

**WEDNESDAY, 1 AUGUST 2001**

---

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

**PETITIONS**

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

**Penalties and Sentences**

**Mr Neil Roberts** from 78 petitioners, requesting the House to amend law with more severe penalties for perpetrators of crime.

**Copperfield River Dam**

**Mrs C Scott** from 415 petitioners, requesting the House supply funds through the Department of Natural Resources/SunWater so as to enable the continuous operations of the Copperfield River Dam.

**PAPERS****MINISTERIAL PAPER**

The following ministerial paper was tabled by The Clerk—

Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy (Mrs Edmond)—

Food Safety Standards Costs and Benefits—An analysis of the regulatory impact of the proposed national food safety reforms.

**MINISTERIAL PAPER**

The following ministerial paper was tabled—

Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie)—

Public Report of Ministerial Expenses for the year ended 30 June 2001.

**MINISTERIAL EXPENSES**

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.32 a.m.): As a continued commitment to the people of Queensland, I today reaffirm my promise of increased accountability, transparency and efficiency of expenditure by tabling the latest public report of ministerial expenses. It is provided every six months and was enhanced last financial year by providing extra detail on office costs.

Considering that an additional ministry and a parliamentary secretary's office have now been added to the government's structure and the significant work being undertaken by my ministers, I believe the report clearly shows that expenditure is being maintained at a reasonable level. There has been an increase of only three per cent in overall expenditure. This is despite an impact on salaries due to the public sector enterprise bargaining agreement which started at three per cent. I table the report.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT****Queensland Economy**

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: Queenslanders can now be proud of living in a state which has a growing international reputation of being Australia's Smart State. For many years we had to put up with being a northern afterthought from some of our southern colleagues. Now Queensland is the vibrant Smart State with a vision and strategies that will deliver long-term, New-Age jobs for Queenslanders and those who may choose to defect to paradise from the southern states. That is why Queensland is leading the way out of the GST-induced downturn, with a resurgence in business confidence.

An employer survey by TMP Worldwide released today shows that a third of all Queensland employers plan to create jobs in the next three months and only six per cent are planning to shed jobs. The major industries in which there will be significant growth—these are not exclusive—are

tourism, telecommunications and transport, all areas that the Queensland government has been focusing on.

The QCCI barometer of business conditions recorded the highest ever quarterly increase in June. The Commonwealth skilled vacancies survey is showing strong growth in Queensland, while the national trend is still heading down.

Latest statistics show that the total value of building approvals rose 19.1 per cent over the last 12 months—much greater than the 4.9 per cent rise recorded nationally. The value of non-residential construction has leapt 31.2 per cent in that period.

Queensland exports are also booming. As Minister for Trade I am delighted. In 2000-01 exports of goods from Queensland grew by 29 per cent to \$21.4 billion—well above the 22 per cent growth recorded nationally. Food exports from Queensland rose 21 per cent to \$4.3 billion. Coal and fuel exports rose 36 per cent to \$7.3 billion. Processed mineral exports rose 29 per cent to \$3.1 billion. Exports of Queensland machinery and transport equipment rose 27 per cent to almost \$1 billion.

Being a Smart State means working to our strengths. Our strengths in biotechnology, research and IT are already yielding results. Queensland's own Peplin Biotech has researched, developed and patented three new cancer-fighting discoveries. As the Minister for Innovation knows, the company made this announcement last week. I made the announcement jointly with it. I am advised that one of the discoveries has the potential to eventually help defeat HIV, which is the fourth biggest killer of people worldwide. It may be many years before any commercial application is available, but Peplin Biotech will use these patented discoveries to advance its new generation cancer treatments with Australian and international pharmaceutical companies.

Peplin Biotech is a Smart State company that was founded only three years ago and was listed on the Australian Stock Exchange in September last year. At the joint launch the CEO paid tribute to this government's policy for bringing about not only its formation but also its success. The company employs 26 people, including 20 researchers, and hopes to double that number in the next six months. Peplin Biotech's success story shows the enormous possibilities that exist for biotechnology companies. Its cancer cures cover breast cancer, prostate cancer and skin cancer—all major killers. It is a demonstrated success of my government's 10-year plan to make Queensland a major hub for biotechnology in the Asia-Pacific region.

