

**TUESDAY, 1 MAY 2001**

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

**ABSENCE OF THE CLERK**

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I have to advise the House of the unavoidable absence of the Clerk of the Parliament, and I would also like to express on behalf of the Parliamentary Service condolences to the Clerk on the loss of his father.

**MEMBER SWORN****Mrs J. M. Sheldon**

Mrs Joan Mary Sheldon, having taken the oath of allegiance and subscribed the roll, took her seat as member for the electoral district of Caloundra.

**PARLIAMENTARY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE****Report**

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Honourable members, I have to advise that today I received from the chairperson of the Criminal Justice Commission a report titled *The Shepherdson inquiry—an investigation into electoral fraud*, and I table the said report.

**PETITION**

The Acting Clerk announced the receipt of the following petition—

**Bramston Beach**

**Mr Pitt** from 192 petitioners, requesting the House to enact a total ban on professional and semi-professional fishers between Coopers Point and Bramston Creek, that is the whole of the residential area of Bramston Beach.

**PAPERS****STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS**

The following statutory instruments were tabled by The Clerk—

Public Service Act 1996—

Public Service Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 26

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982—

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 27

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 28

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991—

Criminal Practice Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2001, No. 29

Fisheries Act 1994—

Fisheries (White Spot Syndrome Virus) Quarantine Declaration 2001, No. 30

Plant Protection Act 1989—

Plant Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 31

Lotteries Act 1997—

Lotteries Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2001, No. 32

Health Services Act 1991—

Health Services Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 33

Guardianship and Administration Act 2000—

Guardianship and Administration (Postponement) Regulation 2001, No. 34

Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000—

Commission for Children and Young People Regulation 2001, No. 35

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

Nature Conservation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 36

Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949—

Standard Sewerage Amendment Law (No. 1) 2001, No. 37

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Dingoes, Fraser Island

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: All of us were shocked to learn of the death of a young boy following a dingo attack on Fraser Island yesterday morning. I know that everyone here—every member of this House—joins with me in extending sympathy to the family of the boy.

I can confirm to the House that the two dingoes believed responsible for the attack were found and destroyed by rangers from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service yesterday afternoon. On learning of the tragedy, cabinet immediately instructed the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to undertake a risk assessment of dingoes on the island. That assessment will be coordinated in government by the Premier's Department as well as the EPA. That assessment will help determine what further action is necessary to ensure the safety of visitors. That assessment will also decide if a cull is necessary and how any cull should be conducted.

There are suggestions that there are now more dingoes on Fraser Island than would occur naturally. The problem we have is that dingoes are wild animals; yet over time on Fraser Island they have become more and more accustomed to people. They now roam freely through the small number of settlements and camping areas on the island, often encouraged by a small number of tourists and visitors who feed them and want contact with them, in direct contravention of clear instructions given by park authorities.

Cabinet and I want the risk assessment to clearly address why there should be any dingoes at all in townships or camping grounds on Fraser Island. Remember: the vast majority of Fraser Island is national park, with only a small number of townships or camp grounds. The dingo is a wild animal and should live in the wild, not in camping grounds and townships.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Trade Mission to Egypt

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: Between 20 and 27 April I led a successful trade mission to Egypt and also accompanied the winner of the Premier's Anzac Day commemorative essay competition to the Anzac Day dawn service at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli. Representatives of Australia's largest cattle and agribusiness companies accompanied me to Egypt to exploit openings for a massive increase in the export of live cattle, and for other business opportunities, with a focus on agribusiness.

In two years, the value of live cattle exports from Queensland to Egypt soared under my government from virtually nothing to \$28 million. The Egyptian government told us that it had stopped importing cattle and meat from Europe because of mad cow disease and foot-and-mouth disease and is on the point of stopping imports from India. This has obviously opened up even more opportunities for Queensland companies to increase exports, and increased exports mean increased jobs for Queenslanders.

It should be obvious to all that this opportunity for a high-powered trade mission to Egypt was not to be missed. It was important not only to increase markets but also to ensure that we retain those markets when issues such as foot-and-mouth disease in Ireland and Britain are finally resolved.

We were able to tell key Egyptian ministers and companies of Queensland's 'paddock to plate' food safety initiatives and of our clean, green beef. In addition, the business representatives who accompanied me on the mission were able to make personal contact with ministers and company representatives in order to establish new business opportunities.

The delegation received strong support from industry, evidenced by the calibre of representatives who travelled with me, including: Larry Acton, the general president of Agforce; Kim Bredhauer, the managing director of GRM International Pty Ltd; John Cox, the managing director of Stanbroke Pastoral Company Pty Ltd; Grant Fitzgerald, North American sales manager for Consolidated Meat Group; Don Mackay, managing director of AA Company Ltd; and Dennis Scanlan, livestock manager of Primac Elders. These are the first, second and third biggest exporters of beef in Australia.

Dr Youssef Boutros-Ghali, Minister for the Economy and Foreign Trade, was enthusiastic about the business opportunities we discussed and said he would visit Queensland before the

end of the year. Obviously he has heavy commitments, but we certainly hope he is able to achieve that.

At a meeting with livestock importers it was announced that a delegation of importers would come to Queensland later this year to further establish business links and explore further opportunities in exports. Dr Boutros-Ghali was also receptive to suggestions that Queensland and Egypt could cooperate in biotechnology research and development. In addition to opportunities for the export of cattle and beef to Egypt, discussions revealed openings for other exports, including dairy cattle and cattle transporters.

One of the other advantages, of course, is that getting into Egypt can be a stepping stone into Europe itself and into other north African countries and other parts of the Arab world. Europe's foot-and-mouth disease crisis, while devastating for the farmers involved, has opened up these exciting new export opportunities for Queensland beef producers. I am hopeful that a range of new contracts will flow from this visit. I believe that will certainly happen.

As Egypt and other countries in the Middle East act on their understandable desire to prevent foot-and-mouth disease from contaminating their herds, this provides an unprecedented opportunity for Queensland. As I said, during talks with Egypt's top beef and live cattle importers, I made very clear that they could rely on Queensland to supply cattle and beef which were free from both mad cow disease and foot-and-mouth disease. I told the Egyptian importers that this state has established Safe Food Production Queensland, a statutory authority charged with maintaining the high standards of food safety in the meat, seafood and dairy industries. We have called this a paddock to plate, industry-based preventive program to minimise food safety risks in the production, processing and transporting of food for human and animal consumption.

While I have great sympathy for those affected by cattle diseases overseas, I make no apology for taking this opportunity to create new markets for Queensland beef and cattle exports as the Minister for Trade. We can never afford to be complacent about our international markets in an increasingly competitive world trading environment, so we must always be looking for new opportunities. This trade mission to Egypt comes hot on the heels of my recent trip to Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore, which has secured new contracts for Queensland pork and beef.

Let me make it clear to the Parliament that I am determined to do everything I can to increase trade exports for this state and I will pursue that as aggressively as I possibly can.

I am also pleased to be able to inform the House of a Queensland company's success in securing a contract for trial shipments of food products to the Middle East. The Bundaberg firm Aus Food Exports is currently negotiating with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to secure sales of food products including beef, lamb and fresh product totalling \$1 million. The potential in those markets for Australian produce is huge. Aus Food Exports predicts sales of up to \$5 million by the end of next year. This regional Queensland company's efforts follow a Department of State Development trade mission to the Middle East in March this year. This example highlights how important to the Queensland economy trade missions such as my trip to Egypt last week are.

Earlier results from the March trade mission show that there is demand in the Middle East for a wide range of products produced in Queensland. As a result of the trade mission, Aus Food Exports has been in contact with a number of businesses in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE quoting on providing products such as fresh fruit, vegetables, processed vegetables, beef, lamb and mutton. Only this week the company had a request from Egypt for a range of fresh Queensland fruit. My government gives a commitment to Queensland producers that it will continue to do all it can to secure more export markets for our produce.

In relation to Egypt, there are a number of other opportunities. There is a massive development of the new valley area in the south of Egypt, and this is one of the largest integrated agricultural, industrial and urban developments of the past 100 years. The project is designed to turn hundreds of thousands of hectares of desert into highly productive arable land able to sustain up to 7 million people relocated from Cairo, which is bursting at its seams.

All the infrastructure and facilities are being built from scratch and the Egyptian government is providing strong incentives to encourage foreign investment in this project. Queensland companies can be competitive in areas such as water distribution and irrigation systems, pest management, cold storage technology, farm management and animal and crop production systems.

Queensland companies have already shown the determination to succeed in Middle Eastern markets, and last week during my visit to Egypt I was able to see first-hand how innovative

Queensland companies are already making inroads into Middle Eastern markets in a range of fields. That is why this development in southern Egypt gives an opportunity for Queensland companies to participate in agribusiness and other opportunities.

Australian International Healthcare has secured a \$US6.8 million contract to design and build the first Australian hospital in Abu Dhabi. These are the sorts of opportunities that exist in the Middle East. The company secured the contract for the 200 bed hospital after a Department of State Development trade mission to the Middle East in March.

There are a number of other opportunities. The Gold Coast company Fibre Light International Ltd has benefited from that trade mission. It is about to sign a \$5 million distribution agreement and potential joint venture partnership in the Middle East. The list goes on.

I seek to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement into Hansard for the information of members so that they are fully informed.

Leave granted.

The agreement will involve Fibre Light International Ltd with sole distribution rights of fibre optic lighting throughout the Middle East through a major Dubai industrial group, which is likely to progress to a joint manufacturing agreement within 12 months.

These two examples underline the huge value of trade missions, such as the March trade mission and the one I have just undertaken to Egypt.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate another Queensland company, Meyjes Maritime International.

MMI is supplying a US\$7.6 million, Queensland-designed, owned and built fast ferry to transport passengers on Lake Nasser, one of Egypt's prime tourist destinations.

This Brisbane firm is a specialist provider of technical, project and operational consulting services to the high-speed ferry industry.

It won the contract against significant national and international competition, including American and European companies.

Mr Speaker, Queensland companies can and are creating new export markets in the Middle East.

I congratulate them for their successes and urge other companies to follow suit.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I table the associated material from my visit to Egypt. I would hate to think anyone in this House thought that I did not give a full and detailed report to this parliament. I table all of the material for the information of the House.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Anzac Day

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: Last week I had the very great honour of representing Queensland at the Anzac Day ceremonies at Gallipoli in Turkey. I was joined at the ceremonies by Kristie Heywood, a student from Our Lady's College at Annerley who won the Premier's Anzac Day Commemorative Essay Competition and whose mother knows the local member, Matt Foley, very well.

We attended the Anzac dawn service at Anzac Cove at 5.30 a.m. until 6.30 a.m. We also attended the Turkish national service at Mehmetcik Abide, the French service at Morto Bay, the service at Cape Helles Memorial and a service at the Australian memorial at Lone Pine, where I laid a wreath on behalf of all my fellow Queenslanders.

Gallipoli has a special place in the heart of Australians. People were still arriving late on the eve of Anzac Day, many of them enduring a long and cold night of discomfort to ensure that they were in place for the dawn service. Some of them arrived at 10 p.m. the night before the dawn service.

Kristie was very moved by her experience at Gallipoli and she was a splendid ambassador of all young people, particularly young Queenslanders. Even across the distance of nearly 90 years it was possible to see the insurmountable challenges facing the Anzac troops. When you see the crumbling cliffs that tower over Anzac Cove, you can understand how awful it would have been that terrible morning 86 years ago. It was this adversity combined with the troops' never say die determination which fired such tremendous camaraderie and forged the Anzac legend and the Australian spirit.

Kristie wrote an outstanding essay about the meaning of Anzac Day to win the competition. Now she is in a position to draw on personal experience and pass on to other young Queenslanders what the spirit of the Anzacs means.

Understanding the sacrifice the Anzacs made is an important part of our history, and there is no better way to understand that history than to go to Gallipoli and be part of this important occasion. I encourage all Queenslanders—and indeed all Australians—if they can once in their life to make the pilgrimage to Gallipoli to see and feel that experience for themselves.

Through trips like this, the Anzac story will live on with our young people. Our pride in those original Anzacs and all the diggers who have defended Australia since is something that defines our national identity. Understanding the sacrifice the Anzacs made is an important part of our history and there is no better way to understand that history, as I said, than to go to Gallipoli and be part of this important occasion. We were among 15,000 Australians at the dawn service in Anzac Cove and 10,000 at the Australian service at Lone Pine.

The sacrifices of another group of brave Australian men and women will continue to live on, thanks to a lasting memorial recently unveiled in Brisbane. When Anzac Day marchers assembled for their parade through Brisbane streets last Wednesday, they gathered near a new memorial to other diggers whose role in our history, though vital, has not been as high profile as it should be.

Just a week earlier the Minister for Public Works, Robert Schwarten, and I unveiled a memorial to those brave men and women who fought and died during the Battle for Australia. The memorial was a long overdue tribute to the thousands of Australian men and women and their allies who defended Australia during the battle waged in the south and south-west Pacific from 1942 to 1945.

It was timely that the new memorial was unveiled just prior to Anzac Day. I personally believe it is important to leave future generations tangible reminders of the people and events that shaped our nation. I believe that the new memorial will play an important role in marking one of the darker periods in our history.

The brass plaque on the pink sandstone memorial says—

In remembrance of Australian men and women and their Allies who fought the Battle of Australia, South and South West Pacific Areas 1942-45.

I would also like to take this opportunity to put on record here the role played by World War II veteran Bill Puckering of Northgate in making the memorial a reality. Bill was tireless in his efforts to have the sacrifices of his mates recognised and tried for many years to see a memorial erected to them. On the advice of his local member—the member for Nudgee, Neil Roberts—Bill, who is now in his eighties, approached the Minister for Public Works and Housing, the Honourable Robert Schwarten. I am pleased the honourable minister was able to make Bill's dream a reality, and I was honoured to have been able to unveil the memorial to such an important part of our history.

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Brisbane Market Corporation**

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: The Brisbane Markets in Rocklea is a major centre for the marketing and distribution of fresh fruit and vegetables in Queensland. In 1998, a review was conducted of the then Brisbane Market Authority, the statutory authority that previously owned and operated the Brisbane Markets, to consider the best ownership structure for this facility. The review, which incorporated significant industry input, recommended privatising the markets. However, the government decided it was more appropriate in the first instance to corporatise the markets in order to provide for a phased transition from a statutory authority with a legislated monopoly to a commercially focused entity operating in an unrestricted environment.

The Brisbane Market Corporation was established and registered as an Australian company under Corporations Law, with the Queensland government holding all shares. I pay tribute to the members of the Brisbane Market Corporation board for their efforts and achievements since its formation in 1999. However, the issue of ownership was raised again last year when the government received unsolicited market interest in the purchase of the markets. While this offer was rejected, it has always been the expectation that privatisation would be reconsidered once the Brisbane Market Corporation had put itself on a full commercial footing. This transition has now been successfully completed and I can inform members of the House that cabinet agreed yesterday to offer the Brisbane Markets for sale through an open competitive process. The proceeds of this sale will go towards the Education Department's new Triple R maintenance program—reroofing, repainting and reticulation.

At this stage it is proposed that the business will be sold for use as a central horticultural market as a complete going concern, including all land, buildings, assets, liabilities and contracts. Staff from Queensland Treasury and the Department of Primary Industries will work closely with the Brisbane Markets Corporation to consult stakeholders and establish a steering committee to facilitate the sale process. The level of demand for new capital investment in the Brisbane Markets will increase in coming years. Our government believes that innovative private sector capital will be best placed to undertake that investment.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### South East Busway

**Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER** (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: On the weekend past, the Premier and I officially commissioned the state government's new \$350 million South East Busway. Regular services commenced yesterday and early reports are encouraging. Commuters across southern Brisbane have embraced the busway as a fast, efficient, safe and reliable means of public transport.

Four days of busway fun days staged over the weekend gave the people of south-east Queensland the chance to preview their new busway. A series of fun, family-friendly events along the South East Busway corridor were sponsored by the private sector. It was a fun way for people to learn how to use the busway and it further demonstrates the level of private sector support for this state government-funded project. On Saturday, 28 April the free community events ranged from a mini Greek festival at the cultural centre to an 'east meets west' Asian festival at Eight Mile Plains. Brisbane Transport also ran the 111 service free of charge, allowing people to experience the busway.

The fun days were a fitting way to showcase the state government's \$350 million South East Busway as part of the overall \$599 million South East Transit Project. The state government has provided the people of south-east Queensland with the first link in a busway network that is clearly the best of its kind in the world. The South East Busway is a substantial engineering achievement, and the state government is immensely proud of the achievements of the design and construction industry.

I would like to acknowledge the excellent work carried out by the South East Transit Project team, which included officers from Queensland Transport and the Department of Main Roads. In particular, Bruce Wilson, Les Ford, Don Steele and Barry Gyte and their hardworking team have done an outstanding job in planning and overseeing construction and operation of this critical piece of regional infrastructure. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the private sector, including consultants and contractors who assisted in planning and then building the busway.

The busway is the first of a new generation of smarter public transport projects for Queensland, providing people with a high-frequency, reliable and accessible public transport system. The South East Busway is the biggest public transport project undertaken by the Queensland government in recent years. The state government has drawn on some of the best technological advances in the world to create a busway that strongly reflects our image as a Smart State. Being a Smart State is about promoting innovation, and this government is committed to providing innovative transport choices for Queenslanders.

Innovation in public transport involves planning and partnerships. The South East Busway is attracting worldwide attention as a public transport solution to future travel demands. It represents the innovations Queensland is putting in place to truly become the Smart State. The Beattie government is planning for the future. We are conducting a major public transport study in Cairns, we are canvassing rail options for the Gold Coast and we recently identified a major public transport corridor for the Sunshine Coast. We are continuing to increase rail safety and are reforming the taxi, ferry and bus industries with new contracts and better services.

Years of careful planning and consultation have gone into the South East Busway. It has created tremendous employment opportunities—more than 7,000 jobs during the construction of the busway. Environmental issues such as air and water quality, noise and vibration, regeneration and erosion were addressed during the construction process. We relocated trees, sponsored education and tree-planting sessions with schoolchildren, and undertook archaeological investigations to preserve our cultural heritage. It is tangible evidence of the state government's commitment to continue to provide infrastructure that makes using public transport easier while at the same time being sensitive to the environment and communities.

People can now experience a style of public transport never before seen in south-east Queensland. The busway will significantly reduce travel time for Brisbane's south side residents by up to two-thirds during peak hour. Travelling from Eight Mile Plains to the city in peak hour can take up to an hour. On a bus travelling along the new busway, the journey will now take 18 minutes. It will now be easier for passengers to link with other bus and rail services.

The busway has been designed as the start of a more integrated public transport system for Brisbane and south-east Queensland. We have created sophisticated infrastructure to significantly improve public transport in the region and create a cleaner environment for the future.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Dingoes, Fraser Island

**Hon. D. M. WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (9.56 a.m.), by leave: I join with the Premier, as I am sure do all honourable members, in expressing my sympathies to the family of the nine year old boy who tragically died following an attack by dingoes on Fraser Island yesterday. Cabinet immediately put in place a response and rangers set to work to find the dingoes responsible. My colleague the Minister for Police arranged for Aboriginal trackers to assist in locating the dingoes. They were not, however, necessary. The dingoes were in fact found and destroyed yesterday afternoon by the rangers. They were two young dingoes, one male and one female, from last year's litter.

It is the standing operational procedure of the department to destroy dingoes that show aggressive tendencies. That standing operational procedure has led to approximately 40 dingoes being destroyed in the last 10 years. That standing operational procedure will remain in place. In addition, cabinet has determined that my department do an assessment of the risk involved in the level of interaction between dingoes and human beings on Fraser Island.

The problem arises because the dingoes have been habituated to human contact. The dingoes remain wild animals but, as a result of feeding and other interactions with humans, many of them have ceased to fear human contact so they do not run away at the sight of humans, as other wild animals would. In contact with human beings they appear like domestic dogs but retain the instinct of wild animals. Also, as a result of habituation and feeding from human-derived sources, the population of dingoes on the island now exceeds what could be supported if the dingoes were living in the wild.

In these circumstances a risk assessment is necessary. This should focus on the question of whether, and how, the dingo population on the island should be reduced. The problem of the habituation of dingoes to human contact needs to be addressed in another way. The information campaign, which my department has traditionally conducted, will continue and be intensified.

Dingo awareness brochures entitled *Be Dingo Smart* are issued to every person who receives a camping permit for the island. Brochures have been distributed to tourist operators on the island for educating visitors about dingo-related issues. Rangers regularly patrol camp grounds and educate campers about not feeding dingoes. This is an ongoing program which will be intensified.

In the last few years we have increased signage—warning signs and educational displays—at camp grounds and ranger/information centres on the island. Rangers regularly speak to four-wheel drive hire companies to convey the message to their clients about not feeding dingoes. There is provision for an on-the-spot \$75 fine for feeding dingoes. There is further provision for a larger fine of \$1,400, and this would be exercised by way of summons in cases where it was considered that the on-the-spot fine was not sufficient or appropriate. These fines will be rigorously applied.

I mentioned that it is the standard operational procedure of my department to destroy dingoes which show aggressive tendencies. Work has been undertaken on a management plan for Fraser Island dingoes. That has received extensive consultation from many sources. I saw a draft of that management plan for the first time last Tuesday. At that time I believed that it needed to include more material on the control of aggressive dingoes, particularly in areas of human habitation. I now believe that even more firmly than I did on Tuesday and have asked my department to provide me with additional strategies to achieve this.

The dingo is a wild animal in the same way as the lion or the tiger is a wild animal. Even if it looks like a domestic dog and habituation to human beings makes it appear like a domestic dog, its wild instincts inevitably will take over. The separation of dingo populations from human habitations, long a policy of my department, will be rigorously pursued.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT****Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre**

**Hon. J. C. SPENCE** (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (10.01 a.m.), by leave: On Sunday I joined the Premier to shut down a potent symbol of one of the saddest chapters in the state's history. We took bricks from the wall of the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre and declared it officially closed. The symbolic dismantling of this monument to the neglect of Queensland children did not come a day too soon. For too long, the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre has been a byword for childhood misery.

Thanks to the courage of former residents who gave evidence to the Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, the centre's history is well documented. The inquiry heard how children kept at the centre—supposedly under the care and protection of the state—became victims of a rigid adherence to the 'medical model'. Children were misdiagnosed and given unnecessary medication, and sedated if they did not submit to the centre's draconian regime.

From the 1980s, the complex itself—outdated and inadequate—heightened the problems. It came as no surprise that the Forde report recommended the closure of Sir Leslie Wilson. I might remind the house that the Goss government had already taken the decision to close Sir Leslie Wilson, but the incoming Borbidge government, to its discredit, reversed that decision. Nor was it surprising that people associated with the centre came together last week to mark the end of an era. Many of the former child residents, although now adults, suffer from the legacy of mistreatment that they experienced in that place. They were born at the wrong time—a time when authorities, sometimes misguided and sometimes cruel, could inflict suffering on children who were supposed to be under their care and protection. Those days are over, and the right to safety and dignity, rehabilitation and education now extends to young offenders.

The government was able to decommission the Windsor facility because we are implementing a 10-year infrastructure development plan for youth detention centres throughout the State. This is in pursuance of Forde report recommendations that we overhaul and close a number of these complexes.

The young people who would have been held in Sir Leslie Wilson are now inmates of the new Brisbane Youth Detention Centre at Wacol. This is built to a national standard and upholds the imperative of ensuring community safety and security. The new centre also provides detainees with security and opportunities for rehabilitation. The government is also in the process of upgrading the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre at Townsville.

One of the keys to an effective youth justice system is balance. While the government will strengthen the Juvenile Justice Act, we are also addressing the causes of youth crime and providing alternatives to detention for our young people. An estimated one in three recidivist offenders did not re-offend after being referred to our pilot youth justice services. Young indigenous people are entering the juvenile justice system at a lesser rate since we came to government. The figure is down from 4.1 in every 1,000 to 2.9 in every 1,000. That rate is still unacceptable, but through measures including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement we are determined to continue reducing it.

The Government also has plans for a charter of juvenile justice principles. The charter will be aimed squarely at preventing children from falling into the patterns of behaviour that bring them into contact with the juvenile—and later criminal—justice system.

There is always a danger that events such as the closure of the Sir Leslie Wilson centre will reopen old wounds. I sympathise with those former residents who, to this day, find the memories of their time there too painful even to discuss. But for many others, the closure and ceremonial dismantling of the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre reinforces the need to learn from past mistakes and set a steady course for the future.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT****Australian Tourism Exchange**

**Hon. M. ROSE** (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: The Australian Tourism Exchange, to be held in Brisbane between 27 May and 3 June, will be the biggest, most ambitious and best yet. It will showcase Brisbane and Queensland and bring massive and ongoing benefits to the Queensland tourism

industry and the state's economy. It is the first time the ATE is being held outside Sydney or Melbourne and is the result of a successful bid by Tourism Queensland to host the event.

Brisbane's selection as host for ATE for the next two years highlights the city's growing reputation and standing within the Australian tourism industry. The ATE is huge. I visited the Sydney show last year and was stunned by its sheer size. It is the ideal place to write tourism business. Business worth billions of dollars will be written in Brisbane.

The ATE is Australia's largest tourism trade show and the third largest in the world. It is expected to include more than 2,000 Australian tourist operators, 660 of the world's top tourism buyers from 50 countries and 80 international and Australian media representatives.

The primary aim is to familiarise international buyers with a vast array of Queensland and Australian inbound product. It also provides the opportunity to showcase our industry to the world by having existing and new products included in overseas tour programs, so the potential benefits flowing from the exchange are enormous.

This year, for the first time, ATE will be divided into two modules: the Western Hemisphere module to be held 26 to 30 May, and the Eastern Hemisphere module to be held from 31 May to 3 June. It is no surprise that the Australian Tourist Commission chose Queensland to host the ATE. We are, after all, blessed with natural beauty, great weather and a friendly, laid-back style that is the envy of the rest of Australia and the world. Queensland is one of the world's most desirable holiday destinations. Queenslanders are lucky: we have it all right here on our doorstep. The Sydney Olympics offered unprecedented opportunities for tourism in Australia. The Goodwill Games being held in Brisbane will again showcase our magnificent Queensland. The ATE this year and next will help build on this momentum.

Tourism is already the state's second largest industry, being worth an estimated \$9.2 billion each year. We host more than 16.5 million domestic and around two million international visitors each year. The international visitation is tipped to double within the decade. Queensland is preparing for the influx. We want to ensure that we grab the opportunities when they present themselves. We have the attractions, we have the industry, we have the will and we have the government commitment to ensure that happens.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Emergency Services Rescue Operations

**Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland) (10.08 a.m.), by leave: Over the weekend Queenslanders once again saw the excellence of our world-renowned emergency services rescue operations. On late Friday night, reports were received about a yacht in trouble off Heron Island. The Capricorn Helicopter Rescue Service based in Rockhampton responded to the call and, soon after, Queensland Rescue 500 from Brisbane responded also.

En route to the yacht, Queensland Rescue 500 was notified of concern for the Capricorn helicopter, which had not reported its position at the scheduled time. The Rescue 500 was redeployed to the Capricorn's last known position and there spotted the stranded yacht with two people on deck. While dropping a life raft to the yacht, the crew sighted the Capricorn helicopter in the water and the pilot and crew in another life raft.

Our rescue pilot and crew were faced with not one but two emergency situations, in the dark and some 124 nautical miles from Rockhampton. The skill and expertise with which they handled this incident is more proof of why Queensland's emergency services are among the best in the world.

I would like to pay tribute to the excellent work of the four crew on board the Queensland Rescue 500. Trevor Wilson, captain; Mark Kempton, co-pilot; Darren Parsons, aircrew officer; and Rod Morgan, rescue crew officer, all exhibited the sort of professionalism that makes us proud of our emergency services. At first light, the crew retrieved the pilot and his crewman from the crashed chopper and the pair from the stricken yacht in what can be described only as a textbook rescue. Later this week, I will present the rescue team with commendations for their dedication and commitment to their work.

On Saturday the Department of Emergency Services contacted Capricorn to express its desire to offer assistance above and beyond our normal arrangements. To that end, the Queensland government's Squirrel helicopter will be sent to Rockhampton to service the needs of that area. The Beattie government supports community-based services such as Capricorn,

Energex and Careflight Rescue Helicopters with service agreements and annual grants of \$600,000 each.

Queensland has the most comprehensive coverage of aircraft providing lifesaving, aero-medical and rescue services in Australia. We have a network of government rescue chopper services in Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns. We also have community providers in Rockhampton, Mackay, the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, and the Torres Strait. Combining that with the Queensland Ambulance Service's fixed wing aircraft and the Royal Flying Doctor Service, we are more than equipped to handle emergency situations. Queensland Rescue has won widespread acclaim for its professionalism and high level of training as well as its successes in rescues in dangerous conditions.

Another important feature of our rescue services is the involvement of ambulance officers on those choppers that I have been talking about. On board the Capricorn that crashed was ambulance paramedic Scott Kennedy. I phoned Scott on Sunday to wish him well. I thank the member for Rockhampton, the Honourable Robert Schwarten, and the member for Fitzroy, Jim Pearce, for their cooperation. I know that they were very keenly interested in the outcome and that they continue to be. I thank them for their cooperation over the past few days.

Our pilots and aircrew are among some of the most highly trained and experienced officers in Australia, and they proved that yet again over the weekend. I am sure that honourable members join with me in congratulating and thanking them for their hard work and excellence in this operation.

## **RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS OFFENCES BILL**

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (10.12 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—  
That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992.

Motion agreed to.

### **First Reading**

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Springborg, read a first time.

### **Second Reading**

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (10.12 a.m.): I move—  
That the bill be now read a second time.

The opposition is introducing this bill to the House in response to the reports of crimes being committed across the state based on racial or religious hatred. The purpose of the Racial and Religious Offences Bill is to amend the Penalties and Sentences Act of 1992 by inserting a new part 9AA. This new part would make it an aggravating circumstance to any crime punishable by imprisonment if the offence was incited or motivated by racial or religious hatred or contempt for, or the ridicule of, a person or groups of persons based on their race or religion.

Under the provisions of this bill, these aggravating circumstances will apply if the offence involves any communication, any conduct or the dissemination or distribution of any material that is vilifying on the basis of race or religion or incites racial or religious vilification. This bill is designed to protect the rights and liberties of innocent individuals whilst punishing those who commit crimes based on the race or religion of those whom the crimes are committed against. This bill will deal with definite acts of racial or religious hatred only and, by doing so, does not raise any possibility of conflict with section 4 of the Legislative Standards Act and the fundamental legislative principles set down in that section.

The opposition stands up for the right to free speech, which is inherent in this great democratic state of ours. This is the same right that has been recognised by the High Court as being the cornerstone of any democracy. As such, this bill targets and imposes penalties against actual instances of racial or religious vilification which result in or contribute to crimes, not cases which involve comments against a person's race or religion. This is in effect similar to the operation of the racial and religious vilification laws in place in Western Australia, where an actual act of racial or religious vilification must have been committed before there will be grounds for charges to be brought against a person.

The Racial and Religious Offences Bill imposes an additional penalty on those who incite vilification or commit offences under circumstances of vilification which is commensurate with the despicable offence which they have committed. That is an increased penalty of up to three years imprisonment in addition to that to which they would otherwise be liable if the circumstances of vilification did not exist. In the interests of further deterring offences motivated by racial or religious hatred, the sentencing judge will be required under this bill to state the extent to which the accused's sentence has been increased as a result of the existence of the circumstances of aggravation.

This bill is being brought before the House in recognition of the need to deter and prevent crimes based on race or religion. These are serious crimes and crimes which society simply cannot tolerate. There is clearly a need for legislation in this state that punishes people for offences that are committed purely on the basis of somebody else's race or religion. Queensland is well renowned internationally as one of the friendliest places in the world for tourists to visit and one of the friendliest places to live. It is therefore important for Queensland to be seen to, firstly, not tolerate crime and, secondly, not tolerate crime based on people's race or religion. However, in the interests of democracy in Queensland, it is important that we impose laws only against the unacceptable behaviour and actions of people, not the opinions some may find offensive.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Welford, adjourned.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Shepherdson Inquiry

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.18 a.m.): The tabling today of the Shepherdson inquiry report is another chapter in the sorry saga of cheating that has been undertaken by the Labor Party for some 15 years. Let's think of all the good, decent people in Queensland who go to the trouble of working out who they are going to vote for, of getting to the polls, and who go there in all good faith to vote. Here they were, cheated year after year by the Labor Party, which had this endemic system of corruption and cheating occurring in the preselection process. The people of Queensland should never forget how they were cheated and duped year after year through this preselection process.

As a result of the Shepherdson inquiry, three of the Labor Party members resigned from parliament: the former Deputy Premier, the member for Springwood and the member for Woodridge. There are two members sitting here today who probably had a pretty close shave. As this report shows, there are a lot of cases in which people were not processed any further simply because of the statute of limitations, which meant that proceedings could not go any further, and there were also cases in which the evidence was inconsistent but doubt arose as to what really happened.

The National Party in opposition will ensure that the decent people of Queensland deceived by the cheating that occurred under the Labor government for years and years and years—it swept it under the carpet and hid it under the burrows until it was forced by public pressure to undertake an inquiry as a result of the investigations taking place in Townsville—are never cheated on again by the Labor Party. We will ensure that those recommendations that are practical, sensible, accurate and fair are implemented by this parliament. It is important that we never forget what the Labor Party did to the people of Queensland. The Labor Party knew about it. It covered it up, but it was cheating of the lowest standard at the lowest grade one could ever imagine.

Time expired.

### South East Busway

**Mr REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (10.20 a.m.): The largest single public transport project ever undertaken by a state government opened for business on the weekend. The new South East Busway has been very well received by the Mansfield electorate and will grow even further in popularity as more people realise that a state-of-the-art transport network is at their fingertips. It is indeed a new era of public transport in southern Brisbane. As someone who has travelled on buses my entire life, I know that commuters have been crying out for reliable and efficient public transport, and now we have it.

My electorate has never had the luxury and efficiency of trains. The new busway will simply revolutionise public transport usage on the south side. To illustrate how efficient this bus service is, this morning at 7.40 a.m. I caught bus No. 136 from the Garden City busway station. At 7.55 a.m. I was here in Parliament House talking to the member for Stafford—that is, 12 minutes of travel and three minutes to walk from the city centre to Parliament House. It took me 15 minutes to get from Garden City to Parliament House. It will only take 18 minutes from Eight Mile Plains to the city—a trip which used to take an hour. I had the pleasure of being the first paying customer at 5.07 a.m. yesterday morning. I table the tickets for the information of the House.

While I have the opportunity, I want to express my thanks to the residents of my electorate living alongside the busway. I thank them for their patience during the past few years of construction and thank them for their cooperation. We now have a sophisticated, highly developed public transport system. I congratulate all those who worked on the SET project: Barry Gyte and Don Steele, and particularly Bruce Poyser and Joe Fresta, who were of great help to me. I congratulate the minister and his department for providing an excellent service and for delivering the busway on time to the people of my electorate. As I said earlier, this will revolutionise public transport usage. It will be great for the environment and great for public transport. I look forward to making further trips to Parliament House on the South East Busway.

Time expired.

#### **Sunshine Coast Family Network Association; Dairy Industry**

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (10.22 a.m.): I rise to publicly thank the Minister for Disability Services, the Honourable Judy Spence, for undertaking to provide the necessary funds to purchase the building and land from which the Sunshine Coast Family Network Association proposes to operate. The association is now proceeding with its application to the Maroochy Shire Council to obtain council approval for the operation of the service. Once all approvals have been received, I look forward to inviting the minister to the official opening.

On Friday, 20 April I attended the all-day dairy industry crisis summit organised by the Queensland branch of the Australian Milk Producers Association. The conference was held next door at the Queensland University of Technology campus. I publicly thank QUT staff for their support and interest in the plight of people affected by the deregulation of the dairy industry. People travelled from interstate and all over Queensland not only to listen but also to participate in workshops with their own ideas. Some of the topics discussed were collective bargaining, the environment and milk production.

I believe the meeting was very successful in assisting people to better understand what opportunities are available to them as a result of the current changes in the industry. Notwithstanding the attendance of members from local government, the federal government and the Queensland opposition, I understand that not one elected member of the Queensland Labor government attended—not one. That is a sad indictment on this government and throws doubt on the Premier's promise to govern for all Queenslanders. Actions speak louder than words.

#### **St Thomas More**

**Ms KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (10.23 a.m.): I stand to share good news with all members of the House today. Politicians now have their own patron saint. St Thomas More was recently given this title by Pope John Paul II. St Thomas More is a timely patron saint for all politicians today as he risked and lost his very life for speaking the truth to those in power. Democracy today, more than ever, needs politicians who are prepared to fight on the difficult issues regardless of the costs. St Thomas More, a lawyer and a statesman, was knighted and made Lord Chancellor by King Henry VIII. St Thomas More was beheaded as a traitor by Henry at Town Hill on 5 July 1535 for refusing to support his abuse of power. St Thomas More's courageous leadership in truth, justice and ethical public service are ideals that all honourable members can aspire to.

#### **Retractable Needles**

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.24 a.m.): How many more Queenslanders have to suffer the terror of unnecessary needle-stick injuries and potentially deadly infections while the Beattie Labor government drags its heels and does nothing to introduce retractable needles? This government talks but fails to act. In February last year—more than 12 months ago—the coalition introduced this as its policy because it knows that there is grave public concern about the

inappropriate disposal of needles in public places and grave concern for people who have suffered needle-stick injuries in public places or in our health facilities.

