the area heading towards the Gold Coast—I think it was Beenleigh—was 76.9c a litre. Out at Bedourie it is \$1.16 a litre. That is certainly a huge difference. It is an impost on people in rural areas. Again, this issue affects the pastoral industry, the mining industry and all of the other industries for which the Minister for Primary Industries is the custodian.

Many people do not realise that our primary industries keep this State viable and enable us to maintain the quality of life to which we have become accustomed. Again and again and again, primary industries create jobs for people who live on the eastern seaboard—whether that be the south-east corner or the northern coastal strip. A minority of people in regional and rural Queensland provide those jobs—in the electorates of Callide, Hinchinbrook and on the Darling Downs, a part of which is represented by the honourable member for Toowoomba South. However, that does not mean to say that we are going to disenfranchise the city or metropolitan electorates throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. Those people, too, have a right to cheaper fuel—to be able to go about their business, whether that be driving the family car, operating a local business, going to and from work, taking the kids to football, to school or whatever. Those people, too, have a God-given right to enjoy cheaper fuel prices.

Today, I call on the Beattie Labor Government to show leadership and to show some vision. It should forget about the politics. It should show some guts and determination to hold its own royal commission in this State to find out the real cause of the anomalies in petrol prices. If somebody is touching

somebody else, let us hear about it. At the moment, the member for Woodridge is conducting a petrol price watch inquiry around the State on behalf of the Premier. We would like to know the findings of those inquiries. He and the other members of that committee must be hearing about anomalies as they progress around the State. I hear about them every day. I have to say again that to deliver fuel to places such as Cunnamulla from Brisbane can be done for just under 5c a litre, but the people out there are paying \$1.04 a litre or \$1.05 a litre for it. That price differential cannot be substantiated.

If we continue debating this issue in this Chamber without agreeing to some genuine ways of addressing these anomalies, we are not being fair dinkum to the 89 electorates that we represent in this State. I again I call on the Premier to show some leadership today and immediately announce a royal commission into fuel pricing in Queensland.

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

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): Prior to the luncheon adjournment we heard a number of passionate speeches on the issue of fuel excise, and probably none more so than that from the member for Tablelands, who probably argued more about why people should not support the National Party than about why we have a problem with fuel prices. Queensland is the most decentralised State in the nation and we are affected by fuel prices more than any other. With more than half our population living outside the south-east corner, of course petrol prices affect the people of Queensland to a greater extent.

In his contribution to the debate today, the honourable member for Gregory bemoaned the cost of fuel west of the Great Dividing Range. But we have still seen no action in terms of trying to address those issues. The Opposition asks us to amend the motion to include a call for a royal commission. Today my question to honourable members is: what would a royal commission achieve for the people of Queensland? A royal commission would achieve, to a large degree, a loss of services for the people of Queensland, because it would cost us millions of dollars to conduct such a royal commission. It is ludicrous to think that by having a royal commission we will get to the bottom of the problem with respect to fuel prices.

This Parliament has been told that there have been numerous inquiries into oil companies and the cost of fuel, but at the end

of the day none of those inquiries, to any degree, has come up with a way to tie down fuel companies and their market practices in respect of fuel prices. A royal commission simply will not work. The National Party is putting its hand over its heart and saying to the people of Queensland, "What we will do for you is conduct a royal commission." Both the National Party and the Liberal Party should stand condemned for taking that position. At the end of the day, that will not achieve the desired result. If we passed the amendment put forward by the National Party and the Liberal Party in this Parliament today, a royal commission would not commence until into the New Year at the earliest. So we would be looking at January. By the time that royal commission brought down its report it would be about nine months down the track, even perhaps towards the end of 2001, with no relief to farmers and businesspeople throughout Queensland. What would a royal commission achieve? Very little at great cost to the taxpayers of Queensland!

It is simply not good enough for the National Party and the Liberal Party to stand up in this Parliament today and say, "That's our solution." At the end of the day, both the Liberal Party and the National Party control the purse strings in Canberra. The Prime Minister has been under intense pressure over several months from a number of quarters, none more so than the Labor Party in this country, to do something tangible about fuel prices. What we as the Government of Queensland are saying today is that the fuel excise rise due in February should be stopped. The Prime Minister should say, "No, we're not going to have that fuel excise increase." That would give some relief to the fuel users of Queensland. Everybody would agree that what has happened to the price of fuel is outrageous. For LPG to go up nearly 100% and for the price of diesel to go up about 50% in nearly 12 months defies all logic.

Mr Reeves: It's extraordinary.

Mr NUTTALL: As the member for Mansfield says, it is extraordinary. It defies any logic. But all a royal commission would do is shift the blame to somebody else. The Federal Government needs to act. Conducting inquiry after inquiry simply will not solve the problem.

What do we have here? We have the Queensland Liberal Party not agreeing with the Federal Liberal Party. We have the Queensland National Party not agreeing with the Federal National Party. There is an old saying that if you can't govern yourself you can't govern the country. That is the problem

we have with the conservative forces in Australia today. They cannot agree. Why on earth would the voters of this country vote for them and support them at the next State or Federal election when they cannot get their act together?

Today we see a very clear split in both the National Party at a State and Federal level and the Liberal Party at a State and Federal level. They are at loggerheads with each other. In my time in this party I have yet to see the National Party or the Liberal Party in Queensland having any effect whatsoever on the Federal coalition Government in terms of the delivery of services to the people of Queensland—none whatsoever. John Howard and John Anderson are saying, "We'll give the people of Queensland a one-off extra \$1 billion for roads." We will take that billion dollars—because it has been paid for by the fuel users of Queensland, anyway—but if they think that will buy off people and that it is enough to quell the anger out there, then they are not in touch with the electorate. They are not in touch with the people of Queensland, let alone Australia, if they think that a billion-dollar buy-off will make people be quiet and say, "We're happy with that." It is simply not good enough. It is an insult to the people of Queensland and all of those hardworking businesspeople and other people in rural Queensland to say, "We'll throw a billion dollars your way. Be quiet and go away."

If we travel in New South Wales and Victoria, we see the extent of the roadworks going on in those States. For years this State has been deprived of its fair share of money for roads. We have only to look at the state of the Sunshine Coast highway. It is a disgrace. I have spoken about that issue on several occasions in this House. All of the Federal electorates up to the Sunshine Coast are represented by members of the conservative Government in Canberra. Each one of those Federal members stands condemned for not standing up for the people of Queensland and demanding more money and for being happy to sit back and cop what we are receiving from the Federal Government at this time. We read reports in the newspapers about grumbling on the Federal backbench about this excise. But are the members actually coming out and saying, "It's not good enough, Mr Prime Minister and Mr Deputy Prime Minister. The people who voted for us are hurting. We need you to do something"?

Mr Reeves: They're weak.

Mr NUTTALL: As the member for Mansfield says, those representatives in the Federal Parliament are weak.

We know how much it is hurting the people of this State. Honourable members should look at how badly the taxi owners are hurting in terms of running their business. It is extraordinary to think how much it has cost them in terms of running their business. Let us look at the price of diesel fuel. I certainly will not stand here and say that I know how much diesel and how much fuel the rural producers use. But I can say that I am sure that those people who do run farms and properties are hurting a lot in terms because of the increase in fuel prices.

However, a royal commission will not help them today. When the bank is going to foreclose on them and they go to their Federal or State member and say, "I am in all sorts of trouble. I need you to help me," and the member says, "We will have a royal commission. That might help you," that is simply not good enough. It is simply not good enough for the people of Queensland; it is simply not good enough for the Federal and State National and Liberal Parties to stand in this Parliament, particularly the National and Liberal Parties here in Queensland—and it is really easy to do. They defy the people at the Federal level, but they stand here in this Parliament with their hand on their heart and say, "No, we should have an inquiry," but it does not solve the issue.

They have to go down to Canberra and say to the John Howards and John Andersons of this world, "We are not going to accept it anymore." Even in my younger days, when Jack McEwen was down there, it would not have happened, and the National Party members know that. When Jack McEwen was down there representing the National Party at a Federal level this would not have happened.

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: I do not know about Doug Anthony, but I certainly know that Jack McEwen would not sit back.

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: I say to the member for Burnett that I have read my history. I do understand a little bit about the National Party in terms of the way it operated in the past. They certainly would not stand there and cop this today. It is a cop-out for the people of the National Party and it is a cop-out for the people of the Liberal Party in this Parliament to stand here and come forward with an amendment to say, "We support a royal commission."

Mr Mickel: What about the ACCC? What is it doing?

Mr NUTTALL: The ACCC just sits on it hands. We may as well wipe the ACCC for all the good it does.

In concluding my contribution to this debate today, I say that John Howard, as our Prime Minister and as our national leader, is not in touch with the constituency of this country in terms of this issue. John Anderson, the Leader of the National Party at a Federal level, is not in touch with his constituency in terms of this issue. The National Party in Queensland is divided with the National Party at a national level. The Liberal Party in Queensland is divided with the Liberal Party at a national level. As long as they are divided, they are saying to the people of Queensland, "We are not fit to govern."

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (2.42 p.m.): I have some news for the Parliament this afternoon which definitely shows that the Labor Government is on the run and is running scared. They have already announced that they are going to close down the next week of Parliament, an important week of Parliament when we could have debated many private members' Bills and many notices of motions. It would have been an important week of Parliament, considering that this week all the annual reports have come through from various departments. That final week of Parliament would have given us a chance to have gone through those particular issues and to have discussed them.

Mr Reynolds: What issue is more important than this?

Mr HORAN: This is an important issue. We could have discussed and debated this again, too, during the next week.

Members opposite are running scared, frightened of the Shepherdson inquiry—absolutely terrified. Eight of them have been mentioned, and they are going to run away; they have not got the courage to stand here and face the music in the Parliament. After all, that is what this place is for: a place where the Government can face the music and answer questions.

Mr Reynolds interjected.

Mr HORAN: I bet "Whiskers" opposite will be the first one pleased to hear that it is closed down. He will be off back home and we will see neither hide nor hair of him down here. He has probably got his bags packed now.

It has been very interesting to listen to this debate today. Almost 100% of the speakers in this debate, in the debate last night and during the other mentions of the petrol issue in this Parliament, have been saying, "You can get

petrol in the south-east corner for 75c or 79c, but where we come from it is 89c, 93c, 95c, 98c." In the case of my colleague the member for Gregory, it is \$1.25 in Bedourie and \$1.22 in Birdsville. That is what everybody has been talking about. We have heard people on the other side pontificating nonstop about the excise increase, which is only one part of the overall price increase. It is an important part, but only a part of what we could do as a Parliament to try to bring about a fairer petrol price.

If honourable members analyse fuel prices, they will see that there are a number of areas where the fuel price is out of our control and there are a number that are under our control. One that is under our control is addressed in the first part of this motion, which is the capping of the excise. We agreed with that last night and we have agreed with it again today, but we should leave no stone unturned in addressing this massive differential in price across Queensland. We should leave no stone unturned in finding out why diesel is so dear when diesel is actually a cheaper derivative of fuel and why LPG gas is so dear when it has doubled from 29c to 58c.

Why would members opposite leave all of those aside? Why would they leave aside the issue of the bulk end users of fuel who currently cannot claim their 8.3c State Government rebate for three months? They can claim that rebate only on what they have actually used out of their tank, even though they have paid for the entire amount. They might have put 500 gallons in the tank, but they have to wait three months to claim it. If at that time they have used 300 gallons, they can claim the rebate on only that. Their money is being used by Treasury to earn interest.

I have given this Parliament about four areas in which we do have some control over the price, although we cannot control what the sheikhs of Arabia or the other oil exporting nations are charging per barrel of oil. These are probably the four areas over which we can have some influence. What does the Labor Party want to do? It wants to concentrate on only one of the four for hypocritical, political reasons. We have agreed on that one, but we also strongly and genuinely believe that there is a chance to make an even bigger difference with these other three.

Two weeks ago at our central council meeting at Kingaroy, the National Party in Queensland moved to have that excise capped. We showed our true colours, and we fought for that in a very strong and vigorous debate between people from all over this State

who are affected by petrol prices. We are on side with that. But why would the Government walk away from these other three opportunities? Why does it not want to have a royal commission if that commission could look at why the price is 75c at Beenleigh, why it is 89c in Toowoomba, why it is 95c in Chinchilla and why it is \$1.25 in Bedourie?

The member for Gregory spoke about cartage rates. He knows of a haulier at Cunnamulla who is carting fuel for 5c a litre. At 5c a litre it would cost somewhere in the order of \$2,500 for a B-double to cart 50,000 litres of fuel out there. That is what the haulier is making, and he is probably able to make a living out of that. It is costing 5c a litre to cart the fuel. If someone down at Beenleigh is selling fuel for 75c a litre, surely the stuff must be able to be bought in Brisbane at around 70c. If you cart it out to Cunnamulla for 5c a litre, that brings the price to 75c. If you put a 5c profit on top of that, that brings it to 80c. Surely somewhere between 80c to 85c would be a fair price out there, instead of up in the nineties, or whatever it is. The question is: what are they paying for the fuel in Brisbane? The problem is that deals have been done. Beenleigh can get it for that price. They probably buy it for 70c or 68c a litre. Why can't someone from Cunnamulla or Toowoomba get it at the same price as they do in Brisbane and just add on top the cartage and their margin?

Honourable members should look at the Warrego Highway. I have asked a question which the Premier and the Treasurer have tried to throw criticism at. I have asked a legitimate question on notice of the Minister for Fair Trading as to why there is a 9c to 10c a litre fuel differential between service stations on the Warrego Highway and Toowoomba, a distance of between 10 and 40 kilometres east of our city. Why is there that difference? It certainly has nothing to do with cartage because it would cost only about another 1c a litre to cart it up the range. It might cost 1.5c a litre to cart it from Hatton Vale or down to Marburg and up to Toowoomba in a B-double, a tanker or even a single semi carrying 30,000 litres.

These are the sorts of things that a royal commission should be looking at. If we are able to force these four issues, this Parliament could probably get the excise capped—and I understand that the excise is somewhere between 1.2c and 1.8c a litre. I have heard the Premier use the figure of 3c per litre. I think that is an exaggeration. But say it is 3c. Whether it is 1.2c, 1.8c or 3c, it is important to motorists throughout Queensland. Every little bit helps.

Let us look at the price differentials. Toowoomba residents pay 9c to 10c more for petrol than Brisbane residents. Residents in the electorates of my colleagues on this side of the House pay anywhere between 12c and 25c per litre extra—even 50c in the case of the member for Gregory. Surely a structured royal commission with guidelines could slash 10c, 15c or 20c off the price of fuel in western Queensland. Perhaps 5c or 6c could be cut from the price of fuel in Toowoomba. At Brisbane suburban service stations where consumers pay a higher price compared to larger retailers, perhaps the price could be cut by 2c or 3c. That is the difference a royal commission would make. Surely a royal commission can get to the bottom of diesel prices. Diesel is a derivative of fuel. It is the cheapest of all to produce. Why are we paying so much for diesel? Why is it dearer than petrol in many cases? Surely a royal commission could reduce the price of diesel by 10c.

What about LPG gas prices and the effect they are having on the taxi industry? Taxi owners pay thousands of dollars to fit their cars out so they can run their vehicles on LP gas. They did that because gas was cheap. This gas is produced in our own country. I know there are export parity arrangements and so forth, but LPG was 29c and it is now 58c. That being the case, there is a need for a royal commission to determine what is going on and whether the price of fuel should be that dear or 5c or 6c a litre cheaper. Members on the other side knock the idea of a royal commission when there is every likelihood—with the right people on the royal commission and with the right instructions, guidelines and time schedule—it could make a difference and potentially deliver to the motorists of Queensland a far bigger saving in cash every time they go to a bowser than that generated by capping the excise. On top of capping the excise, the savings I have outlined would start to make a real difference.

The Opposition's amendment to the motion calls on the Government to reaffirm its support for the fuel subsidy scheme beyond the next election. That is essential. We have to have that commitment. In previous years the Premier has indicated his support for a petrol tax and has always wanted a petrol tax. He said that in this House. He also said it in Toowoomba when he was Opposition Leader. That has always been his baby. He has always wanted to have a petrol tax. He tried to do that when he attempted to change the State fuel subsidy scheme to a scheme where people got \$150 off their registration. With that

scheme, he was not giving out as much as he was getting for the Government. He would have picked up something like \$75m. He tried it, but it failed. We need a commitment, and the National and Liberal Parties want to ensure that the fuel subsidy scheme is sacred to this State, that it is set in stone and cannot be changed by any political party.

The other part of our amendment calls on the Government to reverse its present policy of penalising farmers and businesses who are bulk end users. The fuel subsidy scheme being brought in at the moment is moving from a system which provided the subsidy through 170 wholesalers to one which provides the subsidy through 2,500 service stations around the State. Those service stations will be monitored and checked by providing bulk end users with a system whereby they claim the rebate after three months. However, they can claim it only for the fuel they have used. If they buy 500 gallons and use 250 gallons, they can claim the subsidy on only the 250 gallons used even though they paid for all of the fuel. There is an added complication in that they can claim it only for on-road use from that bulk tank, not off-road use. They have to keep a notebook to work out the amount of petrol used in the paddock and the amount of petrol used on a road.

Mr Borbidge: It could only be designed by Mr Hamill.

Mr HORAN: Yes, it is an absolute dog's breakfast. Apart from that, I ask members—whether National Party, Liberal Party, Independent or Labor Party—to think of trawler operators, fishermen, tourism operators, school bus operators, trucking and transport operators, parcel delivery companies, farmers with bulk tanks and those who live on acreage with their bulk tanks. Members should think of the hundreds of people in their electorate who have a bulk tank and who will be disadvantaged by this scheme. They will have to fork out the money three months before they can get the rebate. They will have to keep detailed book work about on-road use and off-road use. As I said, the scheme is an absolute dog's breakfast.

Service station operators will get 0.05c a litre to cover the extra work and book work they will have to undertake to deal with this scheme. Take a small suburban service station in a regional town which sells about 4,000 litres of petrol a day. At 0.05c a litre, they will get \$2 a day to handle something like 150 to 200 transactions through their service station. Take a bigger service station on, say, an arterial road in a regional city which sells about 10,000

litres of petrol a day. They will get \$5 a day. For the hundreds of transactions they will do from, say, 6 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night, they will get \$5 a day. This clearly demonstrates the difficulties with this scheme and the costs it will impose upon people.

I implore members of this House—whether Independents, National, Liberal or Labor—to think about the maximum result that can be achieved for the people of our State in reducing petrol prices. Are we going to come in here and be political smart alecs and have a go at one component only—the 1.2c to 3c per litre excise increase—or are we going to look at all four possibilities that could bring the price down substantially? There is no doubt in my mind that a properly set up royal commission with the right people on board could resolve these issues. It is pretty simple. It cannot be that complicated. We know that there is a price for petrol at one end. It has to be carted from point A to B, and there is a cost in that. The person at point B has to get a margin. If it has to be transferred from a bigger tanker to a smaller tanker, there has to be a margin there. At the end of the day, if we could get a fair price at the wholesale terminal and then add on those fair and reasonable costs we would be able to bring the price of fuel down.

Today's debate and previous debates on this issue have all been the same. People are saying, "Why is fuel so much dearer in our area than it is in Brisbane", or, as the Opposition Leader said today, in Beenleigh? Why is it? We all know that there is the potential for a 1.2c to 1.8c increase in the excise in February, and we have all agreed to fight against that. If we were successful in doing that, there would still be a 10c difference between the price in Brisbane and that in Toowoomba. There would still be a 40c difference between Brisbane and Longreach, Birdsville or Bedourie. There would still be a 15c to 17c difference between Brisbane and Chinchilla, but we would not have achieved anything in relation to this major problem that everybody has been talking about.

The motion before the House today and the subsequent amendments should satisfy every single member of this Parliament. The first part of the motion—

Mr Reynolds: It's a con. It's a big con, and you know it.

Mr HORAN: The member for Townsville, the king of cons, has said that this is a con. He is not prepared to take something like 8c or 10c a litre off the price of petrol for the people of Townsville. As I said, the motion and the

amendments proposed by the Opposition should satisfy every single member of this Parliament. Firstly, it contains the full motion moved by the Premier this morning. That should satisfy the Labor Party. For the rest of the Parliament, it contains a reference to a royal commission into the price differential between the where the fuel is warehoused at the major regional ports and where it is sold.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr HORAN: The member sounds like he is not interested in helping those people. Because he lives near the Beenleigh fuel station, he can get petrol for 75c. He is a hypocrite. He is not a bit interested. However, there is the possibility of a royal commission in relation to the dreadful price differential of between 9c and 40c a litre which exists across Queensland, and that is what is hurting people. If people think they are hurting paying 80c a litre, they should try 90, try 100, try 110, try 120 and see how it hurts. The royal commission also can delve into why on earth diesel is so expensive when it should not be and why LPG is as expensive as it is when it should be about half the price. That should satisfy everybody in this House.

I am amazed that Labor members do not want to address those three issues: price differential—and surely the member for Mackay would want to address that matter—the price of diesel and the price of LPG. Labor members just want to walk away from the matter and sidestep it. It makes us wonder why they do not want to have a royal commission. I believe it is because they are frightened. They do not want to do something. They want to engage in a cheap political stunt which may save people about 1.2c a litre when they probably could save them about 10c a litre.

An Opposition member: It's too hard.

Mr HORAN: It is all too hard.

The other part of the amended motion reaffirms support for the fuel subsidy scheme beyond the next election. That amendment was also moved by the Deputy Premier. We have agreed with that part by our final amendment. That should satisfy everybody in the House that the fuel subsidy scheme will continue, despite the fact that the system under which it is implemented is fraught with problem after problem.

Finally, the amended motion calls on the Government to reverse the present policy of penalising those farmers and businesses and bulk end users who have to wait three months before they can claim their subsidy. That

includes trawler operators, school bus operators, truck drivers, transport operators, farmers—anyone who has a bulk tank. Why would Labor members walk away from that? Given the interest rates those people have to contend with and their cash flow arrangements, Labor members are probably able to save them as much as the excise cap. Why won't they do it? Why?

Mr Reeves: Why don't you get Howard to have a national inquiry?

Mr HORAN: The first part of the motion calls on Howard to fix it.

What I have spoken about today is whether this House is honest and will address all those components and segments of fuel prices that are within the ability of either us in Queensland or those in Canberra to influence. This is about that part of the fuel price in relation to which it is within our control to bring about a reduction. It covers 100% of them, not 25% of them, as Labor wants to achieve with its motion. Here is a chance for us to do something, to be honest and sincere and cover the whole lot.

Time expired.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (3.02 p.m.): I rise to participate in this debate, and in doing so I acknowledge the contributions made by members who have already spoken in the debate. Accordingly, I do not intend to go over the matters that have been debated and discussed in detail. Suffice to say that I wish to place on the public record that I have concerns about the likely costs of the royal commission. Notwithstanding that, I am prepared to support the Opposition's amended motion when it is finally voted on.

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—CCAQ) (3.03 p.m.): I rise to speak to the motion on fuel prices. I agree with the Opposition's call for a royal commission.

Mr Reeves: Put a bit of "national" in it.

Mr KNUTH: I will come to why I am supporting this royal commission. There is a lot of confusion over who is actually to blame. Representing a rural electorate, I have farmers and other people coming into my office every day. Other than being upset with the high prices of petrol or diesel, the main question people ask is: who is to blame? They ring up their Federal member; they ring up a State member. It doesn't matter which political representative they ring; one blames the other. So who is to blame?

I want to read from an article that appeared in the Townsville Bulletin on 28 September. The subheading is "Operators

between rock and a hard place". The article states—

"North Queensland quarry operators faced with massive fuel costs say they have been left high and dry by State and Federal governments."

There we go again: "State and Federal governments". The article continues—

"The operators say they have been left to the wolves while their counterparts in the mining industry are handed fuel subsidies.

Greg Rains of Nordev Contractors, Townsville, said quarry operators were being penalised for being off-road users.

'We're paying the extra fuel excise of 35 cents a litre, the State Government off-highway levy of 8.354 cents a litre and the GST on top,' he said.

From October 1 the State Government's off-highway levy was expected to rise to 8.6 cents a litre, he said.

Brad Torta of (a) fuel distributor (from the Burdekin) said the 8.354 cents a litre was a sleight of hand on the part of the State Government.

'They are getting 8.354 cents a litre from the Federal Government and they are not passing it on to quarry operators,' he said.

Burdekin quarry operator John Fahey said the Federal Government had repeatedly left the industry out in the cold when it came to fuel subsidies.

'At the last Federal election all off-road diesel was to be eligible for a rebate. Come July 1 we still didn't have it,' he said.

'The State Government elected to pass on 8.354 cents a litre to Queensland motorists but because we were off-road users we weren't eligible.' Mr Fahey said his margins were tight and he would have to cut costs, possibly by shedding staff."

At this point in the article, a change occurs. It states—

"Federal member for Herbert Peter Lindsay said the Government wanted to provide the diesel fuel rebate to all users, including off road. 'We took this to the election last time round and it still hasn't happened. We would change the rule tomorrow if the Democrats and the ALP would change their minds,' he said. He said he could understand why quarry operators were angry.

The Democrats and the ALP had used the Senate to block the extension of the diesel fuel rebate to off-road users."

I repeat: "The Democrats and the ALP had used the Senate to block the extension of the diesel fuel rebate". My point is: who is telling the truth here? We have two different political parties, both of them right here and now blaming each other: "You're the problem"; "No, you're the problem". The royal commission is the only way to get to the source of the problem.

Mr Reeves: It's got to be a Federal one.

Mr KNUTH: Why doesn't this Government set the example and start it off, and then we will put the onus back on the Federal Government. We will see whether the two inquiries match. We will see whether they come to the same conclusion. Maybe they will. But that is what we need.

The member for Toowoomba South raised a valid point: why is diesel more expensive than regular fuel? It should not be. It needs less refining. Why are we paying more? I smell the Democrats in this. The Democrats made it no secret before the last Federal election that they want fewer diesel vehicles on the road. They want people using fewer diesel vehicles in the bush. I am smelling a deal here related to the GST. I believe that the Democrats supported the GST on the condition that there was some sort of price increase on diesel fuel to get people—

Mr Reynolds: That's why you need to have a national inquiry or a national royal commission.

Mr KNUTH: I am calling for both, but I am starting in this Parliament. I believe that this Government has to set the standard. As I said, representing a rural electorate, I have people ask me every day: who is to blame? I believe that at this point in time we have to get a royal commission rolling. It is the only way. I know it will be expensive, as the member for Nicklin said, but it is a hell of a lot less expense than the costs being endured by the people who have to purchase high-priced fuel. In every edition of every paper published in the north, somebody complains about the rise in fuel prices. I will support the last motion moved by the Opposition.

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (3.10 p.m.): What a charade we have heard here over the last two days. It is a political charade by the Liberal Party. We see two of its eight members in the House at the moment because the other six are out there meeting to elect a new leader. Today we have seen a charade that has been a huge embarrassment

to the Liberal Party in this State. Yesterday the members of the Liberal Party said, for their own political convenience, that they would not censure and they would not have a go at the Prime Minister, John Howard, and they said it was because of parliamentary procedure. What a joke and what a nonsense! What we see here is a charade by the Liberal Party and a charade which has been joined in today by the National Party as well.

One thing we can say for certain is that this fuel excise is being felt by everyone across Queensland and indeed everyone across Australia. What we can say is that the Federal Liberal parliamentarians have been lying to the people of Queensland. They have been saying that this has nothing to do with them and that it has nothing to do with the fact that a \$400m to \$500m surplus will be added to the already indecent surplus that is expected by the Federal Government at the end of June next year.

If we look at the Federal Government's accounts and finances, we see it estimating a surplus of something like \$10 billion to \$12 billion over 12 months. At the same time we have a Federal Government that is saying, "We won't take away the 3c a litre", which is adding something like \$400m or \$500m to that surplus. That action is being aided and abetted by the Deputy Prime Minister of this country, John Anderson, who is a National Party member of Parliament.

What we see here is division, confusion and discontent in the National Party, not only between the State and Federal levels but also at the State level as well. What we do know is that six members of the Liberal Party are not in the Chamber today because they are up there considering the future of David Watson as the Leader of the Liberal Party. They are there trying to ascertain what the future of the Liberal Party will be. After yesterday's performance and the performance this morning, the amount of discontent and disruption in the Liberal Party can be seen. What we have seen yesterday and today is a complete political charade by the Liberal Party.

Let me go back to the Liberal Party across Queensland. Over the last six months the Federal Liberal member for Herbert, Peter Lindsay, has been speaking in the Federal Parliament about how the Federal Government is city-centric. "City-centric" in his view means that the Government's actions are judged by the views of those who live in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. He does not believe Townsville is getting a fair go. Indeed, he does not support the Canberra

line. He is out there every day saying, "We want more money for Townsville and Thuringowa roads. We want more money to be taken away from that triangle of Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra". But then when it comes to the vote in the Federal Parliament or when it comes to actually having a bit of intestinal fortitude and voting down that increase in excise next February, he is nowhere to be seen; he is slinking around. I am glad to see that the temporary Liberal Leader of the Parliament has now joined us because we know that this charade that he has been attempting to conduct in the Parliament for the last two days is exactly just that. He knows that it will not be too long before he is deposed by a backbencher whom he turfed out only a number of months ago.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr REYNOLDS: Aren't they really upset by my words, because my words are prophetic.

Dr WATSON: I rise to a point of order. As I have indicated, I will be here a lot longer than he will. He will be joining one of his colleagues in another place soon.

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

Mr REYNOLDS: The member for Moggill, the Leader of the Liberal Party, is in his own delusional world today because he knows that his colleagues are around the halls of this Parliament and they are about doing him over. Look at the media there today. There were nine members of the media staring down at his dismal performance this morning. What he has done in this Parliament today and what he did between 6 o'clock and 7 o'clock last night was a disgrace to the history of the Liberal Party in Queensland. Never before have we seen such a dismal performance. Here they are, the weasels and the weevils of the Liberal Party weaving their way around, plotting the future of David Watson as the Liberal Party Leader.

I hear on the grapevine that not only is he thinking about not being the Leader of the Liberal Party, he is looking at trying to get back into Federal Parliament. That is why last night he was not game to have a go at John Howard. His future is probably not going to be in the State Parliament; his future may well be in the Federal Parliament. I hear he is even thinking of going back to Forde. Does anyone know what other electorate he is going for? I hear he is going for the seat of Ryan, that he is among that long list of candidates contesting the seat of Ryan. We might now know what it is all about.

Let me go back to the fuel excise and the motion before the Parliament today. We have seen the deceit of the Liberal Party at the State level. We continue to see the deceit of members like the Federal member for Herbert who asks that more money be spent on roads. He does not want the fuel excise increases, but what does he do? He lets his people in north Queensland down. He does not like to see what the State Liberals are doing; that is common knowledge in north Queensland. Most of the time he tries to disown them because he is embarrassed about this little team of nine who float around in this Parliament—nine out of 89. Where is Liberal Party's history? Where is its future? At least Liberal leaders in the past like Terry White and Angus Innes had more guts and fortitude than the present Liberal leader has and probably will ever have.

It is a sad day that we see the Liberal party once again act in the way that it has. What we have is a record surplus accruing to the Federal Government. We see this \$1 billion commitment to roads. What is that? It is Tory-speak, that is what it is. It is all about the rural roads in National Party electorates getting the dollars.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr REYNOLDS: What about the Douglas Arterial? Listen to the squeakings of the member for Warrego. As a previous Transport Minister, he knows about the Douglas Arterial. As a previous Transport Minister, he dealt with it. He knows it is a Federal Government responsibility. However, for a bloke who is usually fair dinkum out in the bush and usually fair dinkum in here, he is not fair dinkum about the Douglas Arterial because he knows that the whole \$40.7m that is meant to be spent on that Douglas Arterial should be the responsibility of the Federal Government.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I remind the honourable member for Townsville that I am the member for Gregory, not the member for Warrego. The other point I will remind him of is that the coalition when in Government was totally supportive of the Douglas Arterial. We took that to Cabinet in a joint submission with my colleague the member for Toowoomba South—

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Gregory is debating the issue now.

Mr JOHNSON:—as Health Minister, a bit more than the present Cabinet has done.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Gregory will not debate the issue.

Mr REYNOLDS: What a pitiful performance by the previous Transport Minister. I would have thought better of him in that regard. As the member for Gregory, we would have thought he would have been on his feet here champing at the bit for his country people. He is not doing that. As he knows, a number of issues are affecting country people at this time.

The GST impact on fuel excise which brings it up an extra 3c a litre is a major worry for those people who are travelling long distances—and that is the rural and remote people. The fuel excise is the second major issue. The third one, as I said in Townsville on Monday, is the lack of resolve by the Federal Government to take up in a decent way the suggestions by Minister Tony McGrady, the member for Mount Isa, in regard to the zonal taxation rebate. That tax rebate has remained static; it has not been indexed to the CPI. The ultimate insult to everyone who lives in rural, country and remote Queensland is that the fuel excise is indexed twice a year, but the zonal tax rebate remains the same. It is an absolute disgrace. The Federal Government should be treating the rebate and the fuel excise in the same way.

The motion before the Parliament recognises the extreme pressures that have been placed on Queensland families and small businesses by the continuing escalation of petrol prices. We are requesting the Prime Minister, John Howard, to immediately give a commitment to Queenslanders that the fuel excise will not be increased in February 2001.

If an inquiry is needed in regard to petrol and diesel prices, it should be a national inquiry. That is exactly what the Beattie Government has been calling for. The cost of diesel is an international question, not one relating solely to Queensland. There is an international perspective in terms of crude oil prices in Singapore.

What we have seen from those opposite today is a charade. Liberal Party members in Townsville and Thuringowa are extremely disappointed in the parliamentary Liberal Party. They work hard for the party at the local government level, at the State level and at the Federal level. They deserve much better than this.

The attitude of the Liberal Party in this place is an attempt to hide behind the skirts of the Prime Minister and his merry band. The Liberals attempted to slink away and not take part in last night's debate. Not one Liberal was present in the House last night. At least National Party members voted with spirit and

feeling. One cannot say the same of the Liberal Party.

The Liberal Party took a certain stance because of what it saw as parliamentary strategy. What will Liberal Party members in Townsville and Thuringowa think about this? I have already talked to a few of those people and I can tell the House what they think. They believe that the Liberal Party members in this House have acted in a very cowardly way in slinking away from the issue.