Queensland also has strengths in adding value to our agricultural production. The Orafit chicory project is an excellent example. The Minister for State Development, Tom Barton, made reference to this yesterday. With the support of Trevor Strong, the member for Burnett, he made this happen. If it were not for Tom Barton this would not have happened. This \$250 million project will deliver 200 direct jobs and up to 600 indirect jobs to the Wide Bay region. State Development delivers again.

This project will also provide a useful secondary crop for between 300 and 500 canefarmers around the Childers area. It delivers all the things we are seeking through our Smart State approach: regional investment, which will bolster the economic structure of a stressed region of the state; new jobs in a new export industry; new supply opportunities for local businesses; higher land productivity through soil regeneration; and \$150 million in engineering contracts up for grabs by local industry.

There is, however, one cloud on the horizon. Phillips Petroleum has announced today that it is deferring indefinitely the pipeline from the Timor Sea gas fields to Darwin. The problem is the proposed tax regime of East Timor. Members will know that we are keen to see Timor Sea gas come to Queensland, particularly for the Mount Isa region, the north-west Carpentaria province, Townsville and so on. The companies were expecting to pay 50 per cent of their corporate tax at the Australian rate of 30 per cent and 50 per cent at East Timor's rate of 44 per cent. Under the new arrangements announced last month, the companies would pay 90 per cent of their tax at East Timor's higher rate and only 10 per cent at the Australian rate.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I would not get excited. Members opposite will understand why this is a problem. Their coalition mates got this wrong. So here they are whingeing, undermining major projects again. National Party members are trying to undermine major projects. They do it every day. We work; they whinge.

Under the new arrangements announced by the federal government last month, the companies would pay 90 per cent of their tax at East Timor's higher rate and only 10 per cent at

the Australian rate. Further, East Timor's UN advisers are proposing a profits tax, which would extract a further \$US500 million over the life of the project. Phillips, Shell and Woodside were given undertakings by East Timor that the new regime would be no more onerous.

While the Howard government and the East Timor administration have sorted out a distribution of tax revenue amongst themselves, they do not appear to have properly considered the impact on the developers of Timor Sea gas. Quite clearly, the federal government should understand that without a Timor Sea gas project there will be no tax revenue to share. It is imperative that Foreign Minister Downer ensures that East Timor and their UN advisers understand the importance of this project to Australia, and northern Australia in particular. A sensible tax regime needs to be put in place which will ensure that East Timor receives the income it so desperately needs. If this does not happen, then the Liberal-National government federally will have allowed the future growth of Darwin to slip through its fingers together with a major opportunity for a new supply of competitive gas to Queensland and the rest of Australia.

Another problem here, of course, is the change in depreciation rates for pipelines from 20 to 50 years being mooted by the ATO and the federal government. That needs to be changed, because that is another major negative. We want this project to happen. It is imperative that the federal government acts now and acts quickly to ensure that it becomes reality.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Goodwill Games

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 a.m.), by leave: We are now just 28 days away, as at today, from the biggest sports event in Brisbane's history, the 2001 Goodwill Games. Banners are appearing all over town, volunteers are undergoing training, and the line-up of athletes is almost complete. Ticket sales have surged in the past two weeks, with some 176,000 tickets sold. That is more than half the available tickets sold as momentum builds in the lead-up to the games.

The success of the Australians in the World Swimming Championships in Fukuoka has provided the perfect lead-up to these games. Our swimmers are in top form, and Brisbane is extremely excited and fortunate to have the likes of Ian Thorpe, Grant Hackett and Geoff Huegill among the men, and Giaan Rooney, Leisel Jones and Petria Thomas in the women's events.