People who suffer a needle-stick injury experience terror because they have to wait months to find out whether they are clear of possible infection, which costs thousands of dollars. Something like 5.3 million free needles were distributed in Queensland last year. I understand that a similar number was also distributed through community pharmacies. Therefore, approximately nine million or more needles were distributed in Queensland. That is a significant number, which is causing terror on our beaches and terror for the workers who clean our parks.

The reasoning of the Minister for Health in not introducing retractable needles is that she wants to send the issue to a committee for investigation. The other day she said that retractable needles cannot be used because inferior products will flood over the border—all excuses and no action! The minister said that retractable needles are unsafe, even though models have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. Some 16 states in America are using these needles in their health facilities, yet this minister fails to act. She has failed to reveal which needle she says is unsafe. She has delayed the process while people are suffering unnecessary injury. People are sick of seeing needles in their parks threatening their children.

Time expired.

### **Roy Maka Wano**

**Ms PHILLIPS** (Thuringowa—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): Last Friday the community of north Queensland said goodbye to a great contributor to the development of Queensland Rail. Roy Maka Wano, born in 1932, passed away at Townsville General Hospital on 15 April 2001. He was one of the first Torres Strait Islanders to come to mainland Australia. Roy will be remembered for his commitment and his role in the development of the rail industry in this state.

A descendent of the Mariam-Samsep, Magaram and Dowareb Tribe of Mer, the Murray Islands, in the Torres Strait, Roy spent almost his entire working life—more than 40 years—with Queensland Rail. Commencing as a labourer in 1951, Roy's dedication to the job during both good times and bad saw him serve as a ganger, assistant foreman, foreman and track supervisor before his retirement in 1991. Roy Wano was a highly respected officer at all levels of Queensland Rail and was one of the first Torres Strait Islanders to come to work on the mainland. Roy was in many ways a pioneer.

It was not until Roy came to the mainland that other Torres Strait Islander men came to work in canefields and on the railway lines. These men came with no money, no knowledge of their new surroundings and without the local language. Roy was the one who helped to smooth the transition. He and his colleagues came to be known as the backbone of Queensland Rail on the Townsville to Mount Isa line for many years and will always be remembered for their contribution to Queensland Rail.

It is therefore fitting that last year the Transport and Main Roads Minister, Steve Bredhauer, agreed to work with Queensland Rail to provide a monument acknowledging the enormous contribution of Torres Strait Islanders to the railway industry in Queensland. This monument, to be built at the new Torres Strait Islander Culture Centre that is currently in its planning stages, will memorise Roy Maka Wano and the many Torres Strait Islanders whose efforts helped to improve the lives of Queenslanders. On behalf of the Queensland government, I pass on our deepest sympathy to Roy's wife, Malitta, and their three sons.

### **Retractable Needles**

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (10.29 a.m.): I rise to speak also on the issue of retractable needles. I commend the minister, because I know she has some support for the implementation of retractable needles. However, the community that I am in contact with does not believe they are being implemented quickly enough. Members of my community have advised that last December tenders closed calling for the supply of retractable needles for Queensland Health. Only two companies replied as it was not common knowledge that the tender was in existence. Becton-Dickenson and Terumo responded. However, neither of these companies produces retractable needles. They do produce products called needle guards and safety syringes, neither of which have been recommended in the United States. My main concern is that we are going to get lumped with products that are currently unsaleable in the US. The cheapest of these products is \$1.07 and as high as \$2.47 a unit, which is more expensive than

the proven Vanishpoint—97c—a true retractable needle that is now widely used in the American health care setting.

Time expired.

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

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Dingoes, Fraser Island

**Mr HORAN** (10.30 a.m.): In this parliament I join with the Premier and extend the condolences of the opposition to the family of the young lad who was fatally injured on Fraser Island. I refer the Minister for the Environment to yesterday's fatal dingo attack on Fraser Island—a tragedy compounded by the fact that his government has ignored repeated warnings from local residents and delayed for two years the implementation of a plan to prevent dingo attacks—and I ask: firstly, will he now move immediately to eliminate Fraser Island's rogue dingo problem; and, secondly, can he give a categorical guarantee that no Fraser Island dingoes have been relocated to the mainland under his government, either during this term or during the first term of the Beattie Labor government?

**Mr WELLS:** It is regrettable that the Leader of the Opposition has chosen this particular issue on which to attempt to gain political capital. If I was minded to—

**Mr HORAN:** I rise to a point of order. I take offence at that comment. We have had the decency to provide an apology to the family. It is a matter that has to be dealt with. The minister should not use a tragedy to cover up something that should properly be asked about in this parliament.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! We will not have a debate about this.

**Mr WELLS:** If I was minded to, I could have referred to the fact that just over two years ago they were in government and the situation which now exists existed then. But I forbear. Rather, let us talk about what together we can do to resolve the issue.

Basically, the issue arises by virtue of the fact that we have dingoes that are habituated to human contact. They remain wild animals, but although they are wild animals they are fearless of human beings because human beings have fed them. They have come into contact with human beings over a long time—over a decade—and the dingoes have become familiar and fearless. But their instincts as wild animals inevitably will take over.

What we did yesterday was to order a risk assessment of the situation that we have with dingoes in close proximity to human beings. The result of that is going to have to be that human habitation and wild dingoes cannot go side by side. I have asked my department to have a look at strategies, and these strategies are going to have to include a reduction in the number of dingoes on Fraser Island; in other words, the culling of dingoes on Fraser Island. The number of dingoes on Fraser Island is greater than the number that could be sustained by the natural sources of food for dingoes living in the wild. The numbers that could be sustained if they were all domestic dogs would be very much greater, but we do not have domestic dogs, we have wild animals that behave a little bit like domestic dogs, and that very ambiguity has caused the risk that now exists and which we will mitigate at the earliest possible opportunity. The steps my department already has in place to mitigate that risk will be continued and intensified. The warnings, the signs, the brochures and all of those other things the department has traditionally used as a means of trying to educate people about the risks of contact with dingoes will remain.

### Brisbane Market Corporation

**Mr HORAN:** I refer to today's ministerial statement by the Deputy Premier and Treasurer in which he advised of the sell-off of the Brisbane Market Corporation and the use of the proceeds of the sale to fund the Education Department's maintenance program for repainting, reroofing and reticulation, and I ask: why is he exposing the Queensland government to the dangerous financial strategy of selling a one-off capital asset to provide for recurrent maintenance costs?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** It is not a recurrent program; it is a capital program. That answers the honourable member's question.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the member for Stafford, I would like to welcome some 'overseas' visitors to the gallery—the students, parents and teachers of the Macleay Island State School in the electorate of Redlands.

### CHOGM

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN:** In October, Brisbane will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, turning the international media spotlight on this city. Given protests around the world by those opposed to globalisation, I ask the Premier: can he inform the House whether he has concerns about similar demonstrations here?

**Mr BEATTIE:** My government supports the right of people to peaceful protest. I have to admit that in the past I have been involved in demonstrations. These days it is more that people are involved in demonstrations against me. But I have been involved in demonstrations and I believe strongly, and so does my government, in the fundamental principle of the democratic right to free speech and protest. However, it is important that people obey the law. It is important that people not break the law; that in fact they be involved in peaceful demonstration; that they do not prevent people from going to work; and that they do not impinge on people's property or personal rights. As long as people are involved in peaceful protests, there will not be any difficulties. We will support the police if they take appropriate action to enforce the law. That is simply the position.

Queensland will gain global media exposure as a result of hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting from 6 to 9 October this year. I do not wish to see—and I am sure no Queenslanders want to see—that global exposure focused on violent protests like the anti-globalisation protests we have seen overseas. I respect people's right to protest for what they believe in, as I just said. As I said, I was one of those who fought for Queenslanders' right to demonstrate. However, I call on the anti-globalisation protesters to think carefully about what CHOGM represents. Many of those more than 50 heads of government who will attend represent poor countries. I think there will be about 54 presidents, prime ministers, heads of countries, and they represent poor countries by and large. The whole purpose of CHOGM is to help the poorer countries with aid and the transfer of technology. It is not a meeting of elites, it is about helping the poor. CHOGM is a family of nations. We do not seek to exploit members of our family, and nor should we do so on this occasion.

I know the Queensland Police Service's planning for CHOGM is well in hand and I have confidence in its preparation. Queenslanders can have confidence in the ability of the police and planners to maintain a high standard of security. However, I call on Queenslanders to respect the law and to respect our laws at all times.

Let me conclude by saying this: it is important that we do not hurt the poorer nations who will be here as our guests to participate in CHOGM, which will be to their benefit. It is important that we do not hurt the poor. The message is very simple. There needs to be an understanding of what CHOGM is all about. Yes, this is a great opportunity for Queensland. Yes, it will give us international exposure. Yes, out of that will come jobs and tourism—all of the positive benefits. But, in addition, the underlying work of CHOGM is about helping the poorer nations. There are many poor nations in the Commonwealth family. Those nations have to be put first. I urge the leaders of the protest movement involved to remember that CHOGM is not what some have portrayed it to be. It is a Commonwealth family of nations and it is meeting to help the poor.

### Brisbane River Pedestrian Bridge

**Mr JOHNSON:** I refer the Minister for State Development to the pedestrian bridge which is being constructed between Gardens Point and South Bank, and I ask: what is the engineering problem that has delayed construction and when was it discovered? When is the bridge expected to be open to the public?

**Mr Mackenroth:** When it's finished.

**Mr JOHNSON:** The Treasurer is very smart; we all know that. I also ask: what is the anticipated final cost of the bridge?

**Mr BARTON:** Let me put things in context. The bridge is going to be at the heart of Brisbane and will further put Brisbane on the world map as a significant city with a major pedestrian bridge across the Brisbane River. The project is proceeding well. But from time to time, any innovative project has the odd minor hiccup that needs to be addressed. The actual construction company—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BARTON:** I note that some members opposite think that this is all a huge joke. I do not know why they bothered to ask this question.

The project is proceeding very well at this time. The major arch—the major component of the bridge—is currently under construction at Hemmant. It is going to be fabricated there and then lifted into place. So the very fact that not much is happening at the actual site itself at the moment is not a reflection that the bridge construction is not proceeding on schedule, because it is.

One issue was raised with us by the construction people. They asked us to reconsider one component where the arches bolt together with the central section of the bridge, because it is an innovative design. We have had work done on that. We do not believe that there was any safety risk in terms of the initial design, but we took the precaution of having the appropriate people look at the design and make sure that it was totally safe. They have suggested some minor modifications in terms of how that will be bolted together.

I make the point that the bridge is under construction and has been under construction in terms of the fabrication of the steel work that is to be bolted to the concrete structures that are in place now. The bridge was always scheduled to be opened in time for the Goodwill Games, and I am advised by my department that we are still very confident that the bridge will be completed by then.

**Mr Mackenroth** interjected.

**Mr BARTON:** As my colleague the Treasurer said before, it will be opened and will have pedestrians walking on it when it is finished. But I assure the House that it is still on schedule.

**Mr Mackenroth:** It was going to be before the election, but we moved it forward.

**Mr BARTON:** Yes, it was going to be before the state election this year, but we brought the election forward and, as a result of that, it was not finished before the election.

**Mr Mackenroth** interjected.

**Mr BARTON:** No, we are not going to move it out any further than that.

Work on the bridge is proceeding. In terms of the final costs—I think that everybody would know that, with a major project, sometimes there is rise and fall, depending on what happens with the contract. The final costs, we anticipate, will not be markedly more than what we have already released as an expectation of the final cost. Of course, final costs will be subject to negotiation with the people who are constructing the bridge for the state government—when we reach that magical state of having the bridge completed.

Time expired.

### **South East Busway; Airtrain Citylink**

**Mr REEVES:** I refer the Premier to the new and great South East Busway, which he officially commissioned on Sunday, and I ask: what impact does the Premier expect this new state government initiative to have on public transport usage in Brisbane?

**Mr BEATTIE:** It is significant. I share with the member and the Minister for Transport the enthusiasm that I believe all Queenslanders will have for the busway.

South-east Queensland has entered an exciting new era in public transport. This is about smart transport and smart transport answers for a Smart State. Yesterday, the state government's \$350 million South East Busway became fully operational after years of careful planning and consultation. The busway gives south-east Queensland commuters one of the best public transport systems in the world and is the biggest public transport project undertaken in the region in years. All the member's constituents will have the benefit of travelling into the city along the busway. I am delighted, because the member told me this morning that he got on the bus—at what time?

**Mr Reeves:** 7.40.

**Mr BEATTIE:** And what time was the member at parliament?

**Mr Reeves:** 7.55.

**Mr BEATTIE:** How about that! That is the sort of can-do government Queensland has. What a busway! That is all I can say. And how many people were on the bus?

**Mr Reeves:** It was packed.

**Mr BEATTIE:** It was packed. The member is helping me with my answer. We are a duo.

This is an exciting period where we are reaping the benefits of our investment in the future of Queenslanders who live and work in the south-east corner. Commuters now have a state-of-the-art, 16-kilometre busway stretching from Eight Mile Plains to the Queen Street Mall which provides a service that is faster, safer, more convenient and better for our environment. As Brisbane and the south-east corner continue to grow, we must protect what makes this such a great place to live—our environment, and making public transport more attractive to residents and visitors will play an increasingly important role in our ability to reach that goal in the years ahead.

Another public transport project begins operations next week, that is, the Airtrain Citylink running between the Brisbane domestic and international airports, the Brisbane central business district and the Gold Coast. I was privileged to become the first passenger to travel from Brisbane to the airport on the Queensland-made Airtrain last month, and I urge all air travellers to take advantage of this new development. The \$9 ticket gives passengers a safe, reliable trip to the airport without the worry that a traffic jam might cause them to miss their flight.

Again, the result of this new public transport development is safe, faster travelling for passengers, a reduction in road and air pollution and a reduction in road congestion. Trips from the CBD to the airport take just 22 minutes, with a stop at Eagle Junction.

I would like to point out that the developer, Transfield Constructions, won an inaugural local content award for sourcing all materials, suppliers and contractors for the project from within Australia, and mostly from Queensland.

These two major projects bring public transport in south-east Queensland into the new millennium. A safe, convenient, modern public transport system is crucial if we are serious about maintaining the lifestyle in which we take such pride in Queensland. I table a copy of material related to it.

Time expired.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the member for Robina, I welcome to the public gallery the parents, students and teachers of the Mooloolah State School in the Glass House electorate.

### **Pacific Motorway**

**Mr QUINN:** I ask the Minister for Transport: is his department in dispute with any contractors over issues associated with the construction of the Pacific Motorway? If so, how many contractors are involved, who are they and what is the total amount of money involved?

**Mr BREDHAUER:** No, we are not in dispute with any of the contractors associated with the Pacific Motorway project. That is my answer to the first part of the member's question. The motorway project was completed last year and was opened by the Premier and myself on 6 October, from memory—it was early October, anyway. Additional works have been continuing in terms of landscaping and finalising. However, as with any project of that size, negotiations are still being undertaken with contractors in respect of the finalisation of payments. My department is working through those in a cooperative and constructive manner with the contractors concerned.

I take the opportunity given to me by the member for Robina to thank the contractors on the Pacific Motorway project and the South East Transit Project—the busway project to which the Premier has also alluded. We have been able to forge an important partnership between the public and private sectors, and this has helped deliver some of the most important infrastructure for the people of south-east Queensland. As in any of these projects, there are issues related to contractors making claims for additional works and for variations to contract. We positively and constructively work through those in relation to transport and infrastructure projects. The benefits of these projects to the people of south-east Queensland and Queensland are wide ranging.

**Mr Foley:** Very good public art.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** They include things like public art, which we have incorporated into those projects, demonstrating that we are a government with heart as well as soul.

It is also important for us to recognise that the work that has been done on those projects and the Airtrain project, to which the Premier has referred, has created thousands and thousands of jobs for people in south-east Queensland. One of our most important priorities as a government here in Queensland is jobs, jobs, jobs. We will continue to work through any issues that may emerge with the contractors. We will continue to negotiate. But for the benefit of the

member for Robina, I point out that we are talking about the expenditure of public funds. And when contractors make claims which we believe are in excess of what is reasonable and what they are entitled to, then the people of Queensland have an expectation that I, as the responsible minister, will make sure that we negotiate with those contractors in a positive and constructive way to ensure that we get the best value for money that we possibly can.

I should also say that there have been some differences of opinion between contractors and subcontractors, the latter not having a direct relationship with us as the government. We are also doing our best to assist with working through those issues in the smoothest possible way, but I am confident that all those matters will be resolved as quickly as possible thanks to the constructive efforts of my department and the private sector.

Time expired.

### **Crazy Ant**

**Mr PURCELL:** The presence of yet another exotic pest on Queensland soil, this time the discovery of crazy ant infestations in Cairns, is cause for concern, and I ask the Premier: can he inform the House why these pests continue to be imported into Queensland?

**Mr BEATTIE:** The simple answer to the question is: because the federal government is failing Queenslanders.

According to the federal government, the crazy ant is one of 26 pests and diseases detected in Australia last year despite its own target of no increase in the rate of exotic pest and disease incursions. The federal government must take the issue more seriously. The future of our agricultural industries is at stake. Quarantine is a federal responsibility. Why don't they do it properly? It is very simple. Why don't they do it properly? Let us have a look at it.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** We have to clean up the mess.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, we have to clean up the mess. The Queensland government has been assisting the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service in response to the discovery of an exotic insect called crazy ant in Cairns.

The crazy ant is a native of the African continent. It is so named because of its erratic walking style. The adult ants are reddish-yellow, about half a centimetre in length, with long legs and antennae and a long, slender body.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Members opposite may think this is funny, but I am talking about looking after farmers and the agricultural sector. That is what this is about.

Crazy ants do not normally bite, sting or attack people but can become a nuisance in houses and buildings. Foraging ants can be controlled using commercial household insect sprays. The crazy ant was detected near Gove in the Northern Territory in 1999 and is also found on Christmas Island. The ant forms large nest entrances in wide, flat soil mounds up to 30 centimetres in diameter, with smaller unobtrusive holes along fence lines or walls.

The Department of Primary Industries represents the Queensland government and it has assisted Quarantine and Inspection Services in surveillance of the ant since AQIS first suspected detection in the suburb of Portsmith in Cairns.

The ants' identity has now been scientifically confirmed to be crazy ant. I am advised that unlike fire ant, which has been detected in the Brisbane area, the crazy ant is not a declared pest of agriculture. The Queensland government will assist in the response to the ant infestation through the combined efforts of a working group involving representatives of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. I urge the federal government to ensure that it assists in a response to this pest.

After all, as I said, according to the federal government, the crazy ant is one of 26 pests and diseases detected in the last financial year. That is too many, bearing in mind that the federal government says it has a target of zero increase in the rate of exotic pest and disease incursions attributed to breaches of quarantine.

Canberra has failed. If the federal government had actually met its target, the crazy ant would not be in Cairns. The federal government is undertaking a research program on crazy ants operating on Christmas Island. This program should also target the infestations in Cairns.

Queensland should not again be forced to clean up the mess left by the federal government's failure.

Let me make the point. We have to keep diseases out, including foot-and-mouth disease, or we are in trouble.

### Early School Leavers

**Ms STONE:** I refer the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts to the urgent need to provide assistance to young people who are at risk of dropping out of school before completing Year 10, and I ask: how seriously is the Queensland government taking this issue and can the minister cite any examples of what the government is doing to address this problem?

**Mr FOLEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question. This problem of young people dropping out of school without the benefit of a full education is absolutely central to achieving the goal of jobs, jobs, jobs here in Queensland. We simply cannot afford in economic terms, let alone humanitarian terms, the waste of so much highly talented human resources in this way. Certainly from a humanitarian point of view, it is sad to see the number of young people who have not been able to maximise their opportunities in education.

That is why I was absolutely delighted the other day to meet with a number of youngsters at the Ridgeway campus of the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE at Southport where I announced some \$541,000 to fund an innovative program aimed at helping give those young Gold Coast people a second chance at education.

It is about TAFE working with the youngsters who have dropped out of high school. This program has already been successful in assisting more than 1,000 young people over the last three years to return to school, to find employment or to go on to further education. In fact, more than 70 per cent of the students who have gone through the course over the past three years have found a job, gone back to school or gone on to some further TAFE programs.

I was enormously impressed when I attended early one morning last week a breakfast with a range of industry representatives, the local schools and, may I say, the magnificent seven from the Gold Coast.

**A government member:** The super eight.

**Mr FOLEY:** The super eight from the Gold Coast. What I saw there was very good cooperation. There are currently 83 students aged from 11 to 18 years enrolled in the program.

We need to get serious about tackling the problems of those youngsters who drop out of the school system. TAFE has a role to play and I look forward to working with the Education Department. This is part of honouring our election promise. We promised funding of \$7 million over three years for a youth access program. We are honouring that promise. We are delivering opportunities for those young people because, frankly, they are an important and valuable part of our community. We cannot afford to turn our back on them. We need to give them a chance and that is exactly what this Labor government plans to do.

### Aged Care Facility, Southport

**Mr HOBBS:** I had a question today for the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines but he is not here, so perhaps the Premier could take the question. I refer to the proposed development of the aged care facility at Edmund Hill Drive, Southport, by the Southport Catholic parish. The parish has been working towards this development for a number of years through self-finance and joint venturers to complement the existing aged care facility De Paul Villa, a 95 bed facility catering for both high and low care that would provide infrastructure such as management, catering and laundry facilities, health and medical care and trained domestic staff. I ask: why has the minister now at the 11th hour decided to deny the church the appropriate tenure by resuming the lease when they have finally negotiated a joint venture? Is the government so short of funds it has resorted to pinching from the church and intends to sell the site to the highest bidder?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The minister is in Mount Isa at the moment attending to his responsibilities in relation to various mining matters. I gave him leave to be there because of the importance of the mining industry to Queensland. It is our biggest industry and I gave him approval to be there because this is significant for jobs and growth. I rarely do it, but on this occasion I thought it was important. I know that the opposition

shares my view about how important the mining industry is since it is the biggest industry in this state. The royalties from it fund our schools and hospitals. I know that they would share my view and want to see it advanced. Let me come to the question.

**Mr Horan:** You should have the courtesy to tell us that the minister wasn't coming.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Does the Leader of the Opposition want me to answer this question?

**Mr Horan:** Parliament is the first responsibility of a member of parliament.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr Mackenroth:** The member could have put the question on notice.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am happy to wait until the Leader of the Opposition stops being rude. I am quite relaxed about it. It is the opposition's question. If the opposition members want me to answer it, I am happy to. If they want to be rude, I am happy to wait. We will not have the disruption of Parliament that we saw in the last term by the opposition leader's predecessor.

In terms of the question, I am happy to inquire about the details and ensure that the department briefs the member in relation to it. Clearly, we have an enormous regard for the role the church plays in providing aged care facilities. As members know, we have an ageing population and one of the things that we have sought to do is to ensure as much as the state government can that we support institutions, both within government at a state and federal level and within the churches, in their role in providing aged care facilities.

For example, the member will recall—and this is a matter that he will be interested in—that on a number of occasions the Minister for Housing has informed this House of providing support for aged care in areas where the lives of country people are often dislocated in their retirement by their being forced to move. Someone who lives in the country like the member does would be aware that one of the great dislocations that happens to country people is that, because they do not get an opportunity to live in aged-care facilities once they leave their home, or there are rare opportunities for them to do that, they are forced to move to, say, Rockhampton or other provincial cities. There is nothing wrong with moving to Rockhampton—

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, or Charleville, but the point is that the area of federal responsibility for aged care is important. Over a significant period, the federal government has reduced funding for aged care. That has meant that the state government has to try to take up the slack, which has been very difficult, or that institutions like churches have been forced to take up the slack. I want to put on record my support for what the churches do in providing aged care. This is going to be an ongoing problem for state governments. It does not matter whether the members opposite are in government or we are, we have to get federal governments to play a greater role—and it does not matter what persuasion they are—to assist in providing aged care facilities. If we do not, we will find that our aged citizens—people who have paid taxes for all their lives—will be living in substandard conditions, and that is not good enough.

### Glutaraldehyde Poisoning

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I ask the Minister for Health: is she aware that some staff working in the Queensland public hospital system have contracted glutaraldehyde poisoning? What action is the minister taking to remove the cause of this debilitating illness?

**Mrs EDMOND:** I am not aware of any specific staff. I am aware that it is a difficult compound to work with. I was not aware that it was still being used, except in very limited and controlled circumstances with reverse-flow, lamina flows, et cetera, for sterilisation of things like catheters. I am happy to take the question on notice and get back to the member with the detail.

### Light Metals Industry

**Mrs DESLEY SCOTT:** I ask the Minister for State Development: have there been any further developments with regard to the government's push for a light metals industry in the state?

**Mr BARTON:** Certainly. I thank the member for the question, because there have been some recent developments that give the government a lot more heart in terms of being confident of our capacity to get our strategy for having a light metals industry in Queensland up and running in a much more effective manner.

Recently, the Australian Magnesium Corporation, which is proposing a major plant to refine magnesium at Stanwell, reached a further contract with Ford worldwide that will extend the contract that they had already to a 10-year period. That is worth something in the order of \$2 billion. Ford will be taking half of the total production from that Stanwell magnesium plant. That means that, along with AMC, we are much closer to being able to put in place the financing to make that refinery a proposal.

Everybody would be aware that a pilot plant has been operating at Gladstone for some time, which has proved up the process. Of course, there is the appropriate mining capacity in Queensland. But if we can get magnesium being produced in Queensland along with the aluminium refinery in Gladstone that can provide hot metal, we certainly have the capacity to enter into the auto industry in a major way in terms of providing castings to the world's automotive industry. Currently, AMC is finalising its debt-raising facility. We are fairly confident that that major expansion to the contract—from a five-year period to a 10-year period—by Ford will be a major stepping stone in terms of allowing that refinery to become a reality.

There has been another major development in terms of our whole strategy to make a light metals industry in central Queensland a reality, and that has been the appointment of a foundation professor to the process engineering and light metals centre in Gladstone. That person is Dr Warren Thorpe. He is considered to be Australia's foremost expert in light metals. His appointment is a coup for the Central Queensland University and the new centre of excellence that is being put together at Gladstone, which I visited several weeks ago—on the very day that Dr Thorpe, who will be the foundation professor, was appointed.

Dr Thorpe's acceptance of that position is a major step, because currently his role is research and development manager for casting and alloys at CSIRO at its manufacturing, science and technology unit. Dr Thorpe also holds positions on the Australian Die-Casting Association national council, the strategic leaders group and the federal government's light metals action agenda. The Beattie government is taking major steps towards making that industry a reality.

### Dairy Industry

**Mr ROWELL:** I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: what action will he take to avert the threatened strike action by Queensland dairy farmers? Will he introduce a marketing system that allows farmers to negotiate a fair and livable farm gate milk price?

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I would like to thank the honourable member for the question. I presume that the honourable member is referring to the dairy farmers' price support proposals?

**Mr Rowell:** They're threatening to strike. They're very concerned.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** Yes, this is part of it. There have been some calls for a floor or a minimum price scheme for market milk at farm gate level. Firstly, such a scheme cannot be implemented nationally without the support of all the states. Clearly, there is not support from all the states or the Commonwealth for such a scheme.

Secondly, the scheme would involve a reregulation of the dairy industry and hence put at risk the ongoing dairy structural adjustment payments paid to Queensland producers. That was a condition that was insisted on by the federal government—that each state deregulate before its producers could receive assistance. In addition, due to the operation of section 92 of the Constitution, the state cannot prevent the inflow of milk from interstate, nor regulate the price at which it is sold. The market position of processors using Queensland milk could be effectively undermined if they lost markets to cheaper interstate suppliers while being locked in to mandated minimum producer prices.

However, the problem with our dairy industry stems from this one point: one of the processors tendered at an extremely low price to a supermarket. That was the cause of all the problems. When deregulation occurred, I as minister and the rest of the industry believed that the farm gate price would be around about 45c or 46c a litre, which would have made our dairy farmers viable. Unfortunately, the tender that was put in to a supermarket chain by Dairyfarmers caused our problem. Therefore, what is really required is a rethink by Dairyfarmers about the low tender that it offered the supermarket chain. It is as simple as that. Unfortunately, the other processor did not tender that low; it tendered a realistic price. But once one processor tenders at a ridiculously low price, the other processor also has to join in. That is the root cause of our problem.

I believe that our dairy farmers, our dairy farmer organisations and our government should really work in with the federal government to try to overcome the current difficulties by simply lobbying that processor—Dairyfarmers—to rethink the tender price that it has offered to the supermarket chain.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the member for Greenslopes, I welcome to the public gallery students, teachers and parents of the Thornlands State School in the electorate of Redlands.

### Roma Street Parkland

**Mr FENLON:** I refer the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to the opening early last month of the Roma Street Parkland, and I ask: can the minister outline the employment spin-offs from this new parkland?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** The day after parliament rose, I joined the Premier in opening this unique green space in central Brisbane. The Roma Street Parkland is, indeed, a tribute to the staff of the Department of Public Works who oversaw the project and, of course, it is a testimony to this government's ability to get on with the job. Two years ago the site was just a wasteland. We well remember that it cost a previous public works minister his job when the current Treasurer exposed his incompetence and his intention to build a block of flats on the site.

The truth of the matter is that this is an absolute success in anybody's estimation. The project created some 250 jobs at peak, and it continues to create employment. Thirty Q-Build employees work in the parkland and we have provided two new traineeships in horticulture. These are the first such positions created within Q-Build.

We also have a very unique partnership with BoysTown Link-Up, which provides opportunities for unemployed people from the electorate of the member for Woodridge, whose predecessor first brought this to my attention. The project is an example of how governments working with groups such as BoysTown can make a difference in people's lives. In the lead-up to the opening event on 6 April, some 20 young people had been employed in the parkland. Six young people are now employed on a regular basis, mowing and doing general horticultural work.

Over 30,000 brochures on the parkland have been distributed. Approximately 1,500 people a day pass through the parkland during the week, and about 4,000 people visit the parkland on weekends. To date seven wedding parties have had photographs taken in the park.

**Mr Foley:** \$1.5 million in public art.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Yes, \$1.5 million worth of public art has been incorporated in the park, showcasing the talents of Queensland artists. The celebration garden area is used regularly by touch football teams and other open-space users. A family of ducks has moved into the parkland. Seven ducklings were born last week, adding to the population of four that already resided in the park. One native species that we would like to see is the scrub turkey, and there are plenty in the area. Perhaps the opposition could camp down there for a while and we will have a few.

Time expired.

### St Aubyns Private Hospital

**Mrs PRATT:** I refer the Minister for Health to question on notice No. 274, in which I asked about the contingency plans the minister would implement to cope with the closure of St Aubyns Private Hospital. The minister replied that the four to five patients would be easily dealt with. Does the minister endorse the statements made at the meeting regarding St Aubyns' future by a Kingaroy General Hospital representative that it would be more than necessary for patients to be transferred to Wondai Hospital? Would the minister admit that she may have been misled as to the numbers and the hospital's ability to cope? Will the minister review the whole situation once again?

**Mrs EDMOND:** That is perfectly consistent with what I said. I said that there were a range of hospitals in the South Burnett that were underutilised and that could pick up the slack.

This is a sad example of what is happening in the private health industry in Queensland and around Australia at the moment. We are seeing a number of private hospitals, be they church run or run by non-government organisations or even larger institutions, under threat because of the difficulties they are having in recruiting specialist staff. They are also facing difficulties just staying open and meeting the extra costs that are being imposed on them through the GST, petrol prices

and the falling Australian dollar, because most of their imports are priced in US dollars. That is a major impost on private hospitals. However, the \$2.7 billion that each and every year is poured in to prop up private health cover is not going into those private hospitals. They are not seeing any return. That is causing major concerns.

I am very disturbed at what is happening in some of the major private hospitals across Queensland and Australia. It is not happening just in Queensland. I understand that the private health funds and the insurance companies have had increases in their profitability in the order of 170 per cent. That is a 170 per cent increase in their profits, yet nothing is being done to help the private hospitals and nothing is being done to speed up patients' access to surgery in those private hospitals.

So many restrictions have been built in to private cover, including front-end deductibles, exclusions and so on, that virtually no-one is able to use the private cover that they have been forced to take out because of the big stick that is being wielded by the Commonwealth government. Also, there is absolutely no return for the \$2.7 billion that is being spent each and every year. If Queensland's share of that came to the state, we would not have a problem in health. We would not be stretched to the limit in providing public services in rural areas or anywhere else. We would have money to roll in. However, we are not getting that money. It is simply increasing the profits of the insurers. That has to be probably the worst outcome for the public dollar that I have ever seen in health in Australia. It should be a national scandal. The federal government deserves to be sacked over that one issue alone.

### Internet Gambling

**Mr POOLE:** I refer the Minister for Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading to the federal government's legislation to ban Australian companies from taking bets on horseracing on the Internet. Could the minister update the House on the ban and its likely effect on the Queensland racing industry?

**Mrs ROSE:** I acknowledge the interest that the member has shown in Queensland's fourth largest industry. I have spoken before in this House about the federal government's Interactive Gaming Bill, which will curtail the growth of the Queensland racing industry. I would like honourable members to make up their own minds about how this bill was conceived. Firstly, they might note that the bill falls in an election year. Secondly, it relates to an industry that does not come under the Commonwealth government's control.

On 3 August last year, as a representative at the Australian Racing Ministers Conference, I wrote to the Minister for Communications, Senator Alston, regarding the federal government's moratorium on Internet gambling. Racing ministers wanted to convey to Senator Alston their concern about the dire consequences that banning Internet wagering would have on the racing industry. We also sought to point out the distinctions between wagering and gaming. We were not encouraging new forms of gambling or placing casinos in people's homes, as it has been so cynically claimed. The Queensland racing industry is simply looking at the application of new technology to access the same forms of wagering that have been in use since the TAB began in the early 1960s. As I have stated before, the Internet is a more efficient way for the Queensland racing industry to sell its product.

In a show of modern communications technology, I received a reply from Senator Alston in December. It took him only four months to send me an acknowledgment. He also said that he would consult with business. They must have been the same businesses that Peter Costello consulted before introducing the BAS. Everyone involved in the wagering business—breeders, trainers, jockeys, race clubs, bookies and the TABs—has backed a loser when it comes to Senator Alston's legislation.

The racing industry will lose millions of dollars that would have been its share of TAB revenue derived from Internet wagering. Instead of supporting a great Australian industry, the federal government is encouraging Australian punters to send their money offshore to unlicensed and unscrupulous overseas bookmakers, and they will. They will continue to gamble overseas. The racing industry and the industry's supporters in this House will be glad to see the tail end of the Howard government and Senator Alston.

On 21 March, at the introduction of this legislation, I again wrote to Senator Alston and I am still waiting for a reply. On Friday I will be attending the 2001 Australian Racing Ministers Conference and I will again be pushing and gathering support for wagering to be excluded from the Commonwealth legislation.

### Retractable Needles

**Miss SIMPSON:** I refer the Minister for Health to the opposition's motion in this parliament in March 2000 in which we called for the introduction of retractable needles to stop needle-stick injuries from drug users' discarded needles. I also remind the minister of her public comments that she would not introduce retractable needles because more would be needed as people could not reuse them, and I ask: how many more innocent Queenslanders, particularly people on Gold Coast beaches and parks, will suffer these unnecessary and terrifying needle-stick injuries while the Beattie government and this minister talk but fail to take action?

**Mrs EDMOND:** The member should be aware that the quote that she constantly uses was interrupted, as she knows. So it is totally misleading and it is used in a way that one could call a lie.

**Miss SIMPSON:** I rise to a point of order. That is offensive and untrue. I have quoted only from the minister's transcript. It is offensive and untrue—

**Mrs EDMOND:** It was out of context and it was interrupted. Even the radio station apologised consequent upon the interruption.

**Miss SIMPSON:** I ask for it to be withdrawn.

**Mrs EDMOND:** I was on a mobile phone. I was cut off mid-sentence. How pathetic that that is the only quote that she can ever find to use!

**Miss SIMPSON:** Mr Speaker, I have asked for an offensive comment to be withdrawn.

**Mrs EDMOND:** It was a public quote that was interrupted because the mobile phone broke down. It just shows—

**Miss SIMPSON:** The minister has not acted according to the parliamentary protocol of withdrawing something which is offensive.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Could you say that again, please? I could not hear for the noise on this side.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Mr Speaker, I asked the minister to withdraw that comment as it was offensive.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The minister will withdraw.

**Mrs EDMOND:** I withdraw.

One can understand why the current president of the AMAQ says in his journal that he has to be the opposition because the opposition is so bad—and that is after he has also claimed to write their policies for them. So with all of that wonderful help, that is still the best they can do.

Queensland has led the way in looking at the use of retractable needles. I am quite proud of that because, rather than rush in just because something is fashionable for the moment or because you get lobbied by a few manufacturers, you do not go rushing off and say, 'We're going to take millions and millions out of other health programs and put them into one program that is not proved, where there are no standards, and where there is not even any evidence anywhere that it works.' No other country in the world is using retractable needles in a steady way. While the member claims that some have been approved, they have not been approved as retractable needles. They have been approved as needles but not retractable needles, because nowhere has actually set up a standard yet. That is what I have asked Australia to do.

I put it to the committee for drugs use. My parliamentary colleague the member for Waterford was there at the time in his capacity as Minister for Police. We got the support of the other states around Australia, which also indicated that they would be keen to look at it if a type of retractable needle that could be used by people who are not determined to retract it could be found—one that would work, one that did not rely on the active participation of the user. It is no point having a needle that can be used by professionals because we are not talking about professionals disposing of them in a rational and reliable way, we are talking about people who have other things on their mind.