The people of Queensland will be our judges. I call on members opposite to put their hearts into this and vote for this motion and ensure that our main priority is to bring down petrol prices all over Queensland, and especially in those places that are hurting most. Let us be fair dinkum for once. Let the Liberal Party members show their true colours in this House, as opposed to what they did last night. I hope they will support this motion.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (3.23 p.m.): I am pleased to follow the member for Townsville—or should I say the member for "rorting"—in this debate. What we have heard from the member for Townsville is extraordinary hypocrisy. He has sold out his electorate—

Mr REYNOLDS: I rise to a point of order. I take umbrage at that comment. I find the comment offensive and untrue. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! The member for Caloundra?

Mrs SHELDON: Anything I have said so far is certainly true.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Caloundra has been asked to withdraw. Under Standing Orders, I ask her to withdraw.

Mrs SHELDON: In deference to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr REYNOLDS: I rise to a point of order. I find that to be a qualified withdrawal. I ask the member to withdraw unreservedly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member has withdrawn.

Mrs SHELDON: I think it is interesting that the member for Townsville carried on in such a way in this House. Very recently, I was in his electorate and I noticed that the people up there are very annoyed that Townsville is being thrown into the spotlight over ALP rorting, whilst the real issues are industry, tourism and business. Townsville is a very important regional area in this State. The former coalition Government showed that we recognised

Townsville's importance when we set up the Office of the Premier—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member of the substance of the motion before the House.

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, but the motion we are discussing affects Townsville, the same as it affects every other area of this State and of this country. I am just saying what a wonderful area Townsville is and how it deserves better representation in this House.

Today, we have seen a blunder by the Labor Party because the member for "teeth", the Honourable the Premier, came into this place this morning and thought he had launched a political coup by putting this particular motion on the books. It has backfired. We have Ministers sitting around in the Chamber grinding their teeth because they want to bring legislation into the House before Christmas. The Premier said at a press conference that the Parliament will not be sitting in the first week of December. Ministers in this Government want to have their legislation debated and passed.

Instead, we have this debacle which will be continuing for some considerable time. We in the Liberal Party are very concerned about any costs that are put on the people in our electorates. Fuel prices affect all of us. As members of Parliament, we have to pay for our petrol, unless one is a Minister. We receive a reasonably small car allowance and it is supposed to cover everything—leasing, fuel and maintenance. We all know that it goes nowhere near even covering the cost of leasing our cars. Members on both sides of the House are affected. Any extra expenditure comes out of the pockets of honourable members. We may be able to claim it as a tax deduction, but there is certainly no other way in which we can claim it. We are very aware of the cost of fuel.

In the last month, I have noted that the cost of fuel has been coming down. When I was on my way to Parliament and I filled up my car in Caloundra the other morning the cost of fuel was 77.5c per litre. The member for Townsville said that the whole basis of increased fuel prices was crude oil prices and that it was an international issue. That is quite correct. This is backed up by reports which have been handed down in Queensland, Australia and internationally.

The Premier will not countenance a royal commission which would enable us to consider how this issue affects Queensland. This is something that we cannot control. When the OPEC countries decide that they want more

income for their own purposes, they squeeze the international community with regard to crude oil prices. Recently, the United States had to release some of its strategic reserves in order to supplement its domestic petrol supply.

The United States and other countries are not playing politics the way that the Australian Labor Party is playing politics. I do not believe that the community believes those opposite. This Government believes that the public are not all that bright. Queenslanders understand the problem very well. Naturally, they want lower fuel prices, but they can see the blatant politicisation of an issue which is affecting their daily lives.

The Premier is asking what the Prime Minister is going to do about this problem. What is Kim Beazley going to do? We have not heard one word from the Federal Labor Leader. If he is elected to Government next year will he put a freeze on excise? Is he going to roll back the GST in relation to fuel? No, he is not, is he? We have not heard a word. The silence has been deafening. The Premier and his stalwarts on the other side of the Chamber have not raised this issue at all with their Federal colleagues. They are hypocrites. They are running politics on the airwaves, but they are not doing anything that would result in any definite action for the people of this State.

We had an extraordinary situation with regard to Mr Net Bet this morning—I think he is called the Honourable Treasurer.

Dr Watson: That's his pseudonym.

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, it is a pseudonym. His own fuel tax blew up in his face. Somehow, he had to save face. We had the net bet debacle. Why members opposite have left him there to bring further disgrace upon his party is absolutely beyond me. The Treasurer then had the brilliant idea, "Okay, let's have a fuel tax via the back door. We'll scrap this subsidy and we'll say that we will replace the money in the community by doing something about motor vehicle registration fees."

I knew, sitting here doing the figures, that the Treasurer, by that exercise, would have had a little net benefit to his Treasury coffers of around \$300m. I then had that opinion backed up by people whose Treasury ability I respect. So it was a backdoor deal where the Government said, "We are taking away this subsidy but we are going to give you a bit of help with your car registration and, by the way, we will have a net benefit to our consolidated revenue"—which the Government needs desperately, because I know that it is very short of money. However, that deal backfired. The Premier realised that, yet again, this

genius was on a political hiding to nothing. So that idea was pulled. What did we have? The Labor Party then had to find a bit of face saving so it said, "We will say that all this petrol is going in millions of tankers night and day over the border. We have to stop this rort. So we will make the petrol station operators do all of this book work"—and the members opposite should wait until those petrol station operators find out about all the book work that they have to do—"and we will also incur incredible expense via our Treasury officers in having to do the administration of having all of this fuel subsidy go through the petrol stations and not the petrol companies."

The members opposite must be incredibly stupid if they think that, when the coalition was in Government, it did not look at all of these alternatives to the fuel subsidy. We did that in absolute detail. We found that the cost to Government in administrative services to do what this Government proposes was extraordinarily considerable. I bet the Government members sitting on the backbench have not been told that. That money could be going into Health, Education and welfare services. Instead, it is going to go into more Treasury officers having to administer this scheme.

Further, the petrol stations said to us, "We don't want this. You could do it via a small number of petrol companies whereas you have got thousands of petrol stations who have to go through this." When the petrol station operators find out the amount of the rebate that the Government is going to give them, which is 0.05c per litre, they will realise that it is really not worth it.

So the whole thing has been a political farce to save face. It will not stand up. Given time, the Government will see that it is going to be a political nightmare. Today, it was interesting to note that the member who is heading "vote watch"—and whom we know has headed "vote watch", the honourable member for Woodridge—handed out yet another political coup, a postcard. I remember postcards, and I am sure that the members opposite do as well. Before I was Deputy Premier and Treasurer, the Labor Party decided that it really had to get rid of me. So it distributed postcards throughout the State saying that I was going to sell all the State hospitals. All I can say to the member for Woodridge is "Thank you very much", because that brought the coalition so many votes. The members opposite have no idea. People knew what a fraud the member for Woodridge was. Talk about a flawed political strategist! That was a really great effort.

I say to members opposite, "This is another one." I do not think much of the member's artwork. I must admit that I can see a Beattie tanker there, but apart from that, I think that the member for Woodridge should go back to school and learn the lessons that really have to be learned if he wants to be a serious member of this House. This postcard is another bit of political fraud and hypocrisy, and the member should not think that the community does not know it. People stop me in the street in my electorate—and I would not know which way they vote—and ask, "Why is the Labor Party wasting all of our money on this stuff?"—on political propaganda. The people are not stupid. They know. I say to you guys who sit on the backbench, who may have a bit of talent—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! I remind the member to speak through the Chair.

Mrs SHELDON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was actually thinking of you when I said that. Those members opposite who may have some political talent should really watch out for the member for Woodridge, because he is political dynamite.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Exactly. It is not written on the postcard that it is not paid for by the taxpayer. So as we all know, the corollary is that it has. It is a bit of political propaganda by the Labor Party at considerable expense, may I add, to the taxpayer. So I say to "Boy Blunder" up the back that I think that he has done enough. I say to the member's colleagues that, if I were them, I would bury him for a while, because he certainly needs it. Of course, very recently he has really been coming to the fore in another place in some spectacular manner, and I am sure that he will continue to do so.

The other issue that the Beattie Labor Government needs to face is that, if it is really genuine, it should say to the people of this State, "Right, we will hand you back the GST." The Government is going to benefit under the GST. Every time the members opposite say that the Federal Government is getting more money through the GST, then so is this Government. So are the members opposite going to say, "Right, we will give back to the people of Queensland our take of the GST so that they will pay less money for petrol"? Of course, they are not. The members opposite are absolute, genuine, blue-blood hypocrites. They should not think that the people out there do not realise that.

The Government members have two measures that they could use. One is to hold a royal commission that could look at the things that are affected by rising petrol prices in the State of Queensland—not in all of Australia, not in South Australia, not in Tasmania, not in Victoria, but here in Queensland. However, the Government has said, "No." It has run away from that, and the Government is pretty good at running away. As I said to the Premier the other day, he can run, but he cannot hide. The second measure is that the Government could give back its take of the GST—if it is so great or, indeed, if there is any—to the people. Will the Treasurer do that? No, of course he will not.

I say that the Government has built a house of straw and, like houses of straw, it will be blown down. This charade that the Government is acting out is to, hopefully, draw the media's attention and the attention of the people of Queensland away from its electoral rotting scams and onto fuel. The Government ran a campaign on the GST until it realised that that was a negative and that Beazley's roll back was not going to be accepted at all by anybody. So the Government thought, "What can we bring up now? You beaut, we will get on to fuel." So we got the postcard from Boy Blunder, and all the other things have happened. In the meantime, the Government did not take on the real issues that it could have, such as holding a royal commission into petrol prices or paying back the GST to the people of Queensland. So when the Government's principles are questioned, it is found that it has absolutely none.

Why do we have some of the problems that we have, particularly in relation to the GST? The Labor Senators and the Democrats in the Federal Parliament voted to make the application of the GST as difficult as it is currently. The Labor Senators and Labor's mates, the Democrats, voted against the GST as it was presented to them. So I say to anyone who says to me that they have problems with the GST, "Look to the source of your problem, because the source of your problem is the Federal Opposition." They certainly will be in Federal Opposition for a long time.

People know that John Howard made the tough decisions. As a leader, it is not easy to make tough decisions. It is much easier to be like the Honourable the Premier and be a populist—run out and say anything, know that you are not going to deliver, but hope that the public will be fooled for long enough to vote for you. I think that those days are long gone. People admire leaders who are prepared to

take a stand and who are prepared to make the tough decisions. John Howard did that with his tax reform. Everybody I know, regardless of their politics, agrees that we needed tax reform in this nation. We got it under John Howard. We had never had anyone before who was prepared to bite the bullet, except for John Hewson. However, the people realised that they should have taken on Hewson's propositions and so followed John Howard and gave him a mandate to do what he has done.

Those guys opposite are trying to run a spoiling scene. They cannot bear success. They cannot bear good tax reform in this country. So they are trying to run a spoiling campaign—I suppose mainly because they have no Federal leadership. Those guys opposite must cringe every time Beazley speaks, because he never says anything of substance. He has no principles. He will not take a stand; he changes from day to day. He is a bit like the Premier: whatever he thinks the populist argument of the day is, he says, "Yes, I will do that." People can really see through that.

Mr Lester: Was he the Minister federally when the submarine orders got mucked up?

Mrs SHELDON: The member is quite right. I believe that the submarine orders was one of his blunders. As members can imagine, what Mr Beazley says does not get through to the people at all.

May I say that the coalition feels for the community and we are doing all that we can to help them. I have had frequent discussions with the Prime Minister and with other Federal Ministers on this issue. They are very aware of the concerns. However, could I say that the Federal Government, having got more money in their coffers, is going to spend the money where it really needs to be spent, and that is on roads in outer regional areas—I live in one of them and so do a lot of the members opposite—and in country areas. Australia is a very big nation with its population distributed to very far-flung areas. Transportation to a lot of these areas is by road only. Railways have been closed and the airlines will not go into those areas. So roads are the main arterial, the lifeblood, to people in those communities.

Because of our climate of drought and flood, our roads—and I know this from trying to fund them—are under tremendous stress and pressure. I support seeing that money going where we can see concrete and bitumen—into our roads and transport system. One of the biggest challenges in this nation and State is transport infrastructure. It costs us a lot of money. We often spend money only to see it

washed away, particularly in Queensland. We constantly have to put money into roads. If as a nation we are getting more money, I will be very pleased to see it being spent on our roads.

Let us hope that the OPEC countries continue to take a commonsense and an equitable approach, that we see the price of crude oil drop further and that we see the burden on ordinary individuals, businesses and those in rural areas being reduced as a result. But let us see also some real action by this State Labor Government for our rural and country people. It has taken no action on their behalf. It has not taken the steps it could have taken. This shows its complete hypocrisy. It is not interested in helping what it calls the battlers. It is not interested in helping the ordinary family person and small businesspeople. It is interested only in its re-election. If that is not cynicism of the highest order, I do not know what is.

There is no doubt that this is a very important issue. We have given it our full consideration and are working in any way we can to make sure that people are not adversely affected by petrol prices. Every one of us needs petrol. We will do everything we can to see that prices are lowered and stay low.

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (3.41 p.m.): I do not intend to take up much time today. I have been listening to some of the rhetoric from members opposite. They say that you can give it but you can't take it. The previous speaker made a personal attack on many honourable members on this side of the House, and I venture to suggest that if the boot was on the other foot members opposite would be crying.

There comes a time when people have to stand up and be counted. I believe the people of Queensland are speaking with one voice. It is a pity that honourable members were not speaking with one voice. That voice should be saying, "Enough is enough." Today the Parliament should be sending a message loud and clear to the people in Canberra that enough is enough is enough.

Members opposite talk about cheaper petrol. I have news for them. This morning I got my office in Mount Isa to ring around to find out what the prices are today. In Mount Isa, unleaded petrol is 98.9c, super is 102.9c and diesel is 108.9c; in Burketown, unleaded petrol is \$1.30 and diesel is also \$1.30; in Cloncurry, it is \$1 for unleaded and super, and

\$1.09 for diesel; in Normanton, it is 102.2c for unleaded, 104.7c for super and 110.9c for diesel; in Boulia, diesel is \$1.17; in Camooweal, unleaded petrol is 110.9c, super is the same price, and diesel is 115.8c. And so the story goes on.

The message we are delivering today from this side of the House is that enough is enough. The figures I have just cited are simply the penalty for living in regional and remote areas of Queensland. The members opposite can stand up in this Chamber and say what they like and make all the excuses in the world, but the plain fact of the matter is that it is the coalition Government in Canberra that is imposing these charges on the people who are creating the wealth in this State, namely, the miners, the pastoralists, the operators of cattle properties and the tourist operators. That is where the wealth is coming from and they are the people who are being discriminated against and victimised. This is the penalty for people living in the west.

What do we have? A coalition that purports to represent country people! Earlier, members mentioned McEwen. Even old Nicklin would turn in his grave if he knew how the coalition was defending its mates in Canberra today. As I said in my opening remarks, there comes a time when we have to say even to our mates that enough is enough, and have the courage to stand up and tell them that their policies are wrong. What are they doing? The previous speaker and other Opposition speakers stood up and made apologies for this policy. They are a disgrace. I feel ashamed to be in the same Chamber as those members who are defending the charges being imposed on the people I represent. In relation to some of the other issues facing country people, we have already demonstrated the penalty of living in the west.

Mr Malone: You wouldn't have a clue.

Mr McGRADY: I wouldn't have a clue? The member ought to be ashamed of himself for not getting to his feet and criticising his mates in Canberra. They are his mates. I have been mounting a campaign for some time now to try to improve the zone allowances for the people who live in those remote places. I have not heard one single Opposition member stand up and support me in my attempts to get some justice for people living in the country. Not one member opposite has given me support.

An Opposition member: What did you do when Labor was in power?

Mr McGRADY: I will tell the member what we have done. If we feel that our Federal

colleagues are not doing the right thing, we stand up and we say so, as we did with native title when we stood up in the Parliament and in the media right around the State and said to our colleagues, "Brothers, on this occasion you are wrong." That is the gumption members opposite need. They can stand up in this place and come out with all the rhetoric they like, but where it really counts—in their party rooms—they are dumb.

Mr Slack: But did they take any notice of you?

Mr McGRADY: Of course they took notice of us. The member knows that. The coalition purports to represent the battlers in the bush. Their past leaders would be turning in their graves over the antics of members opposite. They can make fiery speeches and come out with all the rhetoric in the world, but they are betraying the people I represent.

I will tell members opposite something. In the electorate of Mount Isa there used to be a strong National Party branch. There is no longer a branch, because they do not stand for anything. Right across country and north-west Queensland the National Party is dying. Why is it dying? It is dying because members opposite have sold them out. The member for Caloundra was almost crying because she does not get free petrol; she gets only a car allowance. I have news for members opposite: many of the people I represent do not get car allowances; they have to dig into their pockets to pay for every litre of petrol they use.

I recall when petrol used to be three shillings and fourpence a gallon. I also recall when the differential had to be no more than fourpence a gallon. Today we are talking about a petrol price for the people I represent of almost \$6 a gallon. What do we hear from the so-called friends of the bush? Not a single word! What they should be doing is organising a deputation, flying down to Canberra and saying to their mates down there, "Enough is enough. Our people are hurting. Our ordinary toilers are hurting, but so too are the people who are trying to run businesses." As has been demonstrated time and time again, petrol and fuel costs simply snowball and everybody has to pay.

As I said before, I do not intend to carry on with some of the rhetoric that I have heard today. But my heart is broken, because the people on the other side, who should be representing country battlers, are sitting there saying nothing at all and are in fact defending John Hewson and John Howard. They should take a good look at themselves. They are political traitors to country Queensland. Quite

honestly, I suggest they go home and examine their policies.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (3.50 p.m.): I move—

"That the question be put."

Question put; and the House divided—

AYES, 39—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

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

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Any future divisions on this motion will be of two minutes' duration.

Question—That Mr Springborg's amendment to Mr Elder's amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

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

NOES, 39—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

Question—That Mr Elder's amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 39—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

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

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Amendment (Mr Borbidge) agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Queensland Rail

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (4.05 p.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this House condemns the Beattie Labor Government for its betrayal of rail workers and their families by robbing them of a thousand jobs, and for its plan to reduce rail jobs even further, putting economic development, rail safety, community prosperity and families at heartless risk."

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport) (4.06 p.m.): I seek leave of the House to move a motion without notice.

Question put; and the House divided—

AYES, 39—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

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

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)**

Leave

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport) (4.09 p.m.): I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, grant leave to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend certain local government legislation, and for other purposes."

Question put; and the House divided—

AYES, 41—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pratt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 37—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Cooper, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Mitchell

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

First Reading

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport) (4.15 p.m.): I present the Bill and the Explanatory Notes and I move—

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

Question put; and the House divided—

AYES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pratt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Turner, Welford, Wells. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 36—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Cooper, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Mitchell

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Second Reading

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) ((Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport) (4.19 p.m.): I move—

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

The Bill which I am introducing today seeks to achieve a number of outcomes which are consistent with the Government's objectives of continuing to promote good governance at the local level. In particular, the Bill will—

facilitate the conversion of the Townsville Thuringowa Water Supply Board to a new commercialised local government entity similar to a joint local government;

implement certain amendments to the Local Government Act 1993 which seek to maintain public confidence in local government electoral arrangements;

introduce arrangements to continue to assist Mareeba Shire Council to provide tourist infrastructure in Kuranda; and

clarify the intent of certain provisions in the Integrated Planning Act 1997.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 158, I move—

"That the votes of the honourable members for Tablelands and Barambah be disallowed in respect of the previous two divisions."

Standing Order 158 states—

"No member shall be entitled to vote in any division upon a question not being a matter of public policy in which he or she has a direct pecuniary interest not held in common with the rest of the subjects of the Crown.

The vote of the member may not be challenged, except on a substantive motion moved immediately after the division is completed, and the vote of a member determined to be so interested shall be disallowed."

I know that this is a new Standing Order and that this will be the first time it has been tested by the House, but the fact is that the members concerned have voted in a certain manner in this House because this legislation, of which they were aware, will favour them—

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will return to the member in a moment.

Mr BORBIDGE:—in terms of their chance of maintaining their position in the Parliament. They have a direct interest financially, in that this particular Bill will mean that candidates standing against them in the electorates of Barambah and Tablelands will be subject to restrictions that would not otherwise have been in place and were not in place at the time of the 1998 election, when the honourable member for Bundaberg was Mayor of Bundaberg and was not required to resign her seat, and there have been other cases. There was no statutory or legal requirement. I refer also to a number of other members on the Labor side of the House. I contend—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will confer with the Clerk. The Clerk says this is a matter of public policy. Therefore, the Leader of the Opposition's objection is overruled.

PRIVILEGE

Members for Tablelands and Barambah, Voting in Divisions

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (4.21 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. The simple fact is that the Leader of the Opposition is making the assumption that we would have voted differently if we had different candidates running against us. I put on the public record that he has made an assumption that is incorrect. I made it fully clear before the National Party preselection—way before Joe Moro even put his name down as a candidate for National Party preselection—that I supported this Bill. I made it fully clear and I made it clear to everyone in the House that I supported it.

Mr SPEAKER: The member has made his point.

Mr NELSON: The Leader of the Opposition has misled the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Tablelands has made his point of privilege. I have listened to him. I have ruled—

Mr NELSON: I am saying that he has misled the House. I find what he said completely offensive and utterly untrue. There are other parts of this Bill that I have to support because they support the Mareeba Shire Council. I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The member cannot do that now.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise further to Standing Order 158. Mr Speaker, I take your point that this is a new standing order. It has not been tested before. May I suggest that the

appropriate course of action would be for the House to test the standing order as it applies to the honourable members in this particular case, because there is a direct financial benefit. It is not a benefit held in common—

Mr SPEAKER: I have just made—

Mr BORBIDGE:—it is a particular benefit that the honourable members have and will enjoy as a result of this legislation.

Mr SPEAKER: I have just made a ruling. I call the Minister.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order.

PRIVILEGE

Members for Tablelands and Barambah, Voting in Divisions

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (4.23 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I would like to put it on record that, although I did vote with the Labor Party, it is the will of the people. I represent the electorate. I have polled the electorate; that is what it wanted. My opinion is that I must represent my electorate first. If any member of the House would like to see the poll results, I will gladly present them.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Barambah now has it on record. I call the Minister.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. This issue came before the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and it made a recommendation to the House—which was accepted—that if any member had a pecuniary or direct interest in a Bill he or she had to stand before any vote was taken and declare that interest and declare—

Mr SPEAKER: I have already ruled this out of order.

Mrs SHELDON: I do not know how something that has already been recommended by the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and accepted by the House can be out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: I have just ruled it out of order.

Mrs SHELDON: I put on the record of the House exactly what you have ruled out of order.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading

Resumed.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and

Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport) (4.24 p.m.): I seek leave to have the rest of my speech incorporated into Hansard.

Leave granted.

I will address each of these in turn.

As indicated Mr Speaker, the Bill provides for the conversion of the existing Townsville-Thuringowa Water Supply Board to a new local government entity similar to a joint local government. The Bill also repeals the Townsville Thuringowa Water Supply Board Act 1987.

The Board is one of the State's significant business activities which was considered for reform under national competition policy (NCP) competitive neutrality requirements.

The Board is currently a statutory authority, but its legal structure was modelled on the joint local government provisions in the former Local Government Act 1936.

In 1997, an NCP public benefit assessment recommended that the Board be commercialised. In negotiations to implement this recommendation, Townsville City Council and Thuringowa City Council proposed the Board become a joint local government.

However, the councils also proposed that provision be made for the joint local government to continue to have an independent chairperson. This proposal is inconsistent with the requirements for membership of a joint local government under the Local Government Act 1993.

Mr Speaker, in response to proposals put forward by these two councils, this Bill provides for a new type of local government entity with many of the features of a joint local government—but with an independent chairperson who is not a councillor of either component council. Both councils will appoint the independent chairperson—although there is a reserve power for the Governor in Council to appoint the chairperson if the councils cannot agree.

The new joint local government entity will operate on a commercial basis in line with the recommendations in the 1997 NCP Public Benefit Assessment.

Once these provisions are in place, all four of Queensland's urban water boards will either be commercialised or have an equivalent form of commercialised restructure applied to them. This will allow Queensland to meet its obligations under the National Competition Policy agreements to reform the State's urban water boards. It will also assist in safeguarding the receipt of Commonwealth competition bonus payments by the State.

The arrangements contained in the Bill are consistent with the approach taken in the Water Act 2000, which established a single framework to regulate all water service providers.

Under the Water Act, local governments have the option of setting up a monopoly to supply retail water in a declared area.

The role of the Board will essentially remain the same—it will have jurisdiction to supply bulk water to the Townsville and Thuringowa City Councils and to any other bulk water consumers in its operational area.

Mr Speaker, this Bill also amends the Local Government Act 1993 to provide that councillors vacate their local government office when nominating for election to the State or Commonwealth Parliaments.

This proposal was included in a discussion paper released by my Department earlier this year as part of a review of local government electoral arrangements following the March 2000 local government elections.

I also raised the issue at the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) annual conference held in August this year on the Gold Coast.

The Local Government Act currently provides that a person is not qualified to hold office as a local government councillor if the person is, or becomes, a member of an Australian Parliament.

This means that a councillor can nominate for election as a member of the Legislative Assembly or the Commonwealth Parliament and contest that election, while continuing to serve as a councillor of a local government. Their office of councillor becomes vacant from the time of their election to that Parliament.

The current law was put in place following a review of the local government electoral system carried out by Electoral and Administrative Review Commission in the early 1990s. The rationale is that a person should not be able to serve as both a councillor and a member of the State or Commonwealth Parliament.

These arrangements differ however, from the requirements for Members of the Legislative Assembly intending to stand for election to the Commonwealth Parliament.

Under present Constitutional arrangements, if a Member of the Queensland Parliament wishes to nominate for election to the Commonwealth Parliament, they need to resign from the office before nominating for election.

This Bill seeks to achieve greater consistency between the requirements on councillors and the requirements on Members of the Legislative Assembly seeking higher office.

The proposal also seeks to minimise or to obviate the risk of potential conflicts of interest and duty arising for a person as an elected councillor and as a candidate for election to the State or Commonwealth Parliaments.

We are all aware this matter has attracted media attention for some time—fuelled in part by members opposite seeking to protect their own electoral prospects.

I would however, like to point out Mr Speaker that local governments in Queensland have a level of autonomy that is the envy of their counterparts in other States. In Queensland they are treated as governments in their own right.

It is therefore, only appropriate that councillors should be subject to the same principle that applies to members of State Parliament who want to run for higher office.

In this regard it is worth noting that the results of the consultation process on this proposal reveal there is general community support for the move—notwithstanding the expected opposition from local government.

A total of 74 submissions were received by my Department in relation to the proposal. 22 of these submissions were from respondents other than councils and the LGAQ. Of these 22 submissions, 13 were in favour of the proposal, and 9 were opposed. A number of the submissions supporting the proposal were from individual councillors.

In addition, an independent survey was commissioned of community attitudes to the proposal. The survey was carried out in October 2000 by a professional research firm. 53% of respondents indicated support for the proposal, 35% were opposed and 12% were undecided.

The main reasons given by respondents in support of the proposal are that:

- there may be a conflict between a councillor's quest for higher office and their duties as councillor;
- it would stop councillors being elected with the intention of then seeking higher office prior to completing their full term of office; and
- it achieves consistency of treatment between elected representatives at the local and State levels.

Mr Speaker, this confirms my view the community is generally supportive of this change—notwithstanding the views put forward to date by some councils and the Members on the other side of this chamber.

The Bill also incorporates an amendment to the Local Government Act to clarify it is beyond the jurisdiction of local government to make a local law or subordinate local law which purports to regulate the distribution of how-to-vote cards at local government or State elections.

On 16 March 2000, a regulation was made to overturn provisions of two local governments' local laws, which purported to prohibit the distribution of how-to-vote cards at local, State and Commonwealth elections.

Prior to this, Crown Law had advised my Department it is beyond the jurisdiction of local government to make a local law in this regard.

However, on receiving advice of the intention to make this regulation, one of the councils (Caloundra City), attempted to circumvent the effect of the regulation by making a subordinate local law under its existing Local Law dealing with Licensing.

Under these circumstances, the State could not prevent this subordinate local law being made, because the process for making a subordinate local law does not require consultation with the Minister for Local Government.

As such, candidates at the March 2000 local government elections in this local government area were required by the council to obtain permits in order to distribute how-to-vote cards in the vicinity of 100 meters of a polling booth.

While Crown Law has advised that local laws purporting to prohibit the distribution of how-to-vote cards are invalid, in light of this council's actions, an amendment to the Local Government Act is considered necessary to remove any doubt in this area.

Mr Speaker, as indicated earlier, this Bill also seeks to establish a mechanism to continue to assist Mareeba Shire Council with the provision of tourist infrastructure in Kuranda.

On 23 March 1994, the Kuranda Tourist Infrastructure Levy Agreement (the Agreement) was signed between the Queensland Government and the Mareeba Shire Council. The Agreement is now due to expire on 1 April 2014.

The Agreement establishes arrangements for the Queensland Government to contribute to the Council \$1.00 per rail passenger travelling between Cairns and Kuranda. To date, Queensland Rail has voluntarily collected the payment from passengers by incorporating the levy in the price of a ticket.

Passengers on the Kuranda Skyrail, visitors arriving by car or bus, and local traders also contribute to infrastructure provision in Kuranda by means of other arrangements.

The Agreement requires Mareeba Shire Council to spend the funds on providing tourist infrastructure identified in an approved works program, developed after extensive community consultation as part of the Kuranda Strategic Management Plan.

This Agreement is a unique arrangement that was developed to address the specific problems facing Kuranda as a centre that attracts tourists as day visitors. It is acknowledged there is limited capacity for the council to generate sufficient revenue from day visitors to fund the provision of infrastructure needed to cope with the large volume of tourists.

A third party operator is seeking access under the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997 to the Kuranda rail line and is expected to commence operating in the near future.

Because Queensland Rail has been the only rail operator to date, and as it has been collecting and remitting funds on a voluntary basis, legislation has not been necessary to enforce the levy requirements.

With the prospect of a third party operator soon commencing on the Kuranda rail line, the ability to enforce the collection and remittance of the levy by the third party operator is in doubt.

Likewise, it will be important that there is a level playing field for all operators on the Kuranda rail line in terms of paying the levy.

The legislation will require all rail operators on the Kuranda line to pay the levy, thus enabling the Government to fulfil its commitment to Mareeba Shire Council under the Agreement.

These provisions will expire on 30 June 2015, enabling finalisation of contributions and any other outstanding matters following the expiry of the current Agreement on 1 April 2014.

Mr Speaker, I have also taken the opportunity to include in this Bill two amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997 (IPA) and a related amendment to the Land Title Act 1994 to clarify the intent and operation of the IPA in certain circumstances, and to provide interim planning controls for two local governments pending the implementation of IPA planning schemes.

The intent of the IPA has always been that the operation of development control plans (DCPs) made under the former Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act 1990, is preserved. However, in a matter currently before the Planning and Environment Court, the validity of precinct plans made under the Kawana Waters DCP and development approved under those plans has been challenged on the basis that such actions are inconsistent with the intent of the IPA.

If the challenge to the validity of these actions under the Kawana Waters DCP is upheld, this could have major implications for the validity and operation of DCPs for other masterplanned community developments throughout Queensland.

The proposed amendment, which will operate retrospectively, will clarify the existing provisions of the IPA and remove any doubt about the validity of plans made and development approved under DCPs made under the former planning legislation.

The amendment to the Land Title Act 1994 corrects an oversight that occurred in the transition to the IPA. As a result, an access easement can potentially be created without any need for evidence of the local government's approval of the easement needing to be submitted to the Titles Office.

This has allowed some access easements to be registered without prior local government approval—potentially creating local traffic

safety hazards where the accesses intersects with the road.

The amendment inserts a provision in the Land Title Act 1994 making local government approval of the instrument of agreement for the easement a prerequisite to registration.

The final set of amendments introduce a set of interim development control provisions to assist Wambo and Belyando Shires to regulate development across their shires while they are developing IPA planning schemes.

At present, Wambo and Belyando Shires have planning schemes controlling only the urban parts of the small townships in their respective shires. Both local governments have resolved to prepare IPA planning schemes. However, until such time as the local governments adopt IPA planning schemes the only development controls covering the rural areas of the shires are existing subdivision of land local laws and the development controls for building work and environmentally relevant activities.

Both councils have advised they would like some form of interim development control to be put in place.

The former Planning Act enabled local governments without planning controls to introduce interim controls during the preparation of their first planning scheme. The regulations to the former Act provided a basic set of land use and development controls that local governments could adopt or modify.

At the time the IPA was introduced it was thought all local governments had planning controls and there was no need for the continuation of the former power to adopt interim controls. However, it is now clear that an interim development control power is needed for these two local governments.

The amendments incorporated in the Bill provide for the interim development control provisions under the former planning legislation to apply to an appropriate extent to the Wambo and Belyando Shires until their IPA planning schemes are in place. These interim development controls have been tailored to address the specific needs and issues identified by the two Shires.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (4.25 p.m.): I move—

"That the debate on this piece of corrupt legislation be adjourned."

Mr SPEAKER: I cannot accept the motion in that wording.

Mr HOBBS: This is a corrupt piece of legislation and I move—

"That the debate on this piece of corrupt legislation be adjourned."

Mr SPEAKER: The member must use proper terminology. Would somebody else like to move that the debate be now adjourned?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I cannot accept that. I will not accept that.

Debate, on motion of Mr Reeves, adjourned.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (4.25 p.m.): I move—

"That the issue of the two members who voted be referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee."

I have moved that it be—

Mr SPEAKER: I have already ruled on that.

Mr HORAN: I move—

"That the issue of the two members who voted be referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee."

Mr SPEAKER: I have already made a ruling. The member cannot do that.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (4.26 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

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

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (4.26 p.m.): I move—

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

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Industrial Relations and Another Act Amendment Bill 2000. The introduction of this Bill will provide real benefits for working people in Queensland by improving the general

employment condition of long service leave currently contained in the Industrial Relations Act 1999. Under the changes contained in this Bill—

- employees will have earlier access to the leave entitlement after 10 years continuous service;
- in certain circumstances employees will have earlier access to a proportionate payment for long service leave on termination after seven years continuous service; and
- a mechanism is provided for employees to receive a cash payment in lieu of taking all or part of their leave entitlement.

In making these changes, the Government is providing a positive response to the results of a review of long service leave conducted by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and which concluded on 27 June 2000. The review was conducted under section 58(2) of the Industrial Relations Act 1999 that required a full bench to review the entitlement to long service leave before 30 June 2000.