The Commonwealth standards organisation is now looking at that. It is my understanding that they will report back to the health ministers conference and the ministerial conference on drugs in the near future—at the next meetings. All of the states are working together. The Commonwealth, indeed, have said that they are interested, but when we asked them to put up funding for it, they would not. So this idea that they are now running around saying that they are prepared to do a trial but no state is prepared to act is totally untrue. We have put our money up. We are prepared to act with anyone who is able to do it.

**An opposition member:** Where are they?

**Mrs EDMOND:** There are not any.

### **Health Promotion Project, Wide Bay**

**Mr McNAMARA:** I ask the Minister for Health: what is being done to reduce the rate of falls leading to death and injury in older people?

**Mrs EDMOND:** What a good question! What a sensible question! It is a question from a member who represents an electorate with a very high proportion of older people, and I know that he is very interested in this topic. This is about preventing illness and preventing injuries—that is really important—rather than always trying to pick up the pieces long after the harm has been done.

The Wide Bay community is to be the focus of a health promotion project to reduce the incidence of falls in people aged 60 years or over. Through Health Promotion Queensland, the Queensland government has contributed \$500,000 over five years to work with people in their own homes to reduce falls and prevent injury. The project will aim to educate the over sixties through special exercise classes, walking groups and fall prevention days. It will also focus on practical measures, such as improvements to footpaths, lighting and transport, and work with GPs to identify older people who are particularly at risk of falling. The project has the potential to prevent injury and the hospitalisation of older people and to save lives.

Of all accidents among Australians aged 65 years or over, falls are the major cause of injury and death. One in three older people in our community experiences a fall each year, and in Australia in 1995 there were 827 deaths and almost 60,000 people hospitalised as a result of falls. The ABS data for Wide Bay shows that accidental falls contributed to the death of 53 people aged 65 years or older in the period 1996 to 1998.

The Wide Bay project is part of a national injury research program through the National Health and Medical Research Council. It involves a partnership between Queensland Health, the Queensland University of Technology and the University of Queensland, with funding support from the NHMRC and New South Wales Health. Wide Bay was selected partly because of the strong community support for the project and the existing community activities that are relevant to the project. The Wide Bay public health unit already conducts many valuable programs promoting injury prevention, and they are working very closely with local government and the divisions of general practice.

I thank the member for his support for this project. I know he will be out there leading the way. A local coordinator will be recruited, and the project is expected to commence in July 2001.

### **Technology Awards**

**Dr WATSON:** I refer the Premier to the recently announced 14th annual government technology productivity awards and his oft-quoted mantra that his government is building the Smart State, and I ask: can he explain why South Australia received five government technology awards; Victoria, four awards; New South Wales and Western Australia, three awards each; while Queensland managed only one such award, which made us last of the mainland states and the technological equivalent of Tasmania, the ACT and the Northern Territory?

**Mr BEATTIE:** There should be some sort of CJC inquiry into those awards. We do lead Australia. That is an inquiry worthy of a CJC investigation.

**Ms Bligh:** Who were the judges?

**Mr BEATTIE:** Indeed, who were the judges? Was the member one of the judges? I am a bit worried about all of that. Most of the technology companies here are too busy to be out nominating for awards.

The bottom line is that we are going to make Queensland the Smart State. We have made significant advances and we are going to continue. You do not change things overnight, but we have made significant advances in terms of biotechnology. Look at what is happening in biotechnology and our level of funding for universities. We have increased significantly our level of funding for universities. I table for the information of the House—in fact, I ask for this to be incorporated in *Hansard*. It sets out our funding for universities.

**A government member:** \$232 million.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Exactly. Mr Speaker, I know you have to give approval to incorporate this in *Hansard*. It is important to do it. I seek your leave.

Leave granted.

Queensland Government

Premier of Queensland

Beattie: Queensland Government backs Universities

The Queensland Government was setting the standard for other States to emulate with its strong support for universities Premier Peter Beattie said today.

Mr Beattie said a stock take of his Government's support for universities showed more than \$94 million had been spent or committed to capital works projects at the State's eight publicly funded universities since July 1998.

'It is a remarkable achievement and tangible proof of our commitment to the "Smart State",' Mr Beattie said.

'Of the \$94.159 million allocated to capital projects by my Government, \$11.17 million was allocated to Central Queensland University; \$41.289M to University of Queensland; \$18.6M to Griffith University; \$15 million to the Queensland University of Technology; and \$6 million to the Australian Catholic University,' Mr Beattie said.

'There has been a strong bias in State Government funding towards projects that add value to our "Smart State" agenda with the Department of State Development funding a number of innovative biotechnology and high-tec computing projects.

We have developed an excellent working relationship with our universities,' Mr Beattie said.

'I think the Vice Chancellor of Central Queensland University, Professor Lauchlan Chipman summed it up recently when he stated that the Queensland Government was, "without doubt" the leading State Government in Australia in terms of the support it provides to universities.'

Professor Chipman, who retires in July, said:

'When it comes to talk of the "Smart State", Queensland has certainly put its money where its mouth is.'

'In addition to capital funding the State Government also provides substantial funding for medical and dental education and research.

For example, in 1999-2000 the Statewide and Non-government Health Services section of Queensland Health provided \$8.8 million to universities to provide education and training courses for the health sector, undertake research and develop health care models to improve services to Queenslanders.

This financial year it is funding Queensland University of Technology to deliver the Queensland Health Management Program, while Griffith University has been enlisted to develop and deliver the Queensland Health Leadership Development Program,' Mr Beattie said.

Another excellent example of the interface between the State Government and universities is the Queensland based Centre for National Research and Rehabilitation Medicine known as CONROD.

'The Queensland Government, through the Motor Accident Insurance Commission (MAIC), has committed \$14 million over the next five years to CONROD to find ways to improve the rehabilitation of motor accident victims,' Mr Beattie said.

'CONROD is a joint initiative between MAIC, the University of Queensland and the Queensland Institute of Medical Research with specific research projects being undertaken at a number of Queensland's leading universities and hospitals.'

Mr Beattie said his Department had also made a contribution towards universities with almost \$2 million provided or committed to a range of research activities, projects and capital works.

'The State Government is operating at a number of levels to provide infrastructure and support to our universities which are playing a central role in our push to become the "Smart State" and create "new" economy industries and jobs in Queensland.'

**Mr BEATTIE:** The reason I incorporated that information is that, if we take the example of biotechnology, we see that we are leading in Australia. If we take what is happening at the world conference on biotech in San Diego—I have gone to the last two—we see that Steve Bracks is now going, along with his minister, because he knows that that is an important job opportunity area for the future. In terms of IT, we have made significant advances and we will continue to do so. The location of Boeing's regional headquarters here is being used as a spin-off. We have encouraged the regional headquarters of Red Hat and Sun Microsystems here. The major international players are coming here as a stepping stone into Asia and other places.

**Mr Lucas:** Reef Net.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, Reef Net, and we have Access Queensland. We are making significant advances in relation to IT. A new ministry for information technology, headed by Minister Paul Lucas, has been created because of the priority that we have applied.

Queensland leads in many of these key areas. No one set of awards can be used as any determinate. We are leading in a number of areas. We are going to continue to grow in these areas. We will ensure that Queensland is the Smart State. That is exactly what has been happening. There is a critical mass of research occurring. The University of Queensland's Institute of Molecular Bioscience and the Queensland Institute of Medical Research are just two examples.

All areas undertaking research will not get results overnight but will get results eventually. That is our future. We will lead when it comes to being the Smart State.

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

## MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

### Unemployment

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): Matters of public interest are matters that are important to the community. Whilst in opposition, members of the National Party will speak during this debate each and every week about things that are important to people. During the last sittings of the parliament we raised the issue of the dairy industry and the need for action to get a decent price that ensures a living for our farmers. We implored the government, the Premier and the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities to do something about the price dairy farmers are being paid for their products. We suggested that the government bring together the key players in that industry, such as processors, supermarkets, the QDO and AMPA, to get some action. We want to see action rather than words.

Today I raise the important issue of unemployment. Permanent jobs give security to families and young people in order for them to have the finances to buy the necessities of life. Tragically, Queensland is the worst state in Australia when it comes to unemployment rates. A lot of hot air comes from the Premier about jobs, but the real fact of life is that Queensland is consistently coming last in the employment statistics. Last month's figures show that the unemployment rate in Queensland was 8.9 per cent. That is the worst in Australia. Tasmania's unemployment rate is 8.6 per cent. The ramification of this level of unemployment, particularly on young people, is a tragedy.

It is time the community woke up to the fact that all we get from this government are words and hot air. It is time for real jobs. It is time that our unemployment rate was below the average and not above the average, substandard, below par and the worst in Australia. If one wants to make a judgment on the performance of the Labor government, a judgment on the performance of the Premier, a judgment of the principles and policies in place to create jobs and economic activity, one simply needs to look at the unemployment statistics. The cold, hard facts are that month after month Queensland comes last. We have been one of the poorest performing states in Australia for the last 16 months. Queensland has come last some 12 times and second last four times.

When we on this side of the House left government, Queensland's unemployment rate stood at 8.5 per cent. It is now 8.9 per cent. It is going the wrong way under this government. In that same time, the national Australian unemployment figure has dropped considerably, by 1.2 per cent. Let us look at the unemployment rates for the last month. In March Queensland's unemployment rate increased from 8.8 per cent to 8.9 per cent—an increase of 0.1 per cent. A year ago it was 8.3 per cent, so it has increased by 0.6 per cent over the course of a year. In March Australia's unemployment rate decreased from 6.9 per cent to 6.8 per cent—a decrease of 0.1 per cent. A year ago, unemployment in Australia was 6.8 per cent, so the national unemployment rate has basically stayed the same during that 12-month period.

Queensland's unemployment rate is a tragedy for all Queenslanders, particularly young people. One thing the National Party wants to achieve is for the youth of Queensland to have hope and optimism that there is a future, a chance, an opportunity and flexibility for employment opportunities. We also want to ensure that there is a raft of jobs that young people and Queenslanders generally can apply for. The tragedy of this situation is that Queensland is the state of opportunity, or we should be the state of opportunity. Queensland has the ideal weather in order for the tourism and hospitality industries to be far greater than they are in other states. Therefore, opportunities for young people in this state should be far greater than they are in other states, not the worst. Queensland also has export industries such as agriculture and mining. With the current low dollar these industries have the opportunity to create so many jobs. It is pleasing to see that agriculture is leading the way in the creation of jobs. Expansion is a very big possibility, particularly in intensive areas such as cotton farming, viticulture, the beef cattle industry and so forth.

What is the real reason for Queensland's high unemployment rate? What are the fundamental reasons there are no job opportunities? Perhaps it relates to the lack of

infrastructure. There are many major projects being opened at the moment, and one such example is the South East Busway. There has been a lot of PR about that. However, who put the busway proposal in place? It was the National-Liberal coalition. My colleague the Deputy Leader of the Opposition signed the initial contracts involved in getting the busway up and running. Who got the eight-lane highway to the Gold Coast under way after getting the money, signing all the contracts and putting everything in place? The National-Liberal Party government put that project in place. Who put the airport train link in place? It was signed off and started by the coalition just before we lost the election in 1998.

What new projects are under way? To find out, one only has to ask the contractors around this state about their prospects in the future. They see their prospects as pretty dim indeed because they do not see new contracts being signed. They do not see new major infrastructure projects getting under way. There are no projects under way which not only create jobs during the construction phase but also create work in the future.

In the past when we have criticised the pitiful unemployment rates that exist under the Beattie Labor government, we have given some real solutions. One such solution was the proposal for the recycled water pipeline from south-eastern Queensland to the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs. Not only would this project provide work during the construction phase; it would also provide an annual \$300 million boost to the economic growth of Queensland. That means jobs for people in transport, agriculture, packaging, exports and a whole range of small business operations.

It is about time we saw this government make some announcements about projects that are of real worth—that is, projects that not only provide employment during construction but also provide ongoing employment in the future through the increased economic activity that such projects provide. Once again—in fact, for about the 15th time—I strongly recommend to this parliament the recycled water pipeline project. It will not only clear up the environmental problems of Moreton Bay, the Brisbane River and the Condamine-Balonne and Murray-Darling system but also provide many jobs for so many people, particularly young people, in the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs.

Approximately one in four young people are unemployed, which is some 23.8 per cent. Those who sit in this parliament should believe that that is simply disgraceful. Surely Queensland can do better. Surely we can change the policies of the existing government to bring about opportunities for young people. Day by day the public is getting sick of the hot air that comes from the Premier. The people of Queensland want to see something real. The Premier can talk and talk, hold conferences, seminars and strategies and publish brochures and coloured documents, but if at the end of the day Queensland has the worst unemployment rate in Australia the people are going to realise that they want a government of substance and a Premier of substance.

Around the state there are other projects that have stalled which would provide great opportunities to create jobs for young people and for the subsequent downstreaming of jobs, and I refer to dam building. How many dams have been started under this government? Not one. The Nathan dam has not started, but what about the Paradise dam? So much was said by the honourable member opposite in her election campaign three or four years ago as to how important that was. Not one backhoe has moved in yet. Not one hole has been dug. Absolutely nothing has happened. This is yet another good example of promises, promises, promises and no action.

Small business is one of the greatest sources of jobs for young people in particular. If we were to talk to small businesses we would hardly find a small business operator who would not be willing or keen to put on another staff member, so great is their workload. But under the current industrial laws of this government there is no incentive for small business to employ people. We need industrial laws that make it easy for small business to employ people, not make it harder. The greatest asset any employer has is a talented and loyal employee. That is what they want. They want to be able to put on talented people and keep them on. But if something does not work out—they are the ones borrowing the money and putting their hands in their pocket to make that business operate successfully for the good of their family and community—they should have the right to change employees and put on someone else who can do the job to the standard that they require. That is one of the key reasons why we are not getting unemployment levels down in this state.

My time has expired, but can I say once again what a tragedy it is that Queensland is coming last in the unemployment stakes in Australia.

### **Councillor Eddie Santagiuliana**

**Mr BRISKEY** (Cleveland—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): The residents of the Redland Shire are still in a state of shock following the sad passing of their Mayor, Councillor Eddie Santagiuliana. Even though Eddie suffered a massive heart attack and died nine days ago, we have not come to terms with the fact that he has gone. We expect to see him as we always have, attending functions in his beloved shire. For Eddie the shire was his life. He was first elected to council in 1982 and became mayor in 1994. For 19 years Eddie served the people and became known as the people's mayor. His commitment to his position as Mayor of the Redland Shire was never questioned. He was a person who truly cared about everyone in the shire and about the shire's future. As local resident Don Seccombe said, Eddie's life revolved around the wellbeing of the Redlands and the people who lived within it.

Even though Eddie was born in Italy, he lived most of his life in the Redland Shire. He arrived in Australia as a nine year old with his parents, Cecilia and his late father, Ferdinando. Eddie's parents farmed at Wellington Point and later at Thornlands, first growing vegetables and later roses. Eddie married Carolyn in 1971 and they had three sons, Christian, Nicholas and Nathaniel. At Eddie's funeral last Friday Eddie would have been extremely proud of his boys; they spoke extremely well and were a credit to their father.

I first met Eddie in 1986, when I was a teacher at the Thornlands State School and I am very pleased to see students from the Thornlands State School in the gallery today. Eddie was the local councillor for division 3 and was heavily involved in the P&C at the school. His boys attended the school and he was always at the school supporting them and their school.

I got to know Eddie on a personal basis when I was elected as the member for Redlands in 1989. I soon realised just how well he was regarded in the community. When he was elected mayor in 1994 I began to see him on many occasions each and every week. At every function I attended Eddie was there. And if he could not attend, Carolyn would be there in his stead. He attended many more shire functions than I did, as his shire includes three state electorates. He was a tireless worker.

Eddie's community involvement began as an 18 year old, when he became secretary of the Redland District Strawberry Growers Association. He was also chairman of the Queensland Fruit Growers Cooperative for many years and chaired the Redlands Strawberry Festival for more than five years. In addition, Eddie served as president of the Redlands Asthma Awareness Group and was also a director on the board of the Queensland Asthma Foundation. He also served as president of the Cleveland and District High School Parents and Citizens Association and was at one time vice-president of the Thornlands State School Parents and Citizens Association.

Eddie was a member of many sporting, cultural and community organisations and was patron of 36 of those organisations. Eddie also participated in the ministerial regional community forums, regional strategy groups, the Logan-Nerang Water Quality Management Committee, the Regional Water Quality Management Committee, and the Redlands Tourism Committee. Eddie was also chairman of SOUTHROC, the Southern Regional Organisation of Councils—a job that he took extremely seriously and one that gave him much pleasure and one that he spoke to me about on many occasions.

At the requiem mass held for Eddie last Friday Archbishop Bathersby quoted from a statement provided by Eddie's family for the funeral service. It stated—

I am aware that in time my memory will fade. They will probably name a bridge or a park or a building after me. That might be nice but I will be just as happy if, every now and again, the people that I loved and who loved me will spare a kind thought and perhaps a prayer for Eddie.

Eddie, we will remember you.

Eddie was a man who achieved much in his too short life. He will be sadly missed. On behalf of my wife, Cathy, and our family, I extend our sincere condolences to Carolyn, Christian, Nicholas and Nathaniel and also to Eddie's mother, Cecilia, and other family members. I also take this opportunity to extend the sincere condolences of the Honourable Nita Cunningham, the Minister for Local Government and Planning, and all honourable members of this House. Eddie, we will miss you.

### **Councillor Eddie Santagiuliana; Shepherdson Inquiry**

**Mr QUINN** (Robina—Lib) (11.45 a.m.): Following on from the sentiments of the previous speaker, I also pass on my condolences and those of members on this side of the House to the

family and friends of Eddie Santagiuliana. He was a tireless worker, as has been said, for the residents of the Redland Shire.

**Mr Lucas:** A visionary man.

**Mr QUINN:** Yes. I met Eddie on a number of occasions and I was always impressed by the vigour with which he pursued the interests of the Redland Shire, in many instances to the detriment of his personal standing within the community. He certainly had, as has been said, a vision for the Redland Shire and he worked hard to bring that vision to reality.

The other issue I wish to speak about today is the report of the Shepherdson inquiry, which was presented to the House this morning. This means that the whole sorry saga of electoral rotting in Queensland is now rapidly drawing to a close. From the perspective of the people of Queensland, they are glad to see it being drawn to a close. I think they are sick and tired of seeing this sort of behaviour from political parties and politicians and want to see something done in terms of cleaning up the whole electoral process.

This issue dominated the news and also a recent Queensland state election. I do not wish to go over the details of it. Suffice it to say that in the lead-up to that election and during the campaign the Premier was most insistent and quite vigorous in terms of what he intended to do to improve the electoral system in Queensland and to clean up the rorts within the Labor Party. He pursued that with a zeal that I have not seen from the Premier over the past three years on any other topic in Queensland politics.

He was successful in persuading the general public that he was genuine about it and was moving to clean up the ALP and the electoral system in general. I have to say, though, that since that time things have gone remarkably cold. We have really had no further commitment from the Premier or the ALP to pursuing those ideals and actions outlined in the election campaign. In fact, in many respects the opposite has happened. During that campaign the Premier gave the commitment that there would be no electoral rorters employed on the public payroll in government offices and so on. And that would match public expectations. What we did not expect, of course, was a couple of those self-confessed rorters then turning up as employees in parliamentary offices. That was a double standard and it gave the public quite a shock when that was found to be the case.

The report has included in it some suggestions and recommendations in terms of what might happen in the future with respect to legislative changes. I think what we need to do now is to put those changes, or the government's version of those changes—whatever they may be when they come into the House—into effect as quickly as possible. This has been dragging on for far too long. It is an issue of public confidence in the electoral system in Queensland and we need to address those issues as quickly as possible.

Some of the other suggestions in the report relate to the management and performance of the preselection processes within political parties themselves. And no doubt they also will come in for due attention when legislation comes into the House. Interestingly, Mr Shepherdson made the statement that but for the limitations of state and federal laws many more prosecutions could have proceeded. I think those people who escaped by the skin of their teeth can think themselves lucky.

The reforms should be put in place as soon as possible. We need to get to the position where there are no more elections in Queensland conducted in the environment of the previous state election campaign. We cannot have the electoral system in this state brought into disrepute again. It simply is a blight upon democracy and our election process and it casts a shadow over every honourable member. We need to move as quickly as possible to clean this up so it enhances the House's reputation and the standing of members of parliament in the general community.

Now, that may take some time, but my view is that it should happen before the next round of either state or local government elections. They are not due for a number of years, so we have plenty of time to put that into place. But we need to be vigilant to make sure that these changes do happen and that, no matter to which political party we belong, we do not put ourselves in a position where these sorts of allegations can again be levelled against members of the House.

### **Sugar Industry**

**Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.50 a.m.): There is something ironic about the member for Mulgrave rising in this chamber to speak to the issue of cane grub infestation of Queensland's

sugar crop. I say this because it was at Meringa near Gordonvale in the electorate of Mulgrave that the cane toad—the *bufo marinus*—was foisted upon the state and hailed as a saviour of the industry. History clearly shows that the cane toad proved singularly unsuccessful in combating the grey-back beetle and its grub.

Cane grubs cost the sugar industry millions of dollars annually in lost production and in direct on-farm costs associated with the application of insecticides. There are also additional costs to be borne by mills in coping with the damage to machinery as a result of the introduction of dirt to the factory because the cane stool has itself been damaged. The industry has suffered flooding and cyclonic weather against a background of low world prices for many years and cannot afford another blow.

Cane grubs are definitely on the increase in many growing areas. From Mulgrave, Innisfail and Tully in the north to the Burdekin, this silent killer is taking hold of an increasing area of cane and reducing it to worthless stubble. I have visited farms at Upper Daradgee, at Little Mulgrave and at Green Hill to see first-hand the absolute devastation this pest is visiting upon otherwise healthy crops. With the insects present in such high numbers, absolute control is no longer a viable option. The focus has shifted to long-term management. Even if chemical application were able to reduce grub numbers by 90 per cent to 95 per cent, there would be enough residual presence of cane grubs to have a serious negative economic impact.

The Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations has done a considerable amount of work on establishing an integrated pest management regime to maintain some degree of control over the pest once numbers have been reduced to a manageable level. Chemicals such as suSCon Blue and Confidor are being field tested, with promising results being obtained only in some instances. A key drawback of chemicals in current use is their short life span in the soil. Their predecessors had a half life in the order of 10 to 20 years, which made them a viable production cost. Requiring annual application, they are financially beyond the reach of the majority of farmers. To pay so heavily for chemical control of a pest equates to growing a crop for satisfaction only, as the return on the farm gate product does not justify the investment.

Many growers have raised the possibility of returning to the use of organochlorides as a short-term measure to gain ascendancy over the cane grub. Such a proposition is not only impossible under current federal legislation, namely, the Commonwealth Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994, which is complemented in this state by the agvet code of Queensland, it is highly irresponsible, as to do so would raise the spectre of Australia's primary production becoming a pariah on the world market.

In 1987, the sugar industry banned the use of organochlorides such as Gamaxane, Heptachlor and Dieldrin, amongst others. It did this in response to evidence presented by the United States citing the existence of organochloride residue in export beef. Most other primary industries had given such products away a decade or more earlier. Given the fact that no international chemical company produces the product anymore, it would be fair to say that its application is out of the question.

There is no magic silver bullet to solve this problem. The world's major chemical companies do not share the same level of urgency or concern as affected growers. They rationalise that, with the Australian pesticide market accounting for only 2 per cent of the international market, our capacity to force the issue is limited. The BSES, which has come under some degree of criticism in certain quarters, is simply not to blame for the current predicament. It does not and will not have the capacity to develop chemical agents to do the job. It is accepted that the time span for pesticide development is not only much slower now; it is prohibitively more expensive. The BSES can play an important role with chemical companies by engaging in the compilation of data as a result of controlled field tests.

The issue of the grey-back beetle is of huge significance to the sugar industry. I do not believe that I was being less than honest when I likened its effect—if it remains unchecked—to that of foot-and-mouth disease. It has the potential to destroy the Queensland sugar crop should it spread at its present rate. This is why I have urged the Minister for Primary Industries, the Honourable Henry Palaszczuk, to consider a rebate to growers who apply available costly chemicals to their crops. Not only does this give some protection to the individual; it is also an insurance policy for the industry as a whole.

In addition, the industry has requested the employment of two additional DPI extension officers along with a technical assistant within the BSES to assist in the education of farmers in the implementation of integrated pest management practices. I support these measures, and I

call upon the government to give them urgent consideration. Queensland's sugar industry is running out of time.

### **Stock Stealing**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (11.55 a.m.): The stealing of stock has been romanticised by some as cattle duffing or poddy dodging, but there can be no doubt that stock stealing is as much a crime as is stealing any other type of another person's property. The number of reported incidents of cattle theft has increased dramatically with the current good prices and the shortage of stock, with the number of reported incidents almost doubling in the last calendar year compared with a similar period last year. Yet it has become obvious from the questions that I have asked in this parliament that there is very little chance of cattle thieves being caught in Queensland today. By the minister's own admission, Queensland has become a cattle thieves' paradise.

It has become obvious that Queensland stock owners can expect very little help from the Queensland police force if their stock are stolen, and they have almost no chance at all of having those stock recovered. They simply must suffer the financial loss or take the matter into their own hands, and that is regrettable. That has been clearly illustrated by a reply to my question on notice No. 4, wherein the Police Minister informed the parliament that the average clear-up rate for investigations into cattle theft for this year was just five per cent. A miserable five per cent of the incidents reported this year have been cleared up. Over the last three years, the clear-up rate has averaged just 14 per cent. That is the average clear-up rate, not the successful prosecution rate. We are still waiting for those figures.

There can be no justification for this failure to enforce the law in Queensland. There can no justification for this failure to protect the assets of Queensland's primary producers. It is, I believe, another indication of the very low priority given by the state government to anything to do with rural Queensland and primary production. It is another example of the lack of substance behind the rhetoric of governing for all Queenslanders.

The minister's answer also revealed that the Queensland police force has a Stock Squad with 23 positions of which 18 are operational positions. That would seem to be a very small Stock Squad, considering the size of Queensland and its livestock-based industries. But the absurdity of it is that, of those 18 operational positions, nine are currently vacant and have been for some time. It is no wonder then that with a Stock Squad at half strength and a dramatic rise in reported stock stealing cases, our clear-up rate is running at 5 per cent of reported cases.

Primary production of all types is an increasingly risky business, and no business can afford the loss of an asset that has been grown or bred or built up at considerable cost to the owner. Primary producers have every right to expect that the law enforcement agencies in this state will be properly resourced to ensure that they enjoy the same level of investigation and prosecution for crime in their areas as is achieved in respect to the inexcusable stealing of assets in other cases of illegal activity.

The Queensland Stock Squad has been allowed to run down over the last three years to a point where it is hardly operating at all. A 5 per cent clear-up rate is certainly no deterrent to would-be cattle thieves and would—and should—be unacceptable in any other area of crime. It is regrettable that some rural organisations which should be unashamedly representing the interests of Queensland cattlemen have been conveniently quiet and compliant on this issue, much to the Police Minister's relief and the state Labor government's delight. The minister's response last week to appoint two new coordinator positions is woefully inadequate and will not on its own do much to solve the staffing problem.

The Queensland police force needs to recognise the special skills needed to be an effective part of the Stock Squad, and officers who have those skills must be paid at a level which rewards and recognises their specialised skills, just as officers in many other areas are paid and rewarded for their specialised skills. That should have been happening before now. It should have been recognised that the effectiveness of the Stock Squad was being lost long before this point of complete failure was reached. There needs to be an active recruitment program to reverse the run-down that has occurred since this Labor government came to power. That recruitment program needs to focus on recruiting qualified people who have the right background and to whom stock recognition and handling skills are second nature.

It must be recognised that in the livestock industries and in the agricultural colleges of this state there are many people with what are very specialised skills who can and would make

excellent Stock Squad officers if their skills were recognised and properly rewarded. The Police Minister's proposal to dramatically increase the penalties for stock stealing is long overdue and it would be welcome if the Stock Squad was able to investigate and prosecute stock thieves. At the moment it is clearly not doing that, and with a clear-up rate of five per cent the penalties are almost irrelevant. No-one is being prosecuted, no-one is being caught and no-one is being convicted.

All Queensland stock owners can, however, be assured that we will continue to raise this issue in this parliament until the Stock Squad is returned to full strength. We will continue to raise this issue until this problem is resolved.

### **BHP; Medical Adviser**

**Mr PEARCE** (Fitzroy—ALP) (12.00 p.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the unconscionable bad faith behaviour of BHP in the way that it is using the medical profession to further undermine job security in the coal industry. BHP is about to hire the services of a Tieri GP, Dr Foley, to act as its nominated medical adviser, or NMA, in the town of Moranbah to carry out work traditionally done by two local GPs. Honourable members might ask: why would BHP want to threaten the viability of the established medical practitioners who are already feeling the impact of a declining population in a town that, because of the policies of BHP, can no longer boast of stability through permanent employment and job opportunities for young people?

BHP is going down this path because it knows that Dr Foley has what can be said to be a proven track record when it comes to working with the company to remove from the workforce those workers who, through illness or a disability, are past their use-by date. BHP is prepared to try anything that will assist it in reducing permanent employee positions at its mine sites.

Under the Coal Employees' Health Scheme, which is a regulation under the Coal and Safety Act, NMAs are retained by a coal company to make decisions about the fitness for duty of employees—that is, to assess whether or not an employee is fit enough to fulfil his or her job requirements. In addition to appointing Dr Foley as its NMA for the Crinum and Gregory mines near Tieri, BHP also uses the same GP under the requirements of WorkCover legislation to review rehabilitation recommendations and other matters prepared by a treating practitioner and/or specialist.

We believe that this is a clear conflict of interest, leaving workers open to abuse under a structure that encourages biased comment and cash for comment. We believe that there are breaches in confidentiality because information associated with workers' rehabilitation has been released by the company to the NMA without the authority of the injured worker. This is in direct conflict with WorkCover legislation. The doctor is a paid representative of the BHP workers' compensation unit as well as the nominated medical adviser. This raises issues of ethics, morals and the potential for breaches of confidentiality under the professional medical banner.

We have evidence to support these claims. BHP has chosen to ignore the concerns of the Moranbah community because it believes that its association with the nominated GP will deliver reports that will assist it in ending the working life of employees. The injured or sick worker has no right to refuse a medical examination. He has no protection from an employer who has determined that the worker has no place within the workforce and can be terminated on the recommendations of the NMA. There is no appeal process provided for in the regulations once those recommendations have been made. This is just another means for BHP to dismiss a permanent worker and replace that worker with a contractor. It also stops workers from reporting injuries to their employer—and that is not in the best interests of the worker. It does not matter how skilled that worker is, how good he or she does the job or whether he or she is a dud, the objective is to remove the permanent position from the employment list.

The NMA removes from the worker contact with his or her treating doctor who is aware of all the circumstances and illnesses experienced by the worker and who plays a vital role in the management of an injury or an illness. By importing the cash for comment doctor or doctors from outside Moranbah, BHP can influence the future of injured or sick workers. BHP, by its actions, is telling local GPs that they cannot provide the sleazy outcomes that the company is wanting. The fact that Dr Foley has no more medical expertise than the Moranbah GPs means that Dr Foley has been employed by BHP as its NMA because it believes that he can be relied on to sell out workers.

BHP should immediately withdraw from its intention to import Dr Foley into Moranbah as its nominated medical officer from the Goonyella Riverside Mine. BHP has, once again, been

exposed for its unprofessional and unethical behaviour, which is typical of the way BHP does business these days. BHP should back off or have its conduct be seen for what it is: unethical and unprofessional.

### **African Lovegrass; Vegation Management**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (12.05 p.m.): African lovegrass is already one of the main weeds of the Burnett region and it is rapidly getting worse. Recent meetings at Kingaroy and Eidsvold revealed the extent of public concern for African lovegrass. Ninety people representing local government, government departments, Landcare and farmers travelled from Crows Nest and Jandowae to Kingaroy to express their concerns regarding this problem plant. Seventy people at Eidsvold expressed similar concerns.

The very rapid spread of African lovegrass along roadsides and its extremely invasive nature is leading to significant areas of pastures being taken over. As well, this aggressive grass is invading many of the remnant vegetation areas and is reducing biodiversity by taking out native species. Urban communities are also having problems with African lovegrass. It is taking over playing fields, parks, footpaths and industrial and waste areas.

The farmers attending the seminar in Kingaroy told of ways that they had tried to control the grass, from burning, ploughing and using goats and donkeys to chemicals. The most successful method seemed to be the use of a couple of different herbicides. However, most were disappointed at the lack of action by the local councils to do anything about the spread of the grass along the roadsides and felt that slashing was contributing to the grass' spread. This is not just a problem in the Burnett. Areas of the grass are established in a number of places throughout Australia, including Gippsland in eastern Victoria.

Governments, both state and federal, should be looking at ways to attack the problem by way of research through CSIRO, DPI or Landcare and financial assistance and advice to local councils. There are no easy control methods for this plant. Prevention of spread and seeding of the plant seems to be by far the best policy. Farmers can prevent its spread by cleaning down the slashers, machinery and vehicles after operating in areas with African lovegrass. Movement of animals is also likely to spread the plant's seeds through their carriage in mud on feet and wet coats.

To date the only herbicide registered for the control of African lovegrass in pastures in Queensland is glyphosate-ipa based. There are other chemical registrations for control of the plant on various crops and other situations.

Because of the current low rate of spread it is considered feasible to implement a program to suppress and then eradicate African lovegrass. In Victoria it has been suggested that an integrated set of control methods will need to be employed. Only each stakeholder playing its part can remove this lovegrass problem and achieve the overall goal of suppression and eradication. It is essential that research be undertaken under Queensland conditions to understand the biology of the plant, to study the different ecosystems and to develop management and chemical control strategies.

I move to a second issue. The sustainable management of Queensland's native vegetation is vital for protecting our unique biodiversity and ensuring the long-term productivity and profitability of our rural industries. Queensland's proclaimed Vegetation Management Act 1999 is said to be an investment in our future. It is supposed to provide a clear guide to ensure our land is sustained for generations to come. Nevertheless, several constituents have written to my office and visited me to outline the impact that the Vegetation Management Act has had on their future, and their future is not looking bright.

The impact of the Vegetation Management Act will mean that these property owners will lose a substantial amount of money, with the result that their companies will no longer be viable and will have to be wound up. The problem is that their plan to be self-funded retirees was based on the sale of the trees and/or land to provide for their superannuation. This is now impossible, as the land that is unable to be cleared for agricultural purposes is also unlikely to sell. These property owners are also left with council rates of many thousands of dollars each year on land that is controlled by the state. The Vegetation Management Act has had a disastrous effect on these people, resulting not only in the decreased productivity of their land but also in the literal theft of their retirement funds.

If the government is so concerned and committed to maintaining forests for the future, would it consider the purchase of this land for native forest for the state's future, because it has no worth whatsoever as agricultural land and has become a financial burden to the land-holders. I ask that the government consider these measures.

Time expired.

### University of Southern Queensland

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (12.10 p.m.): I wish to raise the valuable contribution of the Darling Downs' own university, situated in Toowoomba, the USQ, towards the government attaining its goal of Queensland becoming the Smart State. This state government has always recognised the integral part played by its universities in that endeavour. I noted that the Premier was reported in the *Courier-Mail* as saying that universities were a crucial element in delivering a Smart State and said that the government had committed more than \$94 million to capital works projects at Queensland's eight publicly funded universities since 1998.

We have ensured that there is a strong bias within that funding towards projects that add value to our Smart State agenda. I believe that an important aspect of the USQ's success in marketing itself, particularly in South-East Asia, is Queensland's multiculturalism. Anyone here who heard or has read the maiden speech of the honourable member for Capalaba knows what is meant by multiculturalism. Students who come here feel welcome. The Premier has described that as one of this state's great strengths.

Australia earns considerable foreign currency as a result of the export of the USQ's courses: 13,000 students of the USQ are off campus studying by distance learning, including 3,000 offshore; 5,000 students study on campus, of whom 900 are international students from 40 nations. Part of the university's success in gaining widespread overseas support is the recognition that the university provides one of Australia's most progressive university preparations and degree programs for international students. Courses are offered in the following faculties: arts, business, commerce, education, engineering, surveying and science in levels from certificate and associate degree to masters and doctorate.

Recent attainments of the USQ include the joint winner of the *Good Universities Guide's*, Australia's University of the Year 2000-01 for demonstrating leadership in developing the e-university; winner in the organisational category, Queensland Government Multicultural Studies Award, and in 1999, inaugural winner of the Award for Excellence as a leading dual mode university, that is, students can study on campus or through distance programs, or a mix of both, in the world by UNESCO's International Council for Open and Distance Education.

This university's importance to the city of Toowoomba and the region of the Darling Downs, Lockyer and South Burnett is immense. Its presence not only promotes the opportunity for those people who live in that area to attend it, and thus enjoy the advantage of, in a very real sense, being part of the Smart State but also its annual economic injection into the region's economy is in excess of \$114 million a year with a multiplier of about 1.8. From a statewide perspective, Queensland's universities earned more than \$275 million in export revenue.

Despite all of the university's accomplishments, of which I have mentioned only a few, and notwithstanding its economic value to the Toowoomba region and the state, the USQ receives the lowest public funding per equivalent full-time students of all the non-private Australian universities. The Commonwealth government gives it an operating grant of about \$69 million, but that includes about \$23 million contributed by students through their HECS payments. Therefore, the USQ gets less than 45 per cent of its resources from the Commonwealth. This is promoted by the federal coalition as increasing self-reliance.

This situation causes the USQ to look elsewhere for necessary funds, at least while the Howard government remains in power. The Beattie government has been most supportive of the USQ: capital works, as I mentioned at the outset; rural nursing; and land use studies. I know that the university hopes that its world leadership in fibre composites design and development will soon be recognised. I know that the USQ praises the Beattie government's Smart State initiatives and offers encouragement and a way forward for this government to better utilise the university sector as an engine room for the better.

Time expired.

### BoysTown

**Hon. K. R. LINGARD** (Beaudesert—NPA) (12.15 p.m.): I have continually expressed my concern about the way in which BoysTown at Beaudesert has been downgraded by the ALP. I am talking about the actual facility at BoysTown and not necessarily the BoysTown facility, about which the Minister for Public Works was very complimentary this morning, and which is actually Link-Up at Woodridge. I am talking about the excellent facilities at BoysTown to which up to 84 young students can be taken.

I remind members that in 1997 the coalition had 84 boys at BoysTown—in fact, one or two extra, because as a special favour they took one or two extra kids who had found trouble. At BoysTown, those 84 students would receive the support, the educational programs and the rehabilitation that they needed. That is a very important thing about BoysTown: it has plenty of activities and plenty of community support to give those boys the support that they need.

It is very unfortunate that the ALP succumbs to those people within their ranks who believe in deinstitutionalisation—not just a little bit of deinstitutionalisation; a complete revamp of all of those facilities such as mental health facilities and anything else that might to them look like an institution. It is completely unfair to see a place like BoysTown, which provides so much excellent assistance to those particular boys, being downgraded completely to the extent that, although 84 places are available at BoysTown and are paid for by the government, at present I would say there are probably only a dozen young children using the facilities.

The Department of Families, which has its workers going out to the magistrates courts and recommending to the magistrate places to which young children can be sent, are not recommending them to places like BoysTown because they have this thought that it is an institution and that it should be downgraded. I find continually that the ALP is going through reviews of all of these places, coming up with a review that might find that, over many, many years ago something may have happened, and then turning around and saying, 'Therefore, we need to close that particular institution.' I can see what will happen at BoysTown: someone is going to come up with something that happened many, many years ago and they are going to say, 'Look at the money that is being spent there. We have only a dozen boys there; therefore we are going to close BoysTown.'

To hear the Minister for Education the other day—she did not realise that the Department of Education looks after the education facilities at BoysTown and the work that is done there, and at present has dropped the number of students and teachers from 17 to seven—

**Ms BLIGH:** I rise to a point of order. I find it untrue and offensive. I was completely aware of Education Queensland's views, but the member's question was framed in the wrong way. I ask for it to be withdrawn.

**Mr LINGARD:** I withdraw because the minister went right off and said that I, as a former Minister for Families, should realise that it was not she who gives the funding; it was the Minister for Families. However, obviously the Department of Education has dropped the number of teachers from 17 to seven.

I refer not only to a facility like BoysTown, where I see a massive waste of facilities, but also to the Minister for Employment and Training, who this morning spoke about some of his access programs on the Gold Coast. The other day I went to a special facility called the Team Employment And Training Network at Moorooka. There I saw magnificent facilities where unemployed people can go and receive education about mechanics, spray-painting, panel beating, retail courses, office administration, landscaping and information technology. They had a special section that provided clothing for those young people who are going to interviews. There at Moorooka is a magnificent facility, which previously had been very successful in providing employment programs but had not received federal funding two years ago. Now you could say that it is a complete waste of a magnificent facility provided by a community organisation. Through a DEET program, the Minister for Employment and Training could provide facilities and could provide assistance to this program if he wanted to.

In Queensland we have 8.9 per cent unemployment and 23.8 per cent unemployment for youth. Yet in the minister's own electorate is a magnificent facility which, for lack of funding, is not providing assistance to those young people. Also, at Salisbury one can find exactly the same sort of thing. One can find rooms containing massive numbers of computers and lots of information technology, but because of lack of funding from the state government that equipment is not providing any service to the young unemployed. I say to the government that it is wasting facilities

at BoysTown and it is wasting facilities in employment and training that could be beneficial to young people.

Time expired.

### **Councillor Eddie Santagiuliana**

**Mr CHOI** (Capalaba—ALP) (12.20 p.m.): I rise today to pay tribute to the late Councillor Eddie Santagiuliana, the Mayor of Redland Shire Council who, sadly, passed away unexpectedly at his Cleveland home on Sunday 22 April at the age of 55. Councillor Santagiuliana was known as the people's mayor and he much preferred to be called Eddie rather than his formal title.

Eddie was born in Italy and migrated to Australia, arriving in the Redlands in 1955 at the age of nine. He attended the local state schools at Capalaba, Birkdale and Wellington Point. Over the years, Eddie became greatly involved in the Redlands community. At the tender age of 18 he became the secretary of the Strawberry Growers Association. At the time of his death he was patron of almost 40 organisations in his shire. Eddie was elected as councillor in 1982 and mayor in 1994. He served the citizens of the Redlands faithfully for over 18 years.

I spoke to Eddie the night before he died and he told me about his intention to return to work the next week. That was typical of a man who was totally committed to his work and to the people who trusted him. Eddie, the people's mayor, never hesitated to encourage others. He came up to me at a function and said, 'Michael, I have noticed how you have worked in the last two months. Keep it up and the people will love you just as they love me.'

Eddie's was another successful migrant story. On the night he was elected mayor for the first time he told the Honourable Con Sciacca, the federal member for Bowman, 'That's not too bad for a wog.' Eddie was a classic example of how migrants come to this land, work hard and contribute so much to this great country of ours despite where they come from, their creed or their religion. Eddie, the people's mayor, will be sadly missed by all, and his work is evident around the shire.

### **Councillor Eddie Santagiuliana**

**Mr ENGLISH** (Redlands—ALP) (12.23 p.m.): The honourable member for Capalaba has provided a picture of where Eddie came from and what factors influenced Eddie's development. I will focus on the legacy he has left for the people of the Redlands.

There are a multitude of images associated with Eddie. The first image is that Eddie was a people's person. Eddie was an Italian migrant who could talk and relate to all people, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. Eddie was a Catholic but would support and lobby for people of all faiths. No-one was considered too small for Eddie to spend some time with, listening to their concerns. In short, Eddie enjoyed people.

The next image is that Eddie was committed to the Redlands. At different times, Eddie was a member of the National Party and the Liberal Party. However, Eddie would not let his political beliefs interfere with working for the people of the Redlands. No matter what political beliefs the relevant state or federal members held, Eddie would praise them or criticise them to obtain the best results for the people of the Redland Shire Council.

Another image is of a man in perpetual motion. Eddie never stopped. Eddie was a tireless worker who served on many P&C associations and was the chairman of the Strawberry Festival and chairman of the Queensland Fruitgrowers Cooperative. Eddie was a member of many community and service organisations throughout the shire and was a patron of a total of 36 organisations.

The final image I and many others in the Redlands have is of Carolyn standing alongside Eddie. Most of the time, if Eddie was there so was Carolyn. If Eddie could not make an engagement, then Carolyn would be there. Carolyn was very supportive of Eddie and his mission to improve the Redland Shire area. More than that, Carolyn was and still is a tireless worker for community and volunteer groups within the Redlands. It is a tribute to Carolyn that after such a tragedy she was able to attend three ceremonies on Anzac Day, which I also attended. That shows her strength as a person.

On behalf of this House, I extend our deepest sympathies to Carolyn and her sons, Christian, Nicholas and Nathaniel. Eddie's legacy is carried in the hearts and minds of all residents of the Redlands.

### Stuart Shale Oil Project

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—IND) (12.25 p.m.): In today's local paper the *Observer*, the managers of the SPP/CPM company—

**Mr Lucas:** What do the initials stand for?

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** Southern Pacific Petroleum/Central Pacific Minerals. That company is now managing the Stuart shale oil project, which was previously managed by Suncor. It has stated publicly that its emissions have improved markedly and that they are particularly pleased with the level of odour emissions that their plant is creating. Statistically, there may be some improvement. However, the people who live in the wind tunnel from that plant hold a completely different point of view.

Over the past couple of weeks that Stuart has been operating, the EPA has received in excess of 120 complaints. Today I would like to present to the House some of the points of view of the residents who are affected by both noise and odour from the plant. One resident has said—

The noise from the plant is terrible particularly all night when we are trying to sleep and the smell has become unbearable to such an extent we have had to leave our home & find accommodation elsewhere. Because of this our life has been disrupted so much we feel we can't have friends and family to visit in case they are affected by it.

Indeed, a number of families have relocated into town at the plant's expense. That leaves their farms unsupervised. Some members of the community have missed critical periods for the spraying of crops. Others cannot go out to look after stock because, when they do go onto their properties, their health is affected by emissions from the plant.

Another resident has said—

This brown toxic laden plume destroyed the view of a once peaceful rural setting.

That person was commenting on visibility and amenity. My concern is for those who have complained about health effects.

On 21 April, a complaint was officially lodged which stated—

One of my guests was having difficulty with the odours and was feeling quite out of sorts as a result. After they left I suffered the usual sore throat and roof of mouth. Headache commenced shortly after and remained for some hours.

Another resident has stated—

On arrival home noted a strong odour with a slightly different smell to it. Not quite as sweet as in the past. Still very offensive and very intrusive.

All of those residents have complained to SPP/CPM and, in most instances, to the EPA. Others have complained about sore throats, nausea, headaches and sensitivity to the roof of the mouth. At the first production trial in October 1999, there was a significant reaction whereby quite a number of people in the community suffered similar health effects, including ulceration of the mouth and inflammation of mucous membranes. At the time that was confirmed to be consistent with the output from the plant. Those are the types of health complaints that residents constantly log while the plant is running.

In a way, the odours and the noise from the plant are opportunistic. They are subject to the wind direction and wind intensity. However, for the people who live in the Targinnie Valley, the effect on their quality of life and their health is indisputable. People have reported numbness of the lips and sore eyes. That is consistent with the types of complaints that are logged regularly. One person has stated—

After about 5 mins on the southern end of the plant, near the QCL entrance, I had a sore throat which lasted the rest of the evening. The smell was awful. Not the usual burnt oil smell.

At the time he thought that the smell came from another plant, but he rang the pollution hotline and when they rang him back they agreed that it was a slightly different odour but it was definitely from the gasses being burnt after the initial shale processing.

The list of complaints goes on, but I will run out of time if I continue to list them. However, I want to put on record that in the main everybody wants that plant to succeed. Everybody acknowledges the need for jobs, but somewhere in this whole regime people's health and quality of life must be protected. In the last five days of the trial the EPA was unable to man their monitoring van because they could not afford to send men or women to be at the van full time. So even the role of the EPA has been restrained.

Time expired.

### Queensland Ambulance Service

**Mr PURCELL** (Bulimba—ALP) (12.30 p.m.): I congratulate the Queensland branch of the Australian Building Construction Employees and Builders Labourers Federation (Queensland Branch) Union of Employees for their running of a touch football game on 20 May this month to raise funds to buy a mini mobile ambulance unit which will be used up and down the east coast of Australia or anywhere in Queensland at major events. It will be fully equipped and fitted out. They are looking to raise \$45,000. I am informed that there will be 80 teams, with about 800 people in total participating. I challenge everybody here in this parliament. We should be able to enter a team to play touch football. This is a chance to get into the employers and give them a flogging. Who would miss that? What a great day that will be! We can line up and get a bit of our own back on the paddock.

We estimate that there will be 2,000 or 3,000 people at the event on the day. I also thank a couple of the ministers, who will be putting out information for the wives and other participants. They are the Minister for Industrial Relations, Gordon Nuttall, and the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth, Matt Foley. I know that a lot of the information they need to get will be given to the wives so that they can deal with those matters.

I urge people to support this event. It will be a great day. I will be asking those who do not attend why they did not front up, particularly those in Brisbane. It is to be held at the Whites Hill playing fields.

**Dr Watson:** Are you sure this is not a contradiction in your role as Deputy Whip over there?

**Mr PURCELL:** None at all! I am sure that everybody here would want to support the Queensland Ambulance Service. Is the member saying that he would not want to support the Queensland Ambulance Service, that he would not want to see this mini ambulance bought so that it can be used at major events where it is difficult to get to people?

Time expired.

## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 3 April (see p. 184).

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.32 p.m.): I will address this bill in the first instance by saying that initially after the election there was some discussion between the Premier and me regarding the formation of the committees. We were basically discussing the make-up of the committees in terms of the number of people sitting on them, bearing in mind the numbers in the House and the large numbers of government members compared with the number of opposition members.

After discussion, the opposition has agreed to this particular system in which the committees will consist of seven members each: four from the government and three from the opposition side. We agreed to this because traditionally, based upon the original EARC reports, the numbers of members on committees have reflected the balance of the parliament, the relative numbers in the parliament itself. Back when we were in government in 1996, when there was a very close parliament, there were three members from each of the government and opposition, with the casting vote going to the chairman of the particular committee. We felt it was fair and reasonable to move to the arrangement of having four government and three opposition members.

I will speak a little about committees. In the 10 years that I have been in parliament I have not had a great deal of experience with the committees, other than the estimates committees. I have never actually served on a committee as for most of that time I have been a shadow minister or a minister. However, I had the opportunity to observe how committees operate when they came to our town of Toowoomba—on relatively few occasions, I must say—to hear evidence on various matters, whether it be public works, public accounts or whatever. The thing I wonder about at times is their overall effectiveness.

Committees are designed to deal with the ever increasing complexities of the parliamentary and government system, and they are designed in such a way that members of those committees can gain a more detailed knowledge of the particular subject and then report back to the parliament so that the other members of parliament, who have their many other parliamentary or other committee tasks to undertake, can receive an informed summary, if you like, of the particular aspect that they have been looking into. The committees are designed then to be an

honest, accurate, bipartisan and impartial investigation or review of the particular aspects that they are looking at.

For example in relation to a public works matter, the committee is designed to ensure that the very best of tendering processes have been undertaken; that the system is accurate, fair and honest; that the construction has been carried out in accordance with the tender documents; that any changes that have to be made during that construction process are fully accountable, because it is taxpayers' money that is being used; and that, if there are any variations or changes, they are being properly processed and are fair both to the company doing the construction and to the taxpayer who ultimately has to foot the bill for the extra amount of money.

In the days of modern parliament, when there is so much more complexity and detail to be understood and examined, the principles of the parliamentary committee system are important, provided that those principles actually result in more effective measures of oversight and more effective measures of accountability and that the committees do not simply end up as another political tool in which one side is careful to guard against anything being discovered that might be of use to the opposition. I guess that is going to be the real test of these committees, to see that they do work with that accuracy and those principles in mind.

In Westminster-style parliaments it is common practice to form these committees to deal with particular issues. We have seen that in the Queensland parliament over the years. Committees were in place back in the 19th century. The practice of having committees really waned during the 20th century until a couple were formed in the seventies. It was really in the late eighties and early nineties that the process of having committees was formally put into place. Now we basically have a system of eight committees, plus the estimates committees that we form after the annual budget is brought down.

For example, committees are established to deal with the internal business of administering parliamentary process, such as the privileges committee and the Standing Orders Committee. There are also committees that deal with parliament's task of review of legislation and those that deal with the scrutiny of government activities that I have mentioned, such as the Public Accounts Committee, the Public Works Committee and the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee.

In 1989 the Fitzgerald report looked at systems in place in the federal parliament of Australia and the House of Commons in the United Kingdom and recommended that Queensland introduce a comprehensive system of parliamentary committees to enhance the ability of parliament to monitor the efficiency of government. In 1992 the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, or EARC, published its report on the review of parliamentary committees, which recommended a new system of parliamentary committees. This resulted in the passing of the Parliamentary Committees Act on 15 September 1995. This act was subsequently amended by the Parliamentary Committees Legislation Amendment Bill 1996. Thus, the use of parliamentary committees as a method of accountability is a cornerstone of the recommendations that have stemmed from the Fitzgerald inquiry.

Today all Australian parliaments enjoy a committee system which is central to the role of both government and parliament in terms of accountability and public scrutiny. There is still today the question of which body is sovereign—the parliament or the government. It is a common mantra in the study of politics that it is the parliament's role to curb the power of executive governments, not the reverse. In the 50th Parliament of Queensland, where the government of the day holds an overwhelming majority of members, it is imperative that the parliament and its committee system are able to curb the power of executive government through adequate scrutiny and the demanding of ethical and accountable government. That is why it is imperative that the parliamentary committees are properly resourced, are free from government influence and are accountable to the parliament and, ultimately, to the people of Queensland. We see that the committees have a very strong role.

The spiralling use of commercial confidentiality to hide government deals with the private sector is undermining accountability and public trust. In recent times, public policy experts and interest groups have expressed concern at the increasing use of commercial in confidence provisions to avoid public scrutiny of government spending. The Virgin Airlines contract is a good example of the lack of scrutiny available to the public and the parliament. We simply have to take the word of the government that it is good for us, not really knowing how many millions of dollars or what particular arrangements were put in place to attract Virgin Airlines to Queensland. There was no ability for the parliament and the public to make a judgment as to whether that money was well spent or whether that money could have been spent on various infrastructure around Queensland.

Dr Steven Bell, a senior lecturer at the University of Queensland's Department of Government, publicly observed last year that the Public Service had developed a private sector ethos and, in many cases, was ignoring its accountability requirements. In a *Courier-Mail* article on 15 March 2000, Dr Bell said—

The bureaucrats are supposed to be responsible directly to their minister, and in the longer line back to Parliament, but they're telling Parliamentary Committees 'we can't talk about things because we've signed commercial contracts'.

There is absolutely no doubt that the commercial in confidence bypass is compromising our Westminster system of accountability. In the same article, the head of public policy at the Queensland University of Technology, Associate Professor Neal Ryan, said the trend to cite commercial in confidence issues was at odds with the rise of anti-corruption organisations such as the Criminal Justice Commission. Professor Ryan said—

On one hand you have an increasing array of public institutions that call government to account, but on the other hand what you have is governments finding ways to avoid those areas of accountability through things like commercial-in-confidence contractual arrangements.

As governments move more and more, and, in many cases, of necessity, into public-private partnerships, it is important that committees continue to keep executive government truly honest and accountable, in line with our Westminster system.

Issues of commercial in confidence may be important until such time as the contract is actually let, before which there may be competing private companies and organisations that do not want others to know what their particular arrangements are. However, if the government has any involvement whatsoever in a partnership relating to a particular project, it is important that the government role be open and accountable and that the partnership role of the private organisation be able to be scrutinised by members of a parliamentary committee. That can be achieved once the arrangement is processed, whilst maintaining all the normal arrangements that occur for a private company. Therefore, the process can be, if you like, retrospectively examined.

Last year we also witnessed Queensland's Auditor-General, Len Scanlan, express concern about what he described as a common justification for limiting public disclosure. In order to restore public confidence in the system of government and the democratic process of the parliament, it is imperative that parliamentary committees are respected and properly resourced so they can better investigate government activities.

The Beattie government's politicisation of the Public Service has become an art form. Consequently, the Public Service can no longer be relied upon to give accurate and relevant information because it is beholden to a government's political interests. It is a most unfortunate set of circumstances and it is a sad reality that many of the proposed Fitzgerald reforms are only a facade, with no substance behind them. The last bastion is the parliamentary committee system. However, amendments contained in the Parliamentary Committees and Criminal Justice Amendment Bill see the elimination of equality in membership by altering the membership of parliamentary committees to seven members, four from the government and three nominated by the opposition. More concerning is what constitutes a quorum, that is, under this bill it will still be four members. The opposition has concerns that a quorum could constitute four government members only, with a chairman from the government with a deliberative as well as a casting vote.

The government's directions or aspirations will win every time, with no input or challenge from an opposition member. I realise that it is important for the opposition to endeavour to ensure that it has representation on individual committees at all times. However, nobody knows what will happen in the future and there could be legitimate reasons for the quorum consisting of four government members only. This makes a mockery of accountability and the honourable intentions of the parliamentary system. As a result, the opposition will be moving an amendment in Committee that a quorum consist of four members with one member being a member of the non-government party or parties. Not only must government be accountable, it must also be seen to be accountable.

In conclusion, the opposition looks forward to the passing of this bill and has indicated that it will not be opposing the bill. In conjunction with the other parties which make up the opposition, we have worked out good representation for three people to represent the opposition on each of those eight committees—the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee, the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, the Public Works Committee, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, the Select Committee on Travelsafe and the Standing Orders Committee. Because of the numbers, virtually everybody on this side of the House will be taking part in one of

those committees. From the point of view of the National Party, we intend to discharge those duties well.

I conclude my remarks in the way I started them by saying that parliamentary committees were put in place for a purpose: to give us a more efficient government and a more accountable government. Those members who will take up positions on those committees have a role to ensure that the committee process is effective and to ensure that we do not start spending millions of dollars on committees which swan around looking at particular constructions or that undertake various investigations and meetings if all they do is of not much use in making the government of the day more efficient in its delivery of the things that people want and to deliver those things in a very honest and accountable way.

We have to ensure that the Public Accounts Committee looks very carefully at the way finances are handled in this state and the way in which public moneys are spent.

The Public Works Committee has an onerous task involving important public projects, be they major projects or be they projects that involve public and private partnerships or simply the way in which school buildings, nurses' quarters or police stations are constructed. That committee needs to examine the tendering process, the effectiveness and accountability of the required construction time and construction costs. It also needs to examine the suitability of the design of those projects to the particular part of the state where they are being constructed. Further, it needs to examine whether projects give the taxpayers good value for money and whether those projects create a suitable working place for the public officers who are to work in those buildings. As an example, if it is a police station, the Public Works Committee needs to ensure that the watch-house and cells are safe, that public counter arrangements are safe, that accessing and exiting the building are safe and so forth.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has an important and onerous task, because the examination of legislation sometimes has to happen very quickly. There were problems in the last parliament in relation to this. When a member rose to speak to a bill, he or she would sometimes find that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee report had only just been completed or had only just been tabled in the House. Whilst that committee has an onerous task, it needs to be able to undertake scrutiny of legislation in a very timely fashion.

**Mr Lucas:** It used to be one week laying on the table in your parliament; it is two weeks under us.

**Mr HORAN:** I well remember standing up to debate particular bills when the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee report was tabled at the last minute. During the last parliament the gag was also applied about 16 or 17 times on important issues such as the dairy industry and vegetation and water management. The minister should not get on his high horse too much, because the government's performance in the last parliament in that area was pretty pathetic.

The Travelsafe Committee is one committee which has had a very important responsibility. Many of us who have been in this parliament before would remember the effort put into that committee by Mr Len Ardill, who was the then member for Archerfield. He impressed us all with how genuine he was about issues to do with Travelsafe and his efforts to improve the safety of pedestrians and other travellers, including people on public transport, and also the general safety of the road system. The effort he put into that area was commendable.

I repeat that the opposition will be supporting this bill. I mentioned the principles that have always applied in relation to the relativity of numbers. I thank the Premier and the Leader of the House for some of the discussion that has been held regarding that issue so that we could come to a system that reflects the numbers of the House but also gives a fair go to the opposition, which represents so many electorates around Queensland. At the committee stage we will be moving an amendment in relation to the quorum.

**Dr WATSON** (Moggill—Lib) (12.51 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to rise and indicate that we will also be supporting this bill, although we do share the concerns of the opposition with respect to the issue of the quorum. In some respects, this amendment bill restores the numbers in the committee system during the 46th and 47th Parliaments, when I first came into this place. It certainly is a mechanism for clearly reflecting the balance of the numbers in the parliament. Having seven members, with a four to three split, is a reasonable compromise. I asked the Parliamentary Library to research the previous numbers. In the 45th Parliament the committees were larger and consisted mainly of eight or nine members. But in the 46th and 47th Parliaments each of the committees consisted of seven members. It was only when we got to the 48th and 49th Parliaments, when the numbers in this House were roughly equal, that we changed the

committee system to six members, with three members each from the opposition and the government. In many ways, this bill restores the status quo when this legislation was first introduced into the parliament.

As somebody who has served on the major committees in this parliament—the Public Accounts Committee, the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committees and the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee—I believe they have worked very well. I agree that parliamentary committees are an important part of making sure that the executive government is accountable through the parliament to the people. It is difficult for honourable members to reserve sufficient time to be able to examine in detail not only bills but also all of the other issues that, technically speaking, we ought to be aware of as members of parliament.

Members of the executive government certainly have greater support in terms of being able to understand what is going on and particularly in relation to the portfolio they are in charge of. Ministers work at their portfolios essentially five, six or seven days a week and, in many ways, can afford the luxury of letting things go in other areas. But a member of parliament has a duty to examine what the executive puts forward to the parliament. Given the limited time that we all have, committees play an exceptionally important part in making sure that aspects of the government's program are put under intense scrutiny and, together with the other resources provided in the parliament, offer some opportunity to bring the executive to account.

Again, my view is that parliamentary committees work best when members who make up the committees can walk into a committee and, to a large extent, leave politics behind. On the committees on which I served—even some of the most controversial, such as the PCJC—that was accomplished to a great extent. It also works well if the members themselves put time and effort into it. Looking back, one can tell that there have been differing performances by certain members of committees. I think that was reflected in the final outcome of committee reports and also reflected in what the individual members gained from the committee process itself.

I share some concerns with respect to the quorum. While in many cases quorum issues are academic in the sense that they are not important, in a couple of committees they could be extremely important. Certainly, in relation to the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, I think it would be unfortunate for that committee to meet when the quorum was made up only of government members. Certainly, there are other aspects of that act, if I recall correctly, in terms of the appointment of the commissioner and other commissioners, which require a majority of the committee, but a majority made up not only of government but also of some non-government members.

In respect of that committee, given the complexity of the issues and the important role the PCJC plays with respect to the Criminal Justice Commission, it would be very unfortunate if there were ever any instances in which the quorum of the PCJC was made up of only government members. The issues in that area deserve and require bipartisan support, if the PCJC is not to deteriorate into a political process in itself. As I said, that is particularly important in respect of that committee, because the PCJC is basically the parliament's watchdog over the CJC. In that sense, it must always be bipartisan if it is going to be at all effective.

Again, my experience, having served on that committee and also the Public Accounts Committee, is that members of parliament have worked exceptionally well in the past, even in tough situations. In respect of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, which I know the Deputy Speaker has been the chairman of in the past—

**Mr Lucas:** And a good chairman, too.

**Dr WATSON:** And a good chairman. He has had good members to work with, and that has been important in terms of making sure that the reports that come to the parliament mostly had bipartisan support. If we look at all of the committee reports that have come to the parliament over the last decade I have been here, we see that very few have had dissenting reports from opposition members, both when the Labor Party has been in government and when the coalition has been in government. That is a reflection of the way members have approached committee reports in the past and the importance that I think this parliament has to place on trying to get a reasonable and bipartisan approach to the issues that arise.

I recall when I was first on the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee sitting down with a former member who happened to be on our side trying to persuade him of the righteous position that the majority of the committee had adopted.

**Mr Lucas:** Who was it? Ray Connor?

**Dr WATSON:** I said 'a former member of this place'. The minister may be jumping to irrelevant conclusions. At that stage the member for Kallangur was the chairman of the committee. We sat for quite some time and I remember Ken Hayward walking out in frustration. But we finally got there. It was important that on that particular issue we did have bipartisan support. By working long enough we were able to achieve it and actually had a report which had some impact outside of this place and outside of the committee itself. So there are times when members have to work hard and with a certain amount of goodwill on both sides if we are going to achieve the objective.

As I said earlier, the final objective—the important part of parliamentary committees—is to make sure that the parliament itself and through the parliament the people of Queensland have the ability to test in a vigorous and rigorous manner some of the propositions put forward by executive government. That is the role of committees. That is the role that each member has to play on committees. I support the amendments before the House.

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

**Mr BRISKEY** (Cleveland—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): Standing Order 182 provides that a parliamentary committee shall consist of no more than eight members. The eight parliamentary committees of the 49th Parliament comprised six members, including the chair. With the passage of this bill, the parliamentary committees shall consist of no more than seven members.

To enable parliaments to operate more effectively and give members access to more in-depth information, small special committees were established to investigate certain issues and report back to the House. The Westminster style of parliament, such as that in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, formed committees to deal with particular issues which concern their parliaments. For example, there are committees to deal with the internal business of administering parliamentary process, such as the privileges committee.

Committees are also established to review and scrutinise legislation. As honourable members would know, that committee of this House is the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. Parliamentary committees oversee and scrutinise the executive and can contribute towards a better informed administration and government policy making process. In respect of their formal proceedings, committees are microcosms and extensions of the parliament. They are an important part of the parliamentary process. I have had the honour of serving on a number of parliamentary committees of this House over the past 12 years, including the privileges committees, on which I served with the honourable member for Moggill when we were first elected to this parliament. And then, after three years on that august committee, we served together on the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee.

The member for Moggill was right this afternoon in asserting that those committees worked very well together. They were bipartisan committees. They were committees which were set up during those parliaments and which comprised seven members, and they did work extremely well. I also served for a short time on the Public Accounts Committee, and my last stint was as deputy chair of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee. Important though those committees were, they each in turn did their jobs extremely well, and we all worked together in a bipartisan way as members of those committees.

Last century, of course, the Queensland parliament used committees extensively to resolve many particular issues which came before it. Matters such as legislation, land transactions, sale of government assets and policy proposal were subject to scrutiny by committees appointed by the Legislative Assembly. In those days, when Queensland had a Legislative Council, the council and assembly worked together to deliberate on issues of concern.

The parliamentary committees system in Queensland went into decline, however, during the 20th century. It was not until 1975 that the Subordinate Legislation Committee was established. In 1988, legislation was enacted to establish the Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts, and since then parliamentary committees have grown within the Queensland parliament.

In 1992, the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission published its report on the review of parliamentary committees, which recommended a new system of parliamentary committees. The EARC report stated that committee membership should reflect representation of the political parties in the parliament—and so, too, it should. After that report was handed down, the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review also looked at the matter and decided, at 11.1.3, that representation of political parties on statutory committees should be in approximate proportion to their level of representation in the House.

**Mr Foley:** Who agreed to that?

**Mr BRISKEY:** The minister may well ask. The committee comprised seven members. The chair was the honourable Dr Lesley Clark, and the deputy chair was Mr FitzGerald, the former member for Lockyer. Laurel Power, the former member for Mansfield, was a member of that committee, as was Mr Jon Sullivan, the former member for Caboolture. There were also three opposition members on that committee. So there were four government members and three opposition members. In fact, the member for Merrimac, Mr Quinn, was a member of that committee.

**Mr Foley:** Really?

**Mr BRISKEY:** Yes. And he agreed to the membership of seven and that the membership should be made up of political parties in approximate proportion to their level of representation in the House.

**Mr Pearce:** Did he say that?

**Mr BRISKEY:** He certainly did, and he agreed to that, along with the member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Rowell, and the member for Everton, Mr Welford. So there were three opposition members: the member for Lockyer, the member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Merrimac. They also agreed at 11.1.2 that the committee endorse EARC's recommendations for the establishment and composition of committees as set out in chapter eight of its report.

So here we are today, debating this bill before the House to increase to seven the number of committee members and to make them proportional to the representation in this House. This is something to which EARC agreed, and it is something to which the then Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review also agreed.

After the EARC report, and after this outstanding report of the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review, the Parliamentary Committees Act was passed on 15 September 1995. The act was subsequently amended by the Parliamentary Committees Legislation Act 1996, which provided for the establishment of six permanent statutory committees.

In 1996, of course, the government held 44 seats, the opposition held 44 seats, with one Independent member holding the balance of power. Accordingly, the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995 and the Criminal Justice Act were amended so that parliamentary committees must consist of an equal number of members nominated from the government and the opposition. In 2001, of course, we find ourselves with the Beattie Labor government holding a record 66 seats.

**Mr Cummins:** Hear, hear!

**Mr BRISKEY:** I endorse that. The National Party has 11 seats, the Liberals and One Nation have three seats each, and the Independents make up the balance.

Accordingly, the Beattie Labor government proposes that membership of the statutory parliamentary committees should more closely reflect the new level of representation of the House. This bill alters the membership of parliamentary committees, as I said, to seven members—four government members and three non-government members—with a quorum to be four members.

I agree with what the honourable member for Moggill intimated in his speech to the House. The quorum is academic. If members take their roles on the committees seriously, as they have done over the past decade, then they will attend committee meetings in person, by telephone or by video link-up. So there is no need to be concerned about having a quorum. Members of all the committees on which I have served in this place attended meetings. The issue of a quorum never arose, and I am sure that it will not arise in the future.

A strong, active committee system is an asset to any functioning parliamentary democracy. Parliamentary committees provide greater accountability by making the policy and administrative functions of government more open and accountable. Committees also provide a forum for investigation into matters of public importance and give parliamentarians the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of such issues. This Bill ensures that representation on committees reflects the numbers in the House as recommended, as I said, by EARC and also endorsed by the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review.

**Hon. K. R. LINGARD** (Beaudesert—NPA) (2.40 p.m.): The member for Cleveland referred to the 66 ALP members of the parliament, and the 'Hear, hears' show that it is easy for the ALP to say, 'It is hard to be humble.' However, eight weeks into this term it is quite obviously becoming, 'It's easy to become arrogant.' The arrogance in this legislation comes from the opening

comments by the Premier regarding this legislation in which he said that the legislation is 'to enhance the effectiveness, the efficiency and the accountability of this parliament'.

The initial proposals for this legislation were that the committee should have four government members and two opposition members with the chairman being elected by the government. The chairman was to have both a directional vote and, if necessary, a casting vote. We have also seen that it could have four ALP members of the quorum, if a quorum was necessary. Naturally, the opposition would not agree, so the government has been forced to compromise. However, this was an attempt to treat the committee system in a typically arrogant manner, a manner which has already become very noticeable in this ALP government. One only has to look at the news releases about the extra personnel given to opposition groups to see a good example of this arrogance. The release from the Premier referred to the fact that each elected member is to receive an extra staff member. That was the opening comment. The release had two pages and the first page referred to the fact that each member was to get an extra personnel. Under the new arrangements, the National Party was to receive this; the shadow ministers would receive this; the Liberal and the One Nation members would all receive this; the opposition Liberals and One Nation would all receive these particular things which they could pool—they could pool the salaries for these extra staff to enable them to employ fewer but more senior staff.

It then talked about the leaders of the Liberal and the One Nation Parties and what they would receive. It then went on to say how money would be saved from the two Independents; it would be saved from One Nation. Then it said that the allocation of an extra officer for each member brings us into line with other jurisdictions. Not once did it mention the fact that the ALP would receive 66 extra staff. If that is not arrogance, what is?

So we found the media running with the comment about all of the extra personnel that One Nation would receive, the extra personnel that the Liberals would receive, the extra personnel that the National Party would receive, but not once in the Premier's release did it say anything about the fact that the ALP had just given itself 66 extra personnel. If that is not arrogance, what is? If it is not arrogance, why didn't the Premier start to talk about the fact that the ALP was to give itself 66 extra members and 66 extra staff?

**Mr Reynolds:** Aren't you taking your extra member?

**Mr LINGARD:** Aren't I taking it? No-one has done it yet because, as we know, it has not been put in place. There was a great announcement about two months ago—

**Mr Reynolds:** Will you take it on 1 July?

**Mr LINGARD:** The member for Townsville unfortunately interjects, but he knows as well as I do that his cabinet has not put it in place. The government has made grand announcements about exactly what we would all get in the way of extra personnel, but not one of those people is in place at present. So the government has put out a release which never referred to the fact that there would be 66 extra personnel being appointed to the ALP, and it expected the media to take it; it expected the public of Queensland to take it; and the Labor government says that it is not arrogant or that it is not showing some indications of arrogance. Of course it is!

Today we see legislation aimed at continuing the domination of the government on committees set up to monitor the government. The words 'monitor the government' are very, very important because, as government members have said today, we are talking about the EARC report; we are talking about the parliamentary committee set up to monitor that. The intent of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995 was to provide a comprehensive system of parliamentary committees to enhance the ability of parliament to monitor the efficiency of government as envisaged in the Fitzgerald report. No-one has any criticisms about that point because over the years this parliament has adopted most of the EARC and the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review recommendations. However, it is incorrect to assume that all the recommendations have been successful. There are some members who have been in this parliament for a long time. There are members who were in the parliament before all of these recommendations were put in place and there are members in this parliament who can say that the Fitzgerald report in some instances was basically flawed and there were some things in the Fitzgerald report that never, ever saw the light of day, thank goodness, because we in this parliament said, 'No, that will not work.'

There are some things in that report that we put into place in this parliament that did not work, and one of those was the Parliamentary Services Commission. As soon as that commission was put in place here, we said, 'It will not work. You cannot run this parliament with a committee.' What we wanted was a speaker who had the role of running this parliament, a speaker who could

make those decisions. We continued to fight about the Parliamentary Services Commission, and the reasons were that Fitzgerald and those people had an unbelievable view that members in this parliament would act in a bipartisan way.

I say to all those members who are on committees: if you are not referring to the fact that you have seen some bad work as far as the party system in these parliamentary committees is concerned, you know as well as I do that you are not telling the truth, because it is very difficult in these committees when you get to a very touchy point not to split ALP one way, conservatives the other way. I have seen it happen so many times.

Similarly, the system of having the government with a majority on these committees is not working. It would not have worked with four government members and two members of the opposition if we are to monitor the works of this parliament. These committees were set up to monitor the government, but in the EARC and PCEAR reports there was a philosophy of bipartisanship.

I note the statements of Wayne Goss in 1995 when he said—and I repeat the words from *Hansard*—

At the end of the day, the success of the new committees will depend on the commitment of all sides of the House to make the system work. Most of all, it will require continued commitment to developing a spirit of political bipartisanship without which no parliamentary system can flourish.

How true! For those people who are saying that they have been on committees where there has been great bipartisanship, I would say to them that they have not encountered many controversial issues.