Consistent with the outcome of that review, the key features of the Bill before the House are as follows—

- a new entitlement of 8.6667 weeks leave after 10 years continuous service to replace the existing entitlement of 13 weeks leave after 15 years continuous service;
- transitional arrangements to phase in the new entitlement;
- an entitlement to payment for long service leave after 7 years continuous service if the employee terminates because of the employee's illness, incapacity, death, or a domestic or pressing necessity, or if the employer dismisses the employee for a reason other than the employee's conduct, capacity or performance, or the employer unfairly dismisses the employee;
- clarifying that the provisions relating to the calculation of leave for casual employees also relate to part-time employees and those who have at any time during the period of continuous service worked as a part-time or casual employee;
- removal of the prohibition on cashing out of leave, providing instead that where a relevant industrial instrument provides for this to happen, an employee and employer may agree that the employee be paid for all or part of their long service leave entitlement instead of taking the

leave or part of the leave. If no industrial instrument provides for this to happen, an employee may apply to the QIRC to order payment on a compassionate or financial hardship ground.

The introduction of these changes and improvements demonstrates the advantage of having industrial relations legislation that contains general conditions of employment and, importantly, that provides a role for the independent umpire to review these conditions and ensure they remain relevant to community standards.

This contrasts with the deregulatory approach of the Federal coalition, and their conservative counterparts in Queensland, where a bare minimum safety net is left to wither away. This approach also ensures a growing gap between those employees who rely solely on awards or who have no award protection, those employees who are on agreements with more favourable conditions. The Queensland Government does not consider this to be a sustainable way to build a strong economy that generates productivity and jobs growth.

That is why the Government, when it introduced its new industrial laws last year, ensured that all employees, through the general employment conditions, would be entitled to a minimum standard for a range of leave and other entitlements, unless their award or agreement provided something more favourable. This recognises that basic workplace standards, such as long service leave, are not something that should be sacrificed at the altar of deregulation.

These general employment conditions take into account community standards and changing work and employment patterns and, as I have pointed out, can be reviewed by a full bench of the QIRC, on application by the Minister, an organisation, or a State peak council, to ensure they remain relevant to community standards. This review provision provides an open and transparent process that gives all interested parties the chance to have their say.

In the case of long service leave, section 58(2) of the Act provided that this condition had to be reviewed before 30 June 2000. This Bill is therefore a significant piece of legislation in that it gives effect to the first such review of a general employment condition under the Industrial Relations Act 1999.

I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Background to the review

The current legislative entitlement for long service leave, established in 1964, is 13 weeks leave for 15 years continuous service with the same employer. There is a proportionate payment accessible after 10 years service where service is terminated by the employee's death, resignation, or by the employer for a cause other than serious misconduct.

The long service leave entitlement was one of the many issues considered by the Taskforce during its consultation process that laid the foundation for the Government's new industrial laws. The current entitlement is among the least favourable in Australia and a number of submissions to the Taskforce argued for improvements to this standard.

In its report to Government in December 1998, the Taskforce concluded that the minimum conditions for long service leave under the Workplace Relations Act 1997 should be retained. However, the report indicated that some Taskforce members had argued for an increase in the standard and noted:

"The Taskforce is aware that some states, as well as a number of awards, provide for more favourable long service leave conditions than currently apply in Queensland legislation. The majority of the Taskforce], however, believe that standards in this area should be subject to review by the Commission" (Industrial Relations Taskforce 1998: 47).

Consequently, the Taskforce recommended:

"That the legislation prescribes a general minimum standard for long service leave as currently incorporated in the legislation and that the Commission review this standard" (Recommendation no. 16).

The requirement in section 58(2) for a full bench to review the current entitlement to long service leave reflects the Taskforce recommendation on this issue. The review began in November 1999 and gave all interested parties the opportunity to put their views forward. Following an extensive review of written submissions, oral argument and witness evidence from the Government, unions, and employer groups, on 27 June 2000 a full bench of the QIRC released a written statement of its findings.

The views and conclusions of the QIRC

The QIRC review supported the following changes and improvements to the current entitlement to long service leave:

- 8.6667 weeks leave after 10 years continuous service, with transitional arrangements to phase in the new entitlement;
- access to a pro-rata payment for long service leave after 7 years service where the employee terminates because of illness, incapacity or domestic or other

pressing necessity (or death), but not where the employee is terminated by the employer for a valid reason related to their conduct, capacity or performance;

- once 10 years continuous service has been worked, whether or not a first or subsequent leave has been taken, all service (stated in years and a fraction of the year if necessary) should be paid for any termination;
- 'cashing out' of leave should be permitted after 10 years continuous service;
- the formula for payment of long service leave for casual employees should apply also to part-time employees and employees with a mix of full-time, part-time and casual employment during their continuous service; and
- part-time employees should be entitled to take full-time equivalent long service leave, as is currently the case for casual employees.

The Government believes that this was an outcome that all parties could accept as a reasonable balance between the range of economic and social factors considered during the review.

In supporting these changes, the QIRC recognised the changes in the labour market since the entitlement last changed back in 1964. The QIRC found work patterns have changed since then and 10 years is now a long time for a worker to spend with one employer. The formula of 8.6667 weeks leave after 10 years service also attracted the Commission because it minimised the costs of the enhancement.

It should be pointed out that the review decision, of itself, did not change the current entitlement. Rather, it represented the views and conclusions of the Commission as to what the standard should be. The Queensland Government therefore has decided to legislate to give effect to the outcome of the QIRC review of long service leave entitlements. The decision to legislate was advocated by both unions and employer groups and will ensure the benefits of the enhanced entitlement recommended by the QIRC are made available to all Queensland workers without undue delay.

The introduction of legislation that reflects the QIRC decision demonstrates in practice the importance the Government places on the role of the QIRC as the independent umpire.

I turn now to the key provisions of the Industrial Relations and Another Act Amendment Bill 2000.

Features of the Bill

New entitlement—8.6667 weeks leave after 10 years continuous service

The new entitlement of 8.6667 weeks leave after 10 years continuous service reflects the position taken by the Queensland Government during the QIRC review. By reducing the

qualifying period for an employee to access the leave from 15 to 10 years, the new standard provides a reasonable, moderate enhancement that will benefit an estimated additional 88 300 employees across the state. At the same time, the costs of the enhancement are minimised because while employees will have earlier access to the leave entitlement, the rate at which leave accrues is not increased.

The new qualifying period of 10 years service brings Queensland into line with the standard in the majority of other jurisdictions.

The Bill also contains a set of transitional arrangements, proposed by the Queensland Government during the review and recommended by the QIRC, that will soften the impact for employers. The transitional arrangements phase in the new entitlement by providing that only two-thirds of leave accrued before the commencement of the Act counts for working out when an employee may take leave. However, they make clear that the leave entitlement accrued before the commencement is not reduced.

Essentially, the arrangements mean that employers will not be faced with an immediate liability for employees who have a period of continuous service before the commencement of this legislation. The Bill provides examples of how the transitional arrangements apply and further clarification is provided in the explanatory notes.

Access to a pro-rata payment on termination after 7 years service

At present, employees have access to a pro-rata payment on termination after 10 years service. The QIRC review supported the Queensland Government position that access to a pro-rata payment on termination should be available after 7 years service.

However, the QIRC view was that the entitlement after this period should be restricted to those employees who have resigned for reasons of illness, incapacity, death, or domestic or other pressing necessity. It should not be available for employees who terminate for any other reason or who have been terminated by the employer for a valid reason related to their conduct, capacity or performance. All employees would continue to have broad access to a pro-rata payment on termination after 10 years service.

The Bill puts this into effect by first establishing that an employee is entitled to a proportionate payment for long service leave if the employee's service is terminated after completing at least 7 years continuous service. However, if the employee's service is terminated after 7 years continuous service but before the completion of 10 years continuous service the employee is entitled to a proportionate payment only if certain prescribed conditions are met, as per the QIRC decision.

This provision will bring Queensland into line with a number of other jurisdictions that provide earlier access to a pro-rata payment on termination on a conditional basis.

The question of what constitutes an illness, incapacity, domestic or other pressing necessity of such a nature to justify a termination is a matter to determine on the facts of each case. If the parties are unable to agree on whether an employee who terminates between 7 and 10 years service is entitled to a proportionate payment on these grounds, this will be a matter for the QIRC to determine. This is the practice in New South Wales, for example, where these questions of interpretation are determined on a case-by-case basis.

Cashing out of leave by means of an industrial instrument after 10 years service

The QIRC recommended that cashing out of an employee's long service leave should be permitted after 10 years service. This outcome was sought by employer organisations who argued during the review that both employers and employees would prefer to have the option of taking a cash payment, rather than the leave entitlement.

The Government had expressed concerns in its submissions to the review that cashing out negates the intention of long service leave to provide employees with a break from work. However, the Government has recognised the obligation on all parties, the Government included, to respect the decision of the independent umpire. The Bill therefore removes the current prohibition on cashing out under section 53 of the Act.

The QIRC decision was silent on the mechanism for implementing cashing out and the Bill therefore provides for cashing out to occur either by means of an industrial instrument or on application by an employee to the Commission.

This means if an industrial instrument covering an employee provides for cashing out to occur, payment may be made if the employee and employer have a signed agreement to that effect.

Alternatively, the Bill provides that individual employees can apply to the Commission for their leave entitlement to be cashed out on compassionate grounds or on the ground of financial hardship. This ensures that access to cashing out is not restricted only to employees and employers who have an industrial instrument that provides for such an arrangement. Employees who are not covered by an industrial instrument or whose industrial instrument does not provide for cashing out will have this avenue open to them, if the Commission is satisfied the payment should be made on compassionate or financial hardship grounds.

In order to ensure that cashing out occurs on a case-by-case basis, either through an industrial instrument or on application to the Commission, the Bill provides that a general ruling cannot be made to provide for cashing out across all awards and agreements.

Calculation of payment for long service leave for part-time employees

The QIRC decision supported the view that payment for part-time employees while on long service leave should reflect their actual service over the entire qualifying period, as is the case for casual employees under the formula prescribed in section 49 of the Act. Similarly, the QIRC recommended that this formula should apply to employees with a mix of full-time, part-time and casual employment during their period of service.

This addresses the concern under the current provisions that employees who are employed part-time immediately before the leave is taken could receive their entitlement for 13 weeks of leave based only on their part-time service, without recognition of earlier periods of full-time employment.

There was substantial consensus from all parties during the review that the provision applying to casual employees should apply equally to these other categories of employees.

The Bill implements this aspect of the decision by providing that the manner and method of calculation of payment for long service leave applies to any employee who was a casual or regular part-time employee at any time during the employee's continuous service to which the long service leave relates.

The Bill also extends to regular part-time employees the capacity to take long service leave in the form of its full-time equivalent by agreement with their employer, as recommended by the QIRC.

Building and Construction Industry Amendments

The Bill also contains an amendment to the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991 to provide for cashing out arrangements for workers under the portable long service leave scheme in the building and construction industry. Importantly, this amendment reflects the arrangements for cashing out contained in the amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 1999.

That is, if no building and construction industry award or agreement provides for the worker to be paid for all or part of their leave entitlement, rather than taking their leave, payment may be made only if the worker has 10 years service in the register of workers and the Commission has ordered the payment on compassionate grounds or on the ground of financial hardship.

The remainder of the amendments to the building and construction industry legislation to reflect the QIRC long service leave decision

have been introduced through the Work Cover Queensland and Other Acts Amendment Bill that is currently before Parliament.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, this Bill before the House represents a continuation of the fair and balanced approach the Beattie Government has introduced to industrial relations in this state.

It comes about because this Government legislated last year, consistent with the recommendations of the independent Taskforce, to ensure that all workers had access to a set of general employment conditions that could be reviewed by the QIRC to ensure they remained relevant to community standards.

The review of long service leave was the first such review of a general employment condition under the Industrial Relations Act 1999.

The QIRC concluded this review on 27 June this year after a comprehensive process that gave all interested parties the chance to put their views. The Queensland Government then took the decision to legislate to give effect to the outcome of the review, a course of action supported by employer groups and unions alike.

Introducing legislation that reflects the outcome of the QIRC review demonstrates in practice the importance the Government places on the role of the QIRC as the independent umpire.

In essence, the Bill provides a fair outcome for workers who can now look forward to having earlier access to the leave entitlement. At the same time there is a recognition of the imperatives facing employers and the cost impact of the enhancement is minimised.

Once again, the Government has got the balance right in the interests of all Queenslanders.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Sheldon, adjourned.

LEGACY TRUST FUND BILL

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP)
(Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services)
(4.33 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to provide for the money standing to the credit of the Legacy Trust Fund and related accounts and funds of the department."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Ms Bligh, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP)
(Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services)
(4.33 p.m.): I move—

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

I am pleased to introduce the Legacy Trust Fund Bill 2000. The Bill will enable Disability Services Queensland to use funds that have accumulated over a period of more than 100 years in an account styled the Legacy Trust Fund by disbursing these funds to organisations catering to the needs of the vision impaired. The department currently holds approximately \$370,000 in the account.

The way in which the Government came to be administering these funds is a curious mixture of historical accident and happenstance. Unfortunately, because of a legal anomaly, it became necessary to freeze the fund. This Bill will remedy that defect.

I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my second-reading speech in Hansard.

Leave granted.—

I will briefly outline the history of the fund and anomalies that have been resolved through the introduction of this legislation.

The Legacy Trust Fund has been managed by various Government departments through the auspices of a series of institutions including the Queensland Industrial Institute for the Blind and the Queensland Blind Industrial Centre.

The sources of funds deposited into the account have been mixed; although it is accepted that a major proportion of individual deposits have come from legacies. In those cases, the testators would have expressed the wish that all or part of their estates be used for the benefit of the vision impaired—or at least those persons for whom the institutions were set up and run.

Despite the way in which the Legacy Trust Fund has always been described, it has been discovered that there is no deed in existence that created a trust. Originally, a private organisation called the "Blind Deaf and Dumb Institution" existed. The institution did charitable work for people with disabilities, but the exact nature of the services is obscure.

From the time the institution was declared to be a public charitable institution for the purposes of the Charitable Institutions Management Act 1885, the institution benefited from both bequests and donations. Some of the bequests were expressed to be for general charitable purposes while others were expressed as more specific bequests.

In any event, monies received from bequests prior to 1917 were dealt with by the private

institution as if it were a trustee. The institution was "nationalised" in 1917 and the Legacy Trust Fund was established and administered by the Government.

In 1931, the Institution was formally divided into what became the Queensland School for the Blind and the Queensland Industrial Institution for the Blind. From this point, the two programs were administered by different Government departments with the Department of Public Instruction (now Education) responsible for the school, and the Home Secretary's Department responsible for the Institution.

In 1945, it was formally arranged that the books in relation to the fund account be kept at the Institution, however payments out of the account had to be made on the approval of the Minister or Under Secretary.

At some time during the early 1980's, departmental officers began referring to the account as the "Queensland Industrial Institution for the Blind Legacy Trust Account".

In 1988, the Auditor-General advised that the accounts of the Institution, including the Legacy Trust Account, were "miscellaneous departmental accounts" and that financial statements for the Trust account were to be submitted to audit and certification.

During the financial year 1988/89, the Industrial Institution, now the Queensland Blind Industrial Centre, was transferred to the Department of Employment, Vocational Education and Training (DEVET). In arranging the transfer, it was suggested by the Director-General of the Department of Family Services, that "all operations and accounts of the Queensland Blind Industrial Centre, Except for the Legacy Trust Account and the Talking Book Library, be transferred from the Department to DEVET", but that because "the Legacy Trust Account was established and maintained for the general benefit of sight disabled people" It should be retained within the Department of Family Services.

In September 1995, the Queensland Blind Industrial Centre was restructured and a private sector charitable company, Vision Queensland, was established to manage the institution. Vision Queensland subsequently made a claim on the Department that the Legacy Trust Fund rightfully belonged to the new organisation as manager of the Queensland Blind Industrial Centre.

I appreciate that vision queensland could not have known the full history of the fund—in the sense that the sources of money coming into the fund were disparate and that records showing the exact purpose for which each and every bequest, donation or gift were not available. The claim by vision queensland gave rise to the obtaining of legal advice from the Crown Solicitor and the freezing of the account pending a legislative solution.

The advice obtained from the Crown Solicitor was to the effect that the Legacy Trust Fund was never set up as a trust, is not now a trust and that most of the funds are likely to be the Department's to disburse as it sees fit. The records, however, do not allow individual legacies and accumulated interest to be differentiated from other monies coming into the fund. The Crown Solicitor's opinion was that an indeterminate proportion of the fund is held by the Department as trustee and that one of the potential beneficiaries is Vision Queensland.

It is not legally possible to deal with the funds held in the Departmental account in the alternative way of applying to the Courts for directions as to the management of the funds under the Trusts Act 1973. THIS IS because the fund itself is not a trust, nor can the quantum of individual sums held on trust be determined.

The Bill will vest the funds currently in the departmental account in the Queensland Government and enable them to be paid to organisations benefiting the vision impaired. this is a legal device which, together with the provision to prevent future actions, will rectify the present problems with accessing the funds. Vision Queensland, as the manager of the Queensland Blind Industrial Centre, will qualify for a proportion of the funds under this new legislative scheme.

The advantage of this legislative approach is that it will finally allow the Queensland Government to disburse the funds presently held in the Legacy Trust Fund—free of any legal ambiguity. Funds may only be disbursed from the account for the purposes set out in the Legislation i.e. a purpose that benefits persons with a vision impairment.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this legislation which will finally correct these historical anomalies and allow an amount of approximately \$370,000 to be used for the benefit of Queenslanders with a vision disability.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

FISHERIES AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP)
(Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (4.36 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Fisheries Act 1994."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP)
(Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (4.36 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill makes a number of amendments to the Fisheries Act 1994, the most important of which is to facilitate the East Coast Trawl Fishery Structural Adjustment Scheme which will accompany the implementation of amendments to an important piece of subordinate legislation, namely the Fisheries East Coast Trawl Management Plan 1999.

The Fisheries Act 1994 provides for the making, and subsequently amendment, of a management plan for a fishery. The Act also provides for the chief executive of the Department of Primary Industries to prepare and publish a draft management plan, or amendments to one, to allow for public consideration before the amendments are made. Because management plans are subordinate legislation, they are given very careful consideration by Government before they are implemented.

In November 1999, the Queensland Government approved a management plan for the East Coast Trawl Fishery, but decided that the key issues of effort capping, allocation and reduction, closures and the use of bycatch reduction devices and turtle exclusion devices should be given more consideration by the Queensland Fisheries Management Authority, the Department of Primary Industries, industry stakeholders and other interested parties.

The Premier formed a stakeholder working group in late November 1999 to undertake this task. The stakeholder working group reported its considerations to the Premier in March 2000 and recommended that an "up front" jointly funded structural adjustment scheme of \$30m be put in place to remove a minimum of 15% effort from the East Coast Trawl Fishery prior to the commencement of other management measures that require amendments to the East Coast Trawl Management Plan.

In the interests of saving time, I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Proposed amendments to the existing Management plan have been widely circulated in the form of a Regulatory Impact Statement and exposure draft of the proposed amendments, which were released in October and deliver the outcomes of the Working Group aimed at ensuring that the East Coast Trawl Fishery is conducted on an ecologically sustainable basis.

The Structural Adjustment Scheme for the East Coast Trawl Fishery will be administered by the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority and it is intended that it be jointly funded by the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments and the Queensland Trawling Industry, on a "one-third each" basis.

The Scheme is not based on compulsory acquisition of licences, but is based on a voluntary tender process. The Scheme will only succeed if sufficient licences are tendered at a price that will remove fifteen percent of fishing effort from the Fishery at a cost of not more than \$30 million.

The Commonwealth has agreed to provide \$10 million towards the structural adjustment of the Fishery but has also indicated that it will remove its offer to contribute to the Scheme unless the implementation timetable for 1 January 2001 is met.

The Commonwealth, via the Minister for Environment Australia, Senator Robert Hill, has identified particular concerns over ecological sustainability of the Fishery within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

In this context the Commonwealth has indicated, although "threatened" might be a better word, that it could unilaterally implement legislative controls in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, including restrictive permits for entry to the Park and additional bycatch controls. This would result in significant restrictions on the economic viability of industry without the removal of some of the existing fishing effort.

In order to avoid this type of heavy-handed Commonwealth intervention, the amendments to the East Coast Trawl Management plan need to be in place and operational on 1 January 2001.

As a component of this exercise, certain amendments to the Fisheries Act 1994 are required to provide for an across the board reduction in the "cap" on fishing "effort", if necessary, as part of the new allocation system of Effort Units in the East Coast Trawl Fishery.

A critical component of the proposed amendments to the Management plan is an allocation system of new authorities for the East Coast Trawl Fishery that will be issued to eligible licence holders on the basis of historical participation in overall fishing effort in the fishery.

These authorities, to be known as "Effort Units", will be a calculation of the number of fishing days allocated to an eligible primary vessel licence holder multiplied by the number of standardised hull units of the boat identified in the licence.

Currently, the Act permits the Chief Executive to exercise his discretion to suspend or cancel an authority in certain circumstances by following a specified process.

However, to enforce the cap of 108 346 nights proposed by the amendments to the East Coast Trawl Management plan, it will be necessary to provide for the part cancellation of authorities issued under the Management plan by operation of the provisions of the amended Plan.

To achieve this, the Act is being amended to extend the matters that may be dealt with in a management plan to include the management of the fishery by a system of authorities, including their issue, conditions, transfer, amendment, renewal, suspension and cancellation.

These amendments are essential for passage as any delay will put the Commonwealth's \$10 million funding contribution to the East Coast Trawl Fishery Structural Adjustment Scheme at risk.

The Queensland Government has made a commitment to the Commonwealth, and to industry, that if a cut in the East Coast Trawl Fishery effort cap is required, it will occur before the commencement of the amended management plan on 1 January 2001.

Several other amendments are also proposed to the Act. The most important of these is an amendment to the Act to, in turn, facilitate amendment of the Fisheries (Spanner Crab) Management Plan 1999 to allow for an adjustment in individual transferable quota, or "ITQ", units where further licence transfers have occurred in 2 cases and ensure that the allocation of ITQ units occurs in accordance with the intended Government policy position.

The amendments will effectively allow for an adjustment of reported spanner crab catch history where further licence transfers have occurred after the commencement of the management plan.

The adjustment is to apply for licence transfers where a change in ownership has been effected, but where special circumstances exist such that the effective operation and control of the licences in question remains the same.

There are only two licence transfers that will be affected. The amendments, while of necessity being retrospective, will not detract from the rights of licence holders, and indeed will ensure that the intended outcome of the spanner crab management plan is achieved without detriment to the parties in question.

Section 124 of the Act is being amended to allow the chief executive of DPI to take action

reasonably necessary to rehabilitate or restore land, waters, marine plants or a declared fish habitat area.

Currently, this section is difficult to apply in a practical sense and, as a result, has been of little use to the Queensland Fisheries Service and its predecessors in seeking to carry out rehabilitation and restoration.

The section states that the chief executive of DPI may take action reasonably necessary to rehabilitate or restore land, waters, marine plants or a declared fish habitat area if a person either contravenes a provision of Part 6 of the Act or does not comply with a condition of an authority under the Act to rehabilitate or restore.

The problem with the application of this section lies in the need to show definitively that there has been a contravention by a person. This is often difficult to establish, particularly in the case of acts which have been committed a number of years before they are detected, for example, unlawful construction of works in a declared fish habitat area.

These difficulties have resulted in the powers under section 124 being very rarely employed. There is, however, a real need for the chief executive to be empowered to take action for rehabilitation or restoration where land, waters, marine plants or a fish habitat have been removed, damaged or destroyed.

For this reason, the section is being amended to permit the chief executive to take action if the land, waters, marine plants or declared fish habitat area has been removed, destroyed or damaged and if the chief executive reasonably believes the removal, destruction or damage was caused by an act or omission that constituted a failure to comply with either a proper legislative requirement or a condition of an authority issued under an Act.

Several other amendments of a non-controversial nature are also being made. The majority of these are procedural in nature and result from suggestions made to the Department of Primary Industries by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.

Section 35 of the Act is to be amended to omit the requirement that a management plan include both a description of the fishery and a statement as to the known status of the fishery. The proposed amendment accords with advice from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel that these provisions have required the inclusion of lengthy passages describing the fishery area and its condition in management plans made to date.

It is considered that these statements are non-legislative in character and should not be included in a management plan, which is subordinate legislation. The advice of Parliamentary Counsel was that the inclusion of the material lengthens the drafting process and causes difficulties in interpretation.

There are currently some difficulties caused by section 33 of the Act which currently provides that before a management plan is made for a fishery, a draft plan must be prepared and reasonable steps taken to engage in consultation about the draft plan.

Section 39 currently provides that a management plan may be amended or repealed in accordance with the provisions of the management plan. Most management plans provide for their amendment in accordance with specified review events and otherwise, provide for the consultation processes that must be undertaken for amendments.

The interplay of these provisions has caused difficulties in the past, as section 33 may be construed as requiring all proposed amendments to comply with the draft consultation process. This creates a potential conflict with the provisions in the management plans about how they may be amended.

It is proposed to amend the Act to specify that the procedure that must be followed to amend a management plan will be to either prepare a draft of the amendments and then take all reasonable steps to engage in consultation about the draft, or to conduct a review of the plan where the result of the review included a proposal to make the amendment.

Section 199 of the Act is being amended, again at the suggestion of the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, to make it clear that an individual may not appeal from a decision of the Fisheries Tribunal to the Fisheries Tribunal once again. As it stands, the section could be interpreted as permitting such an appeal.

It is also proposed to make a number of minor amendments to the Fisheries Act 1994 in the interests of more efficient operation of that statute. It is proposed to correct certain deficiencies, for example, the Act at present allows management plans to be made for fisheries, but this does not include aquaculture. Accordingly, an amendment is proposed to allow the option of management plans for aquaculture.

Another example of a deficiency in the Act is the absence of provision for the registered temporary transfer of allocated fishery quota from one individual to another where quota is used as a management tool. It is proposed to amend the Act to correct this deficiency, although the amendment will not require the introduction of quota in any particular fishery and will not interfere with the established process for the making of management plans.

Unfortunately, Senator Hill has very clearly indicated that the Commonwealth's \$10 million will not be available for the East Coast Trawl Fishery Structural Adjustment Scheme after 31 December unless the amendments to the management plan proceed in accordance with the original timetable.

Any problems that subsequently arise in the implementation of these arrangements will need to be laid where they belong—at Senator Hill's door.

Like industry, the State Government would like more time. But the Federal Government refused to budge.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Rowell, adjourned.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES BILL

Committee

Resumed from 14 November 2000 (see p. 4480).

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr BARTON (4.40 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 14, line 6—

omit, insert—

'2.(1) Chapter 10 commences on assent.

'(2) The remaining provisions of this Act commence on a day to be fixed by proclamation.'

Mr HORAN: This Minister's amendment refers to the problem that has arisen because a number of prisoners who have served more than two-thirds of their head sentences have made application to the Supreme Court—and in some cases have been successful—to be let out or to be awarded compensation. I understand that the Supreme Court has passed two judgments. These judgments have given the impression that sentence remission is an entitlement. The Minister's amendment clarifies that situation to state that remission is not an automatic entitlement.

People on parole are saying that they should have been granted remission and that they were imprisoned illegally. Up to three prisoners have challenged on this point. I understand that one of those prisoners had completed two-thirds of the sentence but committed a further offence in jail and therefore received a further sentence. It was said that that prisoner should have been released after serving two-thirds of the sentence and that had he been released after serving two-thirds of that sentence he would not have committed that further offence and would not have received the additional punishment of a further jail term.

I think the problem has been that the criteria of risk have not been contained in the Act; it has been only a policy. The issue of good conduct and industry was in legislation, but not the issue of risk. I ask the Minister: does this amendment adequately cover that criteria of risk? Does it also adequately cover offenders such as sex offenders against children, who are often of good conduct and industry whilst in prison but who could be considered by the Parole Board to be a risk if they were let out of prison early, for example on remission. I would like answers to those couple of questions.

Mr BARTON: I should say that the member is getting a little bit ahead of himself. My amendment No. 3 goes to the heart of the questions he has asked. I was going to wait until I reached amendment No. 3 to talk about that so that we did not waste any more of the time of this Parliament.

Amendment No. 1 is necessary to give immediate effect to the provisions of the Bill amending the Corrective Services Act 1988. In this way this clause closes off the recently identified loophole. So it is related to that loophole. The remaining provisions of this legislation commence on a day to be fixed by proclamation. That way, once this Bill has passed this Parliament we can get the provisions enacted as soon as possible so that we can close off this loophole.

I want to make it very clear that amendment No. 3 goes to the heart of this issue. In recent weeks there have been three decisions of the Supreme Court that really go to the heart of how we have understood corrective services in this State to operate ever since enactment of the 1988 legislation as introduced by the then Minister for Corrective Services, Russell Cooper. That followed the Kennedy review, about which the member spoke so passionately last night.

At that point a whole structure was put into place. Right through the terms of Labor and coalition Governments, in relation to numerous Supreme Court decisions and tens of thousands of prisoners, we all understood that the system worked in a particular way. However, in recent weeks three learned judges have decided that the old order is no longer good enough. Effectively, that means that, if we do not change the law and those judges' decisions are to remain as precedents or if we do not change the law retrospectively and make it effective immediately, prisoners could be considered to have a right to automatic release after serving two-thirds of their sentences.

Prisoners who have opted to take graduated release, as opposed to waiting in prison until they have served two-thirds or more of their sentences, and who then seek remission could say, "We would like work to release, then we would like home detention and then we would like parole." In effect, when they had served two-thirds of their sentences those prisoners could say, "I know that got us out from behind the fence years ahead of what otherwise might have been the case, but now that we have served two-thirds of our sentence we want to go home automatically, without any conditions applying to us, such as those conditions that might apply for home detention or parole."

This Government has said that that is not good enough. I must admit that I might be legally challenged, but I cannot comprehend how those learned judges in those three cases could have reached the conclusions that they did. They are certainly not reflecting the community's opinion. However, we have decided to close off this loophole and close it off as fast as we possibly can by moving further amendments this afternoon. This Government is absolutely adamant that remission after two-thirds of a sentence has been served is not an automatic right.

The member for Toowoomba South asked: does this impact on sex offenders? My oath it does. Sex offenders are the ones who frequently decide that they do not like the process of graduated release. They go into correctional centres, they refuse to accept their offending behaviour and address it, and they refuse to undertake programs such as the sex offenders treatment program. However, while they are inside they are model prisoners. They keep their noses clean. When they reach the two-thirds mark in serving their sentences, they put up their hands and say, "I should be allowed to go home now."

That has happened too often, particularly when those offenders have pleaded guilty in the courts in the first place because they knew that if they did that they would have a better chance of getting remission after serving two-thirds of their sentence. That is why the heart of this Bill in its primary form, even before the amendments that I briefed the shadow Minister on, is to say that there will be no such thing as prisoners receiving automatic remission after serving two-thirds of their sentence. We will have a system of conditional release, and particularly in relation to sex offenders. If a person is perceived by the authorities to be a risk in the community of further offending, that person can be kept in for the entire period of their head sentence as

determined by the courts. That is certainly something that we are doing through this Bill, even before we move further amendments.

Currently, if a person is released into the community after serving two-thirds of their sentence they walk away with their sentence remitted totally and with no conditions at all being placed on them. This legislation means that we can now put conditions on them. Certainly, the primary condition for everybody is that if they offend again while they are out on conditional release then they go straight back to jail and serve the remainder of the head sentence as well as the sentence imposed for the new offence they committed. Also, in certain circumstances it could mean that part of the conditions of a person's release are that they are to remain alcohol free or drug free or that they are to stay away from certain people they have offended against in the past. A whole range of conditions can be applied. That is what we are doing with the principal part of this Bill.

As well, these three Supreme Court decisions have put at risk the entire basis upon which decisions have been made up until now. We still have hundreds, if not thousands, of people in the system right now who were sentenced under the old regime and who will come up for parole or for remission in terms of the old legislation after the new legislation comes into force.

Even further back than that, we have another group of former prisoners who have been sentenced, who have completed their sentences and who in some cases have been refused remission or parole because of some risk or because they have played up while in the system. We need to protect the State—and when I say "the State", I am not talking about this Government, I am talking about the public of Queensland—from claims by those people that they should be allowed automatically to be released from prison. In the main, it will be the worst types of offenders who are likely to try to do that. In fact, we have already seen some of this coming through to my office and department. For example, one nice grub—a sex offender—is saying, "I have completed two-thirds of my sentence. Now you have got to let me go home." I have got news for him: he is not going home and the amendments that we will move as part of this Bill will make sure that he stays in one of the correctional centres for some time yet.

Some lawyers—and not all lawyers are great people like some of my colleagues who are members of this fine party and this Government—are already writing to me

foreshadowing that they want to seek damages for their clients who, under the interpretation that these three judgments sustain, claim to have been wrongly imprisoned previously. It is crucial that we jam this hard. Certainly, amendment No. 1 is part of that whole process, but this amendment goes only to the heart of ensuring that the remaining provisions commence on a day to be fixed by proclamation so that we do not have any technicalities in relation to how quickly we can get these provisions into place. They all go to supporting further amendments, in particular amendment No. 3, which I have distributed. It goes to the heart of saying that the system did not get it wrong.

I probably should be careful about how I describe what judges have done, but other members have said things in this place before and gotten away with it. It is incredible that these judges could have reached the conclusions that run against numerous precedents of their brother and sister judges over the past 12 or 13 years, and that run against what everybody understood the 1998 legislation to mean. I am seeking the shadow Minister's and this Parliament's support to make sure that there are no more of these stupid decisions, which could allow some of the worst offenders we have in the system right now to be automatically allowed to go home, and certainly we want to make sure that there are no stupid decisions that could allow those who have been allowed home but at some point after the two-thirds magic date for remissions to be able to claim that they have been falsely imprisoned. No-one has been held beyond the point of their head sentence. Some of these people have been held for longer than the two-thirds time that is the magic date of remission either because they have reoffended while they have been in prison or because they are deemed by prison authorities to be a continuing risk to the community.

The community does not want these people in its midst. I will do everything I can—and I am sure I will get the support of this Parliament—to ensure that the community does not have these people inflicted on them and that the community does not have to pay damages to them. In many cases, the damages would be way beyond what their victims have received in compensation. Of course, these people do not pay those damages to the victims. Typically, because these people in jail do not have any money, it is the State that has to pay damages to victims. In turn, these offenders would be seeking to have the State pay them damages

for daring to put them in jail because they have offended against society.