**A government member:** Garbage!

**Mr LINGARD:** The member interjects. Let us have a look at what happened with the backflow inquiry conducted by the Public Works Committee. The minister wanted to vindicate all of the things that he had done about backflow. What did he do? He referred it to the Public Works Committee. What did the Public Works Committee find? It found that there were allegations of the minister misleading parliament, there were allegations of the minister misleading the committee. Those things were referred to in the report. Has anything ever been done by the Premier? Has anything ever been done by the Leader of the House about those allegations of the misleading of parliament, about the allegations of misleading an inquiry? No, they were swept under the carpet very subtly but blatantly and they have never, ever been brought out. So right through the election period we have found that the Premier has done absolutely nothing about the statements that the minister misled the parliament and that the minister misled an inquiry. So we found that the committee split three-all. Of course, unbelievably, a casting vote was made by the chairman, an ALP member. Which way did he go? Of course he went with the government. So we had a four-three vote.

Let us have a look at any thought about the Public Works Committee looking at Lang Park. The Public Works Committee has been asked many times to look at the Lang Park funding. What has happened? Three conservative members of that committee say, 'We should look at Lang Park.' The three ALP members have said, 'No we should not. Do not touch Lang Park.' So it is three-all. What happens with the casting vote? Of course it goes against the conservatives; of course it goes towards the government. So the Public Works Committee does not look at Lang Park. I suppose members are saying that this Public Works Committee is there to monitor what the government is doing. The government will not allow the Public Works Committee or the Public Accounts Committee to look at something which is controversial, especially if the government members' caucus and the chairman goes with it. So any thought that these committees are monitoring a government in the form in which they are established is completely untrue and dishonest.

What happens in the other states? Other states allow the chairman of a committee to be a member of the opposition. Can't members imagine this government allowing the chairman of a committee to be from the opposition!

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr LINGARD:** Other states do but, because of this government's arrogant attitude, not here. The government members say, 'Why would you do a thing like that?' Because they might get found out! Wouldn't it be beautiful if the Public Works Committee could conduct some sort of investigation into Lang Park? That would be great, but that would put the cat among the pigeons for the government. So what happens? We do not have a report on something like that, we do

not even have an investigation. All the government has to do is caucus, allow the chairman to have the casting vote and we do not even have such an inquiry.

For the committees to be effective, there needs to be a method for the opposition to have the ability to initiate inquiries into all aspects of government policy. Those members who know a little bit about some of these committees would know that public works committees in other states have to investigate all aspects of funding. Those committees do not have the choices that we have in Queensland, where the committee sits down and works out what it wants to look at. I see the chairman of the Public Works Committee. This state's Public Works Committee has looked at some marvellous things. We looked at the Normanton bridge after it was built to see how effective it was. That was great! Were we going to criticise the government after the thing has built and named in very controversial circumstances? The Public Works Committee has also looked at all the road systems of Queensland and the barge on the Brisbane River. They were all great things, but the committee has never had a look at Lang Park. That would be too controversial. The Public Works Committee did not really want to get involved in the report on the water backflow. That was pretty controversial, too, because the minister was supposed to have told a fib to the parliament.

So the Premier says that this committee system is set up to monitor the government. In the first place, the government said, 'Let us have it as four-two. That is pretty fair.' I refer to the EARC recommendations. The Premier said that we should all observe the EARC recommendations but, as I have said, many of the EARC recommendations and the recommendations contained in the Fitzgerald inquiry have not been observed by this parliament. We have seen how they have failed. They were well in place before the committee system was set up. Any thought by Fitzgerald that parliamentarians would act in a bipartisan way is absolute baloney.

So I am saying to the government: why not have a chairman of the committee from the opposition? Why not have parliamentary committees that investigate everything done by this government, not just the things that it wants them to investigate? That way, we then might have something that is fair and something that monitors the government. Why does the Premier not have an Auditor-General who works on performance-based auditing? He will not have that, but I heard the Premier say that when he was in opposition. All this government has is an Auditor-General who looks at all the invoices, looks at all the payments, and says, 'They all match up. That is beautiful. Here is the report.' However, no-one looks at the Minister for Families and says, 'What you should be spending money on is this. You have spent money in incorrect areas.' That is performance-based auditing. But, no, that would monitor the government. That would give the Auditor-General too much to work on. So the Auditor-General just looks at invoices and statements, exactly as this government's committee system does. The Premier knows as well as I do that it would be extremely controversial and extremely unlikely for any of those committees to say, 'There is something wrong with the government.'

In 1996, the Premier quoted the following comments made by Max Bingham—

... one can have the best systems in the world, but if one does not have the standards of individuals to go with them then those systems will fail.

I agree with that statement. However, if any member of this parliament tells me that they can get through their parliamentary career without referring to their party affiliations, there is something quite dishonest about the way in which they are talking.

I note also the presentation in 1996 of ideas about the committee system. I make no criticisms of that. I agree that we did exactly the same thing in terms of having three-all on the committees. Mr Borbidge presented legislation that reduced the size of these committees from seven members to six members. He said that there would be three members from the government and three members from the opposition on the committees. He then said that each member has a vote on each question and, where the votes are equal, the chairperson has the casting vote, to which an ALP then opposition member said, 'You've got to be kidding.' I will use the words of that ALP member and say that the government has to be kidding if it thinks that it is going to have three government and three opposition members of a committee in this parliament and not think that it will have three members vote one way, three members vote the other way, and the chairman vote in terms of the government's vote.

I note many other speeches made in 1995 and 1996 on this subject, including those made by the member for Brisbane Central. At that time, the main opposition to committees was based on the deliberative vote and a casting vote for the chairman. I say to the members opposite to have a look at the 1995 and 1996 *Hansards* and see how vehemently they argued against having three members for each side, with the casting vote for the chairman and a deliberative

vote. The members opposite argued all day about it. What do we find in this legislation? Exactly that! The members opposite were presenting that on a four-two. Finally, the opposition convinced the government to have the composition of the committees four-three. However, the government started with having the committees four-two. Even in your greens—

**Mr Beattie** interjected.

**Mr LINGARD:** The Premier says that that is untrue. I refer the Premier to his own speech to this legislation, in which he states that the member for Toowoomba South was the member who convinced him to have the composition of the committees four-three. He started with four-two. The Premier stated—

I note that the Leader of the Opposition has advised a preference for three non-government members on the parliamentary committees rather than two.

That is why the Premier chose to have three members.

**Mr Beattie:** That doesn't mean we were going to put up two.

**Mr LINGARD:** That is what was presented to us in the first place—four-two.

**Mr Beattie:** Get out!

**Mr LINGARD:** Why did the Premier say that? If the Premier read the *Hansard* he would see that he did not read it that way; he read it a different way.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr LINGARD:** I read the Premier's speech. I cannot do any more than that. The Premier stated—

I note that the Leader of the Opposition has advised a preference for three non-government members on parliamentary committees rather than two.

The funding program for this committee system is based on six members. Of course, when we said that we wanted the composition of the committees to be four-three, the government forgot to change all the figures; it just went through the legislation quickly and put in threes instead of twos. The government forgot to change its funding figures. The legislation refers to funding for six members of committees, but now it has seven members of committees.

There has been no attempt to correct the anomalies of the committee system. Regardless of how we argue in this House, we would all have to sit down and say that there is no way in the wide world that a committee comprising four government members and three opposition members is going to effectively monitor the government. There is no way that an Auditor-General who looks at invoices and statements is going to give a performance-based assessment of this government.

**Mr Beattie** interjected.

**Mr LINGARD:** I agree, and I agree in terms of this whole system. As the Premier knows, I am criticising the decisions of previous members. I am also saying that the Premier should not refer to the recommendations of EARC, because we have changed those EARC recommendations many times. The Premier should not refer to the Fitzgerald recommendations, because we have changed those Fitzgerald recommendations many times. We said that the Fitzgerald recommendations would not work, and they did not work. I see the member for Ashgrove smiling. He knows that some of those recommendations did not work. He and Terry Mackenroth helped me get rid of the Parliamentary Service Commission. No-one wanted it. That was the worst thing that had ever happened to this parliament. In 1995 we said, 'The Speaker will run this parliament.'

This is simply lazy legislation that has reinforced the problems of the previous parliaments. Hopefully, future parliaments will have enough commitment to ensure real and meaningful change.

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (2.58 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable members for their contributions, which have been varied, wide, intelligent and interesting. In response, let me make a number of observations, if I can. I listened with some interest to the comments of the previous speaker. I draw to his attention that on 17 April 1996 Tony FitzGerald, the then National Party member for Lockyer, who was then the Leader of Government Business for the Borbidge government said—

We quite rightfully recognised that the chairperson of a committee should be a member of the Government, and therefore quite often the deputy chairperson came from the Opposition side, and the committees did work very well.

That destroys one argument of members opposite, because not at any time when in government did they support an opposition member being chair of a committee.

Let us deal with the issues of representation. I understand why members opposite do not want me to quote EARC, but the EARC commission recommended that representation of political parties and statutory committees should be in approximate proportion to their level of representation in the House. If we did that and were guilty of the allegations made by both the Leader of the Opposition and the previous speaker that we are in some way arrogant—which is obviously the latest political manoeuvre that they are pursuing to try to damage us—out of a committee seven, Labor would have 5.12, or five representatives, and non-Government members would have 1.82, or two representatives. In other words, members could forget about the fair approach that we are pursuing of four-three. It would be five-two if we accepted EARC's recommendation of proportional representation. We are not doing that, because we believe in fairness, we believe in being accountable and we believe in doing the right thing. That is why it is four-three. Let us hear no more nonsense about proportional representation.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to commercial-in-confidence powers and so on. Under section 25 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995, a statutory committee is authorised to call for persons, documents and other things. The House may also give a select, standing or statutory committee, by virtue of section 93 of the *Standing Rules and Orders* of 1999, the power to send for persons, documents and other things. If a person appearing before a committee does not answer questions or produce documents or other things, the chairperson of the committee may require them to comply with the request. If a person fails to comply with a request, the committee may report the failure to the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly may then order a person to appear before a committee to answer particular questions or produce particular documents or things.

In other words, there are substantive powers in the acts before this parliament and in essence the committees have the power of the parliament. Indeed, they have the power to report here. They have very substantive powers to make any government or any executive accountable. As we all know through the free media that we have in this country and state, that is a very powerful mechanism to keep the executive on its toes and to keep it accountable to the parliament. Hence what we are putting forward is fair and reasonable.

I was the first chair of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee and Matt Foley was the first chair of EARC. From time to time those committees did act in a bipartisan way. They did not act simply in a partisan sense. I will give an illustration that the Minister for Health reminded me of. Like me, she was a member of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. On a number of occasions we voted across party lines. The decriminalisation of prostitution was one example. Santo Santoro, the Liberal member for Clayfield at the time, voted for the decriminalisation of prostitution on that committee. Indeed, I can recall majorities made up of two Labor and two National Party members. In fact, if I recall correctly, on one occasion the Minister for Health and I voted with two National Party members to form a majority. Committees can act in a bipartisan way.

**Mrs Edmond:** It depends on the calibre of the members.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, it does depend on the calibre of the members. The member for Moggill made a point about the PCJC and its importance. That is recognised in the act. Under the PCJC, any matters relating to appointments have to be decided across party lines, as the member knows.

**Dr Watson** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is fair enough. I make the point that a simple majority cannot provide for the appointment of a commissioner, for example, of the CJC. That has to be done by more than one political party. That is enshrined in the legislation.

As everyone in the House knows, the performance of the committees is affected by the commitment and the calibre of the people involved in the committees. The bottom line is that committees will perform well if the members work hard, are intelligent and dedicated. If committee members are lazy or are duds, the committees will not perform. I have seen committees of this House run by the research directors. Why? Because the committee members have not performed. Frankly, the research directors should not be performing that role. They have fallen into essentially the governing role of the committees because the committee members have been too lazy to get off their own backsides. That is not good enough. I stress that I make no criticism of the research directors. It is up to the committee members. They are the ones who are elected to the parliament, they are the ones who are accountable to the parliament and they are the ones who should do the work. They should set the agenda. As far as I am concerned, unless

committee members—and I refer to members from all sides of parliament—have a certain level of commitment and are prepared to work hard, the committees will not work.

Notwithstanding the hoo-ha of the debate, our committees are the most formidable and substantive that the Queensland parliament has ever had. Let us look at the history of parliamentary committees. The first Public Works Committee and Public Accounts Committee were formed in the latter years of the Ahern government when the National Party was on the ropes because of the Fitzgerald inquiry. There were serious limitations to the powers of both that Public Accounts Committee and Public Work Committee. The Goss government removed those limitations and broadened the parliamentary committee system. The Goss government should take credit for installing the first substantive committee system that the Queensland parliament ever had. My government has continued that commitment to the parliamentary committee system. Indeed, today we have sought simply to provide a balance.

In my second reading speech I referred to the fact that the initial legislation, supported by Russell Cooper, which established the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee and EARC provided for a four-three ratio. Today we are doing the same thing. All members know why there was a three-three ratio. The two parliaments previous to this, that is, my government and the Borbidge government, were minority governments initially. My government did not become a majority government until we won the Mulgrave by-election in December 1998. For a period we had minority governments and, of course, we had to have a three-three split. When we advanced to a majority government in our own right, we did not seek to come back to the parliament and change the three-three ratio. Under the circumstances, we thought that that would be unfair. However, under a majority government, the position has been four-three. It was four-three under Cooper, it was four-three under Goss and it will be four-three under Beattie. Basically, that is a fair way to do it.

Some concerns have been raised. The Leader of the Opposition has had the courtesy to raise his two amendments with me, and I thank him for that. I have indicated to him that we will not be supporting them.

On the issue of quorums, there needs to be a quorum of four. It is imperative that members take seriously their responsibility to their committees. They should all turn up. However, all we are talking about is requiring members attend a meeting. That is all. We want them all to be there, but if they are worried about reaching a quorum or having their view heard, members need to turn up. I would hope that all three non-government members would attend, but we are not asking for too much. That is not unreasonable. That is fair and reasonable. If members do not turn up to committee meetings, that reflects a lack of commitment to the committee system itself. That is why a determination should be made that members be required to turn up. If committee members are lazy, the committee system will not work.

There are many other things that I could say on these issues. I will not go into them all, other than to say that my government is committed to the committee system. Queensland does not have a long history of parliamentary committees. The committee system here is 11 years old or 12 years old at best. It is 11 years old if the Goss government is credited with all that it should be credited with. We still have a committee system in its infancy. In the early days of the post-Fitzgerald reforms when EARC, the PCJC and so on were first operating, there was a passion, a commitment, a bipartisanship and a determination. I worry that that has eroded over recent times. I hope that we can return some of commitment to the committee system.

I know that one of the members opposite made some references to what committees do, what they do not do and all the rest of it. However, the bottom line is that there have been examples of partisanship on every committee. That partisanship will remain until we lift our standards in this parliament and accept that the committees are responsible to the parliament itself.

As chair of the first PCJC I took some lashes with the cat-o'-nine-tails for pursuing the independence of the parliamentary committee system, and I do not in any way resile from that. But I know, as my friend the Minister for Employment knows, that it still comes down to the calibre of the chairperson and the calibre of the people on the committees as to how committed they are. That is the key to it. As we all know, in the final analysis, if members are unhappy about how the committee system is operating, the final arbiter is to come back here and have the scrutiny of the public domain, the scrutiny of the people who are, after all, the final arbiter and the boss, and that I believe would happen.

I have covered the major matters. I do not intend to dillydally any further on this matter. I believe it is important that this legislation be passed. The reason the government has brought it on today is that we want it to be law; we want these committees to get up and running. There are all sorts of committees, such as the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, that need be put in place. That is one of the reasons we have moved quickly. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

### Committee

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) in charge of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

**Mr HORAN** (3.11 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

1. Clause 4—

At page 5, line 5, after 'committee'—

insert—

' , 1 of whom must be a member nominated by the member who is recognised in the Legislative Assembly as the Leader of the Opposition'.

The aim of this amendment is to ensure that, in circumstances when there is a quorum of four, a minimum of one of that number is a member of the opposition, whether it is a member of the National Party, the Liberal Party, an Independent or a member of One Nation. It would depend upon the make-up of the particular committee. This makes for good legislation because it does maintain within the legislation that, where there is a quorum, one of the quorum represents the other side of the House. It really puts it into black and white and enshrines it in legislation.

The Premier mentioned the fact that people should have the commitment to turn up, and I believe they should, too. I made the point in my speech that everyone should attend meetings. However, there could be a rare occasion when family circumstances arise or something else occurs which means that some members may not be able to attend. That is the reason we want this provision in the bill. We think it makes for good legislation in view of the principles of the committee system—that it represents both sides of the House. So in almost any circumstance there will be a need for someone from this side of the House to attend. That is the reason for moving this particular amendment.

**Dr WATSON:** I reiterate what the Leader of the Opposition said. I will correct something the Premier said during his speech. During my speech at the second reading stage I indicated quite clearly that I understood that in other parts of legislation both the chairman of the Criminal Justice Commission and other commissioners have needed the support of the majority of the committee, including members from the non-government side. What I said, though, during my speech, as the Premier knows from having been a member of the PCJC, is that there are a lot of instances when the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee meets with the CJC and carries out its legitimate function of making sure that the CJC is properly accountable to the parliament through that committee. I said during my speech that it would be unfortunate if in that process, when some critical things are discussed, we got to the situation that there was no-one from the non-government side at the committee meeting. Certain issues do arise quickly and sometimes it is very difficult, despite the best endeavours of members of our parliament to rearrange their affairs, for members of committees to get to meetings.

I understand that in relation to a lot of committees the make-up of the quorum is not particularly important. I thought at least for the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee that was a particularly important issue. It would seem to me to be easier to simply have all committees with precisely the same make-up. The Premier knows, having been on the PCJC—and I have been a member of the PCJC—that there are instances in which it would be quite unfortunate. He wants the PCJC to operate in a bipartisan fashion—and during most of my time it has operated in a bipartisan fashion, and it is important for it to do that. In that particular case it would be unfortunate if we had committee meetings which only government members attended.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I will make one quick point in relation to this, because I have said all I want to say on this and I do not want to delay the business of the House. There has to be proper notice in these things. I believe that if a committee member finds at any time that the chairman is not

giving appropriate and proper notice, that is a matter that should be reported to the parliament and we should all act on it. I do believe there should be proper notice given.

I do not share the member's concern for this very reason: my experience in the PCJC was that we all worked together. When I was a member of the Public Works Committee, when I was in exile, we did all work together. That includes both sides of politics. I have worked with many people on the member's side on this.

**Mrs Sheldon** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** But even in those difficult times, and you could not get a more difficult committee than the PCJC. We looked at gay law reform, prostitution, poker machines and drugs. You do not get any worse than that. We all worked as a team.

**Dr Watson:** And the PCJC.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, we did. But everybody worked as a team and everybody was included. I have to say that people such as Bill Gunn, who was my deputy chair for some time, played a superb role. Bill Gunn did a very, very good job. Bill Gunn became quite a good friend of mine, as he did of Robert Schwarten, Wendy and Margaret Woodgate. I came to have enormous regard for Bill Gunn, and that came out of that committee process. As chairman, I would never have even thought at any time of calling a committee meeting without consulting as many people as I could to make sure there was a majority. We made sure that Santo was there—and members opposite know how difficult that would have been—as the only Liberal representative, and we made sure that there were National Party representatives. They were all consulted. I just think you get a dynamic with the committee. I do not think it is the problem that the member is indicating. I respect his view on it, but obviously we will oppose the amendment.

**Mr HORAN:** I make one further comment. The matter that was brought up by the member for Moggill with regard to the PCJC probably gives a bit of strength to our argument. Of the people we will be nominating, the closest lives three to three and a half hours from Brisbane—and that is if they are home to receive the call. We know that on rare occasions some urgent meetings have been called with the CJC. I can recall one or two quite urgent meetings being called three or four years ago. It is those sorts of circumstances that we would not want to see occur. The amendment we have moved would make for good legislation because it does cover all circumstances. It abides by the principles of the committee system and it means that people can really have confidence that under almost no circumstance could a committee meeting proceed without one side being there.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I rise to make one other point. I do not want to labour this point, but I do think I should make it in the interests of balance. Section 190(d) of the *Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly* states—and I think this will answer the point of the Leader of the Opposition—

A Committee quorum may be constituted by Members participating in the proceedings by way of telephone or video link up, so long as the Committee Members not physically present are able to participate in the Committee's deliberations and take part in any vote.

Basically, they can do it by phone. It does not matter where one lives in this state; people have access to phones. I think that overcomes any concern. For example, if a member was in a remote area for a particular time, they could simply get on the phone. That means everybody can participate.

**Mr Briskey:** It has been done.

**Mr BEATTIE:** As the parliamentary secretary reminds me, it has been done. It will continue to be done. Indeed, I cannot see why it would not be a normal part of the armoury. People have to travel long distances in Queensland, which consists of about 1.7 million hectares. It may well be that if the member for Tablelands is appointed to a committee she may wish to attend that committee's hearings over the phone if she has pressing commitments. She makes that phone call when the committee is meeting in Brisbane. That seems to me to be a sensible way to deal with issues, particularly if the committee is dealing with agenda matters and so on. Again, I highlight standing order 190(d), which states—

A Committee quorum may be constituted by Members participating in the proceedings by way of telephone or video link up.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 5 and 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

**Mr HORAN** (3.21 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

2. Clause 7—

At page 6, line 5, after 'committee'—

insert—

', 1 of whom must be a member nominated by the member who is recognised in the Legislative Assembly as the Leader of the Opposition'.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

### Third Reading

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

**CHIROPRACTORS REGISTRATION BILL  
DENTAL PRACTITIONERS REGISTRATION BILL  
DENTAL TECHNICIANS AND DENTAL PROSTHETISTS REGISTRATION BILL  
HEALTH PRACTITIONERS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL  
MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS REGISTRATION BILL  
MEDICAL RADIATION TECHNOLOGISTS REGISTRATION BILL  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS REGISTRATION BILL  
OPTOMETRISTS REGISTRATION BILL  
OSTEOPATHS REGISTRATION BILL  
PHARMACISTS REGISTRATION BILL  
PHYSIOTHERAPISTS REGISTRATION BILL  
PODIATRISTS REGISTRATION BILL  
PSYCHOLOGISTS REGISTRATION BILL  
SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS REGISTRATION BILL**

### Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Debate resumed from 22 March (see p. 91).

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (3.23 p.m.): The 14 associated health bills which are being debated cognately today are mostly machinery in nature, although the most controversial and more meaty detail concerning these health professions bills has been held over from inclusion in these bills. The opposition will be supporting most of these bills because in the main, due to the exclusion of the significant unresolved issues of core practices for the professions, these bills are uncontroversial. However, as I indicated publicly the last time these bills were tabled in the parliament before the election when a total of about 36 bills failed to be debated because Premier Peter Beattie said the government had finished its legislative program, the opposition is strongly opposed to a significant element of one of these bills, and that is deregulation of optometry practices.

In the Optometrists Registration Bill, the Beattie Labor government is pushing ahead with deregulation of ownership contrary to the wishes of the majority of this profession. As this is a cognate or amalgamated debate where none of the 14 health bills can be individually voted for or against, the opposition will instead be moving an amendment at the committee stage seeking to retain the current provisions of ownership by optometrists of their practices.

The opposition did oppose these bills being debated cognately the last time they were presented to the parliament because the Health Minister ignored the usual protocol of giving advice and briefings to the opposition prior to a cognate debate motion and instead provided a hurried, back-of-the-chamber verbal advisory session minutes before the motion, and that is contrary to parliamentary process.

The minister at that time claimed that there was nothing controversial in the 14 pieces of legislation and that everyone consulted was happy with the final draft of bills before the parliament. I note for the record that these drafts had never been released for public consultation—that is, the draft bills themselves as opposed to concepts of what was in the legislation. The draft bills had not been presented publicly previously and had only been released

in confidential briefings to key stakeholder groups who were not allowed to keep copies, or so I was told by the groups I talked to.

The government used its numbers to ensure that a cognate debate would proceed. Upon examination of the 14 pieces of legislation after they were tabled in the parliament for the first time, there was indeed a very controversial aspect to at least one of those bills, and that is the Optometrists Registration Bill. Furthermore, after the ensuing introduction of the legislation to the parliament, I was able to check details with one key stakeholder group, the Optometrists Association. It confirmed that it was not happy with the legislation pertaining to its profession because of the deregulation of ownership of professional practices. Thus, the National Party's amendment to maintain the legislative status quo with regard to professional ownership requirements is because of the concern of the majority of that profession as represented by their association. Contrary to what the minister said, it is controversial in optometry practices.

The issue of deregulation of optometry practices comes as a timely public debate because of the move by corporations into the health sector. Where some multinational corporations are already using loopholes to stretch the spirit of the law to expand their market share in optometry, there is no doubt that, given their powerful lobbying, they see the removal of ownership restrictions as important to increasing their influence at the expense of owner-operator optometry practices. I believe that it is a retrograde step for the Beattie Labor government to blindly support this push for deregulation, and I do not believe that the public benefit analysis accepted unconditionally by the government really took into account the impact of primarily profit and share market driven businesses in a state as large as Queensland where the expansion of their market share in larger centres will potentially shrink the number of services supplied in smaller centres.

The irony is that the Beattie Labor cabinet agreed to continuing restrictions on certain ownership provisions within the liquor industry but thinks that ownership restrictions in the health profession such as optometry are fair game to a deregulated marketplace. I am sure that optometrists will be thrilled to know that there are bottle shops that have restrictions on ownership while their professional standards, their businesses and their jobs do not have the same protection of law. The government's analysis for optometry deregulation was flawed as it stated that there would be savings to be made in running costs which would benefit customers in the future, even though this could not be quantified or verified and flew in the face of the fact of the current reality that existing optometry practices are on the whole bulk-billers, unlike other Medicare eligible health services.

There are no cost savings to the customer with regard to professional consultations as most customers do not pay a gap over the Medicare rebate and are in fact bulk-billed in the first instance. Deregulation will not deliver cheaper eye consultations with optometrists. As for the very separate issue of who can sell spectacles, the Optometrists Association did not object to this aspect of its business being legally open to other competitors. However, my comment is that the national competition review did not significantly separate the two issues of ownership as opposed to retailing of spectacles.

The concerns arising from this push for deregulation are more questions of standards of service that will be available and, in Queensland's case, access to optometry services in rural and regional Queensland. Also, there is concern about the falling number of optometrists providing access to pensioners and other health care card holders for the taxpayer subsidised spectacle dispensing program.

Having read the public interest analysis at the base of the government's decision to deregulate optometry, my comment is that there are some fairly obvious holes in the conclusions. Firstly—this is relevant to the issue being debated increasingly in other professional health practices—there is a difference between minimum acceptable standards and best practice standards. What I mean is that if someone is found to have practised badly then they have breached minimum standards and there will be a system under this act, as there was under the previous act, to take action against the practitioner. However, there is concern among professionals in the health care sector about what happens when ownership goes to a multinational company, to somebody who has customers to serve other than the health client before them—in other words, the share market driven customers, those who own a part of that business.

What measures have been applied to the issue of quality of service, level of equipment owned by practices, community access to services, particularly in rural areas, and the provision of public dispensing of government subsidised spectacles? It is clear from the minister's second

reading speech that these issues have not been addressed. For example, the Health Minister would be well aware of the problems in recruiting and retaining optometrists to dispense public spectacles for those who are eligible. The numbers of optometrists participating in this public scheme had fallen to 331 in June 2000, from 400 as at July 1998.

Some of the corporate optometry chains I have talked to state clearly that they do not dispense publicly subsidised spectacles because they do not consider it cost effective. While not all optometrist-owned practices participate for the same reason, many in fact do. They have stated that, as cost pressures from more intense competition from the multinationals increase, they will have to withdraw increasingly from subsidising this service as well.

I am most concerned that the removal of any pretence of optometrist ownership and the increased dominance of multinational corporations in the marketplace will see fewer services travelling into rural areas and a decline in the number of practices dispensing publicly subsidised spectacles. Ultimately one would have to ask who will be paying the price for that. It will be mainly those who are on lower incomes, who do rely upon the publicly subsidised spectacle scheme.

One estimate places current corporate ownership of the market at about 50 per cent, though other estimates place it slightly lower than this. There is still at least a notional involvement of optometrists in the ownership structure of the company, if not a controlling interest. The concern is that deregulating ownership, removing any ownership restriction, will see these large multinational companies aggressively seek to further monopolise the market, resulting in fewer independent, sole practitioner practices. The minister may argue that people have been operating in partial breach of the previous legislation, but that is a poor argument for defending the total deregulation with a new penalty if someone is coerced for practising badly or suboptimally.

The issue of corporate ownership of health practices is one not only for the federal jurisdiction but also for the state. I can well understand that there are benefits for general practitioners entering into a larger group practice, with the chance to defray practice costs and access locum back-up. The publicly listed corporate models go much further than that, offering a variety of other incentives, with a mixture of up-front payments and contracts with shared profits. The concerns are whether there may be subtle coercion brought by the corporate practice owners for doctors, and potentially other health practitioners, to alter their health decisions, particularly in regard to referrals to other related services owned by the same corporation. An example of this has been radiation and diagnostics in the case of GP practices. The link in ownership is called vertical integration.

I believe that there are real concerns to be considered and that professional boards may need new legislative tools to deal with the potential issues arising from corporatisation. Queensland is a relative newcomer to this process compared with some other states, but there appears to be a very rapid and aggressive push to corporatise health practitioners, particularly GPs, who have the ability to refer to the more lucrative diagnostic services.

I understand that one estimate puts the number of GPs in Western Australia employed by a corporation at one-third and in other states at about 20 per cent of the total number of GPs in those states. It is interesting that there have been concerns expressed in other jurisdictions about corporatised health practices, but Queensland's Labor Health Minister is actually making it easier for corporate takeover in the optometry profession by proceeding with deregulation.

One of the things lacking in the legislation before the House is a set of provisions relating to professional indemnity. Many of the professional organisations are in fact in favour of these sorts of provisions in order to provide a high level of consumer protection and care. While there are avenues through the professional boards, albeit the Health Rights Commission, to seek redress for grievances, there is a very real need for consideration of mandatory insurance coverage so that people have the ability to claim damages in the event that their practitioner does not have assets that are claimable in their names. I understand that that is an issue that has arisen.

It is interesting that governments will legislate for car owners to have third-party insurance so that there is protection for other people if they run into them; however, we have a situation whereby health professionals, including doctors, do not have to carry professional health insurance. Many good professionals do, but not all professionals do. If they do not belong to a professional association, there is no requirement for them to do so. I would certainly welcome the Health Minister's comments on this issue of professional indemnity. It would be a very practical way of providing a very real measure of consumer protection so that people can take action in the event that a health practitioner causes some damage.

I turn to the issue of core practices. As I mentioned earlier, these are the most controversial aspects of the national competition policy review in regard to the professions. At this stage the findings have not been presented to the parliament. I understand that there are continuing discussions. There is a great deal of concern among a lot of professions. The issue of core practice is to do with who can do what. For example, in relation to dentistry it would go to who can drill a hole in someone's tooth. Putting it very simplistically, it is about who has the right to perform certain acts upon a person in relation to a particular health practice.

There has been a review going on across all of the professions under national competition policy. It has been an ongoing process. We have before us an extensive array of machinery bills, but still we do not have the essence of what people can in fact do under these bills. The previous entitlements of these professions in relation to the tasks they can perform are still in place until that review is completed and the legislation comes into being.

I ask the minister when these issues will be resolved. There has been a lot of talk about the lengthy process of consultation and the lengthy process of bringing this legislation to the parliament, yet this issue of core practices remains unresolved. I know that that is a matter of great concern to a number of professions, who are most concerned about whether they will see an erosion of standards in their areas, whether people will be pushing for minimum standards that do not necessarily reflect best practice. There is a difference between having a minimum standard and having safeguards in place that ensure best practice. There can be a world of difference between those two concepts.

I mention briefly some of the other aspects of the health professionals bills that we are considering here today. Chiropractors and osteopaths will be separated under the board provisions. While I understand that there has been some opposition to that in some quarters, it is something that has been very strongly advocated by the osteopaths. It has been very much their will that they have a separate board. In discussions they say that they are aware of the different cost structures they are likely to incur as a smaller profession, and they are willing to go down that particular path.

The issue relating to pharmacists and the restrictions on ownership of their professional businesses is one that is being resolved at the federal level and is not part of this bill. The existing provisions relating to ownership of a pharmacy are maintained within this legislation.

I refer to some of the aspects of the Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill, which amends the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act and the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999. For the record, since the introduction of the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999, 37 amendments were made by this government last year, and the bill currently before us provides for a further 34 amendments to be made. So there has been quite a substantial number of amendments to the original bill since it was introduced to parliament only two years ago. I have some questions about the process that allowed that legislation to be introduced with so many subsequent amendments being necessary. Many of the amendments contained within last year's amending bill were to correct drafting errors.

I draw attention to one very interesting amendment in this bill. It was referred to in the minister's second reading speech delivered when this legislation was reintroduced to the parliament. I refer to clause 26, which inserts sections 385A to 385C into the act, making it an offence for a registrant to fail to notify the board within 30 days of a conviction of an indictable offence or an offence against a corresponding law, or the imposition of a disciplinary or other relevant action under a corresponding law. Also, a registrant who is a respondent to proceedings in court regarding negligence must not fail to notify the board within 30 days of the judgment in relation to those proceedings or any settlement of the proceedings.

As is noted in the explanatory notes, the requirement to notify of the settlement of proceedings for negligence matters is based on South Australian and Victorian legislation and was recommended by the Commonwealth's professional indemnity review. I can see the potential benefits in this amendment. There are issues which have failed to come before the relevant professional boards for scrutiny because they were settled out of court.

I believe that these issues require more public debate—not only those matters that are automatically referred to a board but also those matters about which the public is allowed to know. I understand that similar moves have been made in some parts of the United States. One can argue that sometimes these issues can be taken too far and that professionals and other people can be crucified in their professional lives by innuendo and not necessarily substance when they choose to settle out of court rather than taking the expensive option of protecting

themselves in a court. There is also a very strong argument as to what is valid consumer protection and education—making people aware that someone has a track record of settling negligence actions out of court.

This bill provides for the board to be notified of certain matters relating to negligence issues, but it does not include a test that allows the public to know about that. We understand that there are times when people facing multiple court cases choose to settle out of court, but the public is not notified about that and they have no chance to respond. We need to have public discussion about whether or not the consumer is protected when there is a succession of settlements and matters are not brought to the attention of the public and about whether in fact the process provides enough protection to the public. The bill provides for the board to be notified of certain matters relating to indictable offences. However, it is interesting to note that there is nothing in the legislation which requires boards to notify police of an offence.

I refer to an article in the *Courier-Mail* of 7 April 2001 wherein it was highlighted that drug-addicted doctors who forge prescriptions and commit other criminal offences can potentially escape prosecution. A very worrying statement in that article was that the Medical Board currently conducts urine tests on 50 doctors detected abusing drugs such as pethidine and morphine and that one of the doctors who underwent testing for more than a decade is a senior Health Department official who advises the government on drug matters.

**Mrs Edmond:** That's totally wrong. You shouldn't rely on something you read in the *Courier-Mail*.

**Miss SIMPSON:** I would welcome the minister's response to that. It is obviously in the public interest. If there are people who have drug abuse issues and they are potentially in positions of influence or in a position to give advice to whatever government and bureaucratic structure, we need to know who is making those decisions. Is any minister making a subjective decision, based upon this legislation, as to whether somebody is or is not a public danger? Is the board making that sort of decision and not taking into account the public interest—making the public aware of whether people have underlying issues that could compromise their decisions?

This issue highlights the need for scrutiny of any board decisions that are not referred to the police and where there is a prima facie case of someone committing an indictable offence. The Queensland Police Service is quoted as saying that it would expect the Medical Board to inform it of suspected offences. Health Minister Wendy Edmond is quoted as saying that she would only expect the board to advise police where there is a public risk or a public danger. As I said, I believe that that is too narrow. We need to look at the public interest.

Clearly, the issue of criminal offences by health practitioners not being referred to the police must be addressed by the government with a mechanism that is more accountable and transparent. There must be appropriate and accountable processes put in place to make sure that the police are informed and that matters are dealt with to guard the public interest and not dealt with purely in the interests of doing it behind closed doors where there is no independent means of making sure that it is indeed an appropriate process.

I will be addressing some other issues at the committee stage. I thank members of the legislative unit for their briefings on this issue. I know that some time has passed since the legislation was previously introduced into the parliament, but I welcome the opportunity to discuss some other issues in further detail at the committee stage.

**Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (3.46 p.m.):** The government's legislative achievements in the Health portfolio are unprecedented in the history of the Queensland parliament. Since coming to office the government has been responsible for the introduction of 23 bills relating to the Health portfolio. In addition to the 14 health bills before the House, the government has been responsible for the passage of the Health Practitioners (Special Events Exemption) Act 1998; the Radiation Safety Act 1999; the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act 1999; the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999; the Private Health Facilities Act 1999; the Mental Health Act 2000; the Tobacco and Other Products (Prevention of Supply to Children) Amendment Bill 2001; and two omnibus health legislation amendment bills—one in 1998 and one in 1999—that amended a further seven Health portfolio acts.

Each of the 23 Health portfolio bills introduced into this House has resulted from a comprehensive review process that has been informed by: developments in the health industry which have emerged due to changes in the incidence and types of illnesses and conditions that are prevalent in society today; changes in the delivery of health services; changes in the composition of the health work force and as a result of new initiatives being constantly placed on

the health agenda at both a federal and state level; changes in the expectations of consumers regarding the standard of care that should be provided by health professionals and services; the need for an effective and efficient regulatory system that incorporates improved review and accountability mechanisms; regulatory reform initiatives, such as national competition policy and the reduction of red tape and costs to business; contemporary legislative standards, including consistency with fundamental legislative principles; and paramount legislation, such as the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Justices Act 1886, the Act Interpretation Act 1954, the Legislative Standards Act 1992 and the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977.

The Minister for Health, the Honourable Wendy Edmond, and her department have demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to public consultation in the development of the 23 health bills introduced into this House. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders, such as the peak health professional associations; the relevant tertiary institutions, specialists colleges, trade unions and industry associations; the relevant consumer and carer organisations; the existing health practitioner registration boards; various agencies, such as the Health Rights Commission; and advisory bodies, such as the Health Rights Advisory Council and the Radiological Advisory Council. The contribution made by these stakeholders is valued by the government and is recognised as an important component in the development of workable legislation. The Minister for Health and her department should be congratulated for making such a significant legislative achievement a reality.

I would like to detail some of the achievements in health legislation. The Health Practitioners (Special Events Exemption) Act was the first piece of principal legislation to be brought forward by the Minister for Health, the Honourable Wendy Edmond. During the planning for the Sydney 2000 Olympics, it became apparent that many Olympic teams would include health practitioners such as doctors, physiotherapists and psychologists who would be responsible for the provision of health services to team members. In the light of this situation and in order to provide for the smooth operation of the Games, it was agreed that each state and territory would introduce legislation to exempt overseas health practitioners from each jurisdiction's occupational registration requirements. The enactment of the Health Practitioners Special Events Exemption Act ensured that Queensland was well positioned to offer itself as a training base prior to the commencement of the Sydney Olympic Games as well as hosting the preliminary matches in the Olympic football tournament.

I would like to draw members' attention to the distinction between the Health Practitioners Special Events Exemption Act and the declared events provision under 10 of the new health practitioner registration bills before the House. The Health Practitioners Special Events Exemption Act exempts overseas practitioners from the requirement of Queensland Health practitioner registration legislation if these practitioners are accompanying overseas visitors participating in preparing for declared sporting, cultural or other events in Queensland. This exemption is subject to the proviso that the practitioners are attached to an overseas team and do not provide health care services to persons other than team members. It is the responsibility of the overseas team to ensure that the health practitioners they engage are competent and registered in their own jurisdiction.

The declared events provisions under the health practitioner registration bills before the House provide for an interstate practitioner to be taken to be a general registrant during the declared event provided that the practitioner is registered under an interstate law and engaged to provide their professional services to persons participating in or preparing for a dedicated sporting or cultural or other event in Queensland.

The effect of these provisions is to extend the benefits and obligations of general registration under the new legislative scheme to visiting practitioners. More specifically, within the limited scope of the declared event, a visiting practitioner will not only have the same privileges—such as the right to use a restricted title—but also the same obligations. A visiting practitioner can be disciplined under the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act of 1999 as a general registrant for that profession. The declared events provisions appear in the registration bills for chiropractors, dental practitioners, dental technicians, dental prosthetists, medical practitioners, medical radiation technologists, occupational therapists, osteopaths, physiotherapists, podiatrists and psychologists. Given the nature of the services provided by speech pathologists, pharmacists and optometrists, it was not considered necessary to include the declared events provisions in the bills for these provisions.

Queensland can be marketed as an ideal location for major sporting and cultural events while ensuring that the health and wellbeing of the people of Queensland is protected.

The Radiation Safety Act of 1999 replaced the outdated Radioactive Substances Act. The new act is a culmination of longstanding legislative review that drew upon the national and international guidelines as to what constitutes a modern system of radiation safety and protection, industry expectations about this standard of radiation safety and protection to be achieved by those individuals and organisations dealing with sources of radiation and consumer expectations regarding the need to impose appropriate controls over the use of a substance that, under certain circumstances, could threaten our health and our environment.

On 1 January 2000 Queensland's new radiation safety and protection legislation came into effect—that is, through the Radiation Safety Act of 1999, the Radiation Safety Regulation 1999 and some 28 radiation safety standards. As members of this House would be aware, the main object of the new legislative regime is to protect the public from the health risks associated with certain sources of ionising radiation and non-ionising radiation while recognising the benefits which may be gained from the use of radiation. This object is primarily achieved through the establishment of a licensing regime which controls who may possess, use or transport radiation sources, the implementation of a comprehensive set of measures designed to promote radiation safety and protection across the diverse range of industries using ionising or non-ionising radiation and the introduction of an approval system to regulate the acquisition, disposal and relocation of radiation resources.

It is my understanding that other jurisdictions including New Zealand are showing an interest in Queensland's new radiation safety and protection legislation as it has set a new benchmark for the type of radiation safety and protection measures which may be provided for under legislation.

I come to the Private Health Facilities Act of 1999. The Private Health Facilities Act commenced on 30 November 2000 and established a new framework for protecting the health and wellbeing of persons receiving health services in private health facilities. Whilst private health facilities were primarily licensed under the Health Act of 1937 for the last 60 years, the regulation of these facilities has not kept pace with changes, in particular in the delivery of health services—for example, the range of complex procedures which are now performed at day facilities—or the expectation of health consumers regarding the standard of care that should be provided by health facilities, whether they are located in the public or the private sector.

In response to these changes the Private Health Facilities Act established a new licensing regime for private health facilities and set in place a range of measures that have been designed to ensure that the appropriate standards of care are maintained and monitored in private health facilities. These measures include requirements that all licensees ensure that their facility complies with the relevant standards made under the act by the Chief Health Officer, licensed facilities operate under a quality assurance program with a body such as the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards, ACHS, and that all licensees make periodic reports to the Chief Health Officer that will enable the quality of health services provided at licensed private health facilities to be monitored.

I turn to the Mental Health Act of 2000. The new Mental Health Act, which was passed on 30 May 2000, will replace the current Mental Health Act of 1974. The new act ensures that Queensland has the legislative framework to support state, national and international reforms in mental health policy.

The main purpose of the new Mental Health Act is to provide a more effective and accountable system for the involuntary treatment of people with mental illness and to provide a system for the termination of the mental state as well as the treatment and care of an offender with a mental illness that is just, open and accountable. In line with community expectation, this act aims to achieve a balance between the need to protect the community and the need to protect the rights of people with a mental illness who are incapable of consenting to treatment or who unreasonably object to treatment.

The new act will come into operation later this year so as to allow sufficient time to develop the necessary subordinate legislation to give effect to this act, establish the Mental Health Review Tribunal and the Mental Health Court and to conduct a comprehensive statewide education program to ensure health service providers, consumers and carers have a good understanding of the new legislation prior to its being implemented. As part of this implementation process, a mental health legislation home page has been developed on the Queensland Health web site to provide information on the implementation process of this act.

I come now to the Tobacco and Other Products (Prevention of Supply to Children) Amendment Bill 2000. The legislative initiatives introduced by the Minister for Health in relation to

smoking are yet another example of this government's commitment to protecting the health of all Queenslanders. As members of the House would recall, this government moved to amend the Tobacco Products (Prevention of Supply to Children) Act 1998 in response to the release of Ecstasy herbal cigarettes in Queensland which utilised a marketing strategy that was targeted at Queensland's youth. The amendments, which were introduced by way of the Health Legislation Amendment Act 1999, prohibited the supply of this brand of herbal cigarettes as well as other herbal smoking products to individuals under 18 years of age.

The Minister for Health has also been responsible for the introduction of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Prevention of Supply to Children) Amendment Bill 2001. As detailed in the minister's second reading speech to this bill, amendments are to be made to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Prevention of Supply to Children) Act 1998 to give effect to the Queensland Tobacco Action Plan by further imposing restrictions on the placement of self-service tobacco product vending machines, introducing a wide range of restrictions on point-of-sale advertising and promotional activities and other smoking products, introducing smoking bans in a wide range of enclosed places and strengthening the monitoring and enforcement provisions of the act.

I turn to the Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill. As members of the House would appreciate, the Health portfolio has an extensive legislative base. It has some 29 acts and 31 pieces of subordinate legislation. While the Minister for Health and her department are working their way through a comprehensive legislative review program, there has been and always will be a need to be responsive to emerging health issues and the changing environment in which the health industry operates; a need to provide a legislative base or, as may be appropriate, amend existing legislation to ensure that state or national initiatives, which have been designed to protect or promote public health, can be realised; to ensure that the Health portfolio legislation can be effectively and efficiently administered by addressing any deficiencies that may become apparent, especially given the age of some of the legislation; and to be responsive to any new regulatory reform programs.

This situation is demonstrated amply when one looks at some of the initiatives that have been realised through the health legislation amendment bills, for example, the amendment of the Health Act 1937 to provide for the establishment of a pap smear register as an integral component of the Queensland cervical screening program. In the first two years of its operation, more than 600,000 women have been entered on the Queensland pap smear register and 700,000 pap smear results have been received by the register. To date, only 0.43 per cent of women have elected to opt off the register. That is a commendable result when compared with the opt-off rates for other states, which are between one and three per cent.

The pap smear register also provides a means by which we can monitor the trends and the incidence of cervical cancer and we can study and manage the treatment of cancer. Experts agree that population-based screening with pap smears is an effective way of reducing the incidence of and mortality from cervical cancer.

The amendment of the Medical Act 1939 to facilitate the implementation of the Doctors for the Bush Scheme is another example. This scheme, which commenced in January 2000, is aimed at recruiting doctors with professional credentials for remote and rural communities. Since the commencement of the scheme in January 2000, 27 doctors have been appointed to work in rural and remote locations, such as Blackall, Blackwater, Charleville, Richmond Creek and Julia Creek.

**Mrs Edmond:** A great success story.

**Ms BARRY:** Yes. The Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act and the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act represented the first stage in the reform of Queensland's health practitioner registration legislation. The Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act 1999, which came into effect on 7 February 2000, is a small but significant component of this new package of legislation. This act has resulted in the establishment of an Office of Health Practitioner Registration Boards as a Public Service office under the Public Service Act 1996, which has ensured the independence of this office from Queensland Health and has resulted in the appointment of an executive officer and staff for the office. The new administration arrangements provided by the Health Practitioner Registration Board ensures that each of the registration boards receives the support necessary to help them fulfil their statutory obligations, which are primarily aimed at protecting the public.

The Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act also came into effect on 7 January this year. As stated in 1999 by Judge Pratt, QC, at the third annual conference of the District Court judges of Queensland, this act seems to have removed what was nothing but a hotchpotch of legislative provisions in the health sphere and replaced it with an overall regime that deals with unsatisfactory professional conduct by registered health professionals. Features of the act that warrant mentioning are the expanded grounds upon which disciplinary action may be taken in relation to a registered health practitioner or a former registrant; a broader range of disciplinary sanctions, which may be imposed upon a registrant who satisfies the grounds for disciplinary action; and the establishment of a three-tiered disciplinary structure, which enables matters to be heard in a way that is appropriate to their severity.

Since 7 February 2000, the date on which the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act came into effect, the following has occurred. In relation to the panel of assessors, the professional panels of assessors and the public panels of assessors have been appointed by Governor in Council. In relation to professional conduct review panels, a secretary of the professional conduct review panel has been appointed by the Governor in Council. In accordance with this role, the secretary has been instrumental in designing an information package for those individuals appointed to the professional panels of assessors and the public panels of assessors. It has also developed a set of guidelines to inform the members of those panels, parties and interested persons of the way in which a disciplinary matter may be conducted before a professional conduct review panel.

The act creates the Health Practitioners Tribunal as the adjudicative body, which has the task of hearing all disciplinary matters referred to it, hearing all appeals, reviewing all reviewable decisions and hearing all matters referred to it under another act. The tribunal is comprised of a District Court judge and three assessors: one from the public list and two from a list of relevant professionals. To date, the tribunal has heard a number of cases and received other referrals, which are now under consideration.

In conclusion, the reform and maintenance of the Health portfolio legislation is an intensive but necessary task. I look forward to working with the Minister for Health, the Honourable Wendy Edmond, in her endeavours to further the future health and wellbeing of the people of Queensland.

**Mrs CROFT** (Broadwater—ALP) (4.05 p.m.): I rise to support the Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill. The Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill is necessary to finalise the development of the new legislative scheme for registered health practitioners. Due to the size and complexity of this legislative scheme, the new health practitioners legislative package has been introduced in two stages. As the members of this House would recall, the first stage involved the enactment of the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999 and the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act 1999. Those two pieces of legislation were passed on 12 November 1999 and came into force on 7 February last year.

The 13 health practitioner registration bills introduced cognately with the Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill represent the second and final stage of the reform of health practitioner legislation. As a consequence of the decision to progress the new health practitioner legislation in two stages, it is necessary to introduce the Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill to repeal the Medical Act and Other Acts (Administration) Act 1966 and make a number of consequential and routine amendments, primarily to the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act 1999 and the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999. Once the new legislative scheme for registered health practitioners is enacted, there will no longer be the need for the Medical Act and Other Acts (Administration) Act 1966.

This act deals with such matters as the appointment of the registrar and deputy registrars of the boards; the financial management and annual reporting requirements of the boards; the appointment and powers of inspectors; and, finally, procedures for offences. The Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act 1999 sets out the means by which administrative and operational support services are to be provided to the health practitioner registration boards. On 7 February 2000, the Office of the Health Practitioner Registration Boards was established as a Public Service office under the Public Service Act. Since its establishment, this office has provided support services to the boards in accordance with the service agreements negotiated with each board.

As recommended by the health practitioner registration acts review, each of the 13 health practitioner registration bills now incorporates a comprehensive set of provisions that deal with investigative and enforcement powers, appeals and legal proceedings. These provisions have been drafted in accordance with fundamental legislative principles and a uniform style was adopted to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, there is consistency across the professions.

Upon perusal of the Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill, it is immediately obvious that the amendments to be progressed through this bill are predominantly technical or machinery in nature. However, there are a number of amendments to the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act that are worthy of mention. In accordance with the objectives of the act, that is, to protect the public, uphold standards of practice and maintain public confidence in health professions, registrants will now be required to notify their board if they have been convicted of an indictable offence or another offence under the registration acts of another state or country; if their registration has been cancelled, suspended or had conditions imposed upon it under the registration acts of another state or country; or if they were the subject of any judgment or settlement of proceedings involving negligence. The requirement to notify the settlement of proceedings for negligence matters is based on South Australian and Victorian legislation and was recommended by the Commonwealth's Professional Indemnity Review.

While it may be argued by some that this duty compromises the rights of a registrar, the notification of these matters will enable a board to promptly identify potential patterns of suboptimal practice with a view to taking disciplinary or other remedial action in the public interest. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (4.10 p.m.): In rising to speak to this plethora of bills—13 in all—I acknowledge the minister's comment that there have been seven years of consultation. I am sure that all of the ministers involved in the process over that time will be pleased to see the completion of it.

I seek clarification from the minister on a couple of matters. The second reading speech deals with the make-up of the registration boards. It states that the Governor in Council has the discretion to appoint between seven and 11 members. It is unclear why there is a discretion in size. Is it the breadth of responsibility? What matters are taken into account to determine the size of the registration board? It goes on to say that a majority of members of the board would be registrants and that the chairperson would also be a registrant. Two members of the board would be members of the public and one would be a lawyer.

My only concern is that these boards will be investigating and possibly prosecuting complaints against registrants. While that principle is not unusual, I raise with the minister the concerns that have been raised with me, and I am sure other members have had similar concerns raised with them. Those concerns relate to the role of other boards that have the responsibility for the investigation, prosecution and, potentially, the discipline of members of their own profession.

The example that has been raised with me involves the Law Society. Whilst I am not trying to cast any aspersions on the Law Society, this is the main issue raised with me involving constituent dissatisfaction about the independence and the objectivity of a board investigating potential discipline matters affecting members of its own profession. I know of one situation where the peers of a particular professional know that the person is less than capable of doing his or her work. In fact, the registration board also acknowledges it, but no action has been taken to have the person's registration modified or removed. That is not an area that the minister has jurisdiction over, but it is a living example of the inability or unwillingness of a registration board to take action against one of its own kind for matters where—

**Mrs Edmond:** Do they have consumers and non-professionals on their board?

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** As far as I am aware they do, but again they are in the minority. It is a stark example, and an extreme one, where other professionals know that, for a number of reasons, a person is not capable of carrying out their responsibility. Consumer problems have occurred because of that incompetence and no action has been taken. In this particular instance where a number of newly structured boards will be established, will there be a way of monitoring the level of complaint, the level of investigation and the way that those investigations are finalised to show how effective the internal investigation is?

The second matter, which has already been raised by the shadow minister, relates to the ability of multinationals to own premises where qualified professionals are working. That matter

raised its head in my electorate recently when a multinational group opened a medical centre. In her second reading speech, the minister indicated that the legislation will confine the amount of pressure or the constraints that those multinational management groups can make on the professionals that work within their organisations, and I commend the minister for that. It states that, if such an offence occurs, disciplinary action could be taken for actions, including imposing an unreasonable quota on the number of consultations to be undertaken, restricting the length of consultations, requiring the use of inferior equipment or products or encouraging overservicing. At least two or three of those issues were raised over the opening of this medical centre in my electorate.

In defence of the medical centre, in a very short period over the past couple of years all bulk-billing has ceased in my electorate. No private doctors bulk-bill. For the benefit of the community—and I believe that it will be a benefit—the medical centre will be offering bulk-billing. However, Dr Sondergeld, the President of AMA Queensland, and other private doctors in the electorate have raised concerns about the imposts that may be applied to doctors working within that system. In particular, they have raised concerns about the issue of quotas, that is, having to put through so many patients in an hour to be able to maintain an income stream, which necessarily involves restricting the length of consultations. Also, they are concerned about encouraging overservicing by using ancillary services like blood testing, X-rays and so on.

Although this issue is contained in the bill and I have no doubt that the intent is there, what mechanisms are in place for those sorts of actions to be reported? How free are the doctors within the medical centre structure going to feel if the imposts that the minister has outlined will be unacceptable are placed on them? How will they ensure that complaints get to the decision makers who can apply discipline? It could almost be like the whistleblower situation. Great pressure would be placed on the individual doctors to toe the line and do their job.

My other question relates to the circulated amendment from the member for Maroochydore, but only in an ancillary sense. I note from the bills that restrictions on the ownership of pharmacies will remain and will be reviewed by the NCP. However, I note that any restriction on the ownership of optometry has been removed. Why was a different application put in place? I know that the NCP is going to investigate the pharmaceutical side of things.

**Mrs Edmond:** They have done, the optometrists.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** They have done it already?

**Mrs Edmond:** They have done it and they've devised that it's not necessary. It is totally inappropriate.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** I thank the minister very much. She has answered that.

**Mrs Edmond:** In pharmacy they are still to do it.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** For those of us not involved in the professional field, these 13 pieces of legislation have taken a bit of wading through. I commend the current Minister for Health and the previous Ministers for Health for their dedication to the task. I look forward to the responses of the minister.

**Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (4.18 p.m.): In rising to support the profession specific registrations bills, I will outline some of the key features. The review of medical and health practitioner registration acts developed a comprehensive policy framework for new health practitioner legislation that will carry occupational regulations through the 21st century. The profession specific registration bills form part of a new health practitioners legislative package that creates a more effective health consumer protection system which will ultimately reduce adverse outcomes in the provision of health care and reduce health costs.

The major issues addressed by the profession specific registration bills include constitution, functions and powers of the registration boards; registration criteria, categories and processes; business and commercial issues, for example advertising; regulation of practice; protection of professional title; and other miscellaneous issues. To the greatest extent possible, the bills adopt a uniform approach to matters common to the registered health professions, that is, the bills are based on standard provisions that have been modified to address any profession specific issues for each profession.

I would like to briefly discuss some of these key issues, but let it be clear that none of the current acts specify the objectives of the legislation. The lack of a statement of objectives in registration acts can contribute to confusion in the minds of the public and the professions about

the respective roles of registration boards and professional associations. For this reason each of the registration bills contains a clear statement of their objectives.

The intent of the legislation is further clarified by a statement that the acts' objectives must be achieved. To do this, they need to establish registration boards as bodies responsible for the assessment and approval of applications for registration and for monitoring and enforcing compliance with the acts. They need to provide for the protection of the public from unsafe, unprofessional or illegal practice by registered or unregistered practitioners by providing for the registration of persons under the acts and imposing obligations on persons in relation to the practice of the registered professions. This means that there can be no mistake about the objective of the new registration acts to advance and protect the public interest.

Another key function is the powers of the boards. None of the current acts have a consolidated list of board functions or the powers necessary to enable the boards to perform these functions. For the first time the registration bills clearly state the board's functions by assessing applicants and registering persons under the relevant act by maintaining a registrar of registrants; by promoting high standards of practice by registrants; by conferring and cooperating with interstate registration authorities, educational institutions and other relevant bodies; by informing registrants and the public about the legislation; by advising the minister about the operation of the legislation; and by monitoring and enforcing compliance with the relevant act.

It is important to note here that the boards also have significant functions and powers under the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999. The key functions of the boards under this act are receiving complaints regarding registrants, carrying out investigations into the professional conduct and practice of registrants, bringing disciplinary procedures against registrants before the professional conduct review panel or health practitioners tribunal, adjudicating the least serious types of disciplinary matters, managing impaired registrants, consulting and cooperating with the Health Rights Commissioner and monitoring compliance with the act, including conditions and undertakings.

Given the broad scope of the board's functions and powers under the registration bills, the power to delegate in appropriate cases is essential if boards are to perform their functions in an effective and efficient manner. The bills prevent the boards from delegating the key powers conferred on them for the purpose of protecting the public, including the power to decide to register or refuse to register a person or to impose conditions on the person's registration. This is consistent with the requirements of the Legislative Standards Act 1992, which requires that administrative powers must be delegated only in appropriate cases and to appropriate persons. This power of delegation will assist in achieving significant efficiencies in administration.

The composition of the boards is a cornerstone of the health practitioners legislation. The bills strengthen the accountability of the boards by ensuring the board comprises a majority of practitioner members while at the same time increasing the level of public membership to two members in order to enable effective participation by members of the wider community.

An increase in public membership is one of the key reforms of the registration bills. The bills ensure that the boards comprise a majority of practitioner members, and this is definitely an improvement on many of the current acts. For the first time the bills require one of the practitioner members of each board to be a nominee of relevant Queensland based educational institutions for the profession. Importantly, the bills underpin the principle that all board members are appointed to act in the public interest. The bills reinforce the government's position that it is not appropriate for board members to have regard to the interests of their nominating body or individual members of that body in undertaking their statutory functions.

Registration boards have further accountability measures. Under the current acts, the boards have significant discretion in determining conditions of entry into the profession and the extent of regulation in other areas such as advertising. In view of the board's broad-ranging powers and their implications, it was important for the new legislation to ensure that the boards are open and responsive and operate with maximum accountability to the public and, through the minister, to parliament. The bills strengthen the board's accountability through revised meeting procedures, requirements for declarations of interest by board members and more comprehensive annual reporting obligations.

Occupational regulation is widely regarded as a highly effective means of providing protection to the public, addressing inadequate consumer information and ensuring that practitioners uphold professional standards. The bills significantly enhance the existing registration model by simplifying and standardising the eligibility criteria for registration and by ensuring appropriate

qualifications. The bills set out a range of objective indicators of fitness to practice. Several professions have additional requirements for registration. There is an additional requirement for registration as a dental prosthetist; the person must be registered as a dental technician. Interns must be registered on intern conditions which require a registrant to practise only in accordance with prescribed internship, which is anticipated to be an internship of 52 weeks duration, comprising supervised practice in surgery, medicine and emergency medicine, undertaking an accredited internship program and/or internship secondment program and complete it in three years.

Practitioners who have not completed a supervised practice program or who do not have relevant practical experience must be registered on probationary conditions. There are two additional eligibility criteria for general registration, namely applicants must have completed, one, pre-registration training; and, two, a period of practice in pharmacy—and this means prescribed supervised practice or its equivalent or an equivalent level of skill and knowledge through postgraduate study and supervised practice. Practitioners who have not completed a supervised practice program or who do not have relevant practical experience must be registered on probationary conditions. Giving the boards appropriate powers to enable them to thoroughly assess applications for registrations means the bills give the boards a comprehensive suite of powers for the purpose of assessing applications for registration.

The bills provide appropriate safeguards for applicants for registration by requiring the boards to give reasonable notice of their intention to exercise the powers of production, examination and health assessment. This is done by providing for standardised categories of registration, that is, general registration, provisional registration, special purpose registration and empowering the board to impose and review conditions on registration to enable practitioners to practise safely within their abilities rather than rejecting applicants who are not fully eligible for registration.

A key reform of the bills is to give all boards the power to impose conditions on a person's registration. In implementing mechanisms to facilitate the ongoing competence of practitioners, a major goal of the regulatory system is to ensure that standards of practice within the profession are maintained on an ongoing basis. Accordingly, the bills establish a new process for renewal of registration and strategies to facilitate the ongoing competence of registrants.

To address the deficiency of recency of practice, the bills now require practitioners to apply for renewal of their registration on a regular basis. The requirement to apply for renewal of registration is a mechanism for ensuring the ongoing competence of registered practitioners, which in turn is consistent with an objective of the legislative scheme to protect public health and safety. The information that registrants are required to provide on application for renewal of registration will assist the boards to determine whether the applicant continues to be able to practise the profession safely and competently. I can assure honourable members that there is more—much, much more—but, on this note, I decide that I will commend the bills to the House.

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (4.28 p.m.): The issues addressed by the new health practitioners legislative package, including the 14 health practitioner bills currently before parliament, have been the subject of the review of medical and health practitioner registration acts, or HPRRA review. The HPRRA review commenced in 1993. The review has been a major project involving a comprehensive examination of one-third of the Health portfolio's legislation, that is, 27 separate pieces of legislation including 12 acts. The project is one of the largest legislative review activities ever undertaken in Queensland.

The objective of the review was to formulate an effective and efficient regulatory system for the registered health professions aimed at protecting the public and promoting quality health care standards. The review examined the regulation of chiropractors and osteopaths; dentists, dental technicians and dental prosthetists; allied oral health practitioners, for example, dental hygienists and school dental therapists; medical practitioners; optometrists; occupational therapists; pharmacists; physiotherapists; podiatrists; psychologists and hypnotists; and speech pathologists.

The scope of the review was subsequently extended to incorporate the registration of medical radiation technologists in order to give effect to a 1993 decision of the Australian Health Ministers Conference to regulate this profession nationally. The major issues addressed by the review included the following: functions, powers and composition of registration boards; criteria and processes for registration of health practitioners; complaints and discipline of registrants, including relationships with the Health Rights Commission; business and commercial issues such as advertising, business structure and ownership; and the scope of professional practice. In relation to the need for review, collectively the current health practitioner registration acts have not

previously been subject to a simultaneous and comprehensive review. Although the health practitioner acts have been consolidated or amended from time to time and on many occasions, they nevertheless contain numerous deficiencies of a technical and policy nature.

Most of the current acts are based on a model which was developed early last century. For example, the current Medical Act is over 60 years old. The current acts have not kept up with changes in the health profession, nor do they adequately reflect contemporary expectations about the regulation of the profession. The current legislation unreasonably restricts business and commercial activities with no health benefit for the public. The provisions of the current acts do not conform with current drafting practice or fundamental legislative principles, especially in respect of the matters dealt with by subordinate legislation. Despite their common subject matter, the various acts contain different approaches to many issues with little obvious rationale for the difference. These differences largely reflect the times at which the acts were drafted rather than any sound policy rationale. There is widespread agreement that the current legislation is totally inadequate and that new legislation is needed as soon as possible to provide an appropriate level of consumer protection.

Before these bills were introduced in the House, immense consultation took place. In fact, the level of consultation was unprecedented in terms of public consultation. There was the release of public consultation documents. These took the form of a Medical Act information paper in 1993, a discussion paper on the Medical Act in September 1994 and a discussion paper on the health practitioner registration acts and 10 profession specific attachments in 1994 of which 3,000 copies were distributed and 197 submissions received in response. There was a draft policy paper on the medical and health practitioner registration act in September 1996 of which over 2,000 copies were distributed and in respect of which 252 submissions were received. As well as these consultation documents, there was a series of public meetings in October and November 1994 in Brisbane, Toowoomba and other areas throughout Queensland. These public meetings occurred to discuss issues raised primarily in the consultation documents and the submissions that followed.

A further area of consultation involved stakeholder advisory groups. The Medical Act Steering Committee, comprising senior public and private sector medical practitioners, medical board members, representatives of the Queensland branch of the Australian Medical Association and the Health Rights Commissioner, and the departmental advisory group, comprising registration board members employed by Queensland Health and the Health Rights Commissioner, contributed to the research and policy development stage of the review. In addition, during the research and policy development phase consultation was undertaken with public members of the registration boards and the Health Rights Advisory Council and nominees of all registration boards and peak professional associations.

As well as the public consultation indicated, there was a series of targeted consultation with key stakeholders. The review undertook targeted consultations with 31 key stakeholders, principally the registration boards and peak professional associations, and consumer groups over a five-month period in 1997. This targeted consultation process involved the provision of detailed information regarding the policy proposals, clarification of stakeholder issues, discussion of options and settlement of the stakeholders' final position. The strategy adopted in each case varied according to the sensitivity of the issue and needs of the stakeholder group. For example, the review had three meetings—more than nine hours in total—and 20 pages of correspondence with the Queensland branch of the Australian Dental Association. While time consuming and resource intensive, the target consultation process was extremely useful in clarifying key stakeholder issues and explaining and obtaining support for the preferred positions in the draft policy paper. A substantial degree of stakeholder anxiety and misinformation was addressed by this process.

A further area of consultation was the exposure of drafts of the new health practitioner legislation. In February 1999 the review conducted targeted consultation on exposure drafts of the first stage of the new health practitioners legislative package. The Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999 and Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration Act) 1999 commenced operation in February 2000. In March 2000 the review conducted targeted consultation on exposure drafts of the 13 profession specific registration bills with key stakeholders, including the registration boards, peak health professional associations, relevant tertiary institutions and specialist colleges, three consumer organisations, the Health Rights Commissioner and the Office of Health Practitioner Registration Boards.

Overall, there was a high degree of support for the legislative proposals put forward by the review. The key findings of the health practitioner registration acts review can be listed as follows. The review found that ongoing statutory regulation of all the health professions which are currently regulated in Queensland is justified on the basis that certain health procedures are risky and/or potentially harmful and should be undertaken by appropriately qualified persons. The consequences of being treated by a practitioner who is not suitably qualified are potentially serious from a public health and safety perspective and costly for individual consumers and the community as a whole. The review also found that protection of certain well accepted professional titles most efficiently enables consumers to identify appropriately qualified health practitioners in a market where there is a substantial degree of information asymmetry and consumers would have serious difficulties determining the validity of professional qualifications and/or standards of practice.

The review found also that registration of the profession is highly effective in ensuring that practitioners uphold professional standards, because of the potential for binding disciplinary action if they do not. It found that registration provides the most effective mechanism for consumer complaint about professional standards issues and the exclusion of unfit or unprofessional practitioners in order to protect the public. All professions under review are currently regulated in other Australian jurisdictions, with the exception of occupational therapy, speech pathology and medical radiation technology, which are partially regulated professions. The review found also that there are no viable alternatives to statutory regulation, that is, deregulation does not provide an adequate degree of public protection, effectively address information asymmetry or provide an effective means of upholding standards. On this basis, the review developed a comprehensive policy framework for new health practitioner legislation.

The new health practitioners legislative package came about as the end product of the HPRA review. The new health practitioners legislation package comprises 15 bills, namely, the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Bill, which deals with all issues regarding complaints, discipline and impairment across all registered health practitioners, except nurses; the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Bill, which deals with administrative arrangements for all of the registration boards, and 13 profession specific registration bills which deal with the constitution, functions and powers of registration boards; registration criteria, categories and processes; business and commercial issues—for example, advertising; regulation of practice and protection of professional title; and other miscellaneous issues.

Due to the size and complexity of the review it was decided to progress the new health practitioners legislation package in two stages. Stage 1, of course, deals with the acts put in place in 1999—the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act and the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act.

Of particular interest to me was the reference made by the member for Maroochydore to the consequences of a finding of negligence of practitioners referred to in the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act. Under the act there is a duty upon the practitioner to advise their board of certain offences or if the practitioner is a party to a judgment or a settlement of proceedings involving negligence. This duty will effectively increase the degree of public protection afforded by the legislative scheme. That obligation on professionals is a severe one and demonstrates that the bills under discussion today and the act that came into effect in 1999 are a serious attempt to properly regulate these professions.

The introduction of those two acts was the first stage. What is before the House today is the second stage of the program—the proposed passage of the profession specific registration acts. The 13 profession specific registration bills currently before the parliament represent the second stage of the health practitioners legislation package. It was determined that an additional profession—medical radiation technology—should be registered under the legislative model proposed by the review. The registration of medical radiation technologists implements a longstanding decision of the Australian Health Ministers Conference to facilitate the operation of mutual recognition for this occupational group.

The registration of medical radiation technologists in Queensland will enhance the operation of mutual recognition arrangements and thereby facilitate greater mobility in the work force between Queensland and the three other Australian jurisdictions that currently register medical radiation technologists, that is, Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

What are the anticipated outcomes of the new health practitioners legislative package? The major outcome is a more effective registration system which will provide greater protection of the

public and a significantly reduced regulatory burden. On the one hand, there is greater protection for the public; on the other, there is a reduction in red tape.

The key features of the new health practitioners legislation package include improved accountability of registration boards, that is, through increased public membership on the boards, independent adjudicative processes, appropriate appeal rights from board decisions, improved annual reporting obligations, revised meeting procedures and requirements for declarations of interests; and the establishment of a statutory Office of Health Practitioner Registration Boards to provide responsive administrative and operational support to registration boards on a self-funding basis. Another outcome is the introduction of mechanisms to ensure the ongoing competence of health practitioners.

There will be clarification and streamlining of the relationship between registration boards and the Health Rights Commission in relation to complaints concerning health practitioners. There will be the establishment of a publicly accountable impartial disciplinary system, which effectively separates prosecutorial and adjudicative functions for all registered health professions. There will be the establishment of informal supportive statutory processes which focus on the rehabilitation of impaired practitioners. There will be a preservation of the current practice restrictions in the short term pending the outcome of separate national competition policy reviews of these issues. There will be the removal of unnecessary anti-competitive restrictions on business structures and, finally, there will be a relaxation of the prescriptive controls on advertising by health practitioners.

The combination of all of these acts represents a massive effort in legislative reform in the health area and the minister, the Honourable Wendy Edmond, is to be truly congratulated on this great effort. It has taken a very long time to get to this stage, and I am sure the House would agree with those sentiments.

**Mr LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (4.47 p.m.): I rise to support the health practitioner registration bills. Health practitioners in Queensland have been regulated by statute since 1861. Each of the current registered professions was registered as follows. Medical practitioners and pharmacists were registered in 1861. Dentists, pursuant to the Dental Act, were registered in 1902. Optometrists were registered in 1917 and nurses in 1928. Physiotherapists were registered, pursuant to the Physiotherapists Act, in 1964. Psychologists were registered in 1977, and various other professions were registered pursuant to other acts along the way. The impetus to legislate in this area has been influenced by a range of factors, including pressure from the professions, developments in interstate and overseas jurisdictions and the need to consolidate years of piecemeal amendments.

In relation to dental practitioners, for instance, the introduction of the Dental Act in 1902 to provide for the registration of dentists was prompted by the increased incidence of tooth loss and the need to ensure that the public was protected from charlatans selling cheap and poorly made artificial teeth. In 1910 the Home Secretary was petitioned by opticians who sought the establishment of a registration board to licence opticians. The profession's push for statutory regulation was vigorously resisted by the medical profession for the next seven years.

The move towards statutory regulation of the psychology profession was prompted by the advent of Scientology in Australia in the 1960s. The Victorian government was the first to legislate to restrain the practice of Scientology through controls over hypnotherapy and psychological practice. Registration of psychologists was a secondary consideration. At the time, the profession was critical of this approach. It was not until the mid-1970s that the Queensland government expressed a desire to control unorthodox health practitioners who used pseudo psychological methods. At about the same time, articles in the Queensland press about para energy, hypnotherapy and unorthodox medicine prompted submissions from the profession to the Health Minister arguing the case for registration of the profession.

The situation regarding optometry was quite interesting. In 1910, opticians petitioned the then home secretary to establish a registration board to license opticians. There was significant opposition to the official recognition of opticians from the medical profession, who argued that opticians were not qualified to recognise eye defects caused by diseases that needed medical treatment rather than the prescription of glasses. This opposition was voiced during the debate on the unsuccessful Medical and Other Practitioners Bill 1911.

The Opticians Bill 1916 passed the Legislative Assembly but failed before the Legislative Council. In 1917, the upper house referred the Opticians Bill to a select committee, which heard the opposing views of opticians and the medical profession. The select committee sided with the opticians and suggested that the upper house proceed with the bill after certain amendments

were made. The Opticians Act 1917 established the Board of Optical Registration and provided for the keeping of a register and the setting of examinations.

The underlying premise of the legislation regulating the health professions has always been protection of the public. Time and time again, the introductory speeches and parliamentary debate of many of the current acts have clearly recognised and emphasised the primary objective of the legislation to advance and protect the public interest. For example, during the debate in Committee in relation to the Dental Bill 1902 it was stated—

The object of the Bill is to afford some protection to the public against people who practise as dentists without having passed an examination, and who are quite unskilled in the art of dentistry, so that the community run some risk in submitting themselves to the treatment of those men.

Again, in that same debate it was stated—

It was absolutely necessary that there should be some check on their conduct. If there was none, and a dentist behaved in a most disgraceful manner, or robbed people right and left, there would be no means of getting at him.