I cannot speak strongly enough about this. I will not repeat my comments when I speak to the further clauses, because I think I have covered the subject in this contribution. I am sure the shadow Minister will support me in my view. The do-gooders have been winning too many of the debates lately, frequently using public funds to initiate cases and causing the Corrective Services Department and the Community Corrections Board to waste public funds in the defence of their decisions. Enough public funds have been wasted in the interests of people who are locked up, should be locked up, should remain locked up and who should be making contributions back to society, not suing us because we have dared to put them in jail where they deserve to be.

Mr HORAN: The Opposition will be supporting this amendment. I want to put on the public record that the community finds amazing the way there seems to be so much legal activity associated with many aspects of prisoners' lives and activities. Although we agree that the treatment should be humane and fair, it seems amazing that so much time and effort of officers of the Corrective Services Department, the Parole Board and lawyers acting on behalf of the Government is being taken up in defending these actions. The article in the newspaper last Sunday morning was a good example of that. People cannot believe that this happens. They are starting to wonder what the system is coming to. The Minister covered everything pretty well. Does this protect the State, for example, from class action?

Mr BARTON: Yes. We have not anticipated class actions. But what it really does is retrospectively change the law. I know that offends some fundamental legislative principles, but there is only one way we can be sure of this. It stops individuals from taking action and it would certainly stop any capacity for a class action to be taken on behalf of groups of individuals. We need to turn this around very quickly. That is why once I got the third decision about a week and a half ago now I sought Crown Law advice on it and linked it back to the advice I already had on the first two decisions, which had been handed down only a matter of several weeks prior to that—these are all decisions that, I think, were delivered during October. We moved as rapidly as we could.

I know that some of the do-gooder organisations whose main interest is looking

after the interests of inmates of correctional centres do not like it. This is to stop them from wasting money that is contributed to them to look after prisoners' interests. This is to stop them wasting public funds so that we can make sure that the law is reflected in the way that we always intended it to be reflected—by Russell Cooper, by Jim Kennedy, by my predecessors as corrections Ministers in the Goss years, by me and by all of those community corrections boards, by the Queensland Corrective Services Commission when it existed and by my Department of Corrective Services. We all knew what the rules were. We had certainty. That certainty has been overturned. This puts back the rules to where we understood they were and stops this nonsense dead in its tracks.

Mr HORAN: I wanted to ask the Minister about the funding of the Prisoners Legal Service. Is the funding coming from State and Federal Government sources or just from the Federal Government? I understand they are able to have a judicial review. There is a free service for prisoners to be able to undertake judicial reviews. If the Government does not win, no money is paid back, because prisoners do not have any money. But if it happens the other way—I think the Minister mentioned this same point—the Government is up for the costs. The Minister mentioned that the provisions of the legislation are retrospective. I want to be sure that this whole thing is watertight. The provisions are retrospective to when—back to when it was first a regulation in 1989? Does it cover everything? They found this loophole. Will they find any other loopholes? Is it retrospective back to the birth of this remission arrangement? I think that would be the starting point.

Mr BARTON: There were several questions there. I will try to answer them all. The first relates to the issue of funding for some of these groups. Very clearly some prisoners get individual funding to pursue matters through Legal Aid. Some cases are taken by bodies such as the Prisoners Legal Service on their behalf. In the past the Prisoners Legal Service has received some funding—it does not make up the majority of its funding; it is only a small percentage of its total funding—from the State Government through Corrective Services' grants scheme. I must say that it is tied funding, that is, the service must report on certain things it does. When we received the last report, we were less than happy that it had in fact not spent the funding on what it was supposed to spend it on. I do not want to pre-empt—

Mr Horan: Does it come from the Corrective Services Department?

Mr BARTON: A small percentage of its funding comes from Corrective Services Queensland. Its spokespeople continually tell me that we might as well not give it to them because it is so poor that they cannot do anything with it. I do not want to foreshadow at this point what we will do with future grants because, like everything, we should always make decisions based on what we have in front of us at that time. Otherwise people then trot us all, including Cabinet Ministers, off to judicial review. Even considering the small amount of funding that we give the Prisoners Legal Service, which is a small percentage of its total funding, I am less than satisfied that we got good value for the public's money. I will certainly be having a good look at that when the next round of Corrective Services grants is considered. As to where it gets the rest of its funding, which is the majority of its funding, I am really not sure. I do not have a handle on that at this point, but it certainly does not get it from me.

The other part of the question was: are there any more loopholes? This is always the multimillion-dollar question. As soon as we became aware of this, my department started working on it. We sought Crown Law opinions on each of the decisions as they came down. The draft amendments that the member has in front of him—they will be moved in my name—I think are draft No. 12. We have continued to take advice from experienced counsel, from QCs, or Senior Counsel as they are called these days, from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and from the Crown Law office so that we can examine this issue as thoroughly as we can.

This Bill has come up for debate this week. I dare say that if we had a little bit more time we might have been able to be 100% sure that there are no more loopholes. But based on the department's experience and advice, Crown Law's advice, advice from very experienced QCs and SCs at the bar who have provided opinions and the very best advice of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, we have brought these amendments forward, and they are designed to go all the way back to cover the 1988 Act—from when the regulations first came into effect in 1989. We are certainly seeking to go back.

I am a little reticent to give the member opposite a 100% guarantee that no-one will ever find another loophole. These judges are incredibly inventive. They must have nothing else to do with their time. I can assure this

Parliament that if they find another loophole I will be back in here to jam a big plug into it as quickly as I can. I am confident that what we have is very thorough.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr HORAN (5.03 p.m.): I just want to set the record straight. The Minister said that I had been briefed on the amendments. I was most appreciative yesterday that when we had a chat outside—we were talking about another piece of legislation; we were discussing the amendment that was in the paper, the one that we have just discussed—he offered a briefing on that and the other piece of legislation which I had. At the time I was not aware that there were other amendments. That was probably my fault for not standing up and asking, "Are there any other amendments?" But that was all I was briefed on. That is why I might be a bit slow in going through some of these. Also, the Minister might remember that last night we debated the Corrective Services Bill until half past 1 and that something to do with petrol has been debated all day today.

Mr Barton: I appreciate that. I will be as cooperative as I can.

Mr HORAN: Thank you. Clause 6 relates to where persons are to be detained. I think this is a pretty important and quite serious clause within the legislation. It says that they must be contained in a Corrective Services facility. Subclause (a) states—

"... if the period is 21 days or less—the person may be detained in a watch-house for part or all of the period;"

So they could be detained in a watch-house for 21 days. The provision continues—

"(b) if the period is more than 21 days—the person may be detained in a watch-house until the person can be conveniently taken to a Corrective Services facility."

I know that under the previous Minister for Corrective Services and under the current Minister—I think he said this last night—there is a policy that endeavours to have prisoners kept in watch-houses for no longer than seven days. It is not the best place for prisoners to be kept in the long term, and it is also quite an impost on police. My understanding is that part of the reason for this clause relates to, say, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners up in the far north, where the period for their

detention may be eight days. It might take two or three days to get from halfway up Cape York down to Lotus Glen and then be processed, and then it might take another two or three days to get back. I wonder if the Minister could explain if there are any other reasons for subsections (2)(a) and (2)(b) of that clause?

Mr BARTON: I think the member has just about summed it up. We have a policy, which was originally put in place by my predecessor and the member's colleague the member for Crows Nest when he was the Minister, that says that prisoners normally should not be detained in watch-houses for more than seven days. I have continued that policy. In the main that can be met. We do have circumstances, though, in special areas where it cannot be. I will give an example. In Mount Isa the rule is 14 days, not seven days. There is a large Aboriginal community and there is difficulty with detaining and moving prisoners, particularly if they have to be flown to courts in the south. Under understandings that have been reached with the community itself, prisoners can be held there for up to 14 days. When we get to other rural and remote areas, particularly Cape York and the gulf, despite the fact that we do have police aircraft permanently stationed out of Cairns travelling to Cape York and out of Mount Isa travelling to the gulf area, there are circumstances where, instead of going backwards and forwards to courts, people prefer to be detained in their home area, where they are close to families and their support base.

I do not want to give any indication that that seven-day rule is being watered down at all. In fact, the old Act provided for 31 days. We had a good look at this and said, "The policy is seven days, and the reality in 99% of cases is that seven days works." It is very seldom that anyone is ever held beyond seven days. Probably the best way I can say this is that we did not want to put in a limit that was so close that it might be breached inadvertently somewhere, giving an inmate the ability to sue the public of Queensland again if for good reason they had to be held for longer than either seven days or 14 days. There are very few occasions—there are the odd ones—when someone might be held there for more than seven days or even occasionally, due to a particular set of circumstances, for more than 14 days. We felt that pulling it back from 31 to 21 days in terms of the statute was fair, but the policy of seven days is going to remain because, frankly, it works.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—

Mrs SHELDON (5.10 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 19, after line 31—

insert—

'(aa) for a prisoner whose term of imprisonment is changed by a court order—when the court orders the change; and'."

This issue was brought to my notice, and I am sure to many members, in the case of Lorna Mackenzie, a woman jailed because she pleaded guilty to manslaughter for the killing of her husband after 40 years of severe domestic violence abuse. The original sentence was eight years with a non-parole period of three years. She used whatever little money she had for lawyers to appeal to the appellate court, the Court of Appeal. It reduced the sentence to five years with a non-parole period of one year. When that occurred on 11 August, by then she had served roughly 11 months. So she applied for release on parole after the 12 months had elapsed, but she was refused.

The board refused her release citing a ministerial guideline that she could not be released because of her initial classification which remained medium, because that was the classification when she went into jail. Although she was in a maximum security jail, she was classified as medium very shortly after that. Therefore, the board refused her parole because of the classification of medium and because she had not completed a particular program. Because of the appeal process—and it was fairly elongated—the prison authorities deemed her ineligible to start any rehabilitation programs. The whole thing would seem a nonsense. The reduction in her sentence should have meant that her classification should have been lowered to permit release. However, the prison did not take any notice of the court's reduction for more than two months because of another regulation that permits classification reviews only at three-monthly intervals.

In the end, it was said that the Parole Board would not review her situation again until January, which meant that this woman would have served over and above the non-parole period determined by the Court of Appeal and she would have spent Christmas in jail without her family. Again at her expense, her lawyer went back to the appellate court which said that she should be released immediately, and she was. She is now home

with her family. On discussing this with her lawyer, I found that this situation not only applied to Lorna Mackenzie but also to a number of prisoners whose sentence on appeal had been reviewed. Yet because of what could euphemistically be called a glitch in the system, this was not taken into consideration by the Parole Board.

My amendment states—

"... for a prisoner whose period"—

and I will discuss the word "period" in a minute—

"of imprisonment is changed by a court order—when the court orders the change;"

I have discussed this amendment with the Minister, who no doubt will speak for himself. However, he has looked at that amendment and has said that he thought it was a reasonable amendment and was therefore prepared to accept it. He has suggested, and I think for very good reasons, that it should be "for a prisoner whose term of imprisonment is changed by a court order". I am prepared to accept that change. I inform the House that I would have had this amendment changed in print, but because of what happened in the House today I did not have the time to do that. Therefore, I am quite happy for the amendment to read—

"... for a prisoner whose term of imprisonment is changed by a court order—when the court orders the change."

This amendment brings justice into the system. I believe prisoners should serve their term. While their crime, the background to that crime, their behaviour in prison and other things are taken into consideration, nevertheless the community needs to know that justice is being done on their behalf, too, as do victims and their families. However, when there are extenuating circumstances such as in this case and in a number of other situations, then it is only humane that we ensure that the laws passed in this House over time do not hinder the justifiable release of such a prisoner.

I thank the Minister for indicating his support for this amendment. The case of Lorna Mackenzie highlighted this issue and, because of the background and what had happened, brought this case into media prominence. Because of that, we as a community became aware of some of the injustices in the system which none of us realised were there and could be used in a

way so that justice was not given to people who deserve it.

Mr HORAN: I support the member for Caloundra in moving this amendment. I thank the Minister for the consideration he gave to it last night when I, with Mrs Sheldon's authority, placed it before him. The member for Caloundra has been very diligent on this particular matter and has followed it through with a fair degree of commitment. There were sad and extraordinary circumstances surrounding this issue. Taking personalities out of it, it seems right that if there is a subsequent decision by an Appeal Court which changes the sentence then any decisions being made by the Parole Board should refer to the final decision which changed from a previous decision, not the earlier decision.

In speaking to this amendment, I have a question for the Minister. I refer to prisoner classifications contained under Part 4 of the Bill where the chief executive must review a prisoner's classification. I understand from the Bill that that has to be done at intervals not longer than six months. I also understand that a risk needs inventory has to be undertaken by the department. Is that correct? What is the workload involved in doing a risk needs inventory every six months?

Mr BARTON: I will put the last bit first, because that is the question, and then I will come back and make comment about the amendment. A risk needs inventory or that type of assessment normally takes something in the order of three months to achieve. That is partly why the Bill provides for the chief executive or the chief executive's delegate to make those assessments once every six months. People need to know that this is not a matter of a lack of resources; it is a matter of just how many resources we throw at the system. It is fair that people be assessed on a regular basis. A minimum period is six months, but it can take three months to undertake a proper assessment of people. It is not something that is arbitrary where someone makes a decision off the top of their head.

These days a lot of time is spent in correctional centres and indeed community corrections undertaking assessments of inmates, assessments of their needs and assessments of what needs to be done before we make decisions. As my predecessor found on some occasions, I can assure the member that when the system, even with the best will in the world, assesses someone as low security who has originally been guilty of a heinous crime, we sometimes get a community backlash as to how we could do such a thing.

Of course, prison is not just about punishment; prison is about rehabilitating people and hopefully giving society back a better person when they come out. So it is a very long process to achieve. I hope I have answered the member's question for him. That is why Part 4 is the way it is.

I return to the amendment moved by the member for Caloundra and supported by the shadow Minister. The member for Caloundra has probably put it as well as I could. Yes, that is the outcome. When I received a copy of this amendment last night, I discussed it with my personal staff and my departmental advisers. We felt for consistency reasons that the word "term" should be used rather than the word "period". That is the terminology that is used in those circumstances in the rest of this Bill. The Bill was structured to be consistent with the Penalties and Sentences Act, which it needs to be read in conjunction with. I thank the member for Caloundra for agreeing that the best option would be to replace the word "period" with "term". On behalf of the Government, I accept that amendment because it goes to the heart of a dramatically changed set of circumstances.

I am sure that the Opposition members who have spoken would also appreciate that when you are running a large system, you must have a set of standards and a set of rules that apply to all. Every now and then someone gets caught up. It is a bit like here, I daresay, in relation to some of the Standing Orders and other standards of the Parliament and our entitlements. Every now and then someone runs into something where they say, "Look, that is just totally unfair. Why can't I do that?" or "Why shouldn't we be allowed to do that?" There will always be the exception to the standard rule. Sadly for Lorna Mackenzie, that happened in her case.

I am fairly confident that a combination of this amendment that the member for Caloundra has moved and changes that I have recently made to the ministerial guidelines for the Parole Board will make sure that we do not see a repeat of those circumstances. I certainly hope not. I thank the Opposition for its amendment because I think it is an excellent amendment and one that we as a Government will support.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 13—

Mr HORAN (5.21 p.m.): Clause 13 relates to accommodation. My concern relates to the accommodation of young prisoners aged 17 years. The clause states that—

"Whenever practicable, each prisoner in a corrective services facility must be provided with his or her own accommodation."

The part I am particularly interested in is subclause (2), which states—

"A prisoner who is under 18 years of age must be kept apart from other prisoners who are 18 years or older unless it is in the prisoner's best interests not to be kept apart."

There are a couple of examples cited. The first is a young Aboriginal prisoner, who could be accommodated with older prisoners to enable him to be with a family member. The second example is a young prisoner being accommodated with older prisoners to allow that person to participate in a WORC program.

The Minister is aware that there have been some serious problems with this provision of the existing legislation. A number of attacks and bashings of 17-year-olds have occurred this year in the "boys yard". Earlier in the year, the Minister said in answer to a question that they would be transferred to other prisons. I do not know whether that has yet occurred fully—100%, every single one.

Mr Barton: That's my advice, yes.

Mr HORAN: I would like to hear whether or not that has occurred.

The incidents that occurred obviously pointed to some sort of problem in using the mentor system. The Minister mentioned the mentor system in Parliament. It is unclear whether it was the mentors who did the bashing, whether these young people were getting in with other older fellows who did the bashing, or whether the 17-year-olds were bashing each other up.

Mr HORAN: I think it was one of the Kennedy reforms that 17-year-olds should be kept separate from older prisoners. I heard the Minister say that they were getting stuck into each other. That is pretty difficult to stop. I take that point, but I would like to hear the Minister's comments on how this clause will provide some form of safety. Although they cannot be protected from each other all the time, we ought to provide the best possible form of safety considering their age.

Mr BARTON: I think my interjection has probably just about said it all. The advice from my department is that all of them have now been transferred. We have closed what was known as the "boys yard" at Sir David Longland, where there had been some problems. My advice is that it was essentially the 17-year-olds getting stuck into each other,

for want of a better term. That was why people were being injured, why people were being bashed. To some degree, the mentoring system that had been put in place before that was designed to try to stop that sort of nonsense in what we call the "boys yard". But we have transferred them all. They are all now at Arthur Gorrie. At some later date, once we get the new contractor bedded down at Borallon, there are provisions in the contract with the new operator to have a unit out there that could also accommodate prisoners who are under 18.

We all know that in certain locations—sometimes it is a workplace, whether it be an office or a factory—a bad culture creeps in. The new people who come in adopt the bad culture even as some of those who caused the problem leave. For whatever reason, a bad culture developed in that "boys yard" at Sir David Longland. At the end of the day, the only way we could fix it was to tear it apart and set up a new one at Arthur Gorrie, with the capacity—once we get the new contractor settled—to potentially have a second unit at Borallon.

This clause really is necessary. We run some very good programs which are applauded by the shadow Minister and other coalition members, such as the WORC program or the Women's Community Custody Program at Warwick, which is basically the women's WORC program. Without this clause, 17-year-olds who are deserving of being included in programs such as those would not be able to participate in them.

I know that it is always a risk. I think it is an issue that society as a whole is struggling to come to grips with. Traditionally 17-year-olds in this State have appeared before an adult court. If they are convicted, they go to an adult prison. I take the member's point. If he begins to think at any stage that I am not a fan of the Kennedy reforms, I advise him that I certainly was. I think the Kennedy reforms, for their place in history, were very, very important. What was necessarily the best 13 years ago does not always hold true today, but overall those reforms are still appropriate. This was a very important part of Jim Kennedy's reforms, and those principles are still alive and well within the Department of Corrective Services.

We keep young offenders separate, but they are in an adult prison. If we were to change the whole basis of it and say that 17-year-olds no longer go to adult prisons but to juvenile detention centres, then we would create a whole new problem for the juvenile detention centres, not just in term of numbers

but also in terms of culture. Suddenly you have an older, more experienced group in there as well.

We believe that the steps that we have taken following the problems at Sir David Longland are in the best interests of those young men and women who have been sentenced to periods of imprisonment by the courts. Again, I think we need to be very cautious. While I do not want to demonise young people, 17-year-olds who are sentenced to adult prisons are not there for stealing the milk money, and they sometimes do get stuck into each other.

Mr HORAN: I thank the Minister for that. Don't get me wrong; I was not making any suggestion that 17-year-olds should be accommodated in a juvenile detention centre. I was just making the point that it was a Kennedy recommendation that, when they are in an adult prison, they be kept separate. I take it that upon their transfer from the "boys yard" at Sir David Longland to Arthur Gorrie and perhaps Borallon, they are accommodated in separate facilities.

Mr Barton: They are in separate facilities.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 14 to 19, as read, agreed to.

Clause 20—

Mr HORAN (5.29 p.m.): This clause is about children living in facilities. There does not seem to be any provision in this clause to separate prisoners with children from other prisoners if, for example, a sex predator is amongst a particular prison population. I could use the example, although it is probably a bit extreme, of Valmae Fay Beck or someone like that who could be in that prison along with another female prisoner who has a child. Can the Minister tell me what happens if that scenario occurs? Is there somewhere the mother and child can be separate from that person or the predator separated from them?

Mr BARTON: They are. I am not sure whether the member has had the opportunity to go and look at the new women's correctional centre out at Wolston, but if he has not had that opportunity yet, I would certainly encourage him to.

Mr HORAN: I saw it when it was empty.

Mr BARTON: In fact, I think I last saw it when it was empty, too. But there is a separate mothers unit at the new women's correctional centre; it is a separate unit that is away from anybody who could fall into that category. Valmae Beck is not at the Brisbane women's centre, she is at Townsville, but I would like to give the most absolute guarantee

I can. Children are allowed only in the Brisbane women's centre and with their mother in that women's unit. That is the way it works.

Mr Horan: Is that the only prison where children are allowed?

Mr BARTON: And Helena Jones, which is a correctional centre at Albion. It is not a high security centre.

Mr Horan: What about Lotus Glen?

Mr BARTON: There are no women at Lotus Glen.

Mr Horan: Townsville?

Mr BARTON: Let me check this because this could have changed. Since I have last set foot in Townsville we have opened some new special houses. They are actually low security areas outside the main fence at the Townsville centre. There is a capacity for mothers who have children to be in that set of circumstances but certainly not in the mainstream women's unit at the Townsville Correctional Centre. The new Brisbane women's centre, which is where most of them are, has a special mothers unit and that is where children are allowed. We certainly do not allow children into any of our correctional centres in circumstances where mainstreamers who have any potential to be predators or sex offenders can be anywhere near them.

Clause 20, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 21 to 27, as read, agreed to.

Clause 28—

Mr HORAN (5.33 p.m.): This clause relates to the fact that the person in charge may authorise a doctor to conduct a body-search of a prisoner if they reasonably believe a number of things, such as ingestion of the thing being concealed within the person and a number of other things.

It goes on to say a nurse must be present during the body-search and so forth. Is it true that doctors will not do a procedure such as this because it is not actually a medical procedure? Doctors will do only certain things. My understanding is they are not employed to do searches; they are only employed to do medical procedures. I understand that that is why this clause authorises a nurse to do it. I would like the Minister's explanation on that.

Mr BARTON: My advice is that it is absolutely essential that it be a medical practitioner. We are frequently dealing with circumstances where people have hidden heroin, and heroin is a tremendously toxic substance. So it does require a medical practitioner to do this. Medical practitioners do perform this, distasteful as it—

Mr Horan: They do it?

Mr BARTON: They do perform it, distasteful as it is, and the nurse's presence is to protect the doctor from any allegations of assault. It is making sure that the doctor who performs this procedure is properly protected. Because of the potential dangers to life with the sort of substances that are frequently hidden a medical practitioner is needed to perform those searches.

Clause 28, as read, agreed to.

Clause 29, as read, agreed to.

Clause 30—

Mr HORAN (5.35 p.m.): Mr Chairman, although I will be moving an amendment, I would like to deal with clauses 30 and 31 together

The CHAIRMAN: If the member would like, he can speak to both amendments at the same time and we will put the questions separately.

Mr HORAN: I move the following amendment—

"At page 28, line 24, after 'prisoner'—
insert—

', whether or not as a member of a randomly selected group of prisoners'."

Clause 30 states—

"The chief executive may require the following persons to give a test sample ...
(a) a prisoner; (b) an offender."

We wish to insert in there "whether or not as a member of a randomly selected group of prisoners" because a later clause refers to random sampling. The same disciplinary or punishment processes do not apply to prisoners used in random sampling as apply if a prisoner is selected for another reason to give a sample. If a prisoner gives a sample for statistical testing, then there is no punishment. That does not seem to make any sense at all when there is a prohibition on drug usage and drug taking in prisons. If there is a process of testing for statistical purposes and prisoners are found to have drugs in their blood system, it just does not make any sense whatsoever that they get away scot-free. We want to toughen up on drugs in prisons. There does not seem to be any point in having statistical testing; there should be testing of prisoners for drugs. If prisoners have drugs on them, they should be subjected to discipline.

Mr BARTON: Let us talk about this one for a little bit. I understand why the member for Toowoomba South is talking to both this clause and the next one in conjunction. While

they need to be voted on separately, I accept that they probably need to be discussed together because it is pretty hard to talk about one without hanging on to the other.

In the first place, let me say these clauses as presented in this Bill are a very substantial toughening up of the provisions in the current Act. In fact, at this point in time all sorts of reasonable suspicion tests have to be met before prison authorities can do a targeted test for drugs on an inmate. As well as the current position of taking samples, they do the random samples which are referred to in the next clause, clause 31. This is one of the provisions that the organisations which represent prisoner interests opposed very strenuously when the discussion papers were circulated, when the draft Bill was released and when the Bill was introduced here.

One of the things they do not like is the fact that clause 30 effectively allows us to require sampling for drugs on essentially any basis. The shadow Minister's amendment to clause 30 is superfluous if one reads clause 30 in the way that the Government intends. If the chief executive, or his delegate, believes that a prisoner should be sampled, that prisoner has to give a sample. We do not have to have reasonable suspicion tests as we currently have. The legislation says "a prisoner", but it really means any prisoner.

If the authorities think there is the potential for drugs being present, they can grab the person and subject him to a targeted drug test. In my view, that is absolutely necessary. I am sure the shadow Minister agrees.

I would like to refer to clause 31 as well because I appreciate what the shadow Minister is seeking to do, and I appreciate his motive in doing so. It is absolutely necessary that we have the random testing capacity. We operate within a whole range of statistics with regard to knowing whether we have drugs in correctional centres. In some cases, this matter is tied in with Commonwealth funding and with national comparisons for the National Drug Strategy.

If we did not have random testing of inmates—so that we have a picture of the position in our correctional centres at any given point in time—we would not be able to participate in Commonwealth funding. In turn, we would not have a picture of whether a centre is good, bad or indifferent when compared with other centres.

I am going to blow my trumpet a little bit because we are very proud of what we have

achieved as a Government in a period of two years and four months. When we came to office, random urinalysis sampling was running at between 20% and 22% in the State's correctional centres; now, depending upon the centre, it is running between 4% and 8%. We have moved in very heavily. Again, organisations do not like it. Part of their objections to the strip-searching of inmates after contact visits, part of their objections to ion scans, and part of their objections to police having the power to search people, if necessary, is a reaction to the fact that we have been very tough on drugs in our correctional centres. There have never been more drugs found in the State's correctional centres than have been found during the period while this Government has been in office.

The proof of the pudding is in the random testing. Random testing has shown that we have driven it down from between 20% to 22% to 4% to 8%. 4% to 8% is still too high. I am one of those people who is a bit incredulous that, when we have people locked up behind triple fences and we have very good security, we cannot stop drugs from getting in. I do not want to go into chapter and verse about how they do it because some of the prisoners might not know of some of the better scams of getting drugs into prisons and they might start practising those scams. People are very inventive in regard to getting drugs into prisons. But we have driven it down.

The shadow Minister's amendment to clause 30 hangs together with his proposed amendment to clause 31. The Government does not believe that it is in the best interests of getting drugs out of the centres to move in that way. We believe we are achieving what the shadow Minister is seeking to achieve.

The way this Bill is drafted is a major step forward. It gives the prison authorities a power that they do not currently possess. This is why random analysis is crucial. If we find that a particular prison, or a particular wing of a prison, is bad as a result of random sampling, even though we do not know who the individuals are—but it shows up that we have a problem—there is nothing to stop us moving in and forcing every inmate in that prison or that wing to give samples. That nails them.

This will be a major step towards getting drugs out of the centres. There is resistance from prisoner groups and families, and I understand that. They do not want to have their loved ones busted for possessing drugs in prison; it could lead to the prisoners serving even longer sentences.

This legislation dramatically toughens up the existing provisions. We believe it is adequate. We believe it is absolutely necessary that we retain clause 30 and clause 31 in their current form. There is no need to toughen up clause 30 because we can achieve what the shadow Minister is seeking to achieve with the clause the way it is.

Mr LAMING: I would like to support the shadow Minister. I hear what the Minister says about the value of random testing. That is good. Any success needs to be acknowledged. The words that are used are "random testing". The analogy that springs to mind is random breath testing for people driving under the influence of alcohol. That testing, although not computer driven, is of a random nature. If a person is randomly picked up driving a motor vehicle whilst under the influence of alcohol, that person faces a penalty based either on the level of alcohol in the bloodstream or, perhaps, whether the person is a second offender.

It seems to me that random testing for drugs in prisons would be a fairly labour-intensive and expensive exercise. The available statistical information would be valuable. If the test was done for some other reason, it might be possible to apprehend a prisoner who had been using drugs before he was tested. The Minister hinted that Commonwealth funding was involved in this matter, or it may have been part of a program. I do not know whether the issue of funding, or being part of a program, forbids the State from imposing a penalty on people who are picked up during a random blood test.

Mr HORAN: I would like to ask the Minister to give some consideration to this. The Minister said that clause 30 enables the prisons to be able to take samples for a number of reasons. My amendment takes away nothing from the reasons why a chief executive may require a person to give a sample. There is the existing power to have samples taken.

The reason I have done that is that it can be a random selection. Our amendment seeks to delete clause 31, which gives the power to have randomly selected testing, and transfer that power to this clause. It is still there; we have not taken it away. All we are taking away is the provision whereby, following random testing, no record must be made to identify the donor of a test sample and that the results can be used for only statistical purposes. If we take out that second clause we still have the power to do the random testing. It means that we can still use that test for either disciplinary or

statistical purposes. That means that if the prisoners who are taking drugs are picked up in this random test they will no longer get away scot-free, which they do now.

If the Minister is keen to tighten the whole process he should support this amendment, because it will do that. I give the example of another area where random testing takes place, and that is at the racetrack. There used to be a system of random swabs. The chief steward would draw out race numbers and horse numbers to be randomly swabbed. Of course, if people were caught they were punished and subject to discipline.

This just seems to be a waste of a resource. The Minister mentioned quite strongly his desire to reduce the percentage of drug taking in prisons. I can only repeat that through this amendment we are strengthening the power of the chief executive. We are not taking away anything that is contained in clauses 30 and 31 that relates to the powers of the chief executive; we are simply taking that power to conduct random testing from clause 31 and putting it into clause 30. So all of those powers exist. However, we are removing the situation whereby prisoners who are caught taking drugs do not receive any punishment, just because they were lucky enough to be caught while involved in random testing. To us that seems to be illogical. It seems to be at odds with what the Minister is endeavouring to do in reducing the percentage of drug taking in prisons. It really seems to negate the value and the benefit of random testing, which can be used as a drug management tool by the general managers.

Mr BARTON: I do not want to belabour this point. I think that I have said everything that I really could say about why it is necessary to do this in the way in which we have done so in this Bill. I am not going to mince words. We not only have a desire to drive drugs out of prisons but also we are actually doing it. We have the runs on the board—no ifs, no buts. Before we came to Government there was a lot of rhetoric about my predecessors supposedly not doing anything about it. When I became the Minister the situation was as bad as it had ever been. We focused on the issue because we were committed. We put huge resources into the ion scanning machines, better surveillance, rebuilding the visitors centres and staff training. Although we put in a whole range of measures, basically the best resource we had was the commitment of our people, who finally received some backing to do the tough job to get it done.

I have to say to the member that this Bill, as it is proposed, is a quantum leap forward. Clause 30 provides a quantum leap forward in prison officer powers to address the drugs issue in prisons. If we interfere with it in the manner in which the member is suggesting by changing the provision relating to random testing, then every time we want to test someone we will have to do a cell extraction to get them out. Every time we do that, there will be the tampering that we do not have now with the random samples. We will create a problem that we do not believe we are capable of handling in there.

We are taking a quantum leap forward. We have already taken a quantum leap forward from the system that we inherited by providing additional resources, extra people and training. I know that the member would have done the same thing if he were in Government. We have done that. This clause gives the prison authorities a huge increase in their powers, but we still need to do that random sampling in the manner that we are proposing in clause 31.

I have talked to my advisers and I have talked to my colleagues. I want to create a mental picture of the implications of trying to jump too far. Earlier on I saw in the gallery the daughter of an old friend of mine, who taught me most of my politics in industrial relations. He once said to me, "If you run at the steps and you try to jump them all in one single bound, you frequently land halfway up on your face, you bounce all the way back to the bottom, you are full of bruises, splinters and cuts and you have not even taken one step." We have taken a couple of very difficult, hard steps on this drug issue. This clause takes it the next step. It is a very important step, but I do not really want to run the risk of trying to jump to the top step in one fell swoop, because I fear that we will end up back at the bottom all splintered, bleeding and bruised. It is for those reasons that we believe that the clauses as we have proposed them are very, very important. I do not underestimate how important they are to us in taking that next step.

Mr HORAN: I disagree. The Minister can take that step, because we are just transferring the power for random selection from clause 31 to clause 30. We are strong in the belief that people who are taking drugs and who are tested randomly should not be able to walk away free. The random selection is done by a computer system. The Minister referred to the difficulty of taking prisoners out of their cells and so forth. That is going to have to occur when the other drug testing is carried out.

Even if these clauses remain, the testing still has to be done properly so that there can be no tampering so the statistics are right. That is the reason we disagree. The prisoners who have been detected as having taken drugs in the random selection will have no action taken against them.

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

AYES, 39—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Cooper, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, 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, 39—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Kaiser, Lavarch, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

Progress reported.

QUEENSLAND RAIL

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA)
(6.04 p.m.) I move—

"That this House condemns the Beattie Labor Government for its betrayal of rail workers and their families by robbing them of a thousand jobs, and for its plan to reduce rail jobs even further, putting economic development, rail safety, community prosperity and families at heartless risk."

This Government, which came to power on a bogus jobs, jobs, jobs agenda, has been presiding over the decimation of Queensland Rail commenced under the previous Goss Labor Government. Under that Government, under the supervision of the now Treasurer and the now Deputy Premier, we saw the mothballing of almost 1,500 kilometres of Queensland Rail line and the loss of thousands of Queensland Rail jobs. Prior to the last election, Government members went around Queensland Rail workshops and other establishments beating their chests and saying that they were sorry for their attack on rail workers and that, if the rail workers only trusted them and paid their union dues, they would be protected.

I will quote part of the confession from campaign '98. In relation to Townsville, page 11 of the regional economic strategy states—

"We are now willing to acknowledge that the removal of the heavy duty workshop and engineering capacity from Townsville was wrong."

Labor promised to upgrade the Townsville workshops. Labor promised—and again I quote from the campaign document—

"There is an obligation on Government owned enterprises such as Queensland Rail to provide certainty and job security."

I trust that the member for Mundingburra and the member for Townsville made special note of this commitment they gave to rail workers in Townsville, because I can assure them that in the not-too-distant future they will be reminded of it time and time again. Mr Speaker, I can give you that assurance. I was there two weeks ago, and I can assure you that the rail workers in Townsville are in no mood to argue. The unions made their point and extracted a promise from the now Premier and got him to promise them that, if he gained office, he would not appoint the then shadow Minister for Transport, the member for Capalaba, as Transport Minister. They said, "We can't trust the member for Capalaba as Minister. Can't you find somewhere to hide him along with the member for Ipswich, who also duded rail workers?" The current Premier must have said, "I've got a new job for you. You can be Deputy Leader. But because no-one can trust you and your AWU faction, we won't give you the Treasury purse strings; we will just give you the title, and that way we can keep the rail unions on side."

Mr Sullivan: What have you been eating?

Mr JOHNSON: I can assure the honourable member that I have not been eating anything. I issue an invitation to the member for Chermside and any other member of the Labor administration to come to Townsville with me the next time I go, and I will give them a guided tour of the blue-collar workers in that city. We can meet with as many workers as the member likes. I can assure the honourable member for Chermside that he will hear things that will not be favourable to his side of politics.

Without a transport policy to bless himself with, the member for Cook lost the raffle and got the Transport and Main Roads portfolio, where he hid for 12 months in case someone asked him a question and played with his tilt train to Cairns project, in respect of which no

tenders were called. Do members remember that he was going to do away with the Sunlander and then realised that there would be less passenger capacity than already provided? Then he was going to use the Sunlander to replace the Inlander, which had just been done up. But, of course, worse was to come.

It was not long, however, before he found the old policies of his colleague the member for Ipswich, the former Minister for Transport, and the member for Cleveland went and got a bright new shiny axe of his own. The rail workers and the rail unions were betrayed by the Beattie Labor Government just as they were betrayed by the Goss Labor Government about six years before. It was not long before the axe was being wielded. On the Government's own figures, it has cut over 1,000 jobs from Queensland Rail. Even the Queensland Services Union refers to this as Queensland Rail's job slashing agenda.

So this Government, this Treasurer, this Minister for Transport and local members representing rail towns, such as the member for Townsville, the member for Mundingburra, the member for Rockhampton and the member for Mount Isa, after giving an assurance to rail workers about certainty and job security, have slashed 1,000 jobs from QR and, according to the unions, there are another 1,000 to go. So we have the previous Transport Minister, the member for Capalaba, doing feature articles about job creation while thousands of rail workers—good hardworking union members—are sold down the drain. These are traditional ALP supporters. He and the Premier would rather give millions of dollars to overseas billionaires to create a couple of hundred jobs than look after the hardworking rail union members whose hard-earned union dues funded this corrupt Government's suspect move into office. By the way, they tell the story at Ipswich workshops about the first election campaign of the member for Ipswich, when they took around the hat to support his campaign. A lot of workers threw in dollars that they could have well used at home to feed their families.

Mr Springborg: They were let down.

Mr JOHNSON: As the honourable member for Warwick said, they were let down.

Do honourable members know how he repaid his debt? He sacked them. He got rid of the lot of them. He shafted them. Is it any wonder that all the rail unions are now gathering their forces to clobber this Government in the forthcoming elections? It is not just the sheer hypocrisy of this

Government that worries the rail workers of Queensland and it is not just the broken promises and lies, it is their fear for the future integrity of our rail system and for the future of communities in which they live and bring up their families. They have very genuine concerns about the workload that will be passed on to remaining workers. They are concerned about the occupational safety of workers. They are concerned about the intrinsic safety of our rail system.

While the member for Cook fantasises about his high-speed train running to Cairns at nearly 200 km/h, we have rail workers concerned about the safety of existing operations. These workers are worried that they will be letting their customers down as they are expected to do more with less and less. They are concerned about the fact that the patronage for QR is dropping and, therefore, the commercial operations which they try to protect are slowly finding other means of transport. They are concerned that they will be forced to do unpaid overtime to do the work that used to be done by those being thrown on the scrap heap by this heartless and deceitful Beattie Labor Government. They are concerned that they will again be betrayed, as they were by QR's failure to tender for the central Queensland contract that it gave by default to the New South Wales Government's Freightcorp.

The rail workers of this State are worried about the impact of these job losses upon the communities within which they live. As this Government has been eager to point out in relation to the creation of jobs, there is a flow-on effect. It is a fact that the abolition of jobs will have a flow-on impact in the community. We witnessed that in Townsville under the Goss regime, which could have cost that city anything up to \$15m per annum in lost revenue to commercial operations that do business with QR. There will be fewer jobs for our children. A reduction in the size of the work force has an immediate impact upon the economy of the community. Many of our rail workers are employed in regional, rural and remote Queensland. In these towns the loss of jobs can have a drastic impact upon the local community. The loss of jobs can result in the closure of schools, the closure of stores and the loss of services, which has been evident right across this State.

As the members opposite slink away from this House and seek to avoid being accountable to the Parliament, I can assure them that they will not escape from the judgment of the rail workers of this State who have been betrayed by the Beattie Labor

Government. Once again it has been the coalition that has had to stand up for the workers in this State.

Mr Reynolds interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Townsville can sneer and laugh. If he knew what his credibility rating is in the Townsville workshops and amongst the blue-collar workers in Townsville, he would not be sitting there with that smug look on his face. I will give him the mail: there is more to come for him, not just from the people of Townsville but from people outside of Townsville. I do not move this motion lightly.

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.14 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the honourable member for Gregory, which was moved for very good reason. For a long time we have been hearing a lot of concern expressed about the future of railway workers and their families—people who have dedicated so much of their lives to ensuring that essential infrastructure and essential services are being distributed and delivered right across this State.

Mr Johnson: True professionals.

Mr SPRINGBORG: As the Opposition Transport spokesman says, they are absolutely true professionals, and I take pride in knowing them.

The rail lines in this State began operation some 100-odd years so, starting from a very small economic base. As a result of the commitment of Government and the dedication of those people who staffed the railways, Queensland had a very good rail service. Unfortunately, in recent times our rail services in Queensland have deteriorated. Morale in the railways has also deteriorated, and the actions of this Labor Government have not helped. As the honourable member for Gregory said, we have only to go back to the days when the Boy Wonder of the Government, the now Treasurer, David Hamill, presided over the Railways portfolio in Queensland to see what actually happened. Thousands of jobs were taken out of the railway system in this State and hundreds, if not thousands, of kilometres of line were closed or mothballed by that Minister.

We all remember the notorious days when the Goss Government announced that it was going to close one third of Queensland's railways. We saw the protests right across Queensland. I think the honourable member for Callide led those protests in his

electorate—and led them very well. We saw Wayne Goss shove his head out the window, sniff the breeze and say, "It's all a big mistake. We won't close as many of them." Nevertheless, many of them were closed or mothballed.

I think we need to realise that that essential infrastructure is still important. We have seen the demoralisation of railways staff—people who have given decades of service in our stations.

Mr Johnson: A lifetime of service.

Mr SPRINGBORG: As the honourable member for Gregory says, they have given a lifetime of service in our railway stations. We should see how those people who work on our lines—the fettlers, the maintenance people and the people who actually drive the trains—feel about what was once a great and proud Queensland Rail service and the direction in which it is now heading.

We have two options tonight. We can support the motion which has been moved so ably by the honourable member for Gregory and recognise the ongoing problem, or we can put our heads in the sand, as honourable members opposite want to do, and not consider the issues that have come so much to the fore. As the honourable member for Gregory said, if you go around and talk to these people, they will tell you that Labor does not care about them anymore and that they do not even see some of their union reps anymore. They just feel so worn down, neglected and rejected. It is about time the Government supported these people—whom it has been pretending to support for so long—instead of coming in here and feigning sympathy and understanding. If it does not do that, then this Government deserves to be condemned for its inaction and for the contempt with which it is treating these people, who for so long have placed their faith and trust in this Labor Government. As I said, these workers are in despair; they are disillusioned and they feel very let down.

That is in stark contrast to the feeling within the bureaucracy. As I move around my electorate and talk to railway workers, they tell me that there never seems to be a problem with people in administrative positions. They all seem to be comfortable. Their jobs never seem to be under threat. But if you are out there jamming a dog spike in along the line, if you are carrying out maintenance, if you are putting the ballast in, if you are driving the train, if you are manning the station, then you can be forgotten about. In fact, many of these people write to me saying, "I have had enough

of this. I want to take a VER. Can you help us get a VER, because we see absolutely no future in something that we have spent a lifetime supporting and building up." I think that is a sad indictment on this Government. You could be excused for thinking that it is a cold, calculated act on the part of this heartless Labor Government. Thousands of jobs are to go.

The situation in Townsville is a good example. Many people do not want to see the historical station moved somewhere out of town to make way for the new tilt train.

Mr Reynolds: You don't want the tilt train.

Mr SPRINGBORG: We all know the situation up in Townsville. I understand that there are further plans to amend the original proposal.

This Parliament must support this motion because it is all about supporting railway workers, people who have given so much, people who have given their all for—

Time expired.

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (6.20 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'House' and insert the following—

'acknowledges QR as the number one transport company in Australia, according to the "Good Reputation Index" in the Sydney Morning Herald on Monday 30 October 2000, recognising its excellence in employee management, financial performance and social impact.'"

Quite frankly, the motion moved by the member for Gregory is a nonsense and the contributions made by both the member for Gregory and the member for Warwick in this place have been wrong. The information they have provided is erroneous. They should be ashamed of standing up in the House and speaking such twaddle.

An issue I want to take up with the member for Gregory relates to his claim that patronage of QR is dropping. Patronage is dropping so much that QR has had a 130% increase in patronage on the railway line between Brisbane and Rockhampton since we introduced the tilt train. On the Gold Coast line we have had two years of around a 16% growth in patronage. On the Citytrain network, we have had around a 4% growth in patronage in each of the last two years. The member for Gregory is the person who would purport to be the Minister for Transport, yet he makes ridiculous statements such as that

patronage is dropping and that that causes problems with the cross-subsidisation of freight services. I thought the member for Gregory would know that Queensland has a vertically integrated system and that there is no cross-subsidisation between the Citytrain network and, for example, our Freighttrain network.

Just to make that clear, let us contrast what this Government has done to what he did as Minister in the previous Government. We have fully funded Queensland Rail's community service obligations to the tune of \$750m, which is the first time that has ever happened. When he was the Minister and the member for Caloundra was the Treasurer, they ripped \$100m out of the CSO payments to QR in order to prop up her Budget. At the same time, they ripped \$850m from the electricity industry.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. That is an untruth. I find it offensive and I ask that the Minister withdraw.

Mr BREDHAUER: I withdraw. The member should go and read his Government's Budgets.

When the member for Gregory was the Minister, 10% of QR's work force were fixed-term employees. Under this Government, we have converted those people to permanent employees. Now less than 4% are fixed term. In relation to redundancies, yes, there have been voluntary separations under this Government, just as there were voluntary separations under his Government. In his two and a half years as Minister, about 800 positions went. In my two and a half years as Minister, about 1,000 positions have gone. What was the difference? The difference was that we negotiated a new separation package which all of the unions agreed to and which delivered better benefits to those railway workers who wanted to exit the system voluntarily. We gave them better benefits than those opposite did. That is why that has happened.

The rail service agreements have all been negotiated. All of the redundancies that have occurred have occurred in accordance with the policy agreed to by the unions. The unions have been fully consulted all the way through. But do members know what? I get union representatives ringing me up saying that they want more of their members to get redundancies. I get members opposite writing to me saying, "Can you help a constituent of mine get a redundancy. QR won't give him one."

The other day the Sydney Morning Herald published the Good Reputation Index of

Queensland companies. Of the top 100 companies in this country on employee management, environmental management, social impact, ethics, financial performance and market position, QR rated eighth overall. It rated the No. 1 transport company in the country. It rated the No. 1 Queensland-based company in the country. It rated the No. 1 wholly owned Government corporation in the country. It rated on employee management, market position and all of those things. It breaks my heart to listen to these whingers and knockers come in here and talk about the great organisation of QR being fully publicly owned, and we gave a commitment to maintain it in public ownership. I wound back the Opposition's plans for further corporatisation of QR when I became the Minister, because that would have put it on the slippery slope to privatisation. The only reason the rail unions think there will be more job losses is that in 1997 when the member for Gregory signed the statement of corporate intent he said there would be another 1,000 job losses. That was under him, not under this Government.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (6.25 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads. I find it absolutely galling in the extreme that the member for Gregory can espouse pious support for Queensland Rail workers whilst sending shivers of fear into their families, their children and their friends with threats of job losses and economic hardship. This is the same member who, with Mr Borbidge, supported a Government that put dogs and guards on innocent workers in the MUA dispute. I know what the member for Gregory would prefer. If it came down to a dog attacking his person or a voluntary redundancy, we know where his preferences would lie.

The member for Gregory seems to confuse the term "voluntary" with "forced" or with "compulsory" or with "mandatory". I would oppose in the strongest possible terms any forced job loss, just as I oppose the force, the dogs and the guards who tried to break members of the MUA. He supported these outrageous un-Australian actions, and now he thinks he can put fear into the very heart of ordinary Australians by deliberately confusing "forced" with "voluntary". I say to the member for Gregory: you rob when you sack or terminate. He supported his coalition masters in this terrible act. That would never have happened under a Beattie Government.

Let us look at some of the good news. Let us look at the truth. Let us look at the

north-west line. The Mount Isa line, which carries the major industrial products from Mount Isa and the Cloncurry region, remains a critical commercial asset for QR and assists in the continued growth of the minerals province base at Mount Isa and Cloncurry. Naturally, this flows on to the Townsville region, especially the Townsville port. The 1,000 kilometres of rail line services all the communities in the Mount Isa/Townsville Economic Development Zone. With a population of about 175,000 people, it represents 5.2% of Queensland's population spread across a total land area of 271,000 square kilometres. It is of course one of the industrial mining powerhouses of the Queensland economy, sustaining high levels of employment and generating valuable export dollars for the State.

QR's massive investment of \$200m in track upgrading has been completed in recent years with the explicit aim of providing the most efficient and least cost service to its customers. The vastly improved track and state-of-the-art rolling stock operating on this corridor are delivering major operational efficiencies for QR which, in turn, are passed on to customers in the form of improved and least cost transport services. QR is clearly focused on developing viable transport solutions for industry that support growth and encourage future regional expansion, reduced costs and increased customer satisfaction. This philosophy underpins QR's need to remain extremely competitive in meeting the needs of industry which in turn will sustain strong levels of regional employment in both QR and the private sector.

QR's investment in the track and new rolling stock has been integral to the recent expansion of haulage from the north-west minerals province. In addition to the long-term MIM mineral products, QR has been carrying minerals from Cannington, Osborne, Eloise and Thalanga mines. As well, the Sun Metals refinery and the WMC phosphate fertiliser projects have been commissioned, with QR performing the major part of the transport task for both. Another major haulage is nickel ore from the Townsville port to the Yabulu refinery. Tonnages on this corridor are set to jump from 2.2 million to 3.6 million tonnes during 2000-01, with most of the increases associated with product carried into and out of the phosphate plant at Phosphate Hill, south of Mount Isa.

Another major initiative undertaken recently has been the establishment of a new rail container terminal and balloon loop at Mount Isa which are designed to improve the efficiency of freight and product handling in the

region. The \$5.9m terminal and the \$1.7m balloon loop are the culmination of a joint initiative of QR, Mount Isa Mines and the Mount Isa City Council. It also forms part of a 10-year rail haulage agreement between QR and MIM and is indicative of a strong relationship which has existed between those two Queensland icons for more than 70 years. The Mount Isa line has been the subject of considerable focus for QR because of the enormous importance of the north-west mining and industrial base, escalating traffic along the corridor and intense pressure from customers with respect to both price and performance.

The increased tonnages carried, increased customer satisfaction and substantially reduced freight rates combined with the opening of large new mines is testament to the success of the project. This is all good news. This is the truth. This is not betrayal. This is success.

Mr Johnson: Tell us about the workers.

Ms NELSON-CARR: The workers are doing a good job, and they have the support of me and the Beattie Government. My advice to the member for Gregory is to get over the past. He should leave the past behind, forget all the what-ifs, forget scaring people and frightening the very fabric of our society and get with the strength, and the strength is this Government and the future.

Time expired.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (6.30 p.m.): After the debacle we saw in the Parliament today of the Labor Party running away from question time, I believe this debate tonight is very timely, because Labor is also running away from the employment of railway workers throughout Queensland, particularly in my electorate.

Most members would realise that Sarina is in the centre of my electorate. It is really a rail town, even though there are a lot of other industries around Mackay and Sarina. The Goonyella line terminates at Hay Point, and there are over 400 workers actually working and living in and around Sarina. They are all good blokes, top men. I know most of them. The current circumstances, under which up to 100 workers could be sacked or take voluntary redundancy in Sarina and thereabouts, is unbelievable.

Mr BREDHAUER: I rise to a point of order. No workers are going to be sacked. I find that remark offensive. The member should not use it, and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr MALONE: The Minister is correct in the respect—

Mr BREDHAUER: I have said that I find the remark offensive and I asked that it be withdrawn.

Mr MALONE: I withdraw. They are taking voluntary redundancies simply because they cannot cope with and certainly cannot hack the Labor Party's policy in trying to run this railway line at an extreme profit.

Coming down the range, the speeds have increased from 60 km/h to 85 km/h. We are heading to a position where it is driver only on trains carrying 10,000 to 12,000 tonnes of coal. The drivers are under extreme stress. They call on me regularly in my office expressing deep concern about the safety of the line. There are bog holes in the line. Many accidents occur on the line as a result of carriages jumping off the line after driving through bog holes that have to be repaired.

Vaughan Johnson, the member for Gregory, and I have witnessed the way in which these people have to repair the line. They have to cut the line, take the line out, repair the ballast, repair the subgrade, put it all back and try to get that line working again within 24 hours. Most members do not realise that close on 85 million tonnes of coal is hauled on that line each year. The trains move past there almost continuously, and the workers are under extreme pressure to ensure that that infrastructure keeps going. As we move towards driver only, we are finding that drivers are coming under extreme stress. The fettlers are being forced to work with fewer numbers and longer hours under extreme circumstances, as I have mentioned. It is just getting worse and worse.

In Sarina alone, up to 100 workers could lose their jobs simply because of voluntary redundancies. I accept that they are possibly not being forced out or sacked.

Mr Bredhauer: Not possibly—they are not being forced out. They are taking voluntary early retirements.

Mr MALONE: They are taking a redundancy, which means they are being forced out. They are also being forced out due to stress. In Sarina, the workers have bought houses from QR. Obviously they are trying to pay those off, but they are quite often having to take voluntary redundancies because of their health and are unable to continue paying off those houses. They end up with a debt, and the whole thing gets worse from there.

Take 100 workers out of Sarina and you have real problems in terms of the commercialisation of Sarina. The Mayor of Sarina, Kevin Morgan, has expressed extreme concern about all of this. I am sure that at the

community forum to be held there next Monday, the Government will discover that first-hand.

It is quite amazing that the rail workers come into my office and speak quite frankly about the fact—

Mrs Edmond: It is quite amazing that they go into your office.

Mr MALONE: They do. They come into my office. They talk quite frankly about the fact that they are suddenly realising that the National Party has done far more for them than the Labor Party has ever done. In terms of Labor Ministers coming to Jilalan, the workers have not seen one; they do not know what they look like. Vaughan Johnson has been there on a regular basis, but never a Labor Minister. I invite the Minister to come up any time he likes and come with me over to Jilalan. We will have a talk to the workers and see what is going on over there.

This is an extremely serious situation. It is having a real impact on our local area. The 100 workers we are talking about in Sarina translates to over 7,000 across the State. Indeed, the de facto candidate for the Labor Party—

Mr BREDHAUER: That is nonsense. I find that offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn. 7,000!

Mr MALONE: I withdraw. The de facto Labor Party candidate for Mirani, Mr Gomersall, actually quotes that figure, so I can actually table it if the Minister so requires. I am sure he is right, because he really knows everything.

Time expired.

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (6.35 p.m.): I say very proudly tonight that Townsville remains the hub of QR's extensive rail operations in north Queensland and will drive the continued expansion of rail business in north Queensland. Spearheading the growth are major capital works in the region such as the recently completed \$200m Townsville-Mount Isa upgrade and the current \$320m program to upgrade the track between Rockhampton and Cairns.

The Rockhampton-Cairns track renewal program represents a massive investment by QR and the Government on the north coast line. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to investment in transport infrastructure and the improvement of rail alignments between Brisbane and Cairns, both of which facilitate the establishment of value-adding industries in regional Queensland. This is the biggest project of its type under way in

Australia. It will provide for higher axle loads and average speeds for freight trains. Maintenance costs will also be reduced.

The growing north Queensland direct container service for fruit and vegetables to southern capitals is one QR business that will benefit from this investment. Bulk sugar, cattle, fuel, cement and supplies provide other significant business. This is all about investing in a modern rail transport network which assists industry and regional communities to continue to grow and prosper economically.

In another upgrade of rail infrastructure—again, one I am proud of—\$24m will be invested on the design, construction and associated track work for Townsville's new railway station. Planning associated with the Townsville CBD revitalisation and the introduction of tilt train services to Cairns prompted consideration of the new railway station in Townsville. The heritage-listed Flinders Street station, irrespective of the negative campaign run by the Opposition, will continue to be used as an administration centre and also showcase the historic development of rail in Queensland. The new station will service the new diesel-powered tilt trains which are set to enter service between Brisbane and Cairns in late 2002. This project is set to cut travelling times between Brisbane and Cairns to less than 27 hours. The tremendous success with the Brisbane-Rockhampton and Brisbane-Bundaberg tilt trains augurs well for the new Cairns tilt trains set to hit the tracks in late 2002.

The tilt train project represents a \$137m investment by the Beattie Government and is one of the key rail election commitments of this Government which will deliver huge travelling benefits to north Queensland communities and a massive injection to the tourism industry. The tilt trains will further improve on the hugely successful design of the current Rockhampton and Bundaberg tilt trains and will incorporate such features as an in-seat video service for passengers that represents a world first. This will be the most advanced in-seat entertainment system on rolling stock anywhere in the world and will be comparable with systems being developed for airlines. The tilt train project is being delivered through an innovative alliance agreement between QR and Walkers of Maryborough, another important regional centre which is benefiting from initiatives of this Government.

Maintenance of both rolling stock and track is another important facet of QR's operations in Townsville. Almost \$50m has been invested at Stuart, set aside as a railway

reserve for relocation of rail facilities since the 1940s for state-of-the-art locomotive and wagon maintenance. In 1999, a new locomotive and train crew facility at Stuart was opened by the Minister. Costing \$14m, it efficiently refuels, services and provides low-level maintenance for the fleet of 110 locomotives in north Queensland.

Not only is QR expanding its freight operations; it is also building its passenger train business in north Queensland. QR Traveltrain operates an innovative fleet of long-distance and tourist trains. Servicing Townsville are the famous Queenslander, Sunlander, Inlander and the Spirit of the Tropics, which runs between Townsville and Brisbane. We are very proud that the Great South Pacific Express, built at the Townsville QR workshops, has won acclaim as an icon for the tourism industry in Australia. It has undoubtedly set the standard for rail travel in Australia and has been rated the finest train in the world. This beautiful train is indeed a tribute to the wonderful craftsmanship of QR's employees at Townsville workshops. The year 2000-01 sees the continuation of the construction of 300 cattle wagons as well as maintenance of long distance airconditioned passenger cars, Kuranda Scenic Railway cars and other timber coaches.

QR is a major spender in the Townsville community. Not only do the pay packets of its work force—more than \$50m for 1,100 employees in Townsville alone—provide a valuable injection into the local economy; QR also provides substantial work for the private sector in the Townsville region. We have seen Goninan North Queensland, which has built 50 new generation locomotives and is supplying coal wagons, and many other examples.

We are getting on with the job. Townsville will continue to be a key rail centre for north Queensland, irrespective of the Opposition and its negativism, and its scaring of families and workers who have a good job in Townsville. We are very proud of the Townsville railway workshops. That pride will continue, irrespective of the negativism of those opposite. We are getting on with the job. We are very proud of what we are doing in Townsville. This is great QR work in Townsville and in north Queensland. I join with the member for Mundingburra in saying that that will be the future for rail in north Queensland.

Time expired.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (6.40 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Gregory that reads—

"That this House condemns the Beattie Labor Government for its betrayal of rail workers and their families by robbing them of thousands of jobs and for its plans to reduce rail jobs even further, putting economic development, rail safety, community prosperity and families at risk."

The facts that surround this motion are that this corrupt Government that duped the Queensland public with its so-called jobs, jobs policy has now betrayed the rail workers across the State. There is no better example of this betrayal than the disgraceful betrayal of the railway workers at Townsville. Just to refresh the memories of members in the House, I state that it was Townsville where the Goss Labor Government planned to close the Townsville railway workshops in appreciation of all the support that it had received from the loyal rail union members at the Townsville workshops. I well remember that the front page of the Townsville Bulletin of 24 March 1994 carried a photo of the railway workers holding up a banner stating "Workshops to stay or the ALP will pay". The member for Gregory and I were there that day so I know exactly what went on. There was no Labor member there to support them, but we were there supporting the workers.

Mr Johnson: Wayne Goss turned his back on them—240 of them standing out the front.

Mr MITCHELL: He did, too. He went straight through and rushed into the restaurant. He never said a word to the workers about where the Labor Government was going.

We all know that this stupid policy of the Goss Labor Government was a factor in the defeat of that Labor Government at the next election. As the shadow Minister for Transport and Main Roads said earlier, Labor candidates for that election actually admitted that they had been wrong in not listening to the rail workers. The only thing that has changed is the banner, which will now read "Jobs to stay or the ALP will pay". This Government has ridden roughshod over railway workers and has presided over the scrapping of thousands of jobs in the last 12 months.

The impact of these job losses in the towns and cities across Queensland is having a dramatic impact upon the economic future of this State, but it is not the job losses alone that are of concern to rail workers, it is the manner in which they are being administered. I am aware of the daily calls to coalition members' offices that have been mentioned here tonight

complaining about the job slashing agenda and the manner in which the VER packages are being administered. It is not me calling it a job slashing agenda, that is what the Queensland Service Industrial Union is calling it. Let us remember that this VER offer was supposed to have closed in April this year but I know that selected officers are being told that, because there are no guarantees about rail jobs under the Government, they had better take VERs while they can. Other workers who applied before April have still not heard if they are to be considered or not. They tell me that they have called the Minister's office and the QR industrial relations section but are complaining that they all are getting the run-around.

On the other hand, I know of a case in Bowen where a worker who did not apply for a VER before April was advised that QR was keen to close down his section and that if he applied for the VER, even though applications had closed, he might still be considered. He was considered all right. He was paid up and gone by the end of that week. This is what Labor calls job security and certainty. Obviously, as we see in so many other aspects of this Government, the only certainty is that any person who trusts Labor will get it in the neck.

I mentioned before the flow-on impacts that the loss of rail jobs has in the community but other job losses have also resulted from this Government's mismanagement of the rail system. Earlier this year Goninan North Queensland laid off 60 workers, cutting its work force in half. The Queensland secretary of the AMWU, David Harrison, said the rail losses were due to the Queensland Rail decision to defer the production of 200 coal wagons and the impact of imported products.

Another familiar critic is the well known Grasshopper previously mentioned in this place, the former Labor Government candidate Barry Gomersall, who said in November last year when he gave Labor the flick that one of the major issues in the next election was ensuring the long-term prosperity of Queensland Rail jobs. Included in this list of critics are the AMWU delegates from the Rockhampton workshop who sent a letter to the Premier after the meeting on 3 March 2000 which advised that the meeting passed a vote of no confidence in the management of QR and the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads, Mr Bredhauer.

So it is not just the coalition that believes that Labor is betraying the rail workers of Queensland. This unconscionable action by

Labor is a major concern for rail workers and rail unions. I am confident that the Labor Government will regret the way it has treated the rail workers. I certainly hope that is the case. The member for Mundingburra and the member for Townsville, in particular, will have cause to regret their broken promises to the workers in Townsville come the next election. I am not sure why the Premier is so scared of facing the House in two weeks' time, but I suspect that some of his friends from north Queensland will be grateful—

Time expired.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (6.45 p.m.): The Beattie Government is committed to supporting investments which benefit both the Queensland economy and the families living within.

An example of this commitment is evident in the signing of the CityRail service agreement between the State Government and QR in September of last year. This agreement supports improved Citytrain rail services for the people of south-east Queensland. It will improve public transport, reduce congestion and improve safety on the roads and deliver on the State Government's Integrated Regional Transport Plan outcomes.

Importantly, this agreement provides for a funding commitment to QR, delivering greater certainty for future planning and service delivery. It also represents the most transparent funding process for rail community service obligations in any State of Australia.

Significant levels of rail capital investment are supported within the Citytrain rail service agreement. For example, \$245m is allocated for an extra 90 passenger rail cars for Citytrain services. These extra cars have allowed for the provision of more train services during peak hours and for the withdrawal of the silver locomotive SX car sets from service. An amount of \$64m will be spent on overhauling and re-engineering the EMU rolling stock. This rolling stock represents the bulk of the Citytrain fleet and the overhaul will improve the reliability of Citytrain services. This overhaul also includes returning the interior fittings to as-new condition. The sum of \$30m is provided to enhance passenger safety. This includes increased camera surveillance on trains and at train stations and car parks. This will be welcomed by all Ipswich people, who make up large numbers of passengers on Citytrain services.

As well, \$47m will be spent on improving access for disabled and elderly people. This will include the installation of lifts—like at Goodna—and footbridges, the upgrading of

existing ramps and modifications to rolling stock.

There are also other incentives for improvements in on-time running and other customer focused performance. Stations that are being improved under a station upgrade program include Riverview in my electorate, Morayfield, Woodridge, Milton, Narangba, Beenleigh, Lindum and Park Road.

Sunshine Coast residents have also benefited from the implementation of dedicated bus services operating between Nambour and Caboolture on weekdays. This \$283m per year contract covers a seven-year period ending in June 2005 and is proof of the Beattie Labor Government's commitment to major rail improvements in south-east Queensland. During the first year of this contract, passenger numbers grew by 3.1%. Even more encouraging, passenger kilometres travelled grew by 7.5%. Passenger numbers for the four months of this year are up by 3.8% compared with the same period last year.

Citytrain is currently operating a record number of services, exceeding 5,000 weekly. Growth on the high speed Gold Coast line has been spectacular, increasing 14.5% to 2.5 million trips in the year ended June 2000. This is a great result, reflecting the benefits of investment in track expansion and the supply of extra rolling stock manufactured by EDI Rail at Maryborough, making possible the operation of additional train services.

In addition to the expenditure already mentioned, significant rail investment in south-east Queensland includes the following: \$120m is allocated for the development of a third track from Northgate to Lawnton, just south of Petrie. This project consists of construction of the third track, upgrading stations with additional platforms, improving disability access and the erection of noise barriers. These works are expected to be completed by December 2000 and will increase capacity for services and allow additional express train running in peak hours.

The sum of \$45m is allocated for the design and construction of rolling stock for the Airtrain service. This will provide QR with additional rolling stock capacity to sustain requirements of providing additional train services when the line to Brisbane's domestic and international airport becomes operational.

QR also jointly introduced the new Citytrans initiative with Brisbane Transport. This initiative will improve the service integration and coordination of trains and buses at key suburban stations in Brisbane.

I would like to congratulate all employees of Queensland Rail on being the No. 1 transport company in Australia—that is according to the Sydney Morning Herald Good Reputation Index—and place on record my highest regard of the workers of the Redbank workshops who take so much pride in their work, delivering on time and on budget.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.50 p.m.): I rise to support the motion that was moved by the member for Gregory and to finalise this debate on behalf of the coalition. Again tonight we have seen a dishonest performance from a dishonest Government. We have a Government that is struggling for survival. We have a Government that completely lacks integrity, and Government contributions here tonight certainly reflect that situation. The contributions we have heard here tonight have been as dishonest as the Government is dishonest. They lack integrity, as the Government lacks integrity. They will not stand up under any scrutiny, just as this Government will not stand up under any scrutiny. It is fitting to mention tonight the way that this Government has run from that scrutiny here today and the way that it is going to run from that scrutiny by calling off the last week of Parliament.

I will recap tonight's debate. We had a contribution from the Minister who does not want to be the Minister for Transport, who has never wanted to be the Minister for Transport and who wanted to be the Minister for Education, but he was too far out there on the loopy Left to get that job. So he got the last marble in the basket—the one job that was left over. His administration of the portfolio has reflected that. He has carried on with the previous attitude of the now Treasurer and tried to shut down vast areas of Queensland's rail system.

Then we had quite remarkable performances by the member for Townsville and the member for Mundingburra—two members who have come to personify dishonesty in this Parliament; two members who represent rotting on a grand scale. They have no integrity here. Their arguments have no integrity. They have nothing to say that is of any substance. They will not stand up under the scrutiny that is being applied to them. It will be interesting to see how long they last. We will see how they go when they have to face the people they represent when the electoral rolls are clean—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Could we return to the motion?

Mr SEENEY: We will see how they go when they have to face the people that they represent and on whose behalf they purported to speak tonight. They will have to face those people without the benefit of the ghosts and parachutists that they have relied on to get into this place.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Return to the motion, otherwise I will sit you down.

Mr SEENEY: Their arguments were deceitful, just as they are deceitful.

The Premier has just entered the Chamber. It is interesting to see that every time the Premier stands up in this House and says "jail, jail, jail", the two members who go pale the quickest are the two members who contributed to this debate tonight.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Callide. If he does not return to the motion he will be asked to leave the Chamber.

Mr Cooper: They go pale, pale, pale.

Mr SEENEY: As the member for Crows Nest said, they go pale, pale, pale. They had nothing to contribute to the debate tonight. They represent large numbers of rail workers in their electorates, but they had nothing to contribute. I place on record the fact that neither of them remained in this Chamber after they completed their contributions. Neither of them stayed here to listen to the rest of the debate.

Then we had a quite incredible contribution from the member for Bundamba. I concede that she is a new member in the House, but she came in here and read a speech which was obviously written by somebody in some department.

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order. Those comments are not true and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SEENEY: I withdraw. The fact is that this motion tonight was about rail workers. It was about workers. It was about people. It was not about statistics. It was not about meaningless drivel. It was about rail workers—the types of people that the National Party represents. These are the people that we stand up for in areas right across Queensland. They are the people that the old Labor Party used to stand up for. They have been abandoned by the slick union hacks who have come into this Parliament as a result of working the system—by rotting the system. They have abandoned the people they traditionally represented.