...

Power must be given to the board to make the members go straight professionally, or to pull them up.

In other words, it was legislating against charlatans and quackery, basically—and I am not talking about the feathered variety.

During the debate on the second reading of the Medical Act 1939 it was stated—

It must be understood that in a Bill such as this consideration has always to be given first to the welfare of the community. ... the purpose of the Bill is to place preventive medicine and the medical system of Queensland generally on a secure foundation.

Again, in relation to the Opticians Bill 1917 it was stated—

... while it will place persons qualified to practise on a proper and rightful basis, it will at the same time afford protection to the public in preventing unskilled persons from practising.

The new bills have been drafted in response to the need for a complete overhaul of health practitioner legislation. Together with the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999 and the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act 1999 they will form the package for a totally new scheme of health practitioner legislation for Queensland.

The Minister's second reading speech for the health practitioner registration bills noted that the power to make laws regulating the health professions is one of the most important mechanisms available to the state to direct the health care system. Through this legislation the parliament effectively sets the ground rules about the nature and quality of the professional services available to health consumers.

As the objects clauses of each of the bills indicate, the purpose of the new legislation is to protect the public, uphold standards of practice within the professions and maintain public confidence in the professions. The bills have been introduced to advance and protect the public interest.

Almost 70 years ago the honourable E. M. Hanlon made the point that boards are established in the public interest to administer a system of occupational regulation on behalf of the government. This principle is preserved in the bills currently before the parliament.

**Mr FENLON** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.55 p.m.): I rise to support this set of bills, which are being debated jointly and which relate to various health practitioners in Queensland. The purpose of these bills is essentially to maintain what might be described as a corporatist style of control by the state over these professional standards and the delivery of services in this sector.

The regulation should be supported in terms of creating an influence over the profession. Indeed, the state has an interest in this because it needs to establish the power under these laws to regulate these professions to ensure that professional health care is properly controlled. State control is fundamental in this regard. If state control and public control of these professions is lost, then there will be serious implications in terms of the public interest. It is my strong belief that the strength of these professions relies also on the strength of the educational base and the training base that is provided within each of these areas. Unless those features are well established, then the efficacy and viability of much of this legislation has to be looked at very closely.

Today I will touch on two professional sectors in particular that will require close consideration in the future with regard to regulation of professional standards. One of those sectors relates to dental technicians and dental prosthetists. I will refer to the other sector as one which broadly falls outside this set of bills, that is, the natural medicine sphere of service provision.

The field of dental prosthetists is one about which significant concern must be raised in terms of the level of educational services being provided. My information from the industry is that there has indeed been a decline in the educational standards in that industry. It is important that, in terms of state-controlled education for those areas, educational standards are indeed maintained.

Historically, by contrast, private sector control has existed in the natural medicine industry. Recently the state entered the industry more as an afterthought. There is already a very strong natural medicine industry, and it was very well established by the private sector. Now we find the state jumping on the bandwagon as a later development.

In terms of the natural medicine industry, the private sector has done very well in terms of there being degrees accredited in both Queensland and Victoria as recently as three years ago, and there has been recognition of degree courses in Chinese medicine for practitioners who are adequately trained in the modalities of acupuncture, naturopathy and homoeopathy with four-year degrees. Indeed, I am informed that Queensland leads the way in educational standards and professional practice in natural medicine. The educational model is even recognised internationally.

These industries have major implications in terms of the public interest. The quality of the health services provided is dependent upon the quality of the education and training system that supports the profession. Indeed, in her speech the minister referred to the educational standards. Here it is important to note the dental prosthetists area where training courses are of a very substantial concern.

The dental prosthetists' profession has a significant history and I am very proud to have been associated with it since the early nineties. I also give great credit to the former Deputy Premier, Tom Burns, who was a great supporter of this industry and its regulation. He, as well as others in this place under the Goss government, appreciated the importance of the delivery of quality prosthetist services to our elderly citizens even if only for such simple matters as the provision of false teeth.

The profession has evolved today to the stage where there have been significant discussions on the provision of new courses in terms of moving from technical training to courses at tertiary level. I will return to that matter shortly. I understand that the negotiations are at a sensitive stage, but there is certainly a lot of frustration in the industry in terms of the need to obtain decent courses in dental prosthetics to service this industry.

Let us look at the reality of what we are dealing with and the importance of the public interest in this set of professions that are subject to the legislation before the House. The reality is this: approximately 15,000 people are killed accidentally each year in the system and it has been argued that 100,000 are injured each year. That is about 300 people a week, 45 a day and perhaps two people in the course of this debate today. This is an unfortunate fact of our health care system and internationally these are the realities. This is not to decry nor to diminish in any way the professionalism that is exercised in these industries; it is a reflection of the fact that these are often high-risk practices, even with the best professional care and equipment. They are often invasive practices and practices which use chemicals and medicines that can be very dangerous. Indeed, Australia has a very fine reputation overall in its health care system, but it is an inescapable fact that internationally these events do occur.

I am advised that there is great alarm within the dental prosthetists profession about a decline in the standards of education. At the moment in Queensland, the only education outlet for dental technicians and prosthetists is a course conducted by TAFE where, in typical TAFE style, the course has been left to die the death of a thousand cuts. There is one practitioner left teaching this course and it is in a very sad state of decline in terms of teaching and the amount of equipment that is provided.

There is an urgent need to recognise the fact that this profession is the only one within this group that, as I am informed, does not have training to degree status. It is important that we bring this professional group of dental prosthetists to a much higher level of training—a level of training which caters for the needs of the public for high quality professional health care. If any profession poses a risk to the public, it is and should be a concern to all of us. It is appropriate for dental prosthetists to move into the higher education sector, from TAFE to a degree standard.

Indeed, adequate standards should be observed through this industry. I am informed by practitioners in this industry that at the moment there is significant concern about practitioners not being properly regulated and not practising to the high standards expected of this industry.

This is, of course, a concern—as it should be in every similar area of the health industry at the moment—in terms of the possible transmission of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and infectious hepatitis. There is alarm within this industry over the standards and the need for proper training and education. I know that the association of dental prosthetists is a highly professional group which is very concerned about this issue and that it has done everything possible in its own right to set the standards and to try to ensure that they are enforced. It is a profession that demands that foundation of good education and training to drive it. Those concerns extend not only to infection but also to possible injury and simply the quality of service that might be provided. It is a matter that demands urgent action in the public interest to guarantee the highest professional quality so that there can be no risk to the public.

I appreciate that discussions are under way at present. Notwithstanding that, it must be recognised that there is a great deal of eagerness within this industry to take this matter forward. The time has come for all health professions to move out of the TAFE sector and into the tertiary sector. Health standards demand the highest standard of education appropriate to their practices.

Natural health practitioners are also very important. It is interesting to note the difference in education standards between these industries. It is interesting to take a wider perspective of the health profession in this context. Under these bills, as I think the minister pointed out, we have an industry of approximately 30,000 regulated health practitioners.

However, there is another sphere of health practitioners which is generally free of any legislative regulation and is generally only subject to common law, and this sphere is what is now referred to as the natural medicine industry. Natural medicine practitioners adopt the philosophy of allowing a healthy body to heal itself naturally without the use of pharmaceutical drugs or surgical intervention.

My concern is that up to 70 per cent of Australians are now using this system of health care which is generally outside the laws that are the subject of this debate. Statistically, this sector of the industry is significant because it is used by approximately 14 million Australians, it has a turnover of \$2 billion a year and employs thousands of Australians. It is purported to have an excellent safety record.

This legislation is about creating and regulating a just relationship between a client and a practitioner. That is this legislation's most fundamental and valuable achievement. The natural medicine industry is growing quickly. For example, it is estimated that over the past 10 years it has grown by 100 per cent. In doing so, it is existing in an environment in which, essentially, the government knows little of what is occurring, firstly, in terms of the fundamental issues of public safety, where they do exist; and, secondly, in terms of the central aspects of this legislation, that is, the regulation of that client-practitioner relationship in terms of creating a just and equitable relationship between the client and the practitioner. That is a very significant fact. I know that the public has a great interest in that.

It is ironic that many people use natural health practitioners. Through conversations with my constituents, I know that many people do use them. However, information relating to their experiences is highly fragmented in their minds and in their minds alone. Indeed, without any legislative superstructure, it is difficult to perceive what is occurring in a general sense in terms of the relationship between those individuals and the array of natural health practitioners who are in practice throughout our community.

Recently, the Victorian government recognised this reality. After an exhaustive inquiry, which involved the assistance of some Queensland practitioners, the Victorian government decided to register various Chinese medicine practitioners as a subset of the overall natural medicine industry, that is, they regulated acupuncturists and herbalists. It appears that other states may indeed follow the Victorian example. This is possibly a timely opportunity indeed to consider the regulation of part or parts of the natural medicine industry.

There is indeed a great deal to be done in this area in terms of ensuring that public safety is guaranteed. I congratulate the minister on bringing this legislation to the parliament. It is legislation that regulates each of these industries, and any step in that direction has to be a very sound one. The public cries out for a sound guarantee of their safety and, indeed, ultimately their rights and recourses in relation to their experiences in these industries.

The regulation of these industries is important also because they occupy a very significant place within, and are recognised as such, the national health insurance environment. Many clients of health insurers now have the capacity to claim benefits as a result of using these particular practitioners. There is a great deal of importance attached to ensuring that these

practitioners deliver a highly professional service, one that guarantees public safety. I commend the bills to the House.

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (5.13 p.m.): It is my pleasure to address other honourable members of the House on the health practitioner registration bills. They are indeed important bills. Other speakers have already recognised that, and I endorse their remarks.

I must say that, as some members of the House would know, as a psychologist prior to becoming a member of parliament and, in fact, practising in various fields of psychology over a period of some 25 years, I have taken a particular interest in these bills, certainly as they relate to the profession of psychology but also as they relate to the other diverse health practitioners in the 12 other bills that form the legislative package. Just that number of bills in itself is an indication of the huge size of this task. I ask members to think about the range of body parts, as it were, that are controlled by these practitioners—from chiropractors to dental practitioners, speech pathologists, psychologists, podiatrists, osteopaths and others.

Therefore, it has surely not been a surprise to members of the House that the bills have taken a long time to be developed so that all of the issues relating to them are well thought through and that most of the professional groupings are very much in support of the direction in which we are going. I must remark to members, too, how times have changed. When I became a psychologist, which was some 25 years ago, psychologists were regarded by and large by the great majority of healthy people and others in society as people to be avoided. Nonetheless, the then practise of psychology, whether in the public or the private sector, was to sit in one's office and wait for clients in some kind of strife to attend—to pay large fees with little ability as consumers to question one's qualification, to check on one's capability and, in fact, with very limited control over the profession.

In those years we did not, whether in working for the public sector or in private sector firms—or for ourselves for that matter—even think about cost effectiveness. If people were willing to pay or if people were able to attend a public clinic and wished to continue, then we saw them, as it were, week in, week out, and for some, month in, month out, and even year in, year out.

Of course, times have changed. Now it is important to make sure that we have proper standards in place not only for initial qualifications but also for the continuing upgrade of education in all of these areas of the health profession. It is important to have some punitive provisions in place to take care of those who act outside their capacity and not in the interests of consumers. It is also important to have in place mechanisms whereby consumers can have a say about the standards in the first place and act to scrutinise the practice in all of these health areas as well as assist should complaints from clients need to be examined. It is also important that we look at the cost effectiveness of health practices as much as we do in every other sector in society.

Yes, of course, in the early stages some of these professions resisted the notion that they may have to be more competitive, that they may have to be more accessible and that they may have to be more accountable. I am pleased to say that a great number of them have agreed that there are more benefits for their professions, as well as for their clients, in the new legislation than otherwise. However, I must say that two groups in Cairns have petitioned my involvement in the development of these bills over the last years. Therefore, I wish to address their issues in particular.

The first group are dental therapists who brought to my attention, as well as to that of the Minister for Health, their concern that there was an opportunity, at least in the national competition review that is under way of dental practice, to bring better services to people than were presently available, particularly to people who live in remote communities such as those in Cape York and the Torres Strait. That certainly included people in Aboriginal communities, many of whom have—as unfortunately we know—very poor health status. It is important that those dental therapists who expressed these concerns to me in Cairns as well as at Apunipima, which is the Cape York district health council, are aware that their suggestions for reform will be better addressed under the national competition policy review that is under way and that there may, therefore, be consequent changes that we will bring into parliament at a later date.

The other group who had sought my assistance were some optometrists in Cairns who were concerned that, in allowing others who are not optometrists to own optometry practices, we may cause some difficulty particularly to small country practices. Their initial reaction was absolutely understandable. Their reluctance to let go of the control of the practices that they have had historically, particularly in country areas, is also understandable. Their concern that new practices

and more cost-effective kinds of practices may have to become part of their everyday way of doing business is genuine.

The most important concern, however, is that if corporate profit-making enterprises can direct optometrists in their practices, they could be prey to improper directions in the interests of profiteering. Therefore, the minister is to be complimented for the punitive provisions contained not only within the optometrists registration provisions but also the other medical practitioner registration provisions. Those provisions provide very severe penalties for improperly interfering in the work of any health practitioner. Fines can be as great as \$75,000 so, of course, they are not likely to be imposed often. The independent decision of an optometrist, a chiropractor or a psychologist which is made on the basis of expert knowledge must not be interfered with by those who own businesses and who, quite properly, have other concerns. They must not interfere with the integrity of a health practitioner's practice.

I compliment the minister and all of the staff of Queensland Health who have worked on these bills over many long years. The legislation will result in considerable differences. I have no doubt that most of them, if not all of them, will be to the credit of the health professions.

I have noticed, as I am sure others have, that there will be a loosening of advertising provisions for health practitioners. That may allow us to be a little more inventive in our advertising than we have been allowed to be in the past. A sign of the times has already been noticed in one Cairns optometrist's office, where a sign says, 'If you don't see what you're looking for, you have come to the right place.' An advertisement for a podiatrist's office is headed, 'Time wounds all heels.' I will not tell a psychology joke. I do not think that would be seemly at this point in the proceedings.

I extend my compliments to the minister. The legislation, in the form of these 13 bills, will provide a significant advance for all health practitioners.

**Hon. W. M. EDMOND** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy) (5.22 p.m.), in reply: I thank all members for their comments and support. We have certainly heard a wide-ranging debate on what will be wide-ranging reforms that, for the information of the member for Gladstone, have resulted from seven years of consultation and involved five ministers. Certainly this legislation has been progressed over a long period and has involved a lot of consultation. Of course, it has all been directed at improving the input of health consumers and ensuring the protection of the public.

Some of the debate highlighted the problem of relying on the media as the only source of policy formulation. The media can reflect a very superficial and not very well-informed source, particularly in terms of policy matters.

Some members have claimed that introducing a cognate bill has restricted debate on the clauses, but this is not actually the case. Clauses can still be debated on the relevant professional bills in sequence. It does not actually restrict the debate. A really great spirit of cooperation existed among all of the professions during the development of this legislation. They have worked hard to achieve a sensible uniformity in the legislation as it applies and to minimise the differences that exist for professional specific purposes. Some give and take has occurred in the spirit of that cooperation. I thank all of the professional bodies and the individuals for that goodwill and for their hard work. Therefore, at this stage it would be inappropriate to change aspects of the legislation that have already been debated exhaustively and that other professions may not support, as often other professions have given way on some issues to make sure that we achieved conformity.

It would appear that the opposition has found a very small number of contentious issues within the 14 bills. The ownership or otherwise of optometry practices is probably the leading one. I am sure that we were all lobbied on that issue, particularly prior to the election. As a health professional, the member for Cairns has answered that issue very well. There is quite a division among optometrists on this issue. I certainly asked optometrists around me how they felt about it, and they were not concerned at all, but there is a division and some people have spoken very loudly about it. However, I find it quite extraordinary that some optometrists have claimed that they do not trust their professional colleagues to maintain professional integrity and standards. I would not say that about a fellow radiographer. I find that an extraordinary statement, particularly as this legislation, for the first time, introduces quite a severe financial penalty for owners of practices that are not registrants who seek to unduly influence clinical decision making. All of the other professions have welcomed this change, and they say that it is the first time that it has occurred. Medical practitioners have stated that, in the changing marketplace of health care

where multinationals can and do own medical centres, optometry practices and, indeed, a variety of other practices, this protection is needed and it is now provided by the bill.

I should point out that one does not need to be a medical practitioner to own a medical practice or a dental practitioner to own a dental practice. Indeed, many practices are actually owned by a partner who leases the practice back to the medical professional as a way of sharing income. For many years it has been common that practices are not owned by people who are registered in that particular practice. It should also be noted that some of the corporates currently being established are actually conglomerates of medical practitioners or other like practitioners who are working together. By working together they can share ancillary staff and equipment, thus reducing costs and after-hours expenses. By doing that they can, indeed, provide improved care. As we have heard, they can actually provide bulk-billing where it has not been provided by individual practitioners. However, that needs oversight and that is why this legislation is being introduced.

A few questions were asked and I will deal with them as I go along. A question was asked about professional indemnity insurance being compulsory for registration. The Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council, AHMAC, is currently examining indemnity arrangements. All of the states are concerned about the rising cost of claims and poorly warranted claims which seem to be putting an impost on all states' health care. This is in response to recommendations of the Commonwealth government's review of professional indemnity arrangements for health care professionals. Queensland Health is represented on the working group established by AHMAC to examine what is a very complex issue. The bills do not make professional indemnity insurance compulsive for registration at this time, as to do so would be inappropriate and would pre-empt the outcome of those current deliberations. However, I will ensure that all stakeholders are fully consulted on the AHMAC recommendations at the appropriate time.

There has been quite a lot of discussion in the media recently and we have seen statements regarding the withdrawal particularly of public health services by specialist and rural GPs. Mention has been made particularly of obstetrics and gynaecology. For the information of the House, I point out that Queensland has an indemnity arrangement that goes far beyond anything any of the other states have. In Queensland we professionally indemnify all of those specialists and practitioners working in the public health system as long as they are working within their recognised and registered scope of practice. We also—and I think we are the only state to do so—provide subsidies for rural GPs for procedural work to encourage rural GPs to continue delivering babies in the bush. The other states do not do that. Practitioners have to take out their own indemnity insurance, which is quite a burden. That is why some of the other states are finding that practitioners are threatening to withdraw services from the public system.

The amendments made to the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act under the Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill were queried by the member for Maroochydhore. These are, in fact, consequential to the professions' specific registration bills in the large. The main change is the insertion of proposed new sections 385A to C which oblige registrants to notify the board of certain events. Initially, this provision was intended to be placed in each and every registration bill, however it was thought more appropriate if that obligation was put into the professional standards act. So instead of having it in every single bill separately, we have put it in one act to cover them all.

Other amendments progressed in the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 2000 corrected minor drafting errors, and it is not unusual to have minor drafting errors. Often they are consequential errors in which a mistake in one place gets carried through in a number of places, particularly when dealing with so many bills and such complex legislation.

The issues reported in the *Courier-Mail* about doctors with drug problems were largely, I have to say, inaccurate. The issue of impaired practitioners, including doctors with drug problems, is dealt with in the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act. The medical board retains a discretion as to whether to report matters to the police. The paper seemed to imply that these were doctors who are currently using drugs. That is not the case. What we are talking about here are medical practitioners or other health practitioners who are in rehabilitation. The supervision and the oversight is to make sure that they do not relapse. So they have urine tests, et cetera, on a random basis. I think I saw one figure of something like 16 tests being conducted in a one-month period at random intervals to make sure that they are not relapsing and taking drugs.

There is a heavy supervising and monitoring role over these people who are being rehabilitated to make sure that they are off drugs and not reusing. If the board was required to

report all doctors with a drug problem to the police—even those in rehabilitation—doctors would not report themselves or their colleagues to the board. We have found that, without the encouragement of self-reporting, doctors with drug problems would not be supervised. They could be there and we would not know about it. So the aim is to get them into rehabilitation programs where they are under strict supervision for the public to be protected.

The corporatisation of health practices was something that was touched on, and I have mentioned it briefly, as did the member for Cairns. The decision about ownership was made in regard to all of the professions, with the exception of pharmacy ownership because that is currently undergoing a wide ranging review at a federal level, and I will speak about that at length later. Rather than restricting the ownership of health practitioners' businesses to registrants, the bills create a major offence for persons directing or inducing registrants to do something that would constitute grounds for disciplinary action. This could involve imposing an unreasonable quota on the number of consultations to be undertaken, restricting the length of consultations, requiring the use of inferior equipment or products, or encouraging overservicing. Under the bills, a person found guilty of this offence could be prohibited by a court from carrying on or managing a business providing a health service. The government is confident that this offence will effectively ensure that clinical decision making by registrants is not subject to unreasonable pressures from business owners and managers. Having regard to the objects of the acts and the potential for the behaviour targeted by this provision to seriously compromise public health and safety, this offence is punishable by a maximum penalty of \$75,000. It is significant.

Because it is related, I will deal with the query by the member for Gladstone about how we would encourage reporting of undue influence. The undue influence offence provision is supplemented by whistleblower protection for people who provide information, assistance or evidence to the board, an inspector or a court in relation to alleged breaches of this and other provisions under the bills. In particular, it is an indictable offence for someone to take reprisal against a person who reports an alleged offence, and also a person who suffers detriment as a result of the taking of reprisal is entitled to sue for damages. So we have quite hefty provisions in there to protect whistleblowers on that. As a result of this legislation there is also further oversight by the Health Rights Commission. So they are working in tandem to follow up.

Again, the bills, in conjunction with the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act, significantly strengthen the accountability of the investigation and disciplinary functions. First, the number of public or non-professional members of the board will be increased to two, thus ensuring that investigations are not conducted only by the registrants' profession. Secondly, the Health Rights Commission will have an enhanced watchdog role, particularly in relation to investigations. The boards are required to give a report on all completed investigations to the Health Rights Commission for comment before the board takes any action. The commissioner is given explicit power to report to the minister about investigations conducted by the board or about a particular investigation. Boards are required to advise the commissioner when disciplinary proceedings will be commenced, and the commissioner retains the right to intervene in disciplinary proceedings. Finally, public involvement in disciplinary proceedings is increased. Disciplinary bodies, the health practitioners tribunal and professional conduct review boards all include a public member or assessor.

Another question that was raised was why we are removing the ownership restrictions on optometry practices but not on pharmacy practices. The current legislative restriction which allows only optometrists to own optometry businesses has been reviewed already under the national competition policy guidelines. The restriction has been circumvented in Queensland for many years through various corporate strategies including, for example, the use of nominee optometrists to hold shares in optometry businesses on behalf of non-optometrists. New South Wales and Tasmania are the only two other Australian jurisdictions that still restrict ownership of optometry businesses. The legislative restrictions in those two jurisdictions are also being reviewed under the NCP guidelines, and in New South Wales a recommendation has already been made to discontinue them. That will mean that only Tasmania is still awaiting the outcome of its NCP review.

A public benefit test undertaken for the Queensland review by independent economic consultants found no evidence of adverse impacts on optometry health care as a result of optometry businesses being owned by non-optometrists. This was the case not only in Queensland but also in other Australian jurisdictions that do not prohibit non-optometrists from owning optometry businesses. The public benefit test report concluded that the legislative objective of the proposed new Optometrists Registration Act could be achieved without restricting

ownership. The government therefore considers that there is no justification on health grounds to restrict ownership of optometry businesses.

With respect to the pharmacies, the Queensland government is committed to supporting the concept of community pharmacies, and in June 1999 the Council of Australian Governments, or COAG, commissioned a national review of pharmacy regulation. The final report of the national review was presented to COAG in February 2000. COAG has established a national working group to consider the review recommendations and to promote consistent national decisions on the final report. Representatives of Queensland Health and Queensland Treasury are part of this national working group. The Queensland government has also established an interdepartmental working group, and the working group is to oversee Queensland's response to the recommendations contained in the review report and ensure that any changes made to pharmacy ownership legislation are appropriate for Queensland.

The member for Gladstone also asked about the size of the boards and why there needed to be discretion to allow them to be increased from seven to 11 members. The size of each board will be determined having regard to the complexity and the size of each profession. While it is likely that most of the boards will retain the current nine members, the medical board is likely to have 11 members, given the large size of the medical profession and the diversity of practices, and the new osteopaths board, which is going to cover a relatively small number of practitioners, is likely to have only seven members. Each board and relevant professional association will be consulted in determining the appropriate number.

I take this opportunity to thank the staff of Queensland Health for all the work they have done in preparing this monumental legislation. I also thank members of this House for their contributions in the debate tonight. I think it has made them all very aware of the wide-ranging reforms happening in health. As has been stated, this is all part of major reforms of health services and standards which will improve the safety of the public. I take this opportunity to thank all members for their support.

Motion agreed to.

### Committee

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy) in charge of the bill.

### Chiropractors Registration Bill

Clauses 1 to 42, as read, agreed to.

Clause 43—

**Miss SIMPSON** (5.42 p.m.): Firstly, I thank the minister for her summary of the speeches given during the second reading debate, because it is of assistance to have the minister's response on those issues. I particularly appreciated the minister's response with regard to professional indemnity. We await the outcome of those particular reviews. The cost of professional indemnity insurance as currently exists for those who have it is a concern, but we will also await the outcome of the review with regard to potential benefits for those who do not currently have that protection to provide to consumers.

Clause 43 relates to eligibility. With regard to the core practices issue, can the minister say when those issues will be resolved, because they are particularly significant issues. They are complex issues. They potentially could have quite an impact on the professions. I would appreciate the minister's advice as to where that process is currently at.

**Mrs EDMOND:** It is important that we realise that this is a part of very wide-ranging reforms in health. This is the second stage. The third stage is the scope of practice. We believed it was beneficial for everybody concerned to work through the first two stages and then move on to the scope of practice. As the member opposite indicated earlier, some of the scope of practice will be debated. For instance, there is quite a vigorous debate in dental practice as to where dental therapy, dental hygienists, dentists, prosthodontists and all the rest of it fit in. Hopefully we will be able to work through those in a very consultative manner as we have in the past. We will be looking to moving forward on the scope of practice consultation once these bills have been passed. Some of the work has been done in relation to consultation. National competition policy

guidelines and tests have been reviewed for a number of the practices. We will be continuing that process once these bills have passed.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Can the minister give us an indication as to how long that process will run for and whether any deadlines have been set under the national competition policy review?

**Mrs EDMOND:** We are expecting to start in June or July this year. We were not sure when this legislation was going to get through. We expect the consultation period to be about two months. We are hoping to have any amendments brought to the House by the middle of next year and then finalised.

Clause 43, as read, agreed to.

Clause 44, as read, agreed to.

Clause 45—

**Miss SIMPSON (5.46 p.m.):** This clause relates to fitness to practice. I note that the draft of this legislation before the House last year was a slightly different draft to the one contained in this package of legislation. As I understand, it is purely to meet the requirements of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's recommendation. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee had some concerns with regard to the Criminal Code (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act and the fact that that may inadvertently be read to change the type of criminal history that had to be made available to the boards. In drawing attention to the fact that the minister has amended this section since the previous bills were tabled, I would simply ask whether there are any other provisions in the bills that have been amended since the previous legislation was tabled.

**Mrs EDMOND:** There were changes due to transitional amendments. I think it is also fair to flag with the member that there will be changes to this actual part of this bill. This bill indicates that it does not override the rehabilitation of offenders legislation. As a result of the Commission for Children and Young People Act, where there is going to be disclosure of any offences that relate to children, we will be going back and amending this bill to be consistent with that. Of course, some of these practitioners will be dealing with children. There was a misunderstanding that those provisions were already within the legislation to force disclosure of health practitioners. That has not been the case. We will be amending this in the future to be consistent with the Commission for Children and Young People Act.

Clause 45, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 46 to 129, as read, agreed to.

Clause 130—

**Miss SIMPSON (5.49 p.m.):** Clause 130 relates to registration autonomy. There was quite a bit mentioned about this during the second reading debate. I acknowledge the intention of this provision, that is, to try to overcome the issue of coercion. In respect of the application of this clause, because it is a fairly new clause I would seek the minister's advice as to whether this type of concept has been tried in any other jurisdictions and whether there will be a review of its effectiveness in terms of people's awareness of it and access to it. Obviously, this is a new aspect of legislation. With the advent of greater corporatisation, issues of coercion obviously are of concern. I seek the minister's advice primarily as to where this has been done and what means there will be to review the effectiveness of this provision. I know there was some mention as to how people will access this provision. I think the question is: how will people be educated to know that this provision is available?

**Mrs EDMOND:** Certainly, this provision has been very widely supported by all of the professions, and more particularly in the medical profession than in any of the allied health fields, because they are the areas going through enormous change at the moment. None of the other states has this sort of legislation. Queensland is seen to be at the vanguard of improving health legislation. We have introduced more proactive reforms in health legislation over the last few years than has been done in Australia for the last 30. A number of the other states are examining this legislation and looking to make their legislation consistent. New South Wales is currently preparing legislation along very similar lines. In terms of how this will work, as I mentioned in answer to the member for Gladstone's queries before, whistleblower protection will cover those people and there are also quite significant penalties for people who take reprisal against somebody who has raised this issue.

There has been a lot in the media recently about the corporatisation of medical practices, in particular GP practices, with vertical integration with pathology and radiology practices all built into

the one building and being owned by the one corporate conglomerate. A number of those who have been to see me have been part of a group of practitioners. There are significant benefits under that structure. I do not think we should just reject the concept of group and conglomerate practices out of hand. Certainly, clients often find it much easier if they can access pathology, radiology and pharmacy services at the same time as they go to their GP, rather than having to go to five different places or even specialists in the same building. There are a lot of benefits there, but we do need tight controls. We believe this will be the toughest control in Australia. Yes, we can always go back and review legislation if it does not work or if it needs to be tightened, but I think a \$75,000 fine and the loss of the ability to own such a practice in future is quite significant, and I think people will be trying to avoid that. Certainly, the feedback we have got from the professions is that they support it, they accept it and they are very much willing to give it a go

Clause 130, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 131 to 190, as read, agreed to.

Clause 191—

**Miss SIMPSON** (5.53 p.m.): I draw the minister's attention not only to clause 191 but also to clause 192, as these were both mentioned in the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 13* for the year 2000 which dealt with this legislation when it was previously introduced. The clauses that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee had concern about regarded the effective reversal of the onus of proof. It was concerned that this was a limitation of people's rights. The *Alert Digest* stated that both effectively reverse the onus of proof since under the law a person generally cannot be found guilty of an offence unless he or she has the necessary intent. I know that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee continued to have a concern about that and raised whether it was necessary to include this provision.

**Mrs EDMOND:** This is to ensure that managers cannot hide behind the Corporations Law while they are putting undue influence on health practitioners. We made a decision that public safety was more important than the protection of that individual.

Clause 191, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 192 to 242, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

#### **Dental Practitioners Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 268, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

#### **Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 249, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

#### **Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill**

Clauses 1 to 37, as read, agreed to.

#### **Medical Practitioners Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 302, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

#### **Medical Radiation Technologists Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 237, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

#### **Occupational Therapists Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 239, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

### Optometrists Registration Bill

Clauses 1 to 211, as read, agreed to.

New clause 211A—

**Miss SIMPSON** (6.00 p.m.): I move opposition amendment No. 1—

1. After clause 211—

At page 112, after line 18—

insert—

'211A Ownership of a business providing professional services

'(1) A person who is not a registrant must not be the owner of a business providing professional services.

Maximum penalty—30 penalty units and, if the offence is continued to be committed after conviction, 4 penalty units for each day the offence continues to be committed.

'(2) This section does not apply if the business is owned by a corporation, or an unincorporated body, consisting only of registrants.'

This amendment relates to restrictions on ownership of optometrical businesses, which was referred to in the debate on the second reading of the bill. This is certainly a very controversial issue. All the optometrists to whom I have spoken have been most concerned about this change to their practices. The optometrists association has made it very clear that it as a body is opposed to this and is most concerned about issues relating to access to services.

We have already seen many optometrists withdrawing from the public scheme of dispensing spectacles to people on low incomes and people who would find it very difficult or even impossible to afford glasses. I am aware of one very large company that has said it would not participate in this scheme because it did not believe it was cost effective and, therefore, it was not interested in being involved in that particular scheme. Of course, there will be others who have no corporate background and who also will not participate for the same reasons. However, concern has been raised that there will be a push to remove sole practitioners from this profession as much as possible, or to remove optometrists' own practitioners from this profession and to have an increasingly smaller number of practitioners practising and an expansion of the corporate entity.

Through this amendment I am seeking to maintain the status quo, where there is some level of restriction. During the public interest review process there has been very strong lobbying of the government by those large optometrical groups. There is no doubt that the optometrists association has concerns, as professionals, and believes that there were flaws in the evaluation of the public interest test and what it really meant to rural and regional Queensland.

Some of the services that are currently being provided by practitioners in some areas might not be considered as cost effective for the larger operators, who would not normally go into those areas and would be more likely to centralise their operations. I agree that there are benefits in people being able to practise together in larger practices. However, my concern relates to publicly listed companies that may have a different client agenda and different pressures placed upon their financial decisions than would somebody who lives in the community and provides a service to that community.

I want to correct something the minister said about the provisions of the cognate debate. It is acknowledged that the majority of these bills are uncontroversial. That is why I primarily spoke to clauses relating to the first bill, because the issues are the same across the other professions and it was not appropriate to continually ask the same questions when they had been answered already. But the Optometrists Registration Bill is a different matter.

I had concerns about this bill being included in a cognate debate because we cannot oppose the second or third reading for only that particular bill; we would have to do it for all bills—either accept them or reject them. That is why I was against this particular bill being included in an amalgamated debate. We can debate individual clauses, and that is the option that has been left to us, but we do not have the option of voting against the second or third reading. This amendment seeks to reinsert the current provisions—the status quo—to provide some level of restriction.

Two primary issues were dealt with in the public analysis of the previous restrictions, namely, ownership and the sale of spectacles. Certainly the optometrists association believes that those two issues have overlapped in the analysis. Although it had no objection to the sale of spectacles being deregulated, its objection was to the practice being deregulated and the fact that this would mean that fewer and fewer practitioners would be operating independently.

This is a large state. It is not like other states in which most areas can be reached within a couple of hours of leaving the capital city. There are different cost pressures, and there is a very real concern that there will be further reduction in the number of people who are providing spectacles to the public and that there will be an impact upon those service providers.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** I acknowledge the minister's comment that other specialty areas such as medical specialties do not have regulation on ownership. In fact, the minister stated that some practices are owned by partners and then leased back to doctors. However, I want to address a couple of issues contained in a document on which I believe Queensland Health and the NCP based part of their recommendation to deregulate optometry. One of the statements in the report by SKM Economics reads—

No major change in the price of optometry services is expected under any of the options although marginally higher prices are expected under Options 4 and 5. Medicare establishes benchmark prices for optometry consultations and there is already a competitive market for optical appliances.

In the long term, however, a marginal reduction in the underlying costs with running an optometry practice is expected under Options 1 and 2. This reduction in underlying costs may help reduce any increase in consultation costs in the future and may also flow on to reduce the cost of optical appliances.

I have not read many documents that are prepared under an NCP review. One that I have read in detail related to the review of water supplies in relation to the dam in Gladstone. There seems to be almost—and I am not saying that there is—a cut-and-paste mentality with these sorts of reviews. They say much the same thing: that it is expected that there will be no detrimental effect, or words to that effect. But even with the dairy industry deregulation we have seen that the predictions of cost savings to consumers just do not eventuate and, in fact, there is enormous collateral damage to the industry that is actually deregulated.

The shadow minister has already commented on the provision of services to pensioners and those in the community who are unable to pay the full service price for optical appliances. I would be interested in the minister's response to that, because it is a very critical issue. I commend the Health Department for its provision of spectacles to pensioners and the optometry companies that supply lenses and frames at an affordable price, if not for free. In the past I have written to the minister about the delay in getting frames and glasses back to pensioners and so on, but the fact is that at least that opportunity exists for people who are unable to pay the full price for optical services in order that they can have their needs met.

In its studies SKM Economics has said that that practice will not cease. However, there appears to be no tangible evidence to show that the service would continue at no cost to pensioners or other persons who qualify because of their income level. If that service was lost, it would create an enormous impact on a significant sector of our community—people who can least afford it. So I would be very interested in the minister's investigations into that issue. SKM Economics also stated—

No net change in terms of total employment in the industry is expected under any of the Options as total demand for optometry services will be unchanged.

Again, there is that non-definitive but positive terminology: no net change is expected. But it is all care and no responsibility on the part of SKM Economics, because it completes its contract and then goes. And when there is a net impact it just says that, on the basis of the evidence with which it was provided, it was not expecting that there would be a net impact.

Coming from a regional area, I think that 'no net change' merely means that if there is an impact the highest probability is that it will be in rural and regional Queensland. I would be interested in the minister's own investigation into that matter. I took on board the minister's comments about the deregistration of optometry, but these issues that have been raised by SKM and responded to by the optometrists association are very important.

The next issue that I raise is—

The cost of administering the ownership restrictions and some potential for compensatory issues associated with restricting or eliminating existing companies which can operate in other jurisdictions. These costs would appear to exceed the potential benefits of these Options that are marginal at best impacts on Service Providers.

I find that scary simply because—and it has nothing to do with the government of the day—compensation packages for the negative impact on industries historically either do not materialise or are much less than the actual cost to the industry. Again, I cite the dairy industry, but there are many other industries where governments state that any negative impact will be covered by compensation. An example is the east coast trawl management plan. Under the buy-back of licences there will be a compensation package, albeit under a different guise. Those packages never materialise and they certainly never cover the full impact.