We represent those people now. We represent them well, and we will continue to represent them. This motion tonight was

moved in their interests. There have been many examples in my electorate and in railway electorates right across the State where experienced workers are disillusioned with the railway system and are disillusioned with the administration of what was once a great institution.

Time expired.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (6.55 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Minister. Contrary to the doom and gloom, the meaningless drivel and the scare tactics that we always hear from the Opposition, Queensland Rail is one of the great coal railways of the world. However, in this climate of privatisation and pressures to break down vertically separated railways, Queensland Rail is under pressure from private operators who will try to cherry pick the best routes and traffic.

FreightCorp has already been named as the preferred supplier for a small coal haulage contract in central Queensland. Privatised operators will try to capture market share from QR by trying to capture base load contracts, and QR will be expected to take up the slack in on-demand capacity. Meanwhile, the Beattie Government is committed to the retention of QR as a vertically integrated structure.

In response to the challenge of new train operators, QR has been growing its output to ensure that clients do not go without haulage capacity. The carriage of export coal is a major part of the QR coal operation. In the last financial year QR carried 104 million tonnes of export coal—11% more than in the previous year. Most of that export coal was carried within central Queensland. Putting aside for a moment the coal trade, QR has also been a part of the growth in the State's export mineral trade, hauling 7.5 million tonnes of minerals to ports in Queensland in the last financial year.

Finally, in that year the other classes of QR's rail freight traffic totalled 9.5 million tonnes—an increase of 11% over the previous year. By any measure QR has grown the volume of its haulage work. Clearly, coal and minerals traffic was the bulk of that trade, accounting for 122 million tonnes, or 92%, of the total freight traffic.

The Beattie Government has given priority to the improvement of long distance passenger rail services in Queensland. The tilt train service servicing Brisbane-Bundaberg-Rockhampton has been a success in patronage terms. Last year 331,000 passenger trips were made on the service. Rockhampton alone has benefited in tourism dollars by \$4m a year. The people of Bundaberg, Maryborough and Hervey Bay

have welcomed the introduction of a daily tilt train service between Bundaberg and Brisbane—a wonderful service to my electorate, and extremely popular.

In response to public acclaim, this Government has decided to provide a diesel tilt train service in the future from Brisbane to Cairns, meaning an investment of \$137m between now and late 2002. It will generate much employment during construction and operation. It will provide up to 2,329 jobs over that period. With such a sound record, it is no wonder that QR is acknowledged as the No. 1 transport company in Australia. I appreciate the improved passenger services we have in Bundaberg. With unemployment being such a major problem in the Bundaberg area, the introduction of the highly successful tilt train service, delivered by QR, has been a major boost to our economy and to our community.

Question—That Mr Bredhauer's amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 39—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Wellington, Wells. Tellers: Purcell, Pitt

NOES, 37—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Cooper Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Any future divisions on this motion will be of two minutes' duration.

Question—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 39—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Wellington, Wells. Tellers: Purcell, Pitt

NOES, 37—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Cooper Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Sitting suspended from 7.05 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

WEAPONS AMENDMENT BILL**Second Reading**

Resumed from 15 September (see p. 3839).

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (8.30 p.m.): I rise to speak against the contents of this Bill which I believe would, if passed, help unravel the hard-won gains that we have made in recent years in Australia on gun laws. Although the Bill, presented by the member for Thuringowa, is clearly well intentioned, if it were successful it would wreak havoc on the national weapons scheme, which was agreed to by all Governments in Australia and all parties following the dreadful event at Port Arthur in 1996.

All Governments and all parties then in the Parliaments of Australia supported the resolutions of the Australasian Police Ministers Council. At that time we all bore some pain. Many Labor Party members and supporters opposed some elements of the resolutions and the subsequent legislation. Despite that, we all supported the legislation.

I would like to remind this Parliament that it was coalition legislation. I was then the shadow Minister. At that point, on behalf of the then Opposition, which is now the Government, I supported the legislation. The then Opposition supported the then Government's Bill—the coalition's Bill—which is, in effect, the current Weapons Act in this State. The Government—the then Opposition—supported the coalition's legislation because it was the very clearly demonstrated wish of the Australian public and the majority of the public in Queensland. As has been shown by a recent Sunday Mail survey published only last weekend, clearly the laws are still strongly supported by the great majority of the public of Queensland. I think that the figure that was published last weekend demonstrated that some 72% of Queenslanders believe that Queensland's weapons laws should not change.

Those laws caused great pain to many people. I appreciate that. In 1996, we all appreciated that. However, those people who bore pain and who felt very hurt by the legislation were the minority and at this point they remain the substantial minority view of the public of Queensland.

We must never forget those events at Port Arthur and the people who died. We must never forget that huge outpouring of public emotion. At that time, many people in the community also felt very strongly that we all did

not go far enough. I must remind this House that those people have not changed their views. This nation and this State will not be well served by another wide-ranging, divisive debate on weapons.

From time to time, resolutions of the Australasian Police Ministers Council are considered by the Australasian Police Ministers Council, of which I am now currently a member, and some adjustments are made in the national view after strong, logical debate by all Governments in Australia—and that is representative of all major political parties in Australia. Not long before the last election my predecessor, the Honourable Russell Cooper, the member for Crows Nest, when he was the Minister for Police and Corrective Services made some adjustments by way of regulation. At that time I did not move for disallowance in this House as it was the view of the then Opposition—the now Government—that they were, in fact, sensible changes. But I must advise this Parliament that at the time they did incur the wrath of the Federal coalition Government, which is still the Federal coalition Government of this nation. I must say that it then fell to me to defend at the Australasian Police Ministers Council—as the change to the regulations occurred immediately before the change of Government in Queensland—those changes to regulations that had been put in place by my predecessor, the coalition Minister, the Honourable Russell Cooper.

The last Australasian Police Ministers Council several months ago sought another sensible change, which has been acted on by the Federal Minister for Justice in an interim way, and which requires some legislative change in Queensland. I will not dwell on that, because that Bill is currently before the Parliament, having been presented to this Parliament last week.

I must say that the outcome that this Bill before us tonight seeks could work only if we had a genuine national single licensing system in Australia, which could be achieved only if all States were prepared to cede their powers on the licensing of weapons to the Commonwealth Government. The Queensland Government is not prepared to take that step, nor is any other State Government in this nation. The public simply will not support having firearm owners roaming anywhere in Australia with their firearms unless it is for a purpose such as participating in organised, approved shooting competitions which, I must say, are adequately provided for in the current laws of this State and the laws of every other State.

The Bill presented by the member for Thuringowa is well intentioned. I appreciate that, but it is simply not appropriate legislation to be considered. This Bill that we are now debating seeks to remove a requirement in the Weapons Act for a firearm owner who decides to move from interstate to Queensland to live to obtain a Queensland licence for their firearm. That is the most far-reaching provision that is being sought in this Bill before the Parliament tonight. It aims to do this by providing that an interstate weapons licence be deemed to be a corresponding Queensland licence once the owner gives the Police Commissioner written notice of his or her intention to live in Queensland for up to one year and proof of current membership in an approved shooting club.

If this Bill were to succeed, the Police Commissioner is then required to provide acknowledgment to the person of the corresponding status of the licence. Currently, if the owner of a licensed firearm moves from interstate to Queensland, he or she must obtain a Queensland licence. They will have three months to obtain the licence for category A and B weapons and seven days, or until the application is decided, for category C, D and H weapons.

This Bill is in direct contravention of the decision by the Australasian Police Ministers Council in 1996 to introduce uniform legislation for each State and Territory in relation to gun laws. I stress that that decision was a reflection of the council's determination at the time to do whatever it could to prevent another horror like the Port Arthur massacre from occurring again. That determination remains as strong now as it was then.

There are some very important reasons behind the uniform provisions that deal with the need to have a licence in the jurisdiction in which the firearm owner lives. One is to ensure that a weapons licence continues to be directly linked to the original genuine reason for the possession of the firearm. Another important factor is enabling each State or Territory to maintain an accurate record of licensed persons and registered firearms in their jurisdiction.

The member for Thuringowa stated that the purpose of this Bill is to reduce red tape and unnecessary duplication in the current scheme. The current scheme in Queensland is no more onerous or time consuming than similar schemes in other jurisdictions but, that aside, the processes contained in this Bill change the administrative structure with little or no impact on costs or resources in any case.

This Bill provides that an interstate weapons licence is deemed to be a corresponding Queensland licence until it expires. Consequently, the licence holder would eventually be required to enter the mainstream administrative scheme, resulting in the normal associated costs and resources being outlaid. It is simply a question of whether that person does it as required under the current laws or does it at a later date, as suggested by the member for Thuringowa's Bill. But also, the administrative process in the Bill for the adoption of the interstate weapons licence requires checks to be made with the issuing jurisdiction and requires the commissioner to acknowledge the corresponding nature of the licence to the interstate licence holder. The only real administrative difference in this process is the non-issuing of a plastic licence card, which has minimal impact as it is computer generated.

However, while good government is about cutting bureaucracy, it is also about public safety and public protection. We will not compromise one for the sake of the other, and public safety is certainly paramount in terms of this Government's view—this Government's very strongly stated position—that it is not prepared to entertain any watering down of the weapons legislation as it currently stands in this State. Without seeking to go into the areas covered in the Government's Bill currently before the House—it was presented by me last week—I say that that is a Bill that seeks to further tighten gun laws in this State. It seeks to tighten them at the request of the Federal coalition Government and other State Governments and at the request of the weapons dealers and sporting shooters in this State for the very simple reason that they understand that a very important public safety question needs to be considered, and the same very important public safety question needs to be considered when we consider this Bill tonight.

In his second-reading speech the member for Thuringowa raised a number of issues in justification of this legislation, but these issues do not stand up to any real scrutiny. For example, the second-reading speech uses precedents such as interstate boat registrations to support the argument for the automatic recognition of interstate weapons licences. This is just not applicable, as someone wishing to register a boat does not have the same requirement to establish and maintain a genuine reason for holding a boat licence, as is the case for a weapons licence.

The member for Thuringowa, in his second-reading speech, did not provide grounds to substantiate the view that there is a lower level of compliance with the present scheme currently applying to interstate licence holders moving to Queensland. Since August 1999, about 10 applications a week have been received from interstate weapons licence holders. In other words, people who are moving here are complying with the laws as they stand in this State. I am advised that no significant concerns have been raised by interstate applicants when advised of the requirements under the current Queensland Act.

There are also a number of fundamental flaws in this legislation. But essentially my biggest concern is that it strikes at the core of the existing national scheme and for no clearly defined and substantiated purpose which cannot be overcome within the existing weapons legislation in this State. We may never know whether another Port Arthur would have occurred in Australia if Australia had not taken the mature, sensible approach to gun laws that it did in response to that horror in 1996. However, we can be sure that we have done our absolute utmost to ensure that something like that will never happen again.

In terms of my responsibilities as the relevant Minister, I attend the APMC roughly twice a year. Another meeting is to be held in several weeks' time. I must say that it is not just my view but also the very strong view of all Police Ministers and Justice Ministers nationally that we not depart from the current provisions. It is very strongly put by particularly the Federal coalition Government on each and every occasion there is any consideration given or action taken by any State to water down those very important provisions. I must say that it is hard fought and hard defended particularly by the Federal Minister for Justice, Amanda Vanstone, on behalf of the Prime Minister, John Howard, to the point that she was very upset with me in particular at the time I was defending the sensible changes to regulations that Russell Cooper had made back in 1997-98, which she felt did not meet the letter of the law of the Australasian Police Ministers Council resolutions. They were sensible changes that went to the point of as simple an issue as firearms owners being provided with a replacement weapon where they had a weapon that had failed. In many cases, these were people such as primary producers who needed a weapon for the purposes of their employment.

A provision in the APMC resolutions stated that there needed to be a 28-day

cooling-off period not just for original weapons licences and procurement of weapons originally but also for replacement weapons. We know that in this State we can turn around the checks that need to be made within a 24 to 48-hour period, and that is what those sensible regulations were about. I make the point that we did not seek to change them, because we did not want to open up an entire debate on the weapons legislation. But I can assure honourable members that the Federal Government has not changed its stance and it is still pretty annoyed with me and the Queensland Government over even that sensible change to the regulation, because it is concerned that we do not get a close enough look at people when they are seeking subsequent or replacement weapons, for things such as checks on whether a person has domestic violence orders issued against them. If the provision put forward in this Bill tonight succeeded, it would be a total impossibility, in terms of the red tape that would need to be put in place, to do all of the interstate checks, which individual State Police Services are not well placed to do.

I am not sure what position coalition members will take on this Bill, but I can certainly advise them and this Parliament of the strongest, toughest possible position that their colleagues in the Federal Government would take on just such a proposition. I repeat: this proposition could work only if we were to have a truly national registration scheme instead of template provisions replicated in each and every State. That would certainly not be achievable unless there were to be a ceding of the powers to the Commonwealth. I repeat that I think the Commonwealth has enough powers and influence in this area without State Governments wishing to cede those powers to the Commonwealth. This is a responsibility that we have. But we do have a responsibility to the public of Australia to make sure that we do not water down those very important provisions that were determined at a time of great angst and pain for the population of Australia and, I acknowledge, a time of great pain for weapons owners across the length and breadth of Australia, who felt that they were being unfairly blamed for a wrong that they did not commit and certainly would not have supported.

It is a strongly held view that we are not in a position at this stage to water down that weapons legislation. I know that the member for Thuringowa has brought this private member's Bill forward with the best of possible intentions. I acknowledge that it is certainly his intention to try to make things easier for

honest, upstanding people who are weapons owners who move into this State. I make the point that they are adequately catered for in the current provisions. We would build ourselves a massive mountain of red tape, restrictions and problems were we to accept this Bill. This Government will not be supporting this Bill for that reason, because we fear that it would water down our fundamental commitment to the existing weapons legislation and the agreement that we reached, along with every other State Government and the Federal Government, on behalf of the public of Australia after those dark days in 1996.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (8.50 p.m.): The time at which the Weapons Act was introduced, after that tragedy at Port Arthur, was a time of great national grief. If there is one lesson that has been learnt, it is that one has to be very careful about rushing in and making decisions in times of grief. It is better to wait a while and make the right decisions—better decisions—in the cold, hard light of day, once the grief has been assuaged.

I have said in this House before that Australia is too good a place to have ever deserved that tragedy at Port Arthur. It was a dreadful event. My eldest son was one of the first journalists to attend there after it happened. He has spoken to me about the dreadful scenes that he encountered. He is fortunate that he had been in the Army Reserve and is a fairly strong sort of a character.

The nation rushed headlong into the Weapons Act. As a result, in many instances we simply and absolutely hurt and offended the good, law-abiding people of our nation. As time has gone by it has been seen that those people who complied with the Act are all law-abiding people. It broke their hearts to hand in some of their firearms. For as long as I live I will not forget one old lady, a staunch member of the National Party, who came into my electorate office. Her firearm had been handed down to her from her father and I think from her grandfather to her father. She had this firearm when she eventually retired from the land and came to live in Toowoomba. She is now living in a house on her own. This law-abiding lady did not want her firearm destroyed. She knew how to handle it—she had handled firearms all her life—and she had it put away safely in the cupboard. It was very, very important for her to have that firearm for security. She is a pretty capable lady. I dare say that had someone broken into her place

she would have been able to use the firearm to get the person to leave, quick smart.

I will never forget that when I pointed out to this 73 or 74 year old woman that, in order to keep her firearm under the new Weapons Act, she could join a rifle club or get a letter from someone to say that she could hunt at their place and so forth, she said to me, "Mr Horan, I am a law-abiding person and I am not going to lie and say that I am going up to lie on the mound every Saturday morning at the Toowoomba Rifle Club having shots. Nor am I going to lie and get a letter from someone to say that I am going to shoot pigs out the back of the Balonne somewhere." She said, "I am an old lady in my seventies. I know how to handle this firearm. I am safe, I am law abiding and I want to keep it in my house. But I am no longer going to be allowed to and I have to have it destroyed." That is only one example of the sorts of law-abiding people who were hurt by this particular legislation.

As time has passed by, all of us have seen that it has been the good, law-abiding people who have been hurt—those people involved in sporting and recreational shooting and those with firearms for professional purposes. People who do not own or use firearms cannot understand the deep hurt that many of these people have felt. I have been to the Toowoomba Pistol Club down at the Helidon range and had a shot with the people down there. They have wonderful family weekends. People come with caravans and tents. They all take part in the shooting, whether it be some of the younger ones taking part in the air pistol shooting or others taking part in other things. It is a good family sport and it is ultrasafe. There has never been an injury. It is as safe as can be.

These people are the backbone of our society. They are the sorts of people whom we like to think live in our communities. They are part of a club. Some of them are on the administration of the committee as secretary, president, treasurer and so forth. Some of them are helping with the catering, some are helping with keeping the grounds mown and tidy and some are constructing buildings and so on. They get together and have a competition shoot on weekends. These are the sorts of people who were deeply hurt and deeply offended.

We have to start from the point of respect. The Minister talked about going to Australasian Police Ministers Council meetings on a regular basis. I think any changes that are considered have to come from the basis of respect—respect for these good, law-abiding

people who have done nothing wrong. They have been punished and made to take the brunt of the hurt and the guilt that Australia felt following the Port Arthur tragedy. We must always remember these good people when looking at legislation and endeavour to treat them with respect.

The other aspect we have to always consider is the mantle of safety. The Minister mentioned—and it is important—that the mantle of safety is there, be it in training, in the way firearms are stored or in the way firearms are used in competition, recreation and so forth, so that accidents do not occur and so that firearms cannot get into the hands of the wrong people.

The other day I was talking to some people who have little children and who do not live very far from Toowoomba. They had a serious problem with brown snakes. They do not want to have a gun in one cupboard, ammo locked in another cupboard and the bolt locked up somewhere else again, because when a king brown or one of these Darling Downs browns comes by their door and there are kids there, they want to be able to get rid of the thing straight away. They have had to have that weapon handy—they have had to be able to use it—because they have a serious problem. They had 13 snakes around the house one weekend. So they have to have something handy to protect themselves and their kids from the brown snakes.

An aspect of practicality has to come into the way that legislation and regulations are drawn up. We have said consistently that, when the Weapons Act and the associated regulations were drawn up and passed, as time went by there would always be a need to finetune some of the particular arrangements so that the mantle of safety could be preserved at all times—that is essential—and so that the actual usage by these good, law-abiding people could be sensible, practical and safe.

I think that is what the member for Thuringowa has endeavoured to achieve in this legislation. He has recognised that these law-abiding people are coming to Queensland. In some instances they are retired people who come up here for their winter vacations. It is well known that they like to travel through the areas around Bowen, Mackay, Townsville and so on in the winter. Those who are recreational or sporting shooters like to be able to use their firearms for that particular purpose, just as those who are bowlers like to go bowling, those who dance like to go dancing or those who are fisherman like to go fishing and so

forth. They bring their equipment and like to be able to take part in their chosen sport. That was one of the reasons the member gave, and I think it made a lot of sense.

One of the other arguments used by the member for Thuringowa in his second-reading speech related to interstate servicemen and women. He would probably know many in his electorate, who are often transferred from Ingleburn to Townsville or from Puckapunyal to Townsville and vice versa and so on. He argued that these people ought to be able to have a licence that would involve what one might call "mutual recognition" between States.

This is the sort of legislation that the Minister should take to the Australasian Police Ministers Council. He should say, "If these people have gone through all the testing processes, all the training processes and all the investigations into their background so that they are approved people, they should get a licence." People who hold a firearms licence in Queensland are probably some of the best law-abiding citizens of Australia because of what they have been through. I would venture to say that they have gone through almost a deeper examination than have those who wish to become justices of the peace.

A firearms licence is virtually a badge of honour, because people who have been licensed have to go through a rigorous process. Once they have their licence, they cannot transgress in any shape or form. They can lose their licence for things such as domestic violence or not using the firearm in accordance with the provisions of the Weapons Act. However, people travelling from interstate have been through the process. Why add the inconvenience and red tape of making them go through more training when they have been through it already? Australia has mutual recognition with New Zealand. Residents can go back and forth to New Zealand for things such as trade, yet those who want to cross the border for a holiday and who stay longer than three months have to change to Queensland's licensing system.

The member for Thuringowa has been very genuine in bringing this legislation to the House. He is a person who thinks deeply on these matters. This legislation has respect for decent, law-abiding people, as well as a mantle of safety. Queensland could lead the way and the Minister could take this concept to the APMC. Why do we have to be exactly the same as everybody else? If we can do things better, more safely and more practically, why not make an adjustment in hindsight? This

finetunes the Act and makes it better, more practical and just as safe.

Recent research has shown that the use of firearms in homicides has been decreasing since 1980. That has had nothing to do with the weapons legislation. It has been decreasing of its own accord since 1980. However, the use of knives has been increasing.

Dr Prenzler: Blunt instruments—axes.

Mr HORAN: Yes, other instruments as well, but mostly knives. Many people warned that this would not make any difference, and in hindsight that has happened. The proposal put forward by the member for Thuringowa is about treating with respect decent, law-abiding firearm owners such as recreational shooters, holiday makers, those being transferred to Queensland in the military and retirees. Mutual recognition provides that when it comes time for their licence to be renewed it has to be renewed within Queensland and become a Queensland licence. That makes sense. Overall, this will work within the mantle of safety. There is nothing more dangerous about this. In fact, it is as safe as the existing legislation. It treats with respect people who deserve that respect.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (9.03 p.m.): The Liberal Party has always staunchly opposed any moves to undermine the national approach to gun control. The original legislation was sponsored and supported by the coalition at both the Federal and State level. On a number of occasions in this House we have indicated that we would not compromise the underlying principles of the Weapons Act. We believe that the national system of gun control has delivered tangible benefits to the people of Australia. We have always said, however, that if there are anomalies and ways are identified to make it administratively simpler or which change some technical aspects of the legislation, we should look at that to make it more workable in the interests of everyone concerned. The proposal put forward by the member for Thuringowa does not undermine the principles of the legislation. It maintains those principles, and we support that approach.

However, there are some anomalies. Over the next couple of years those anomalies will come to light even more. It is incumbent upon the Police Minister to take those anomalies to the Australian Police Ministers Council to try to iron out those inconsistencies. It was always said that every State would have its own State-based regime and that inconsistencies would

need to be ironed out. We support that. This legislation is not something that ought to be cast in stone; it ought to be able to be amended to take account of anomalies as they arise. As I said before, we do not believe that the principles of the Weapons Act are being undermined. If we thought they were, we would oppose the legislation, as we have opposed legislation in this House on previous occasions. We have made it quite plain that the Liberal Party does not believe we should be watering down the legislation in any way, shape or form. We do not see this as a move to water it down; we see it as a sensible administrative change to allow some flexibility in the system. As I said, I would think that similar moves will be looked at in other States over the next couple of years.

It is important that the underlying principles be maintained. There must be confidence in the regimes at the State level. However, there may be a need to look at the issue of administration. We will support the legislation on the understanding that it does not compromise the underlying principles of the principal legislation.

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (9.06 p.m.): As the member for Thuringowa stated when introducing this Bill to Parliament, its intention is to bring some sense into today's world of burgeoning bureaucracy. One has to ask: when will Government begin to trust those who do comply with the laws and regulations of a State and its country? The current licensing presents individuals with a ludicrous situation whereby months of legal registration in another State will become invalid if a person decides to travel for any extended period. Many people who fall into this category are in the armed services who move from State to State following their occupation, and many of these armed service personnel are members of gun clubs. Many those affected are also retirees or pensioners who often have plenty of time to fill and choose to travel and explore this wonderful State and this wonderful country whilst still pursuing that hobby.

There is currently temporary recognition of interstate licenceholders who participate in a shooting competition conducted by an approved shooting club or approved by the Commissioner of Police, licenceholders who undertake recreational shooting on rural land with permission given before the event to shoot on the land by the land-holder or a licenceholder who visits Queensland to perform an occupational requirement to shoot on rural land for rural purposes are taken to be licensed in Queensland for the purpose of those activities. There is also the opportunity to

obtain a visitors' licence, which may be issued to an adult who resides outside Queensland, interstate or overseas, and intends visiting Queensland to engage in an activity that is one of the reasons for possession of a weapon under section 11 of the Weapons Act 1990, which includes the sport of target shooting, recreational shooting, an occupational requirement, a collection by a collector of weapons, military re-enactment or a historical demonstration, starting sporting events or theatrical production.

A visitors' licence may be issued to an adult if the person is entitled by law to possess and use a firearm in the State or country where the person usually resides. The maximum term of a visitors' licence is only three months. For many, this is only the start of what they hope will be a long and relaxing holiday, but they will be confronted with the necessity to hunt for a venue where they can renew their licence. In the event that interstate residents decide to move to Queensland and become permanent residents, the interstate licence is taken to be the corresponding licence under Queensland law for three months from the date of notification in the case of category A and B weapons or seven days from the date of notification in the case of category C, D and H weapons or until the applicant's licence is approved or rejected, whichever comes first.

This need to register in Queensland is not only an added expense to those who have no desire to contravene the law but also a frustrating paper trail. The member for Thuringowa stated that Inspector McCoomb, the former head of the Queensland Weapons Licensing Branch, has stated publicly that only 25% of those who possess guns are licensed. Many may dispute this, but a man in Mr McCoomb's position at the time he made this statement would have known the true situation, we would hope.

With today's technology, it is possible for any figure in authority to electronically check the currency or legality of any licensed firearm. For many, the added financial burden is unwarranted, unfair and sometimes unaffordable, and the perception of any one of these things may be enough to stop someone from complying with the requirements of law. The non-compliance rate is extremely high, and procedures which are or appear to be excessive or which duplicate do not encourage compliance, especially when many people who possess firearms are opposed to the laws as they exist at this time but, under sufferance, do comply.

It is well known that there are many people who oppose the gun laws outright and many who reluctantly registered because they did not want to be labelled a criminal. There was a case very recently where a gentleman who wanted to possess a firearm was approached by ASIO to be interviewed because of—in the view of ASIO—his extreme beliefs. Because he wanted some protection, he asked the officers whether he could tape the interview. They refused. After a long period of haggling, he said, "Well, you shouldn't have to say anything to me that couldn't possibly be recorded." The officers then left. I believe that he was right in the stance he took. When he came and talked to me about the situation I said, "Give them a ring, and if you want a second party to be there, I will be there for you." He rang them, and they said, basically, "We have learnt all we need to know about extreme elements." Why is a man who wants to own a gun and who wants to protect everything he says when approached by ASIO classed as extreme because of a hobby?

It would not take much to encourage those—like this fellow—who move around a bit and who are opposed to authority and regulation or just a little complacent to drop off the register altogether or simply fail to register at all if a firearm comes into their possession. This is a very likely scenario, as the acquisition of a firearm in Queensland is not a difficult exercise. Most members of this House would probably be able to lay their hands on an unregistered firearm tomorrow. That would not be inconceivable to anyone I know.

Legislation is altered every day. I heard the Minister say to the member for Merrimac, "Let's see you stand behind your legislation." I have often seen legislation changed in this place, so I can see no reason why legislation that enhances and does not alter previously enacted legislation should not be supported. I do so in this instance because I believe the member for Thuringowa has presented a very reasonable Bill for this House to endorse.

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (9.13 p.m.): I could not pass up an opportunity to contribute to a debate on firearms legislation. I have spoken on every single such piece of legislation since 1990. For those members who do not know, I point out that I am a registered firearms owner in Queensland and have shot competitively over a long period, although I am not currently active in that pursuit.

I want to make a couple of very simple points. I heard what previous speakers said.

There is validity in the interstate argument, but the fact is that this is not a new argument. The member for Toowoomba South talked about New Zealand. I have never been able to take a firearm across the Tasman. I do not know what the rules are now, but when I was shooting competitively one had to seek permission from the New Zealand Government to take a firearm into that country. There was no validity of any licences. Even licence holders from States which at that time had licensing regimes were not accepted in New Zealand.

Mr Horan: We are talking about mutual recognition legislation.

Mr SCHWARTEN: That is fine, but mutual recognition is about Federal Government recognition between various agencies. But it all has a head of power with the Federal Government of whichever country one seeks to shoot in. That is the authority which allows people to take a firearm into a country to compete in the Olympic Games. It is not a sovereign State issue.

The fact of the matter is that, as noble as the honourable member's sentiments are, the real issue goes back to the Federal Government's desire, after the dreadful Port Arthur massacre, to have a national agenda that was then to be implemented by the States. The only way that can be changed is for the Federal Government to change it. We in Queensland—especially our Government—are not in a position to change that. It does not matter how much the member believes that that will alter the effect of it; it will not happen.

The stick that was taken to the coalition when Russell Cooper introduced this legislation was that if the State did not do it there would be a referendum. I said in this place at that time, "If you have a referendum on firearms ownership in Australia, no-one will have them." That is the bottom line with that. That position has not changed.

Aside from all the issues that are associated with trying to say that people can come and go in a State and report to the Police Commissioner or whomsoever that they are carrying firearms around, it will not work unless the Federal Government has some national form of registration. I do not think most firearms owners want a national form of registration. Certainly the people whom I know do not. That was the very thing that they avoided by having State Governments make their own legislation. States opted to protect the rights of people who want to own firearms by having State legislation. They did not give

that power to the Federal Government. That is the bottom line with this.

The honourable member for Merrimac made a contribution to this debate which lasted for a couple of seconds. He is in a better position than anybody, because a Federal Liberal Minister is creating this situation across Australia. I can assure the member that the Minister will not move from that position. It does not matter whether this Minister goes to the relevant ministerial meetings and brings it up; in fact, it would probably work against him if he did. The better option would be for the member for Merrimac, if he feels so strongly about it, to pay Amanda Vanstone a visit. That is why Russell Cooper is not speaking in this debate: he knows exactly the position he faced in this regard.

I understand the sensibility of what the honourable member is proposing by this legislation. It makes commonsense. If people go up to the gulf and they want to take a .22 or whatever, they should be able to do it. We should be able to do a lot of things. A firearm could not be taken into the Northern Territory 25 years ago. The police there detained friends of mine from Queensland and removed their firearms from them. That was at least 25 years ago. That situation has remained unchanged, and it will change only when there is reciprocal recognition through a Federal head of power. Unless we can get Amanda Vanstone to do it, I know that it will not happen. For all the noble sentiments—that this is commonsense and all the rest of it—the reality is that it will not happen. This legislation may be passed tonight, but it will not affect the result one bit.

The people who want to grandstand on the issue—and I am not suggesting that the member for Thuringowa is doing that—are avoiding the political reality. Russell Cooper could not do it when he brought in his legislation. He did the best he could to try to get what he thought were workable gun laws in this State.

Mr Barton: And we supported them.

Mr SCHWARTEN: We supported that legislation when in Opposition. That has not changed and it will not change until Amanda Vanstone agrees to a change. The Honourable Minister pointed out that all the surveys show that people are swinging away from guns like we would not believe. If anybody wants to change that view, as I have said previously in similar debates I challenge them to get up here and support what a lot of people in this place purport to support—the conducting of a referendum as being the

method to determine what people really think. We will not have reciprocal rights for those who own firearms; we will have people without firearms at all.

I offer my views in the matter in the hope that we can get some honesty into the debate tonight and so that people do not grandstand on the issue. The reality is that it is easy for the National Party to sit there and snipe about this. It introduced these laws into the State. The National Party did not change from the national laws then. If the National Party was sitting over here now it would not change it either. If the Liberal Party wants to change the firearms law as it applies in this State, it should get on the phone and talk to Amanda Vanstone.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND)
(9.20 p.m.): My opinions on the firearm laws are no secret. Long before this debate even started I always thought that the outlawing of firearms—or the outlawing of any implement, for that matter—is basically a fruitless exercise because there are a lot of things in this society that are illegal, yet they are easily obtained.

Drugs are one example. We can outlaw drugs till the cows come home. As far as I am aware, drugs have always been illegal and they have always been a menace to society. We can outlaw firearms but we cannot make them go away. In Indonesia it is illegal to own a gun, yet they are freely available in most parts of that country. People are not just prohibited from owning certain types, it is illegal to own a firearm, yet they are still available.

I own quite a few firearms. Most of the people I know own at least one, maybe two, whether it be a shotgun for cleaning snakes out of the backyard or whether it be a .22 for taking out chicken hawks or something like that. Most people in the area that I come from need firearms.

I agree that there is no place for guns in the city. People living in the middle of Brisbane have very little need for a firearm unless of course they are a member of a gun club or a sporting shooters organisation and shoot as a past-time, sport, hobby or recreation. I have always thought that more reasonable firearm laws would take into consideration where people live, not just what they do or what their occupation is and all that sort of stuff. Realistically, those who live west of the Great Dividing Range or up in the far-north need protection from certain wildlife, whether it be a large boar, a large crocodile at a creek crossing or a shark. With regard to sharks, we have to remember that certain spear guns come under the Act as well.

In the spirit of what the member for Rockhampton said, I agree that any referendum in this country on the ownership of firearms would see the firearm owners defeated resoundingly. I have never argued that point. That is one of the most valid points that has ever been raised in this debate. I am not seeking a referendum on the subject because I know city people—and we are a largely urban population—would vote it down. But the point of this debate tonight is the amendments contained in the Bill presented by the member for Thuringowa have absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with winding back firearms. It is not winding back anything; it is not changing anything. All it is doing is making a bit of a rational change to the manner in which we do the business of firearm licensing between the States, particularly as it relates to those who may wish to extend their stay while they participate in some sort of shooting activity.

One of the most important groups of people that this will affect, as the member for Barambah alluded to, is members of the armed services. I know for a fact that this was often a question asked when I was a soldier posted in and out of different States, whether it was from Queensland to the ACT or from the ACT back to Queensland. We have to remember that, as far as the military is concerned, Queensland is a large posting place for the armed services. Townsville is one of the largest bases that the Army maintains in this country. The RAAF bases at Garbutt and Amberley come a close second and third. Those places are home to a lot of people who come from States like Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania. Of course, as we know, there are firearm licensing differences between those States. When soldiers are posted they can take their possessions with them. I know that a lot of soldiers pursue shooting as a hobby. As the member for Mundingburra comes from that area, she might also agree that a lot of the sporting shooters associations have their membership predominantly based in the armed services. The armed services also conduct civilian range shoots and so on to promote the concept of shooting as a recreation and a legitimate sport.

Lavarack Barracks is the base for the ODF. The Operational Deployment Force can source troops from all over the country to be at ready notice for a period of months as part of its ready deployment force. As we have seen with Timor, it brought troops from all around the country; it brought troops from cavalry regiments from Darwin and Puckapunyal near

Melbourne. It brought MPs from all over the country as well to be readily deployed to Timor.

Mrs Pratt: A battalion of MPs?

Mr NELSON: That is a reference to military police. The point that I have tried to make is that these people would have been based in Townsville for only a certain amount of time. Let us say that was for six months on a rotational posting. They would have been eligible to bring their possessions with them to Townsville. I put to honourable members that if I was one of those soldiers one of the possessions that I would have brought would have been one of my firearms, maybe more.

Again, the need for the secure storage of firearms means that people cannot just leave them lying around the country. If a soldier gets posted away for six months he cannot say to his wife or friends, "Here are the keys to my gun safe. Can you watch the rifles for me and give them a clean every couple of weeks?" He has to take them with him; he has no choice.

I put it to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that these days people have no choice other than to take their firearms with them if they really want to follow the law to the letter. So therefore they are stuck. They are in the position of having to carry their guns with them. When they get to Townsville they find that they have to go through all this rigmarole of going through the licensing procedure again after a period of time. Generally it is a mess. In his speech the member for Rockhampton agreed that it was an unacceptable position.

The Bill that the member for Thuringowa has introduced goes some of the way to rectifying this mess. It does not change the eligibility of somebody to get a gun, it does not change the type of gun they can own, it does not change the way they can use it or what category of firearm they can own. All it changes is the fact that once they have proven that they are a person who can have a firearm under a scheme in a State—and let us face it—

Mr Feldman: Responsible firearms owners.

Mr NELSON: Yes, they must be a responsible firearm owner. Let us face it, these days no matter what State we are in the laws are stringent. It is no easier to get a firearms licence in Tasmania than it is to get one in Queensland. It is basically the same.

So the point of the matter is that when these people are coming to Queensland—not just military personnel, but all sorts of other people—they should not have to go through that mess and rigmarole again, especially

where they may not become a full-time resident of Queensland; they might only have a six months, a year or maybe a two-year posting here and then they might be sent off again. They might do a shuffle of States; they might move from Tasmania to Queensland and then back to Western Australia. Anyone who comes from Townsville would know that that is a soldier's life—to be posted from one end of the country to the next at a moment's notice. It is part of the trade. So these people are stuck in a position in which they will have to be continuously out there changing their licences and causing themselves a whole heap of grief when there is really no need to go through that. It is really and truly a waste of time, effort and money.

It is my sincere belief that the member for Thuringowa has researched his Bill very well. Obviously he knows what he is talking about and the Bill has my full support.

In summary, I would like to say that there was a lot of hysteria which led to the passing of these firearm laws. The hysteria was whipped up following the tragedy at Port Arthur, and other tragedies. The leaders of our country used a huge stick in an attempt to wipe out something that cannot be wiped out, namely, the illegal use of firearms. One can no more wipe out the illegal use of firearms than one can stamp out the illegal use of drugs.

It is pointless to say to a person who is a registered firearm owner, "We are going to restrict your use of firearms so that we can stop criminals using firearms." That is a waste of time. Other members and I have said that before in this House.

I have never understood why the laws came about in the way they did. However, being law-abiding citizens, we must accept the decisions made by our politicians even if they are ludicrous in the extreme. Firearm owners have complied with the laws, even to their detriment. I guarantee that not one single criminal has abided by the firearm laws. That has been evidenced by the spate of shootings that occurred after the firearm laws were passed.

We have heard of police stations being machine-gunned in New South Wales. I guarantee that the weapon that was used in that case not registered. Recently in Queensland we had instances where police officers were shot at, or shot, by people who were using weapons that were illegal and that do not come within the Act because the people who own those sorts of weapons would never have complied with the firearm laws in the first place. The firearm laws have targeted

people who are innocent and who have done nothing wrong.

I am a member of the National Rifle Association, which is a United States organisation involved with firearm advocacy in various parts of the world. The association's esteemed president, Charlton Heston, made a very important point, namely, that many more people are killed by cars than are killed by guns. Yet we do not ban cars.

When I last checked on the numbers—which is a few months ago—I found that hundreds of people had been killed in Queensland as a result of motor vehicle accidents.

Mrs Pratt: Drowning.

Mr NELSON: If we included all the categories, such as drownings, deaths in fires and air accidents we would end up with a phenomenal number. However, we will concentrate on vehicles because that is a very good parallel. A vehicle is a machine; a firearm is a machine. Hundreds of people have been killed either by people irresponsibly driving cars or as a result of road accidents.

At the time when I was undertaking my research I discovered that only two people had been killed by firearms. At the present time I believe the number would probably be only four people killed by firearms for the whole of this year. Any fair-minded person would consider that that is an anomaly. It is strange.

It is much easier to get away in a car after killing someone. It is a lot harder to shoot someone than it is to run them over with a motor vehicle—especially if firearms are stored in a responsible manner. My firearms were stored in a responsible manner even before the firearms laws were passed. Most owners of firearms would store their weapons in a responsible manner.

As I said, the member for Thuringowa has introduced a sensible Bill. He has also given notice of an amendment which will allow people to go on with their lives whilst still complying with what I consider to be unfair and overzealous laws. However, they are the laws of the land. Even if this legislation were passed, those laws would still be complied with in their full entirety. There is no change in the strictness of the firearms laws.

This is simply an amendment which makes the implementation of those laws easier and more palatable to people who have to work within the framework of the firearms laws. Most members of this House would have no idea of what I am speaking about because probably most members do not own firearms.

They are difficult laws to comply with because they are manifestly unfair and unjust. If I introduced a law tomorrow to ban the use of cars because they are murderous instruments and they cause so many deaths in society, there would be outrage.

A couple of days ago in this House an honourable member referred to Emily's List and the role of females in society. One of the largest advocacy groups for the ownership of firearms in the United States is the Women's Electoral Lobby. Why is that? In some parts of America women live in a relatively unsafe society.

Take the case of a young lady who was walking along the street at night, and a group of three or four young men think they are going to make their feelings felt with this young lady. There is nothing more levelling than a .357 magnum. With a .357 magnum in her possession, that lady would be more than equal to her attackers. Women who have been saved from attack by the ownership of firearms are strong advocates for the retention of firearms. It does not take a man to pull a trigger. Anyone can pull a trigger. The ownership of firearms is an important asset in women's self-defence.

We have had "take back the night" rallies and such things in Australia. Such rallies in America are attended by women's advocacy groups. A firearm in a woman's possession is a great leveller because, no matter how many men there are, none of them can beat a .357 magnum shoved in their face.

I support the Bill. It saddens me that the Bill will not be supported tonight. I am heartened to learn that the Bill will be supported on this side of the House. Perhaps I was a little unfair this afternoon and maybe elements of the coalition are listening. I give credit where credit is due. I did not believe that the Liberal Party would support this Bill.

Mrs Sheldon: You should never prejudice anyone.

Mr NELSON: That is correct. I am very pleased to see that we have support from the Liberal Party. Perhaps I was a wee bit too harsh this afternoon. As I said, it is a shame that this Bill will not be passed by the House. It is sensible legislation. All legislation that is introduced by the member for Thuringowa is always sensible. The previous legislation that was introduced into the Parliament by the member for Thuringowa has borne fruit. We now have an organ donor register in this country. That is due to the work of the member for Thuringowa and his numerous cohorts. The legislation has my full support.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (9.40 p.m.): Tonight I rise to speak to the Weapons Amendment Bill 1999. At the outset I say that the City Country Alliance will be supporting this Bill. This Bill aims to amend the current section 33 of the Weapons Act 1990 that relates to interstate residents moving to Queensland. Under this section of the current Act, a holder of a firearms licence from another State has to give notice to the Police Commissioner if he or she intends to reside permanently or stays for any length of time in Queensland. This section applies to all categories of firearms—A, B, C, D or H weapons—and requires the holder of such licences to give written notice to the Police Commissioner. In the case of category A or B weapons, people have three months to re-register for a licence to possess these weapons in the State of Queensland. For categories C, D or H, the time limit is only seven days. I have no problems at all with those time limits. The intention of this Bill is to change the Weapons Act 1990 to allow the Police Commissioner to recognise all the other States' firearm licences until their time of expiry without the need for interstate licence holders to apply for approval.

There is no doubt that the changes to the Weapons Act and the licensing of firearms owners since the Port Arthur massacre in 1996 have had absolutely no effect on crime or the activity of criminals in this country. I refer to some statistics. Between 1915 and 1998, the rate of firearm homicide has fluctuated from as low as 0.16 people per 100,000 head of population in the 1950s to as high as 0.78 per 100,000 head of population in 1984. The most recent year recorded a firearm homicide rate of 0.3 persons per 100,000 head of population. Those statistics should be considered in light of the average death rate in this country by homicide of all descriptions, which is around two per 100,000 head of population.

This figure has remained unchanged for many, many years in this country. There is also no doubt that, notwithstanding some year to year fluctuations, over the past 20 years the rate of firearm-related homicides has definitely been declining, and declining at a steady rate. Between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999 in this country, 808 homicide victims were killed by firearms. Over that 10-year period that is an average of 81 per year. That figure gave an average rate of homicide by firearms of around about 0.5 persons per 100,000 head of population. At this juncture I must say that that figure includes the victims of that horrible massacre at Port Arthur in 1996.

There is no doubt that, while the 1960s showed that the trend of homicide by firearms was on the decrease, the trend for homicide by sharp instruments, such as knives, was definitely on a corresponding increase. There is no doubt at all that the number of homicides due to firearms has been on a steady decline for many, many years and that there has been a corresponding increase in homicide by sharp instruments, particularly knives. As everybody knows, there has been no effort to ban knives in households.

Also over the past 20 or 30 years assaults on people, including sexual assaults, have increased and unlawful entries have skyrocketed. For example, in 1996 the number of unlawful entries throughout the whole country was 402,079. By 1997—one year later—that figure had risen by another 15,000 to 417,845. Also over that time motor vehicle thefts, the number of unarmed robberies and armed robberies has increased. The number of assaults has increased from 114,156 to 123,940. The incidence of murders throughout the country has also increased. These incidents occurred at a time when the number of firearm-related deaths was on the decline. That statistical evidence spans many, many years. If anybody wants to have a look at those figures, I have them here.

There is also no doubt that the incidence of suicide in this country is also on the increase. However, suicide by firearms has been decreasing steadily over many, many years. Our suicide rates are very, very interesting. They show seasonal fluctuations. Those figures show that suicide rates have a very close relationship to the unemployment rate in the country. As the unemployment rate in our communities rises the suicide rate rises, particularly the male suicide rate. Also, suicide rates follow very closely increases and decreases in farm productivity. In 1998 there were 2,683 suicides throughout the country, but fewer than 200 of those were caused by firearms. Over many, many years the number of suicides by firearm has also shown a steady decline.

These trends in relation to firearms have been very consistent. The Port Arthur massacre and the resultant knee-jerk legislation through this country brought on by the Federal Government and the firearms buyback scheme have had absolutely no effect at all on these trends. I notice that in the past month or so the Premier, Mr Beattie, made a great deal about the drop in murders by firearm in this State in the past 12 months. Statistically, that trend will surely be a one-off and the rates will more than likely come back

to the trend that has been visible for the past 20 years or so.

Since the national agreement on firearms reached by the Police Ministers of this country following the Port Arthur massacre in 1996, many restrictions have been placed on firearm owners in this country. Firstly, all firearm owners have to have a genuine need for owning, possessing or using a firearm. They also are required to be over the age of 18; be a fit and proper person; be able to provide identification through a system similar to that used when opening a bank account, that is, a 100-point system requiring a passport or multiple types of identification; and undertake adequate safety training. I do not think anybody in this House has any problem with that. I certainly do not.

Like many other members of this House, I am a firearm owner. I love the sport of shooting. I have been shooting since I was about three or four years of age. I say sincerely to many members in this House that I think that is quite a good age to learn to shoot: one can certainly learn how to handle firearms safely. My father certainly made sure I could do that. Also like many other members of this House, I have a number of firearms. I enjoy shooting. I certainly have no problems with the firearm restrictions that were placed on us by the members of this House back in 1996.

However, I have some problems with the bureaucracy that is involved. I think that the storage provisions of the Act are a plus. I know that out in the bush—I certainly have many friends who live in the bush and I come from the bush myself—storing a firearm in one cabinet, a bolt in another and ammunition in another can lead to great inconvenience, particularly when feral animals or even the odd snake or two are causing havoc around the house. Certainly, that causes a problem to people in those areas, and I sympathise with them when they try to have these provisions changed to suit their needs. I think that, as time goes on, there will certainly be some changes to these firearm laws to suit those needs. However, at this stage of the game, in debating this Bill we are talking about the interstate transfer of firearms.

While I am talking about firearms, I would like to talk about storage facilities. Under the provisions in the Act, category A and B firearms are to be stored in a locked receptacle constructed of either hardwood or steel, and category C, D and H firearms are to be stored in a locked steel cabinet. There is no doubt that those provisions have led to a decrease in firearm thefts from licensed users. Although

thefts from firearm owners serve as only one source of firearms for illicit traffickers in this country, it is important that firearm owners comply and store their firearms according to these regulations.

There is also no doubt that illegal firearms certainly come from thefts from gun dealers. One statistic I have shows that, in July 1999, 350 working hand guns and 250 hand gun frames and other weapons parts were stolen from an army disposal store in the mid-north of South Australia, at Oakley. There is no doubt that there are a lot of illegal firearms out there and that most of them do come from theft. However, I notice that a lot of these statistics that are presented, particularly by the Australian Institute of Criminology, do not refer to the illegal smuggling of firearms into this country. I believe that goes on and that it goes on on quite a grand scale.

As I said, there is also no doubt that honest firearm owners do not have many problems with the restrictions that have been put on them by the current Weapons Act. Unfortunately, it was the way in which these restrictions were applied originally that caused many of the problems for the honest firearm owners out there. Many of these firearm owners, who have owned firearms safely, often for many decades, found themselves—and I can vouch for this—treated like criminals. It is no wonder that the country is still awash with so-called illegal firearms.

In his second-reading speech, the member for Thuringowa referred to the fact that Inspector McCoomb, the former head of the Queensland Weapons Licensing Branch, stated publicly that only 25% of those with guns in Queensland are now licensed.

Mr Barton: Emphasis on "former".

Dr PRENZLER: Yes, he is the former head of the Licensing Branch. He was highlighting the reality. Under the buyback scheme, only 600,000 firearms around the country were surrendered. Many of these were not even in the categories that the authorities were after. There is no doubt that in the community there are millions of so-called illegal firearms still circulating. They are probably buried in holes in the ground or hidden behind walls. The 600,000 firearms surrendered would not even come close to covering the number of, for example, SKSs or AK47s. Certainly more than that many were imported into the country over many years. The buyback scheme did not even reclaim all of those firearms. There are millions of firearms out there that are now deemed illegal, many of

them in the hands of so-called illegal firearm owners who are really honest Australians.

As I said, in spite of the rhetoric of the Premier, the latest surveys have found that the majority of firearms used to commit homicide in this country were not even registered, and the perpetrators of firearm-related homicide were not licensed firearm owners at all. This is a problem. These findings indicate that the regulatory regime that has been imposed on honest firearm owners in this country has made it very difficult for irresponsible or other otherwise unsuitable individuals to legitimately obtain a firearm. In other words, the majority of those who commit homicides in Australia are individuals who, by some method or other, have circumvented the legal processes and requirements and will be least likely to be affected if further restrictions on the ownership of firearms are introduced.

The Police Minister mentioned the Bill he brought into the House the other day, which is aimed at the illegal trade of so-called unworkable hand guns. I agree with the Minister. I think he is dead right. That had to be closed. That was a loophole that was being abused by some unscrupulous firearms dealers in this State. I know of the ones the Minister referred to. All they are doing is putting a slur on the honest firearms dealers and owners in this State. I agree with the Minister that they should be closed down. In relation to that Bill, I will be putting this argument very strongly and will be voting with the Minister on it.

Further restrictions will definitely affect only the law-abiding shooters in Australia who have already made significant sacrifices in the perceived furtherance of public safety. Of course, this raises the question: where do these perpetrators get their firearms from? As I mentioned before, most of them are stolen and traded illegally. I think a lot of them are coming in from overseas.

It has always been the policy of City Country Alliance members that, when it comes to crime that has been committed involving the use of a firearm, the punishment meted out by our court system should appropriately reflect the use of such weapons. In other words, the punishment should be much greater if a firearm is used to perpetuate an act.

I do not know what we can do with people such as Martin Bryant, who is a despicable human being. There is no doubt that the system in this country to filter out those sorts of people is failing, as it is in many countries around the world. These people are slipping through the net, sometimes resulting in

horrible unforeseen circumstances as occurred in Port Arthur in 1996. I sincerely hope and pray that that sort of thing never happens in this country again.

City Country Alliance members support the safe and responsible ownership and use of firearms. We believe that, whilst it is paramount that all Australians be protected from the illegal use and abuse of firearms, measures to control and apprehend those who illegally or irresponsibly use firearms should not be used as tools to obstruct, harass or penalise legitimate law-abiding firearm owners in this country. We believe also that a person has the right to self-defence in their own home and we also believe in relation to firearm ownership that a register of prohibited persons should be established. As I said earlier, more severe penalties for firearms offences should be introduced into our Criminal Code. Under our policies, we hope that will eventually be the case.

In all the debate regarding violent behaviour in our society, much is said and plenty of evidence is given to link violent videos and games to the increasing violence on our streets today. I believe the level of such videos and games that our young people have access to remains unabated. I believe that, before any further restrictions are placed on legal firearm owners, this is an area that requires some legislation by Governments of this country—legislation that is necessary to protect our youth.

In his second-reading speech, the member for Thuringowa stated—

"This amendment is concerned with the bureaucratic difficulties encountered by firearm owners who travel to and around Queensland or who have moved to Queensland permanently.

It is not legally possible for an individual who states hunting as his genuine reason to own a firearm, backed by a letter of permission from a property owner, to carry that firearm interstate under any circumstances."

That is true. That is how the law stands today. The purpose of this amendment is to look at that. The speech continues—

"However, it is possible for members of approved shooting clubs to carry their registered firearms with them when they travel to Queensland. They have available to them a directory of all Sporting Shooters Association of Australia clubs throughout the State and are able to access those clubs' calendars for suitable events in which to compete

during the period of their travels or in a location in which they will reside permanently.

They can presently gain temporary recognition of their interstate firearms licence under section 32 of the Queensland Weapons Act for the purpose of participating in a shooting competition conducted by an approved shooting club or approved by the commissioner or for another purpose specified under a regulation for this section."

I believe that all firearm owners in this country should belong to sporting shooters clubs of some description or another. There are quite a few of them around. I belong to the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia. I have done so for many years. It sponsors the safe and sensible use of firearms in this country in all aspects of the sport, whether it be hunting, clubs competition or whatever, from hand guns through to long rifles. I urge any honourable members who own firearms to become members of clubs and to try to foster their sport in a safe manner in our country.

The member for Rockhampton said that this amendment will not do much because it is not reciprocal with other States. Perhaps if we pass this amendment tonight some sort of reciprocal arrangement can be worked out between the States and we will see some mutual recognition.

Mr Feldman: You have to start somewhere.

Dr PRENZLER: The member is dead right. The point is that we are one nation. We have a firearms system now throughout the whole country under the national firearm agreement.

Mr Barton: You will rue the day if you give it to the Feds.

Dr PRENZLER: I can assure the Minister that I do not want to do that. But there is no reason that we should not be seeking a reciprocal arrangement among the States. The member for Rockhampton mentioned taking firearms from Queensland to the Northern Territory. I used to do that. I never had any trouble taking firearms to the Northern Territory. All we had to do at the time was pop into the police station up there, register the firearm and they would give us a temporary licence for it. They kept a good close watch on us. It is not hard to do and we should be looking at it. We will be supporting the Weapons Amendment Bill 1999, because we believe that section 33 in its current form hinders law-abiding citizens of this country from

going about their lawful business without undue obstruction from the current Weapons Act. We think this will remove a lot of the bureaucracy from the system. We ask all honourable members to give the Bill the same support.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (9.58 p.m.): Tonight I rise to support the Bill introduced by the member for Thuringowa. Similar to the previous speakers, the member for Lockyer and the member for Tablelands, I could provide a lot of information to the House about responsible gun ownership. However, tonight I wish to put a human face on the issue of responsible and sensible gun ownership. Mr Alan Tedford is the new president of the Murrumba Pistol Club at Caboolture. He is a fine man and a fine shooter. I commend him for his support of the club, along with his wife, Dorothy. As I said, I wish to put a human face to our perception of a responsible shooter.

Alan previously served over 20 years in the armed services. He served a lot of that in the Army band. He is a man who is very talented. He plays quite a number of instruments: the trumpet, flute, piano, organ, saxophone, trombone, drums and tuba, just to name a few. He was actually instrumental in teaching my daughter, Danielle, to play the flute and the piccolo. He was one of the first instrumental music teachers who roamed the area up there in Caboolture and through the schools. He set up what is now the instrumental music program with Gary Sander, another fine musician from the area up there. Both of them were instrumental in forming the Caboolture community band. My daughter played in that band for a couple of years prior to her going to university.

The unfortunate thing about Alan is that about 10 years ago he suffered a very severe back injury. It hospitalised him and he spent quite a bit of time bed ridden in his home. I used to visit him there because he was quite a good friend of mine. Part of his rehabilitation was to try to get himself involved in a sport and try to get his mind working again on getting himself over the debilitating injury that he had suffered. He worked very hard at getting himself back on track and out of the house.

As part of that rehabilitation, at age 55 or 56 he took up the sport of shooting for the first time. It was something that he took to like a duck to water. He took this up basically to mentally challenge the disability that he had. He has since gone on to win State championships. I think he has been placed in Australian titles as well. He performs very, very

well as a very ardent sporting shooter. Being a sporting shooter who has to travel, as previous members have pointed out, interstate and around the traps to various shoots, he has experienced difficulties associated with taking his firearms—and he has quite a number of them—to and from different States. It does create challenges for very ardent sporting shooters, as the member for Thuringowa has highlighted in his second-reading speech.

This Bill seeks to make this transportation of firearms just that little bit easier, to cut down on that bureaucratic nightmare that the shooters come across from State to State and at various police stations when they go to let people know their intention or where they are going. We just want to offer our support to the Sporting Shooters Association for, I suppose, highlighting the anomalies and that bureaucratic nightmare that they face on a day-to-day basis in trying to organise shoots and interstate competitions and in trying to have uniform provisions around Australia.

I can understand the Minister's dilemma. None of us here wants to hand over that type of national registration into the hands of the Commonwealth—not at all. I know that the Minister is very responsible with the portfolio and I know that he and the other Police Ministers do not want to hand that type of power over to the Commonwealth. However, I really believe that, with a lot of talk and a lot of dedicated looking at firearms legislation throughout the States, some sort of template legislation could be drafted that could fix up some of these anomalies and make things so much easier.

As the member for Lockyer said and as I said to him, it really needs to start somewhere. I suppose what we are trying to advocate is: let us start it here in Queensland, let us make the push from here, let us make it so that other States want to look on us with a bit of envy in the way we are trying to be responsible with the firearms legislation and be responsible to those people who have a very deep interest in that sport. After all, as I said, if it were not for this sport in which he has found an interest, I very much doubt whether Alan Tedford would be as mobile as he is today. I suppose had he not found that interest, he would probably still be bedridden in his home. He may even be in a wheelchair today. It is that international or interstate competition that spurs people on to achieve in any sport. I just want to put on record that that we should recognise shooting as one of those very legitimate sports in this country.

Dr Prenzler: It is part of the Olympic Games.

Mr FELDMAN: Yes, as the member for Lockyer said, it is a sport in the Olympic Games. Early on, I noted the trouble experienced by sporting shooters as to the legality of having in their possession a particular category of firearm for their sport. It was one of those things that we really should highlight.

These amendments to the Weapons Act—the amending of section 33—are responsible. They are legitimate. They are not being trendy, but they aim to be responsible to those who have firearms and who want to go about their sport legitimately. I know that the member for Thuringowa has pointed out previously that a lot of these sportsmen are members of the armed services or the Police Service. Policemen face these problems when they travel interstate to shoot. Introducing amendments that make it so much easier to cut a swath through that bureaucratic nightmare only bodes well for the sport and for us as a State.

I commend the member for Thuringowa for highlighting this as a problem and for trying to do something about it. I just want to commend the member and commend the Bill to the House.

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (10.06 p.m.), in reply: I would like to comment on one of the things that the member for Caboolture said about a person who had a disability and who took up shooting. I bring to the attention of the House that the people of our Leisure Accessible Club who use our disability vessel were all taken up to the Sporting Shooters Association a few weeks back and they participated in a day's shooting as guests. Quite a few of them have now joined the Sporting Shooters Association. It is a good sport for everyone.

I would like to thank the Minister for his comments, particularly for acknowledging that I have put this Bill up in good faith. I am not a radical gun owner. I am patron of the Sporting Shooters Association in Townsville and am a member of the Townsville Pistol Club. I want to thank all the members who contributed. I will not go into their contributions in detail; the Minister has it all there.

This proposed amendment to the Weapons Act is very simple. It would make compliance with the firearms laws much easier for people who travel or who come from interstate and intend to reside in Queensland. This Bill recognises licences issued by other States until their expiry date. Townsville and Thuringowa are garrison cities. A large military presence means that we also have a high

percentage of firearm owners who are frequently transferred from State to State. The present system makes it very difficult for them to comply with the Act. This problem has been recognised by the Weapons Licensing Branch. I understand that it has been raised before at the Police Ministers conferences and it will be raised at the next one.

A licence issued in any other Australian State should be recognised in Queensland until its expiry, and the holder should then be required to apply for a Queensland licence if he or she continues to remain in Queensland. The Minister might confirm for me whether or not the Federal Government has commissioned a national database.

Mr Barton interjected.

Mr TURNER: That was the proposal originally in the firearms legislation. No?

Mr Barton interjected.

Mr TURNER: Okay. There is a very high rate of non-compliance with firearms law in Queensland. This high rate of non-compliance will never be addressed while the bureaucratic procedure is too difficult. I ask the Minister: if somebody had an illegal firearm now which they have had all the time and have not registered, what happens if they want to walk into a police station now and want to register it?

Mr Barton: This isn't question time.

Mr TURNER: I am pointing out the compliance with the law. Now that we have people sitting at home with all these illegal firearms—and I can assure the Minister that there are a whole heap of them—is there an amnesty under which these people can now go and register those firearms without repercussions?

Mr Barton: There is no current amnesty. Alternatively, we are very keen to clean up all of those unregistered shooters and unregistered firearms that are out there. Neither Russell Cooper nor I had the Police Service start a witch-hunt to go looking for them. We have relied on when people have tripped over the provisions of the legislation or when they have used firearms inappropriately. We are not doing pick-ups. Because they are in breach of the law, I cannot guarantee that some people have not been picked up, but we are more interested in fixing the problem than going on a witch-hunt.

Mr TURNER: The thing I was pointing out is that if somebody already has a firearm they are not going to register it, so that problem will not go away if they are going to be naughty

boys when they get there. Does the Minister know what I mean?

Mr Barton: I will take that on notice.

Mr TURNER: I just wanted to ask the Minister that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! We are in a difficult situation. The member is the one summing up, and I do not want to interfere with that. At the moment the Minister is the one interjecting.

Mr TURNER: This simple amendment to the Weapons Act will allow a firearm licence issued in another State to be recognised in Queensland until its expiry. This simple amendment will stop unnecessary and wasteful duplication. This simple amendment will help address the non-compliance of firearm laws. The Minister stated that 72% of people were happy with the firearms laws. I would suggest that 72% of firearms are not even registered. New residents in Queensland have to sit exams again when they have already passed tests in other States at a cost of \$53 and \$40 to get their licence, and they would be very reluctant to do that. We are promoting illegal firearms. Firearms are brought into Queensland unlicensed. I have been assured that they come here with a licence from another State but do not get visitors' licences because of the difficulties associated with that process.

Mr Horan and Mr Quinn made excellent comments. I pointed out that problems with the military will be raised at the next Australian Police Ministers Conference. I was also interested in Mr McCoomb's comment that only 25% of licences are registered and the Minister's comment that he is no longer with the firearms branch.

Mr Barton: He's reflected a personal opinion, not the service's opinion.

Mr TURNER: So what he said did not fit in?

Mr Barton: It was not the facts.

Mr TURNER: The Honourable Rob Swarten said that passing this Bill would make no difference. He said, "We're one State. Who's going to take any notice of us?" I want to know when Queensland will stand on its own feet. We fell on our faces with the NCP Bill. We fell on our faces with the deregulation of the dairy industry when no-one was prepared to stand up and say, "Queensland is going to do this", all because of the other States. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 38—Beanland, Black, Cooper, Dalglish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, 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, 38—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, McGrady, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Pitt, Purcell

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading

Resumed from 27 October 1999 (see p. 4370).

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (10.19 p.m.): The Criminal Code Amendment Bill (No. 2) 1999 was introduced into this House by the member for Nicklin as a private member's Bill on 27 October 1999. This Bill seeks to replace sections 271 to 273 of the Queensland Criminal Code with new provisions dealing with self-defence. The Bill attempts to redress the perceived difficulties encountered by women in pleading self-defence when they have killed violent partners. On 14 March this year, I tabled in this House the report of the Task Force on Women and the Criminal Code. On 5 October this year, this House passed legislation which addressed key recommendations of the task force.

The Task Force on Women and the Criminal Code was established by the Government to honour an election commitment which recognised that the Criminal Code needed to be reviewed to ensure that justice is done for all in our community, including women. The task force included representatives of diverse backgrounds from both Government and community. Task force members consulted extensively throughout Queensland. The issue of violence against women was the subject of detailed analysis by the task force. Significantly, the task force did not recommend any changes to the law of self-defence. As the task force noted in its deliberations at page 163 of its report—

"Acknowledging that the existing law does not always work well for women does not necessarily mean that radical change is the solution."

While it has been acknowledged by both the task force and those who have provided comments to me on this Bill that the current law of self-defence may have some difficulties, there are a number of reasons why the Government does not support this Bill. Firstly, it is important to remember that the majority of offences of violence are committed by men against men, not by women. Women are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. This Bill is inspired by a noble goal, and the Government is sympathetic to the aims espoused by the honourable member for Nicklin. But a detailed legal scrutiny of the Bill indicates that it should not be supported.

I table for the benefit of honourable members a media release which I issued on 27 October 1999 when the Bill was introduced to the Parliament. In that media release, I indicated that the State Government would carefully examine the changes to the Criminal Code proposed by the member for Nicklin. The Bill that is currently before the Parliament responds to a community concern. In that media release, I identified a number of areas of concern in the Bill, including—

"The lack of a clear definition for a 'defender' creates uncertainty because it does not refer to any threat of violence or injury, except by implication.

The use of the term 'assailant' creates further uncertainty. In this Bill, the 'assailant' is someone against whom the 'defender' has used force and it is not clear whether some other requirement is intended, such as the immediacy of an attack by the assailant on the defender.

The proposals do not limit self-defence to an act in response to injury or threat of violence but, as presently drafted, could possibly apply to lawful application of force, such as arrest.

The Bill may unintentionally allow someone who abuses a partner to justify an assault on the basis he or she perceived a threat to themselves."

In other words, the Bill, while it has noble intentions, may actually backfire and produce an adverse effect on those whom it was intended to help, namely, women in the situation of being battered spouses.

Let me turn to some of the aspects of the Bill. The Bill is aimed at battered women who

kill, but will benefit anyone charged with an offence of violence, whether they are fatal or non-fatal offences and whether the offenders are men or women. What flows from that is that there are a number of, I suspect, unintended consequences arising from the Bill. Secondly, as the task force report has noted, any difficulties in establishing appropriate defences concern problems with obtaining the evidence, getting the evidence before the court and having it properly explained to the jury, rather than with the substantive defence itself. This is the issue that the task force has recommended should be addressed. Thirdly, experience has demonstrated that the current law is sufficiently flexible to accommodate women subject to abuse from violent partners who kill in self-defence, provided that the relevant evidence is heard and understood.

In saying that, I am mindful of the widespread community sympathy for the recent case of Lorna Mackenzie. I am also mindful of the fact that there have been many mistaken statements in relation to the case. A little later in the course of my speech, I will table for the benefit of honourable members a copy of the judgment of the Court of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Queensland, delivered on 11 August, because that judgment sets out the relevant facts of the case. I have to say that there have been some serious misstatements of the relevant facts of the case which have entered into public debate without being subject to careful scrutiny.

Let me just deal firstly with this issue of the availability of self-defence before I go on to deal with a number of fundamental drafting flaws in the Bill. In the case of *The Crown v. Lorna Margaret Mackenzie*, the President of the Court of Appeal, the Honourable Justice McMurdo, had this to say—

"It is difficult to see how self-defence under s 271 of the Criminal Code could have realistically assisted the appellant. The history of domestic violence given on this appeal would have been sufficient to raise the defence of self-defence in that the appellant may have had reason to believe she was at risk of assault from the deceased and could not effectively defend herself against the assault otherwise than by arming herself with a gun. The evidence supported a finding that the appellant believed the gun was unloaded. It follows that she must have also believed that the deceased knew the gun was unloaded, as she claimed that it was always unloaded.

A defence based on self-defence contains serious flaws if the jury

concluded, as was likely, that the gun was unloaded: it seems implausible that she was defending herself from assault by arming herself with an unloaded gun which she must also have believed the deceased knew to be unloaded. To raise such a defence would, as her legal advisers told her, undermine stronger defences which would reduce the offence of murder to manslaughter. The appellant was therefore correctly advised of the advantages of pleading guilty to manslaughter on the basis of criminal negligence, eliminating the slight but nevertheless real risk that she could be convicted of murder and availing herself of the mitigating benefit of a plea of guilty. This sound advice was freely accepted by the applicant, who was 'not a gambler'."

The honourable President of the Court of Appeal, Justice McMurdo, went on to conclude—

"I am satisfied the appellant entered her plea of guilty in the exercise of a free and informed choice based on competent advice; there has been no miscarriage of justice and the appeal against conviction should be dismissed."

I read that passage because it has been suggested by some in the course of public debate that this case illustrates the unavailability of the defence of self-defence and, in fact, the President of the Court of Appeal herself made it very plain in the passage that I have just read to the House that—and I quote again—

"The history of domestic violence given on this appeal would have been sufficient to raise the defence of self-defence."