Finally, the last concern that I wanted to raise is—

It is proposed that the new Health Practitioner Registration Acts will include an offence provision for the owner of a practice to use undue influence on clinical practice.

The optometrists association has gone on to make the valid point that the need for this type of legislation reveals acceptance of potential problems for the public. The minister answered in general terms that it would be covered by whistleblowers legislation and that there would be tribunal intervention and review of breaches that are raised with the various registration boards. However, the optometrists are saying, 'We do not have that problem now.' Changing or deregulating ownership brings into clear focus the spectre of that starting, and the retention of regulation would mean that those types of pressures would not even be in the marketplace. I would be interested in the minister's response to those issues.

**Mrs EDMOND:** The government will not be accepting the opposition's amendment largely because this discussion has gone on and on and on. There will never be agreement. There is only one group in the optometrists profession that objects. We have also had letters from dispensing opticians and different people supporting the legislation and saying that they do not oppose it.

I think it is important to clarify for members that the free spectacles scheme is something completely separate. It is not something that the optometrists do out of the goodness of their heart and wear the cost of that. The Medicare item number that is provided covers the diagnosis and prescription on a person's first visit. Everybody is charged the same; they even charge me the amount of the Medicare rebate. They all choose to do that. They do not have to charge the same amount as the Medicare rebate. Like the doctors, they can charge above that amount, but they do not. Even for people who are well off, most optometrists seem to charge the amount of the Medicare rebate. So they seem to be quite accepting that that covers their full costs and they do quite well out of it.

The free spectacles are actually provided by the government through a scheme that does a bulk purchase deal with a dispenser. Then they get sent back to the optometrist, if that is the wish of the person, to dispense them.

The issue that has been debated by the optometrists and the reason some of them have withdrawn is that they claim that the amount that they are given for handing those glasses over to the client is not enough. A few years ago—I think in 1995—they got nothing. They just had the first part of it; they did the rest as an act of goodwill and because it attracted other business to the optometry practice. Since then the amount has increased, and I think they currently get \$7.50 for handing over the glasses. However, a lot of people get the glasses mailed back to them; they do not even go through the optometrist because they cannot find an optometrist who will participate in the handing over part of the scheme. Sometimes there are minor adjustments to be made in terms of the tightness of the frames and those sorts of things, and they are generally made by the receptionist, not by the optometrist. So the free spectacles scheme is something completely different and totally outside this legislation. Yes, it relies on an element of goodwill on the part of some optometrists who feel that they have a duty to elderly people. The feedback I have received is that they do quite well. My understanding is that the contract for providing those free spectacles is about \$3 million. I am also advised that about \$3 million in ancillary services bought by the individual clients gets taken up as part of it—all the extra bits and pieces that they might buy at the time or by having their prescription enhanced. For instance, people can pay extra to have different frames rather than the regulation frames. Many optometrists find that it is quite a lucrative business.

I have no idea of the breakdown of the numbers involved in that, whether they are the big corporate bodies or individuals. My understanding from the figures I have seen is that it is a complete mix. To say that corporatisation will remove that is not necessarily true. I know the optometrists are running that line, but it is not true.

The current restrictions on ownership do not apply to medical practitioners and dentists. The restrictions on ownership provisions do not apply to any other health profession except pharmacy, and that is under review. Depending on the outcome of those reviews, that could change. So it actually does not apply to any of the others. I have had all the optometrists' material and they claim that if we change this there will be a sudden rush of complaints. There has been no indication that the other states have any more complaints than we do, even though they do not have these ownership provisions now. The only states that currently have them are Tasmania and New South Wales, where they are currently undergoing their reviews. My understanding is that

New South Wales is moving towards deregulation as we speak. Tasmania is still conducting its review, but in the light of what is happening in the other state, that is likely to change, too.

I can assure the member that they are two completely separate issues. It is disappointing that the optometrists—and I have to say that a number of optometrists have indicated to me that they are very concerned about the implied threats of the optometrists in saying that if we go ahead with this legislation they will pull out of the free spectacles scheme. The two issues are totally separate. They should not be connected. It is rather disappointing that the optometrists have sunk to that level in their objections.

**Miss SIMPSON:** The minister said that everybody except a few optometrists are upset about this legislation. Can I ask the minister whether the optometrists board in fact endorsed these restrictions on ownership being taken away?

**Mrs EDMOND:** I understand that at the beginning they accepted it, but under pressure from the optometrists who were lobbying very heavily before the election they changed that stance. I understand also that all other boards do support it.

**Miss SIMPSON:** My other question to the minister is in relation to the free spectacles scheme, which we know is subsidised by the government. The spectacles are provided by the government. My question is if it is such a terrifically financially rewarding scheme for optometrists, why are there fewer and fewer optometrists in this scheme? I understand that there used to be about 400 optometrists participating in 1998 and that had fallen to 331 as at July last year. That was in information that I understand the minister tabled in the House.

**Mrs EDMOND:** The numbers vary from time to time. My understanding, the last time I looked, is that it is very similar to what it was a couple of years ago. Sometimes there is a spate. A group practice will pull out and at other times others will come in. As one lot falls off, others pop up wanting to have that practice. It is probably more of a difficulty in rural areas where there is one provider who has a sole practice and, therefore, has a monopoly. I find that it is those more than the big corporates who are the ones who are withdrawing. It is the monopoly in small areas where they feel that they can really control it. In a number of those areas we provide them with it. We mail it to them directly.

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

**AYES, 19**—E. Cunningham, Flynn, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Lee Long, Lingard, Pratt, Quinn, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Springborg, Copeland

**NOES, 60**—Attwood, Barry, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Choi, E. Clark, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, J. Cunningham, Edmond, English, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hayward, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, McGrady, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Phillips, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Reynolds, N. Roberts, Rodgers, Rose, Schwarten, C. Scott, D. Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Strong, Struthers, C. Sullivan, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Reeves

Resolved in the **negative**.

Clauses 212 to 238, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

#### **Osteopaths Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 226, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

#### **Pharmacists Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 247, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

#### **Physiotherapists Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 243, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

**Podiatrists Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 239, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

**Psychologists Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 255, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

**Speech Pathologists Registration Bill**

Clauses 1 to 236, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Bills reported, without amendment.

**Third Reading**

Bills, on motion of Mrs Edmond, by leave, read a third time.

**FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (6.33 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Mackenroth, read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (6.34 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

On its enactment, the First Home Owner Grant and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2001 will legislatively implement on and from 9 March 2001 the extension to the First Home Owner Grant Scheme which was announced by the Prime Minister on that date. It will also change the date by which the pipeline proponents for the proposed PNG to Queensland gas pipeline are required to submit access principles to the regulator from 18 May 2001 to 1 December 2002.

In relation to the First Home Owner Grant Scheme, first home owners that satisfy a number of criteria are currently entitled to the payment of a grant of \$7,000. The grant is intended to encourage and help home ownership and offset the effect of the goods and services tax on home ownership.

On 9 March 2001, the Prime Minister announced that the grant payable under the First Home Owner Grant Scheme would be increased from \$7,000 to \$14,000 in certain circumstances. The intention of the additional grant is to stimulate Australia's building industry.

Provision of the \$14,000 grant will be a short-term measure that will end on 31 December 2001, at which time the first home owner grant will revert back to \$7,000. For first home owners who do not meet the extended eligibility criteria, the grant will remain at \$7,000. Funding for the additional grant is to be provided by the Commonwealth, with the extended scheme being administered through the existing state and territory schemes.

Although details regarding eligibility criteria had not been fully worked through—one might say that they had not been worked out at all—by the Commonwealth when the Prime Minister announced the new scheme, all states and territories worked closely with the Commonwealth to settle the criteria and to ensure that payments could start being made as quickly as possible. As a

result, on 23 April 2001 the Commonwealth issued a fact sheet setting out the criteria that must be satisfied for the additional \$7,000 grant to be payable.

The Queensland Office of State Revenue has taken a proactive role in revising the administrative arrangements that will support the new scheme and in preparing the legislation to give it proper effect, and other jurisdictions have been able to adopt this work to assist in settling their own arrangements. Therefore, even though it took the Commonwealth two weeks to finalise its policy position for the new scheme, Queensland home buyers were not in any way disadvantaged as payments have been made within time for all eligible applicants. What is more, payments are continuing to be made under the new scheme within the same time frames as for the existing scheme.

To be eligible for the additional grant, a first home owner must satisfy the eligibility criteria for the existing grant and contract for the purchase or construction of a new home, or commence construction of a new home if an owner builder, on or between 9 March and 31 December 2001.

A building will be considered to be a new home where it has not been previously occupied or sold as a residence. Except in limited circumstances where a substantially renovated home has been purchased from a vendor who is liable for GST on the sale, previous occupation of the building as a residence by someone other than the first home owner—for example, the builder or short-term tenant—will preclude eligibility for the additional grant. Premises that have not previously been occupied as a residence, such as a warehouse or an office block, will be considered to be a new home if they have been converted into a home and are being occupied as such for the first time.

In addition to contract dates, the Commonwealth has included construction commencement and completion requirements for off-the-plan sales, building contracts and construction by owner builders. These criteria are intended to achieve the Commonwealth's policy objective of stimulating the building industry by encouraging quick building commencement and completion.

For building contracts, construction must commence within 16 weeks of the contract's execution, with a relaxing of this requirement only in particular circumstances to be specified in a ruling. The contract must also specify that construction will be completed within one year of the construction's commencement. If the contract does not specify a date for completion of construction, the construction must actually be completed in that time.

In recognition of the fact that construction undertaken by an owner builder or by a builder under a contract for the purchase of a new home off the plan is often completed over a longer term than contracts for the construction of a home, construction undertaken in these circumstances must be completed before 1 May 2003.

Although the amendments to the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000 that give the extended scheme effect will expire on 31 December 2001, transitional provisions will preserve the rights and obligations of first home owners who enter into contracts or start building new homes by 31 December 2001. Importantly, the transitional provisions do not alter the fact that the Commonwealth has put a sunset date on the extended scheme's operation, and the Queensland government will therefore have no discretion to change the Commonwealth's requirements that new home purchase or building contracts be made, or construction be started by an owner builder, by 31 December 2001.

Finally, there have been some cases where, following the announcement of the extended scheme, some home buyers cancelled contracts that had been entered into before 9 March 2001 and executed new contracts on the same or substantially similar terms after 9 March 2001. In some cases, these home buyers took advantage of 'cooling off' arrangements under the original contracts to cancel them in an attempt to qualify for the additional grant. As these types of arrangements are outside the intention that the additional grant encourage new home purchases after the announcement date, these contracts will be ineligible for the extra \$7,000.

In relation to the PNG gas pipeline, AGL-Petronas Consortium, APC, the preferred pipeline constructor for the proposed PNG to Queensland gas pipeline, has made representations to the government for an amendment to the Gas Pipelines Access (Queensland) Act 1998. As a result of delays encountered by the PNG gas producers group, the pipeline consortium is unable to comply with the deadline stipulated in the act for the lodgment of access principles for the pipeline.

**Mr Seeney:** If Jim had been here it would be different.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** But he is not, is he?

The change requested will have no significant policy implications. It will change the effective date in section 59(1)(a) of the Gas Pipelines Access (Queensland) Act 1998 from 18 May 2001 to 1 December 2002. That date is when APC will be required to submit final access principles to the regulator for the proposed PNG to Queensland gas pipeline.

By acceding to the request from the consortium, this will allow the proponents to continue their development efforts under the existing regulatory arrangements. By this action, the government will give APC further time to develop the PNG to Queensland gas pipeline. Development of the PNG gas project is expected to continue to move towards a conclusion. The producer group has recently announced a new approach, with major participants Exxon and Oil Search taking a more prominent role in developing the project. I understand the producer group is now targeting the third quarter 2001 to secure agreement with potential gas users for the volumes required which may lead to the timely finalisation of access principles.

The First Home Owner Grant and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2001 will ensure the effective administration of the extended First Home Owner Grant Scheme in Queensland by providing robust support for the rights and obligations of both first home owners and the Queensland government in administering the scheme. It will also preserve the regulatory certainty secured by APC under the competitive tender process conducted by the PNG gas producers and facilitate the development of the PNG gas project.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

##### Brisbane Market Corporation; Triple R Program

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (6.44 p.m.), by leave: In answer to a question today I stated that the proposed Triple R maintenance program to refurbish schools would be capital expenditure. The Triple R maintenance program was classified as capital expenditure in the election commitments presented during the last election. As part of the current budget process, the government is obtaining advice on the appropriate accounting treatment of this election commitment.

To the extent that the Triple R program is classified as operating expenditure, the funding requirement will be matched by one-off retained earnings currently in the accounts of the Brisbane Market Corporation. Retained earnings from BMC, being profits that have been retained by the corporation over a number of years, will be classified as one-off operating revenue for the government. The government will be in a position to match this special one-off source of operating revenue to the parts of the Triple R maintenance program classified as operating expenditure. The Triple R maintenance program is itself a one-off program spread over three years. The balance of the expected proceeds to the government from the sale of the BMC will appear as a capital item in the state accounts available for use in the government's capital program.

#### STATUS OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT BILL

##### Second Reading

Resumed from 3 April (see p. 192).

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (6.45 p.m.): I indicate at the outset that the opposition will be supporting the bill that is currently before the parliament. It is interesting to recount some of the history of this bill for the benefit of honourable members.

I am not sure, but I think there may be some sort of record being set today. This bill was introduced into parliament twice in 1995. It fell off the notice paper as a consequence of the parliament being prorogued. It was introduced again in the year 2000 but fell off the notice paper again as a consequence of the parliament being prorogued. So basically it has been introduced into parliament on four occasions and it has changed only slightly in that time. After being introduced during four parliamentary terms, I think we are finally going to see the bill passed by dinnertime tonight.

This legislation certainly acknowledges the changing nature of our society. If we go back a number of decades in Queensland and throughout Australia—and I suppose much of the world,

for that matter—we see that we had very much a traditional family unit. It was not common for children to be born in different types of relationships, or out of wedlock, and in many instances those children were not necessarily recognised by the law. I think that such children were probably recognised as being 'without father' prior to legislation being brought before this parliament in 1978, that is, the original status of children legislation.

As I indicated, the nature of families is changing, and that is why the original bill was introduced into this parliament in 1978—to take account of those particular sets of circumstances. I note also that there have been a number of debates in this parliament since 1965—complementary legislation to a maintenance bill was passed at that time—about the establishment of paternity and trying to ensure that people meet their obligations.

This piece of legislation seeks to update the Status of Children Act of 1978 and to adopt a far more contemporary and consistent approach. There has been much debate by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General over the past decade about trying to adopt a consistent approach right around Australia. There are a lot of reasons for that, of course. If we cast our minds back prior to 1978 and the original legislation that was passed by this parliament, we will recall quite clearly that on many occasions people who were not considered to be legitimate children were not able to take advantage of estate. Situations arose in which something may have been or should have been willed to them but, because of their situation, they were not able to be recognised and were not able to enjoy the advantages of many children today as a consequence of modern legislation.

There is a great degree of inconsistency around Australia in the law. This legislation seeks to overcome that inconsistency. There is inconsistency between the states, territories and the Commonwealth in relation to establishing and proving paternity. This bill recognises the fact that today many people live in de facto relationships—that is, relationships other than marriage—and there is a need to determine paternity for a whole range of reasons, including intestacy matters and a range of other matters at a state and Commonwealth level, such as maintenance.

To date, a person may be considered to be the father of a child in one state whilst in another jurisdiction in Australia he is not considered the father of that child because of differing rules in proving or assessing paternity. For example, in the Commonwealth jurisdiction that person may be considered to be the father for the purposes of maintenance. However, under state laws, if that person were to die, the child may not necessarily have access to what they would be entitled to under intestacy arrangements because of differing laws. It is very important that that inconsistency be sorted out. This legislation seeks to do that.

There are other ways in which paternity is able to be proved medically, such as blood testing and DNA testing. There is absolutely no doubt that a person tested under those regimes is the father of the child when the test result is positive. However, in some instances people object to being tested. Therefore, there is a regime under this legislation whereby a man who has cohabited with a woman in a married or unmarried relationship within a certain time is automatically deemed to be the father of the child. That is quite fair. If a person does not want to go through the process of being DNA tested or blood tested, it is fair to have a system in law which prescribes that that person is considered under law to be the father of the child for everything that child may expect from that father under state jurisdiction or Commonwealth jurisdiction. This legislation seeks to clarify these particular aspects. If there is a dispute when a person has been deemed to be the father of a child and he does not necessarily believe that to be the case, he can be medically tested in order to prove otherwise.

It is extremely important that there are a range of options available. It is important that the state has clear legislation which denotes the status of the child and the status of paternity. In conclusion, it is extremely important that we have consistent legislation throughout the Commonwealth covering the states, the territories and the Commonwealth government, because people do move interstate. Children should not suffer as a consequence of differing laws in different states.

**Hon. R. J. WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (6.53 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable shadow minister for his comments on the Status of Children Amendment Bill and note his comment as to the time it has taken for this bill to be debated and the number of occasions it has been put before the House.

**Mr Springborg:** Ten weeks and it got through.

**Mr WELFORD:** That is an indication of this can-do government in its second term. I look forward to many future occasions on which the shadow minister and I can cooperate in this pleasant way to get things done for the benefit of the people of Queensland.

As the honourable member mentioned, the bill brings a number of advantages to the law in relation to this area. Not least is the issue of consistency with other states. That is a desirable thing to have. It is the reason I will be bringing before the parliament in coming weeks legislation in relation to Corporations Law, to ensure that in relation to those laws there is also a consistent approach throughout Australia. I thank the opposition for its cooperation in relation to this bill. I am pleased to join with it in finally passing this bill through the House.

Motion agreed to.

### Committee

Clauses 1 to 21, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

### Third Reading

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

### ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. A. M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (6.57 p.m.): I move—  
That the House do now adjourn.

### Sugar Industry

**Mr ROWELL** (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (6.58 p.m.): The greyback cane grub is inflicting serious damage on the north Queensland sugar industry. Canegrowers lost an estimated \$11 million of product last season because of this pest. Our farmers are losing out badly. The grub is costing growers at least half their crop, and the greyback cane grub is becoming more common. There has been a 35 per cent increase in crops damaged by the pest this year. That is an extra \$3 million out of growers' pockets in one season. Northern canegrowers spent \$5 million on insecticides in 1999 to combat the pest. Growers plagued by the grub are incurring other expenses from the pest as well. Producers affected by the greyback cane grub have to plant more often because they are barely getting a second ratoon out of their stool instead of a third and fourth. Planting costs of \$1,000 per hectare are common.

The problem has been identified and means have been found to reduce the impact of the grub on sugarcane. The BSES and the SRDC have concentrated research and development on controlling the greyback grub and have found three key factors that need to be focused on the control of the pest. They are the improvement of current controls, the researching of new cost strategies and the redesigning of farming systems to culturally and biologically control the cane grub.

The BSES and the cane protection and productivity boards have also funded an extension officer in the Burdekin to work with growers to trial pest management programs on specific farms. To implement these strategies, financial assistance is needed from the state government for the affected growers.

As well as the implementation costs involved in controlling the greyback cane grub, a rebate is sought to encourage growers to support a quick uptake of these methods for cane grub control and to assist farmers in meeting the costs of approved and safe insecticides. The rebate would be provided and available only to growers who abide by the recommendations of the integrated pest management strategies. Recommended and registered products such as SuSCon are—

Time expired.

### Station Road Upgrade, Woodridge Electorate

**Mrs DESLEY SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (7.00 p.m.): During my years listening to the complaints and concerns of the people of Woodridge there has long been one area of the city which has had more than its fair share of problems. I refer to the Woodridge Railway Station and

the Station Road precinct. This area is the location of many of our government departments and community organisations, as well as the Commonwealth Bank and post office. It is indeed the gateway to Logan Central when arriving in our city by rail. Unfortunately, this area has developed a reputation for crime and drug taking and is an area to be avoided at night. I am pleased to inform the House that, due to a collaborative project by our state government, the Logan City Council and Queensland Rail, this area is to undergo revitalisation, with stage 1 to cost in excess of \$1 million.

There has been a great deal of consultation over quite a number of years, with the Station Business Association, Station Road traders and the local community all involved in the process which has been conducted by the Logan City Council. I particularly acknowledge the work done by Reg Johns, Karen Peachey, Lea Budge and Councillor Russell Lutton of the Logan City Council. A community consultative committee was formed, made up of representatives of Woodridge Community Renewal, the Station Road traders, the Station Business Association and Woodridge High School representatives, as well as members of the community and a committee from the Logan City Council. Mr Martin Cooper, Director of the Ridgemill Project Management Company, has been appointed to manage the project and he recently outlined the project when he spoke at a breakfast meeting at the Logan Diggers Club.

Work is now progressing on the railway station, with a lift being installed to assist the disabled and elderly to access the platform. Our Police Service has been involved in a safety strategy for the area, and security cameras are in the process of being installed along Station Road. They will soon be operational. A bus interchange will also be commenced shortly. Residents now have an opportunity to view the Station Road upgrade plan, with its street beautification, including trees, shrubs and gardens, pavers and attractive street furniture, improved lighting, a town square, improved car parking facilities and easy access to public transport.

Mr Nick Vlahos has been generous enough to make a shop available along Station Road where residents may view the upgrade plan. Our city is putting on a new face, but I am happy to report that it will not only be more aesthetically attractive; in many aspects the citizens of Logan City are seeing and will continue to see improvements.

Time expired.

### **Pensions, British Expatriates**

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (7.03 p.m.): I rise to speak about the plight of almost 214,000 British expatriates living in Australia—36,000 in Queensland—many of whom are suffering severe financial hardship because their British pensions were frozen when they left Britain. This action of the British government in freezing pensions is costing the Australian taxpayer about \$100 million a year because as the value of the British pension reduces over time the British expatriates are forced by necessity to apply for access to the means-tested Australian pension. This is a disgrace and I call on the Queensland government to apply pressure on the federal government to have the matter raised at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting scheduled to be held here in October.

The British-Australian Pensioners Association has already written to all the heads of government of affected Commonwealth countries, including Australia, suggesting that they request that the issue be discussed at CHOGM. I urge this government to back them 100 per cent. I acknowledge that the heads of government do not have the power to change this inequity, but they can certainly apply pressure on the British government to redress this wrong. The irony of the situation is that the British government upgrades the pensions of 400,000 British expatriates in other countries—mainly Europe, the USA and the six other Commonwealth countries—but not Australia. This is quite clearly discriminatory.

The British pension is awarded to all who reach retirement age in accordance with the number of years of mandatory contribution they have completed. It is not means tested, so the British expatriates are not asking for money that does not belong to them. If they had stayed in Britain, for example, they would get annual upgrades of their pensions.

If the British government decided to remedy the situation, about \$450 million a year would enter the Australian economy in additional payments to the pensioners. Queensland's share of this would be about \$76 million a year. I strongly urge this government to lobby the federal government to put this matter on the agenda at CHOGM and inform this parliament prior to the

holding of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting what the government's intention on this matter is.

### **Coolum Community**

**Ms MOLLOY** (Noosa—ALP) (7.06 p.m.): Coolum, like many coastal towns, has little in the way of entertainment for its youth. The Coolum District Musicians and Supporters Association has banded together and for over 12 months now has been holding live music sessions in the Coolum-Peregian RSL free of charge. They are attracting up to 100 young people to the venue on a Sunday afternoon. This mentoring process, whereby the more mature musos come together with the younger artists, flags a new era for the future of our young and the broader community. This group has a vision, fostered by the open-heartedness of the RSL. Perhaps this is a new era for the RSL in our community as a leader and supporter of our youth. I will be following the steps of this great community initiative and intend keeping the House updated on its progress.

On another tack, while I value and have great pride in telling the House about the positive achievements in Coolum and my electorate at large, I would not be doing my job as the people's representative for Noosa if I did not also highlight the issues in my electorate that need attention. It is what the people of Noosa demand and it is my duty as their representative to do so. While applauding the positive developments for our youth in Coolum, there still exists a major problem for the whole Coolum community. It is a problem that will not go away and it needs to be addressed now.

Coolum needs to be a safe community—a community wherein people's wellbeing is paramount. Coolum should not be seen or perceived as a community under threat—a community without adequate police protection. Coolum, a major holiday destination for many families, needs more police. Coolum badly needs a 24-hour police presence and an increase in numbers. In short, more police and now is what my community demands and, as their representative, that is what I also demand.

### **International Year of the Volunteer**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (7.08 p.m.): This year is the International Year of the Volunteer. It is very fitting that we recognise in an appropriate way the efforts made by a wide range of people in every community who work in a voluntary capacity in the almost endless range of activities that make life better for everyone. There can be no doubt that life in the community I represent, in the electorate of Callide, would be much poorer but for the efforts of the people who work in a voluntary capacity. Without reward to themselves they come together to work in a range of fields, including sport, community development, community service, church groups and care groups such as Meals on Wheels, Anglicare and Blue Care—all of which provide services that would otherwise have to be provided by the government.

There are many other volunteers, such as those in the State Emergency Service, rural fire brigades and Landcare groups. The list goes on and on. All of these groups and many more are made up of volunteers, and their efforts are critical to the maintenance of the lifestyle and the social structure of the communities in which they work all over the state. Almost without exception these volunteers are regrettably being frustrated and annoyed by the volume of red tape and the volume of seemingly endless, pointless paperwork and the pedantic regulations that they are being required to endure in the duties they carry out.

In contrast to the sentiments behind the International Year of the Volunteer, it seems inescapable that life is being made more difficult for volunteers in this year dedicated to recognising their efforts. Long-serving volunteers are being driven from the services that they have long provided by this overload of form filling and pedantic regulation which adds nothing to the service that they provide but curtails and hampers the efforts of those working for no reward. It serves as a discouragement to those who would otherwise give their own time in the service of others.

There needs to be a careful analysis of the costs and benefits of all this red tape and regulation. There needs to be a careful analysis by the bureaucrats and the regulators, who need to think carefully about the costs and the benefits to the people and the communities who rely on the services of the voluntary organisations, because they will be the ones who suffer in the end. If the burden becomes too great and the volunteers opt out, then either the government will have to pay someone to provide the services or dependent people will have to go without and our

community life will be lessened. The first option is unlikely. The second option is simply unacceptable.

We need to look after our volunteers. We need to protect them from unnecessary burdens, and we need to protect them from unnecessary litigation—from the increasing trend towards no-win, no-pay lawyers. We need to value the services that our volunteers contribute to every community throughout the state—big and small. We need to be aware of the burden that unnecessary litigation, unnecessary regulation and unnecessary red tape place upon those people. Every member of this House should support those volunteers in the work they do and support this call to make their life easier.

#### **Father Kevin Clancy**

**Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (7.11 p.m.): Tonight it is with some sadness that I rise to farewell one of Townsville's Catholic community leaders. Father Kev Clancy died suddenly on Monday, 23 April. He was due to start the 6.30 mass that morning, but obviously he did not turn up. He was 74 and about to celebrate his jubilee year.

Kevin James Clancy was born to James and Kathleen Richardson on 3 July 1926 in Brisbane, Queensland. He was educated by the Sisters of St Joseph at Windsor. Then he went to the Christian Brothers College in Gregory Terrace from 1935 to 1940. He went to Pius XII Provincial Seminary, Banyo, and his ordination occurred at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Townsville on 29 June 1951. It was the Most Reverend Thomas Cahill, the bishop of Cairns, who performed that ordination.

Kev Clancy had many appointments. He was an assistant priest at the cathedral as well as in Ingham, Mundingburra and Ayr. He was a parish priest in Collinsville, Garbutt, Julia Creek, Cloncurry, Charters Towers, South Townsville and Mundingburra. He was a resident priest in Mundingburra and an administrator at the cathedral. Some of his other duties included being an RAAF chaplain; the director of St Vincent de Paul; a member of the Senate (Council) of Priests; and the chairman and a member of the Sick Priests Fund. He was also a diocesan consulter, a member of the Clergy Personnel Board, a director of the Pontifical Mission Aid Society, a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, a member of the Priests Life & Ministry Committee—the list goes on.

Kevin Clancy was one of the people. He had a real connection to the people, especially those who were not necessarily involved in the church. He was particularly fond of young couples who came for counselling prior to their marriages, families preparing for baptism, and so on.

When Kev was a young boy at the Christian Brothers College, there was a big recruitment drive to pick up more priests. Kev felt that he had the calling, but he felt that he would not pass the scholarship exams. The priest at the time visited his father and said, 'Young Kev wants to be a priest. I think he'd make a fine one', and his father said, 'Over my dead body.' As it turned out, Kev passed his scholarship and joined that same day with Bishop Benjamin.

Kev Clancy always had a good word to say about everybody. He was very quick-witted. Over the past week, many have remarked that his jokes were not necessarily funny but that they could not help laughing with him because he was always laughing at himself—despite the fact that they were pretty bad jokes.

Many priests in north Queensland looked up to Kev as a counsellor and a friend. When he was parish priest in Garbutt, his door was always open to any young priests in need. Father Terry Lyons was a young priest at the time, and Kev Clancy always had a beer ready for any young people, particularly young priests. They complained about the curates at the time, and they believed that the only right that curates had was to have a Christian burial.

Time expired.

#### **Dingoes, Fraser Island**

**Mr HOPPER** (Darling Downs—Ind) (7.14 p.m.): I rise to speak about the dingo problem on Fraser Island. Unless something drastic is done, and done fast, history is bound to repeat itself. One life lost is one too many. Numerous reports of bites and attacks, and now a fatal attack, can only lead to the conclusion that dingoes and people cannot coexist on Fraser Island. I would suggest that a baiting program be implemented immediately. However, our environmentalists would say that baiting with 1080 destroys too much other wildlife.

Let me give honourable members some facts. Before I was elected, I was a dogger for the Wambo Shire and have had vast experience with the habits of the dingo. It takes 0.11 milligrams of 1080 per kilogram of meat to kill a dingo. It takes 4.11 milligrams of 1080 per kilogram of meat to kill a feral pig—37 times the amount required to kill a dog. It takes 75 milligrams of 1080 per kilogram of meat to kill a western rosella—682 times the amount required to kill a dog. It takes 300 milligrams of 1080 per kilogram of meat to kill a shingle back lizard—2,727 times the amount required to kill a dingo. This shows that, when used properly, 1080 is an extremely effective tool to use in the control of dingoes.

The mainland is full of dingoes, especially my electorate—thanks to our federal government's gun laws. The dingo kills to survive. It is natural to them to attack other living things. Pups 12 months and under often attack for no reason as it is nature's way of teaching them to kill to survive. The point I make is that while there are dingoes on Fraser Island there will continue to be attacks on humans. I feel that the only way the dingoes can coexist is for them to be placed in an extremely large enclosure and fed. The expense of this would be phenomenal, especially when our government is finding it hard to fund the present dingo barrier fence, which is definitely providing protection for our sheep country.

Under no circumstances are the dingoes to be relocated, not only for the sake of the mainland—as it is already plagued with dingoes—but for the sake of the dingoes themselves. Fraser Island is an island of sand, so the dingoes that live there walk only on sand. Their feet simply are not used to walking on the hard surfaces of the mainland. After a few days on the mainland, they would be extremely footsore and relocation could only be classed as a cruel way of dealing with this problem. I have trapped many, many dingoes.

Time expired.

### **Bank Branch Closures**

**Mr LEE** (Indooroopilly—ALP) (7.17 p.m.): Early last year, when the Commonwealth Bank partook in the biggest takeover in Australian corporate history—the \$7.5 billion takeover of the Colonial Bank—this virtually spelt the end for what many of us in the Indooroopilly area remember as the bank branch. After the takeover of Colonial, the Commonwealth Bank group late last year announced a net profit of \$1,135 million—an incredible increase of eight per cent compared to that of the previous period.

In light of such extraordinary profits, the Commonwealth Bank is now trying to set new records in my electorate. Over the past three months it has closed the Colonial Bank branch and now plans the closure of the Commonwealth Bank branch in the 4068 postcode area, which covers Indooroopilly and Taringa, forcing customers to do all their banking at the Westfield shopping centre.

It appears that it is not only those in the bush who are bearing the brunt of the extreme economic rationalist policies of our banking system. Those in our suburban communities are also being increasingly forced to accept branch closures and given no alternatives other than to conduct banking over the phone or via the Internet. Those lucky enough to actually find a bank branch these days are often made to pay extra fees for what appears to be regarded as a privilege to get face-to-face customer service.

Banks in Australia have simply gone too far. As customers, we should not have to put up with increasing bank fees and decreasing customer service. There needs to be some form of regulation to protect the customer from such exploitation. The current system suits only the top four banks. Increasingly, smaller banks are being taken over and branches of all banks are being closed down. According to a Reserve Bank of Australia bulletin, nearly 2,000 bank branches closed between 1990 and 2000. This is appalling. I believe that the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that this stops immediately.

I appreciate that to stay competitive in the banking industry mergers may, from time to time, be unavoidable. However, I do not believe that as a community we should sit back and watch the four major banks monopolise the market. We must create increased measures to prevent a unification of the banking system that is sure to manifest itself if the federal government continues to leave such matters as solely the responsibility of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. The federal government needs to take a more interventionist approach with the banks. It is not acceptable for banks to charge exorbitant fees and get away with it and it is certainly not acceptable for banks in rural, provincial and metropolitan Australia to continue to

close branches simply because the banks make more money by customers conducting their business over the telephone.

It is time that the federal government took a serious look at its banking policy and forced the banks to adopt some degree of social responsibility which it is clear that they will not adopt voluntarily.

### **Regional Television Services**

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (7.20 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak about an issue that is concerning a large number of my constituents, constituents who were forgotten about, in the changes to television broadcasting technology in the early 1990s.

This change happened as a consequence of television aggregation—I think it was under the Keating government—whereby the government wanted to free up a certain amount of the bandwidth of broadcast technology and FM radio to enable new players to enter the market and to provide the opportunity for Australians in many areas to enjoy a wider range of television services as a result of the change of technology from very high frequency to ultra high frequency.

Unfortunately, there are a number of people in areas around Queensland—and I would suggest many communities around Australia—that missed out as a consequence of that. In my electorate, for example, we went from the days when we could view clearly two free to air television stations, the ABC and 1045A, subsequently WIN Channel 9, to having a situation now for many of us where we can enjoy the ABC because it still broadcasts at VHF frequency and see the other three stations—including the two new free to air television stations—broadcast at UHF, but only just.

However, some of my constituents in the more remote areas of my electorate are now able to view only one free to air station, and that is the ABC. Channel 9, or WIN TV, which they were able to view prior to the change, can no longer be received, and they certainly are not able to receive the benefit of the two additional free to air commercial stations. A lot of these people are forgotten about.

At the time, the federal government indicated that it would slowly fill in the blackspots over a period of time. At that stage it said that if there was a community of 100 or more, then they would be able to take advantage of the program. The federal government, as a consequence of the sale of Telstra, has reduced that qualification to 50 or more.

The real problem, of course, is that this involves communities. Very low power broadcasters are used to fill in the blackspots—that is if the people in the region qualify to start with. The people out on the periphery, on the properties that are dotted around the place, are missing out on this. It is just not good enough. This is what drives people in rural and regional areas, and I suppose in other areas around Queensland, absolutely mad—when they have been promised an improvement in a service and it actually gets worse. Is it any wonder that people are cynical?

At the end of the day, the principal test for any government that wants to change something should be that the service delivered should be equal to or better than that which was enjoyed previously—and it is not. I would call upon the federal government to stop this bureaucratic approach and to recognise that we have a problem. There is an issue of fundamental justice to be considered.

### **Institute for Molecular Bioscience**

**Ms STONE** (Springwood—ALP) (7.23 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak about a place that deals with projects that many of us think are only dreams. Let me tell members: those dreams are getting closer and closer to reality and they are happening on our back door.

I was delighted to get an invitation from my colleague the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy to visit the Institute for Molecular Bioscience at the University of Queensland. I thank the minister for giving me this opportunity. As a member of his legislative committee, I found the visit to the centre fascinating.

As I said before, this institute is dealing on a day-to-day basis with projects many of us believe are dreams. They are truly representative of the Smart State. For years, other cities in Australia have been at the forefront of delivering on science initiatives. To those cities I say: move over, Queensland is fast becoming the Smart State due to the hard work and commitment not

only of the Beattie Labor government but also of our hardworking and committed men and women scientists.

The Institute for Molecular Bioscience is committed to excellence in research and postgraduate teaching in biology, chemistry and computing. Over the next three years the centre plans to grow from 200 to over 450 research scientists. These scientists will come from various disciplines, including gene discovery and early stage drug development.

This is a big plus for the people who have chosen science as their career. It is also a big plus for the community to have the skills and expertise of these scientists in our state. The centre is also looking forward to increasing its graduate student population from 50 to over 100. These graduates will be offered expertise in intellectual property, ethics and public policy and other technology management areas as well as research training in their selected discipline. I would say this is a Smart State.

The Institute for Molecular Bioscience is committed to working collaboratively with the hospitals and medical research institutes to better understand the genetic and biochemical bases of disease. This can only be described as a positive for our nation's health.

Along with all this fascinating and smart medical research comes the need for mathematicians and computer scientists to develop new programs that can handle biological information. The centre is committed to developing future designs of computers and information systems to take on these exciting ventures.

The Institute of Molecular Bioscience will be situated in a research complex currently being constructed at the University of Queensland in partnership with the CSIRO. The \$105 million complex is possible due to the funds raised by the University of Queensland, the Commonwealth government Federation Fund, a private benefactor and, of course, the Queensland state government. The institute will also receive \$77.5 million in operational funding over the next 10 years.

This is government once again demonstrating its commitment to the Smart State by giving core operational funding to the institute. I commend the centre on its innovation and commitment to Queensland.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.26 p.m.