As with all these cases, it turns on the evidence of the particular case and the detail set out in that report of the Court of Appeal will, I think, be of assistance to any honourable members who have taken an interest in the case and have perhaps relied upon inaccurate accounts that were put abroad in the course of public debate and discussion of the case.

Let me turn to the fundamental drafting flaws in the Bill. The proposed new section 271(1) justifies a person using force that the defender believes, on reasonable grounds, is necessary in the circumstances as perceived by the defender. Therefore, although an objective test applies to the belief that force was necessary, the circumstances in which that belief arose are purely subjective. Thus, the Bill introduces a subjective test that will allow an accused to raise the defence based

on an irrational or unreasonable belief. This could mean that if the circumstances perceived by the accused are completely irrational the accused could still believe, on reasonable grounds, that the force used was necessary in those circumstances.

For example, if an accused believed that all Aboriginal people were likely to assault him and as a result assaulted an Aboriginal person as a pre-emptive strike, in the circumstances as perceived by that accused the assault might be seen to be a reasonable response.

Under the existing law, section 24 of the Criminal Code provides that a person who does an act under an honest and reasonable but mistaken belief in the existence of any state of things is not criminally responsible to any greater extent than if the real state of things had been such as the person believed to exist. For example, if a person honestly and reasonably but mistakenly believed that she was being unlawfully assaulted or that the force she used was necessary for self-defence, then she can be acquitted. This is a more appropriate test.

So the first fundamental drafting flaw—I describe it as a drafting flaw, but it is a problem of principle rather than a problem of technical drafting—goes to the subjective test. Again, this subjectivity could backfire on the very people whom the Bill was intended to help. Those who would argue in the public arena in favour of these propositions should consult their conscience and should consult a detailed analysis of the legislation because there are grave dangers that by introducing such subjectivity the law could in fact assist those most inclined to commit violent offences who, regrettably, are often men.

Let us turn to the issue of jury directions. The proposed new section 272 contains mandatory jury directions. The task force considered jury directions in relation to domestic violence and in sexual offences. The task force did not recommend legislating jury directions. The women's task force on the Criminal Code was quite an historic process for Queensland. We had women from the Country Women's Association, policewomen, women from the Director of Public Prosecutions office, women from Legal Aid, from rape crisis groups, from sexual assault support groups, women from domestic violence backgrounds, women from the Government sector, women from the voluntary sector, women from the indigenous community and women from multicultural communities coming together in order to address this issue.

Nobody has got all the answers, but this process was one which addressed the fact that women have historically not got a fair go. The legislation which flowed from their recommendations will help to redress injustices. But I have to say that the task force did not adopt the framework set out in this Bill. That being said, I commend the member for Nicklin for seeking to address these important issues and for stimulating public debate in this area. The law benefits from informed public debate and that has certainly been stimulated by the Bill.

Let me turn then to a third area of problem—namely, the deeming of certain people to be experts. The proposed new section 271(3) deems certain people to be appropriately qualified experts. It is, however, not appropriate to legislatively prescribe which persons are deemed to be qualified experts. Further, the provision may usurp the functions of the judge and jury in determining whether a particular witness has relevant expertise in a particular case.

Let me turn to a fourth area, which is that the proposed defence is not limited to defence against an unlawful assault, as the defence is under the present law. Therefore, a person may rely on the defence to excuse force used to defend himself or herself against a lawful assault such as an arrest.

The circumstances in which a person is justified in taking another's life should be considered exceptional. As the Honourable Justice Kirby said in the High Court case of *Osland* 1998 73 Australian Law Journal Reports 173 at 207—

"No civilised society removes its protection to human life simply because of the existence of a history of long-term physical or psychological abuse. If it were so, it would expose to unsanctioned homicide a large number of persons who, in the nature of things, would not be able to give their version of the facts. The law expects a greater measure of self-control in unwanted situations where human life is at stake. It reserves cases of provocation and self-defence to truly exceptional circumstances. Whilst these circumstances may be affected by contemporary conditions and attitudes, there is no legal *carte blanche*, including for people in abusive relationships to engage in premeditated homicide."

In accordance with the public assurance which I gave at the time, I did circulate this Bill for comments to members of the judiciary and to senior members of the legal profession.

Again, I think this very process helps to stimulate public debate and discussion. That circulation went to lawyers both on the prosecution side and lawyers on the defence side. I have to say that the feedback from that was to the effect that the Bill was not supported, largely for the reasons that I have already outlined. That is not to say necessarily that all regarded the state of the law on self-defence as beyond criticism, far from it, but in accordance with the undertaking which I gave in that public media release I did circulate the Bill and sought comments, and that was the effect of the feedback which I received.

For the benefit of honourable members, I table the report of the Court of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Queensland of 11 August 2000 in the case of *The Queen v. Lorna Margaret MacKenzie*.

In the last two years we have seen a concerted effort to come to terms with the disadvantage that women face in our legal system. Certainly, for far too long women have been ignored in the appointment of the judiciary. Regrettably, in the history of Queensland, the Liberal Party and the National Party in Government have never, ever appointed any woman to be a judge. It is unbelievable.

Mr Wilson: Astounding.

Mr FOLEY: As the member says, it is astounding. This has tended to contribute to an environment where the law has been male-dominated and where, at the highest levels of discussion and debate on the law, including the criminal law, there has been a male-oriented culture. That is not a good thing for the law; nor is it a good thing for proper debate generally. Debate is at its best when it draws upon many voices.

Debate in the law, as in other areas of public life, is at its richest when it draws upon people from diverse backgrounds—from people not limited to one social class or one gender. We have seen in the law, regrettably, this male dominance. That is changing. I am pleased to say that we now have a court system where one can have some expectation that one will see women on the bench. We have a woman President of the Court of Appeal, a woman as Chief Judge of the District Court and a woman as Chief Stipendiary Magistrate—I should say Chief Magistrate following the passage of the recent amendment in this Parliament. We also see increased numbers of women sitting as judges in the Supreme Court and the District Court and as magistrates.

Certainly, the work that the Women's Task Force on the Criminal Code did, I think, helped to contribute significantly not just to a scholarly analysis of the law but to practical recommendations to amend the law, to improve training and to improve administration so as to ensure that the law could better address the problems and needs of women.

During the course of that consultation I travelled on some occasions with members of the women's task force to groups as diverse as the Cairns Rape Crisis Group who very generously allowed members of the community at large to come into its area to consult on these matters.

Ms Boyle: A very important community group in the far-north, I might say, Minister.

Mr FOLEY: I thank the member for Cairns. I respectfully concur with that view because that group is making a very fine contribution. Indeed, just recently I had the benefit of its input into an initiative concerning women who are subject to violence throughout remote areas of Cape York—particularly indigenous women. The assistance of that particular group, together with the Indigenous Family Violence Action Group, has resulted in an initiative to seek to bring such cases before the courts sooner rather than later and to identify those cases where a victim is not left simply waiting for months on end. The case is brought on as soon as is reasonably possible and, where appropriate, by way of an ex officio indictment with the consent of the defence and the defendant's legal representatives so that the matter can be dealt with—for example in the case of a plea of guilty—by the District Court judge visiting in the remote area—for example, Bamaga or Kowanyama. That initiative is, I think, a practical way of trying to respond to the shocking problems of violence that, regrettably, women face in those areas—as, indeed, they face in a number of other areas of the State.

This issue of the law relating to self-defence, however, requires us to listen carefully. The women's task force did that. It had terms of reference to examine the position of women in three main areas: firstly, women as victims of crime; secondly, women as offenders or as accused persons; and thirdly, the overall procedures and architecture of our court system to try to establish some more general improvements.

It is fair to say that in the area of self-defence and provocation there is an ongoing and lively debate, and the views expressed by the honourable member for Nicklin are not without support in the course of that debate.

But the danger is that changes introduced for the benefit of protecting a battered spouse may backfire and tend to excuse violent spouses who would then wreak their violence upon innocent battered spouses even more—sometimes resulting in homicide. I am sure that is not the intent of the Bill. In framing the law we have to look at the consequences, both intended and unintended.

I must say that during the course of public discussion on this matter I heard some particularly silly contributions from the member for Caloundra. I have to say that the member for Caloundra's request to me as Attorney-General to lodge an appeal against the conviction of Mrs MacKenzie showed a breathtaking lack of knowledge of the law. It is for the accused person to lodge such an appeal, if she wishes to. She exercised her right. To have received phone calls from the media, having been urged by the member for Caloundra to agitate for the Attorney-General—who, after all, exercises a responsibility on behalf of the Crown, which is the prosecuting authority—to appeal on behalf of the defendant showed, regrettably, a lack of understanding. Ultimately, the accused person had the benefit of very expert legal advice and exercised certain rights.

I think that demonstrates that these cases must be approached with some care and with some understanding of the processes to be followed. I would hope that the honourable member for Caloundra would have understood by now just how inappropriate her actions were in that regard. It no doubt caused confusion in the community and, who knows, perhaps for the family of the person concerned. The point in this exercise is not simply to be motivated by good intentions. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. The point is to approach these issues with the benefit of proper analysis and understanding so that one can make a useful contribution to the cause of justice.

The Bill before the House is an attempt to address an important issue. It raises important questions about the law of self-defence. The Government is not able to support the Bill for the reasons that I have set out. Nonetheless, I commend the member for Nicklin for seeking to address an important matter of public debate.

The position of women before the criminal law is one on which this Government has moved to honour its election promise to set up the women's task force and has moved promptly in this Parliament to enact the key recommendations of that women's task force. On this issue, that task force did not

recommend the course recommended by the honourable member for Nicklin. For the reasons that I have outlined in this speech, the Government is unable to support the Bill before the House.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.58 p.m.): This private member's Bill has been sitting on the table of this Parliament for some time. Certainly, as the Attorney-General has indicated, and as was quite clear from the introductory comments of the honourable member for Nicklin—which were not quite as specific—it arose out of circumstances surrounding the conviction and subsequent sentencing of Sunshine Coast woman Lorna Mackenzie. As I say, this Bill has now been on the table of this Parliament for some 12 and a half months awaiting debate. Certainly, over that time things have come to pass. There has been much public debate surrounding the issue which was the primary motivation for this amendment Bill coming to Parliament. There has been the adjudication of matters in the Court of Appeal—appeals being lost on the grounds of conviction but being upheld on the grounds of sentencing.

Tonight, I have listened with some degree of interest to the contribution by the Attorney-General. At the outset, I must say that I concur with many of the concerns that he raised during the course of his contribution. Certainly, they are very similar to the concerns that have been raised with me as shadow Attorney-General. However, having said that, the Opposition will be supporting the private member's Bill which was brought into this Parliament by the member for Nicklin, but we are not absolutely convinced that it is without fault. We believe that there is some significant area for improvement. However, I would say that, as the Government has the numbers in this Parliament, it is unlikely that it would reach the stage where amendments could be proposed that may address some of the issues that have been alluded to by the Attorney-General.

It is fair to say that I believe there were some legitimate issues that motivated the member for Nicklin to bring this legislation to the Parliament, notwithstanding the fact that I do not necessarily subscribe to the view that the legislation before us is the most appropriate way to address the issues. The Attorney-General talked a lot about the effects of violence on women and what has been done over the past couple of years in the area of the Women's Task Force on the Criminal Code to try to address some of these issues, and he indicated quite clearly that the task

force did not recommend that the Government go down this particular path.

However, it is clear from the evidence that has come to the fore over the past few years that there have been situations in which primarily women have suffered systematic, ongoing physical and verbal abuse that in some cases tends to manifest itself in an overreaction in which somebody gets hurt. Most often it is the woman who gets hurt and in some cases the woman retaliates and then she may very well be charged with manslaughter or even murder. I suppose the actions that are incurred by males in the relationship tend to be more verbal and I suppose they do not necessarily manifest themselves in the gross overreactions that end up in our criminal courts in Queensland.

I will refer to some of the sections of the Bill that is before the Parliament. This Bill purports to restructure the law of self-defence in Queensland to take into account in particular what is now called the battered wife defence. As I said, this is apparently a reaction to the recent case involving that Sunshine Coast woman. The existing section 271 covers the situation where a person is unlawfully assaulted and has not provoked the assault. In that case, the person assaulted is entitled to use force to defend themselves provided the force used is reasonable and is not intended and is not likely to cause death or grievous bodily harm. If the unlawful assault causes a reasonable apprehension of death or grievous bodily harm and the person defending believes on reasonable grounds that they cannot effectively defend themselves from death or grievous bodily harm, then they may use force as necessary for the defence, even if it does cause death or grievous bodily harm.

Existing section 272 covers self-defence against provoked assault. If there is a reasonable apprehension of death or grievous bodily harm and the person believes on reasonable grounds that it is necessary to preserve from death or grievous bodily harm, then that person is entitled to use force in self-defence as reasonably necessary, even if it causes death or grievous bodily harm.

Existing section 273 applies similar principles where aiding another in self-defence. The proposed section 271 omits any prerequisite that the person seeking to use self-defence must be under assault, either unlawful or provoked. Indeed, as set out in the Explanatory Notes and in the second-reading speech of the honourable member for Nicklin, he makes it quite plain that it is to be lawful for a person who can succeed in utilising his

defence to be the initiator of the assault which causes death or grievous bodily harm, provided they can establish a pre-existing history of abuse by the victim. In effect, what the honourable member is saying is that the victim of abuse can transform themselves from victim to aggressor and use force against the previous aggressor amounting to death or grievous bodily harm if they can raise a case of domestic abuse.

Proposed sections 271, 272 and 273 seek to direct the courts to receive as expert witnesses persons who would not normally be regarded as any more expert than the general community. This runs counter to the way in which the law has developed for receiving the evidence of experts whose expertise in particular circumstances is usually or always open to challenge. This complex legal approach is to be removed by the proposal before the Parliament and the views of the majority of the Parliament from time to time as to who is to be regarded as an expert is to be substituted.

A similar criticism can be addressed at proposed section 272. Parliament should be very loath to interfere with the capacity of the judiciary and the Court of Appeal to determine what is the appropriate direction to be given to a jury to enable it to arrive at a just decision in a particular case. Here the Parliament is attempting to direct a judge to give a direction to a jury in a particular way without any knowledge of what the evidence was in a particular case, or the way in which the case might have been fought either by the prosecution or the defence. This raises a real potential for injustices to occur when political ideology is sought to be applied to the difficult task of proving a person guilty of a criminal offence beyond reasonable doubt.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (11 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Water Supply, Burnett Electorate

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (11 p.m.): Recently, the State Government allowed public access to social and economic impact reports on increased water supply in the Burnett region. It is a catchment area covering 13 shire councils and more than 120,000 inhabitants. The Centre for Agricultural Resource

Economics, or CARE, and the State Development Department conducted the analysis and forecasts. I refer to some of their findings tonight.

The irrigated portion of the Burnett covers an area of only 2.7% of all the agricultural land in the catchment, yet it is highly productive. From just 2.7% of the land area comes two-thirds of the value of agricultural production in the region. From just 2.7% of the agricultural land area comes about \$330m per annum in production value and about 20% of the region's economy. This equates to almost 10,000 jobs in the Burnett.

Let there be no mistake that water infrastructure has underpinned growth and development of the Burnett region. However, the people of the Burnett region are not well off when compared to most other regions of Queensland. In a world where the farm gate price represents less than 10% of the price paid by consumers at the supermarket, the Burnett economy has not shared in the growth of the Queensland economy. I will quote from the CARE report, which states—

"The Burnett region is among the weakest in the country according to a number of indicators."

The report estimates the ratio of staff per population in service industries in the Burnett is so far below the State average that it would take an increase of 11,866 jobs to put it on par with the Queensland mean. What an astounding figure. The report goes on to say that the Burnett has a lower than average share of publicly funded education and health services, low wages and it has a heavy dependence on welfare and on industries which are not growing. This is not to say that there is not great innovation, drive and determination within the rural and urban communities of the Burnett. In fact, the Bundaberg region has one of the highest ratios of small to medium sized exporters in the State and there are many inspiring examples of firms that are successfully value adding to their products.

At present, about 60% of the Burnett's produce is exported. However, the region has neither the necessary water reliability or the economies of scale to diversify further into growth industries that add value to its raw products. The Burnett does not only need water to increase production, it needs a reliable supply that will attract capital investment in a range of value-adding industries. Ultimately, that will keep money and jobs in the local economy in the long term.

Additional water supplies are imperative not only to maintain the economic status quo but also to ensure the region faces no further decline. An alliance of agricultural representatives in the Burnett region favours a Burnett WAMP draft scenario that increases the annual yield by 170,000 megalitres per annum. Such an increase would give my region the capacity, finally, to take advantage of existing and future industrial opportunities.

Projects that are already on the drawing board include the B2K project—a billion-dollar sugar and pulp paper milling project—and the industrial food precinct, which will enable farmers to form efficient clusters and to focus their marketing efforts. This project was embarked upon in my term as Economic Development and Trade Minister, and I am very pleased that the project retains the support of the current Government.

The social and economic information reports released by the State Development Department give us a conservative idea of the potential benefits to the Burnett. Under scenario 9 of this report, an increase in water entitlements by 160,000 megalitres would increase Burnett business turnover by \$158m per annum. It would increase employment in the region by some 1,860 full and part-time jobs, according to the State Development Department's figures. And this does not take into account the major injection of construction and development jobs. It would improve the gross regional product in the Burnett by \$90m per annum. A further calculation by the Burnett Water Development Group indicates that the net benefit to the State would accrue to \$1 billion within a 30-year period.

Presently, urban, commercial and agricultural water users divert about 17% of the mean annual flow from the Burnett catchment. Under the preferred proposal, the proportion would increase to 26.5% of the natural flow. This compares favourably with other rivers in Queensland, such as the 23% diversion rate suggested in the Fitzroy WAMP. Unlike other river systems in Australia, the Burnett is not overcommitted and the environmental impacts can be controlled by management techniques that mimic the natural flow regime of the river itself. The growers of my region have not demanded an unreasonable increase in storage levels and recognise that unsustainable changes to the river system benefit no-one in the long term.

Under the time line developed by the coalition, some crucial water development would already have occurred in the Bundaberg district—specifically, the bag on Walla Weir

and the Bucca Weir to relieve the pressures of saltwater intrusion on the underground aquifers.

Under the time frame agreed to by the then Opposition Leader, Mr Beattie, the site of a major water storage should have been identified and a full impact study should be under way. In deliberations over submissions to the draft Burnett WAMP, I urge this Government to consider the very genuine community need and to ensure its hypothetical budget allocation to land acquisition becomes more than just a mirage.

Corporations Law

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (11.04 p.m.): Last week I spoke in this House about the need to change the Corporations Law because of abuses by large companies such as the National Bank, Telstra and Woolworths. Unfortunately, during that debate the Liberal and National Parties opposed my motion and I hope the following example of the Commonwealth Bank's excesses may prompt both parties to reconsider their opposition prior to the convening of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General meeting this Friday.

Yesterday I spoke to a prominent and highly respected dairy farmer who informed me that, after being encouraged and supported by the Commonwealth Bank to borrow money over recent years, his loan interest rate jumped from 9.9% to 14.2% in July this year. When the farmer asked why the interest rate increased, he was told that because his milk quota no longer had any value, the bank's risk on his loan had increased and, accordingly, the interest rate on the debt had to increase.

I understand the bank has maintained this hardline stance notwithstanding the fact that the farmer has over many years demonstrated his capacity to regularly and without fail meet the loan repayments on time. Another disappointing aspect of this case is that it contradicts the Commonwealth Bank's promotion of the bank's willingness to restructure farm debts. In this case, notwithstanding repeated requests for a restructuring of the debt, the bank refused, arguing that the increased risk necessitated the increased interest rate from 9.9% to 14.2%.

A Government member: That's a disgrace.

Mr WELLINGTON: That is a disgrace.

This is a real life example of the Commonwealth Bank's callous use of strong-

arm tactics to make Queensland farmers pay unreasonable interest rates on farm loans once farmers are up against the ropes. I have been informed that support from the Department of Primary Industries financial counselling service has been greatly appreciated by this family. As a result of this support, negotiations are currently under way with another bank to refinance the farm debt. I believe the Commonwealth Bank's actions in this case are a jolly disgrace, and I am happy to provide the name of the farmer in question to members privately if members wish to follow up on this matter.

Accordingly, I urge the members of the Liberal and National Parties to reconsider their opposition to my motion and support the stance taken by all other members of this Parliament prior to the Queensland Attorney-General leaving for the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General meeting this Friday.

Community Renewal Projects, Woodridge and Kingston

Mr KAISER (Woodridge—ALP) (11.07 p.m.): Tonight I wish to report to the House on the tremendous progress being made in the Woodridge and Kingston Community Renewal Projects. Community renewal is a State program, as many honourable members recognise, which allocates money to communities to solve local challenges.

In Woodridge the community has just signed off on its community action plan, which has at times been a very difficult process. However, we now have one in place. In Kingston we are about to launch the project and work continues on a community action plan. But what is really pleasing to see is the vibrant community reference groups that have developed in both Woodridge and Kingston that are now, I believe, beginning to recognise the tremendous value of this project. They are both chaired by very capable local members of the community—Noel Shaw in the case of Woodridge, and Mr Fred Kisbee in the case of Kingston.

It is important that I take this opportunity to explain a couple of the principles by which I believe community renewal locally should operate in Woodridge and Kingston. The first principle that I think is essential is that this money, which is allocated by the State Government, is the community's to spend. There are a number of people locally who are having some difficulty in accepting that fact. In my view, it is very important that community renewal be used to empower local

communities to solve local challenges themselves.

It is far more appropriate for communities to develop their own solutions to some of the challenges which exist in their areas than it is for public servants, politicians or anyone else to come in and impose solutions. It is vital that the community itself recognises that this is a State Government program which provides them with an amount of money to do with what they like. Sure the public servants are there to provide assistance and to offer advice, but at the end of the day it is the community that needs to decide how to spend this money.

I wish also to pay tribute to the tremendous public servants who are working on the project locally, led very capably and ably by a very committed public servant in the local area, Mr Ron Daniels, who heads up the Education Department regional office locally but who also chairs the regional managers forum. The regional managers and the communities are working hand in hand to solve some of the challenges of Woodridge and Kingston, and they are doing a tremendous job. But I thought it important to place on record in this most public way my view that that money is the community's to spend. Anyone who cannot accept that needs to get a grip on that fact. This is the community's money to spend and it can determine how it is spent.

Black River Ambulance Station

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.09 p.m.): For some time now there has been concern about the number of occasions on which only one officer was on duty at the Black River Ambulance Station at Thuringowa. In September, together with Thuringowa City Councillor Kathy Girvan, the committee met with the QAS commissioner, the QAS regional director and the honourable member for Townsville. At that meeting it was agreed that the QAS would endeavour to man the Black River Ambulance Station with two officers. However, a check in the weeks following the meeting revealed that on only 14 out of 36 occasions were two officers present at the station.

As a result of this, the Black River Local Ambulance Committee presented me with a petition. It reads—

"At the present time, the Black River Ambulance Centre is unattended 60% of the time because there are not enough staff. We need your help to make the

Black River Ambulance Centre a 24 hour/two officer response station."

The petition is signed by 2,850 concerned citizens. I hereby table the petition.

Sunshine Motorway

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (11.10 p.m.): I make no apology for the fact that I have brought up my concerns regarding the Sunshine Motorway and the tolls on that road system 28 times since I have been the member for Mooloolah. This runs second only to my remonstrations on policing matters, which I have brought to the attention of this Parliament 78 times. In places like the Sunshine Coast, it is a tremendous challenge to even keep up with the growth rate, let alone catch up with the lost opportunities of the past. In relation to policing, we have barely kept up, let alone caught up with our disadvantage in police to population ratios. This is an outrage. But today it is road infrastructure that I want to talk about.

A number of my previous calls for road infrastructure related to the Sunshine Motorway. The current Government has, I believe, been punishing the Sunshine Coast and its residents because the former—

Mr Reeves: That's outrageous.

Mr LAMING: Yes, it is outrageous—because the former coalition Government dumped the most unfair tolls in Australia and gave our road back to us.

I have long been an advocate for upgrading and duplication of this quite good road system before the existing infrastructure simply clogs up. The roadworks within the Mooloolah electorate that need attention are, firstly, four-laning north from the Buderim-Mooloolaba Road; secondly, interchange work at the Buderim-Mooloolaba Road intersection with the motorway; thirdly, four-laning from Mooloolaba out to the Bruce Highway; and, fourthly, the commencement of the Kawana arterial as an alternative north-south route to the Nicklin Way.

A check of progress on these projects in both the 1998 RIP and the 2000 RIP is a cause for some concern. The four-laning of the Sunshine Motorway has stayed in the indicative forward allocations, which means that we cannot expect any work inside two years, despite my continuous calls to bring it forward. That is a disgrace.

The same applies to the interchange with Buderim-Mooloolaba Road. Four-laning of the motorway out to the Bruce Highway is still languishing as a network planning study. This,

too, is a disgrace. Once again, despite my remonstrations, the first stage of the Kawana arterial, which is designed to ease the pressure on the northern end of the Nicklin Way, was to commence in the period from 2000 to 2003 period but now appears to have slipped out to 2005.

Mr Hegarty: It is the same throughout the State.

Mr LAMING: It is the same throughout the State. But tonight I am drawing the attention of the House to the Kawana Aterial in particular. The commencement of these roadworks was supposed to be triggered by the advent of 45,000 vehicles per day on the Nicklin Way through northern Kawana. We now have 48,000 vehicles a day on this road, yet the new road appears to be five years away. This, too, is an absolute disgrace.

I call on the Minister for Main Roads to stop punishing Sunshine Coast residents for their determination in throwing out the Goss Government for breaking its promise to remove the hated tolls and to provide us with the main road network that we deserve.

Mature Aged Unemployed

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (11.14 p.m.): I want to raise with honourable members of this House a very serious issue, that is, the plight of men in their middle years who are unemployed and who have few prospects, or so it has seemed to them in recent years, of gaining employment. For many of these men in their middle years, having lost a job, they feel as though they have lost a limb. They lose confidence; they can become seriously despairing and feel as though they have been tossed onto the scrap heap. The effects on them can be serious and beyond simply being a matter of losing an income on which they had relied.

Several such men have been to see me in Cairns in recent months. George, for example, is a man who is now 55 years of age. He has been unemployed for the past five years. In his youth he knocked around Australia. He started off as a shearer and did all kinds of unskilled and semiskilled jobs. He found his own way and was an independent man. He married and raised a couple of kids along the way. He was proud of his strength, his fitness and his capability. But as he came into middle age and sustained a back injury and so was not able to compete with men whose bodies were younger and fitter, George was progressively let go from work, found less and less work, and has, as I said, been unemployed for these past five years.

When there is a prospect of a job and he attends an interview, there is a kind of simmering anger in George because he fears that yet again he will be rejected, that he will be found insufficiently educated or not good enough for the jobs of the year 2000. That is indeed what has happened to him. What a waste of productivity for our society and what a sad story for George and his family.

Robert came to see me as well. He is a bit younger at 49 years of age. He was retrenched from a white-collar job some two years ago. Since then he has been unable to find work, other than some casual work in Cairns filling in doing accountancy duties at night with hospitality ventures. Robert has no prospect of a continuing permanent job. His marriage is in strife. He feels that the tension has caused some real difficulty in his marriage and he has no prospects.

However, I am pleased to say that, thanks to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, we have an innovative program that has commenced in Cairns particularly targeting mature aged unemployed, the majority of whom are men. Some of the figures that bear on this category of people who are unemployed illustrate how serious the situation is. Sixty-three per cent of Australian workers who have given up actively seeking a job are over the age of 45 years. Forty per cent of men aged 45 to 55 years are underemployed. Two-thirds of 45 to 55 year olds have low literacy levels. Forty per cent of the unemployed over the age of 45 live outside State capitals. Long-term unemployment is highest among the 45 to 54 year old age group.

These men have been the forgotten men, and that is not right or fitting for any of us in this House, including those members representing city electorates. These men have already made fine contributions. However, it is important that when many of them are only around halfway through their lives, we as a society find a proper means by which they can continue to contribute and contribute better than they did in their youth—perhaps not in the same way in terms of physical fitness, but with the wisdom and the experience that can only come with age.

The new program, thanks to the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, involves a contribution from this State Government of \$60,000 for this project, which will assist some older unemployed people towards building on their preparation for the jobs of the year 2000; help them with literacy and numeracy skills, job

searching skills and computer skills; and work to confront employers with the facts that older workers are more reliable, efficient, responsible and loyal, and that they relate well to customers and make excellent role models for younger employees. The prejudice that has existed in the minds of employers must also be tackled.

I congratulate Turning Point, the firm in Cairns which will administer this program, for its initiative in this regard. I wish it well. I am told that it has already had successes with some individuals. It is to be hoped that this program will give others the courage to have yet another go.

Sarina Dairy Fresh

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (11.19 p.m.): The Thursday evening before last I had the very great pleasure of officially opening Sarina Dairy Fresh situated on the Sarina Range. Since the very first inquiries about on-farm processing in July 1999, Scott and Pamela Cousen have worked tirelessly to overcome many of the challenges to establish Sarina's only on-farm dairy processing plant in the Mackay district. I joined with their friends and relations to open the processing plant on their dairy farm. The uncertainty surrounding deregulation of the dairy industry created initial reluctance by financial institutions to come on board. There was no local expertise in milk processing engineering available, with people and machinery having to be sourced from Brisbane, Sydney and as far away as Melbourne. This proved most challenging because several times dealers provided products which were unreliable, unsuitable and certainly not up to the challenge of processing milk on a dairy farm.

The Cousens were fortunate indeed that local tradespeople and engineers in our district worked with Pamela and Scott in sorting out these problems, and the project progressed to where the supply of two litre full cream milk began on 22 September this year. The system works on 1,100 batches at a time with computerised safeguards in place for temperature and time for proper pasteurisation and security in terms of hygiene. This initiative has seen overwhelming public support and response, with Sarina shops and residents supporting the project wholeheartedly. As the member for Mirani, it makes me very proud indeed to represent and work with a constituency which continually demonstrates a strong sense of community spirit and which actively supports and encourages positive productive development. I congratulate Scott

and Pamela on their personal and financial commitment to their industry and to their community. I am sure my fellow members in the House join with me in wishing them a very successful future.

However, it is a pity that the Labor Government and the Minister for Primary Industries did not have more regard for the dairy industry and farmers when they refused to pass on the \$98m in competition payments. Dairy farmers throughout the State are doing it tough. It is good to see that a young couple have gone against the trend and created a successful project with the development of milk. I call on all members to support them in competing against the multinationals and securing a future for them and for their industry.

Manifesto 2000

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (11.22 p.m.): As we continue to witness violent struggles around the globe such as the current Middle East crisis, we as individuals can feel helpless to bring about the fundamental changes in values and beliefs that will make our world a more peaceful place. In response to such sentiments, the United Nations proclaimed the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace. To contribute to the year, a group of Nobel Peace Prize laureates have drafted Manifesto 2000, which has so far been signed by over 60 million people around the world. The aim is to obtain 100 million signatures by 31 December 2000. By signing Manifesto 2000, a person pledges to bring about a culture of peace in their own daily life, their family, workplace and community by giving effect to six basic principles—respect for all life, reject violence, share with others, listen to understand, preserve the planet and rediscover solidarity. If people everywhere lived their lives according to these core values, the world would truly be a different and more peaceful place, because when we change the world changes, too.

I recently spoke to Smithfield High School students about Manifesto 2000 with Councillor Bonneau and was encouraged by their enthusiastic response and willingness to sign the Manifesto. Today honourable members have an opportunity to do the same, and I hope they will all sign the Manifesto distributed this morning in the Chamber and implement the six core values in practical ways. The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University has been designated messenger for Manifesto 2000 by UNESCO. I thank Martin Truman for bringing this project to my attention in Cairns

and Peter Clark, the Brisbane coordinator, for providing copies of the Manifesto for me to distribute here today and who will receive our signed Manifestos. I commend the BKWCU for its commitment to this project, the latest in a long line of worldwide initiatives by this organisation to bring about peace to our world and improve our quality of life. I sincerely hope that members here will contribute to the goal of 100 million signatures for a culture of peace and return their signed Manifestos to me.

Paralympic Games

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (11.24 p.m.): Four weeks ago today the world witnessed the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games. From that moment on, Australia and the world witnessed nothing but success after Australian success. The organisation of the Games was a credit to the Sydney Paralympic Organising Committee, which should be congratulated on its preparation and planning for the event. The Australian Paralympic Committee should also be congratulated on the manner in which it prepared the team. The success of the Games has placed paralympic sport on the map in Australia and enabled people from all walks of life to understand the significance of sport for individuals with a disability.

Throughout the Games it was evident that children were enthralled by the sporting experiences which they witnessed, and many thousands of these were from Queensland schools who travelled to Sydney for the Games. Indeed, it could be argued that the Sydney Paralympic Games was a national success and has achieved an education for young children which would have been deemed impossible some three years ago. A generation of children have been educated to understand individuals with a disability and have learnt how to better understand this section of our community. One child was heard to say to a Paralympic athlete in a wheelchair,

"What sport do you play? Can I have your autograph?", whereas earlier in the week the same child was scathing of individuals in wheelchairs. This education process is very important. Another was overheard asking his mother whether he could have a wheelchair for Christmas. How times have changed. Wheelchairs have suddenly become cool.

Unbeknown to most, there was a strong Queensland contingent in the team—consisting of 46 athletes, 32 male and 13 female, and some 30 administration, medical and athlete service staff, all of whom gave their time freely receiving no tangible rewards. Therefore, the total number from Queensland on team 2000 was 76 out of a possible 438. Overall, Queensland athletes brought home 25 medals—seven gold, eight silver and 10 bronze, which is a credit to Queensland. The overall medal count was 149 medals of which 63 were gold. Of interest is the fact that the Chief de Mission, Paul Bird, and Assistant Chief de Mission, Dr Keith Gilbert, and Dr Brendan Burkett, the flag bearer for the opening ceremony, were all proud Queenslanders.

The future of these Games and athletes should be of prime interest to the Queensland Parliament, perhaps one we could assist with by directing resources to assist future developments at the ground level. Also, the Federal Parliament has set up a committee entitled Parliamentarians for the Paralympics organised and chaired by Graham Edwards, the Labor MP for Cowan. This committee is bipartisan in nature. I take this opportunity to extend an invitation to members of this House to join with me in a similar enterprise in the future. I congratulate the Paralympics for a magnificent games. I conclude by saying that the Paralympics was all about changing the focus—not what a person with a disability cannot do but what a person with a disability can do.

The House adjourned at 11.27 p.m.