It is going to be a 12-day sporting and entertainment extravaganza that starts on 29 August with beach volleyball, swimming and gymnastics events scheduled for the opening day of competition. Men's swimming, cycling and beach volleyball have been very popular with ticket buyers, but although some sessions are booked out there are still plenty of great tickets left. The games will bring Brisbane enormous international exposure—unprecedented. They will beam into 450 million homes and be seen by one billion people and put Brisbane firmly on the world map. That means jobs and tourism. It is an exciting time, and I urge everyone to get out there, buy a ticket and take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see the gods of sport—as they are so called—in action in our own backyard.

**Mr Foley:** And goddesses.

**Mr BEATTIE:** And goddesses, of course. We use that in a neutral gender way.

Queensland has never had a year like 2001. Some 208,000 interstate and international visitors will come to Queensland in 2001 to attend major events—events supported by the Queensland government—equivalent to 520 full jumbo jets—supported also by the Queensland Events Corporation, for whom I am the minister.

Queensland Events estimate that there will be a \$340 million benefit to the state this year. And what is more, there is still more to come. Early last month we had the 14th World Veterans Athletics Championships bringing an estimated \$22 million injection for the state's economy. There were 6,000 visitors from 79 countries in our midst. The championships were part of a month's sport where world-class facilities and magnificent winter weather delivered the state's economy an estimated \$50 million bonus. The championships were bolstered with the more than 10,000 visitors on hand for the British and Irish Lions/Wallaby test at the Gabba. Sadly, we lost the test, but we were winners off the field.

While I am talking about rugby, on behalf of all Queenslanders and all members of parliament I would like to pay a tribute to the retiring John Eales. What a great athlete. What a great Queenslanders. What a great Australian. He was very much a role model for young enthusiastic sports fans. My two boys play rugby—the twins play rugby—and they saw him as very

much an icon. He was certainly an inspiration. I wish him and his family well in his retirement. As I said, he is a great Queenslander—a great Australian. And underneath all that, he is a gentleman, a very humble star, and somebody for whom I think we all had admiration. So I wish him well. He was clearly an inspiration.

The same weekend when the tests were on there were near sell-outs for the Brisbane Lions at the Gabba—and, of course, Sir Alfie Langer and the magnificent maroons at ANZ. It has been a great time for Queensland sport and job creation and demonstrates why the state government is pressing ahead with a major stadium at Lang Park—Suncorp Metway Stadium. That is why we need the Suncorp Metway Stadium—to take advantage of these events. And it means jobs for Queenslanders. This is to ensure that we can win even more major sporting events to boost the economy and create jobs—the likes of the 2003 Rugby World Cup, the world's third-largest sporting event, and then the Air New Zealand Golden Oldies Rugby World Festival in 2003, which is expected to attract more than 5,000 competitors plus accompanying persons—not bad when the estimated gain for Queensland is a multiplier gain of 24; in other words, for every dollar Queensland Events invests, it estimates a return of 24 times. That is smart business in a Smart State.

At the moment we have the Brisbane River Festival. And I dare say it—apart from CHOGM and the Queen's visit before the end of the year—there will be the Australian International Movie Convention at the Gold Coast; the Ekka; the VIP Pet Foods Queensland 500 at Ipswich; the Honda Indy 300 at the Gold Coast; the Noosa Triathlon on the Sunshine Coast; the Australian and New Zealand Police Games on the Gold Coast; Greg Norman's Australia PGA Championship in Brisbane; the Australian Open Golf Tournament on the Gold Coast; and the Woodford Folk Festival on the Sunshine Coast.

And there is more already planned for next year. There is the Air New Zealand Golden Oldies Netball World Festival on the Gold Coast; the Tri Nations Rugby International in Brisbane; the Asia Pacific Masters Games on the Gold Coast; the inaugural International Racehorse Owners Golf World Cup on the Gold Coast, to coincide with the Magic Millions Carnival; the inaugural Masters of Business Conference, to coincide with the ANZ Ladies Masters Golf Tournament; plus at least 14 major national and international events already secured by Queensland Events for 2002.

But already 2003 is shaping up as a bumper year for major events, as well. There is the Air New Zealand Golden Oldies Rugby World Festival in Brisbane—5,000 competitors for the largest event of its kind in the world; the Rotary International Convention in Brisbane—25,000 delegates; the World Cup Rugby in Brisbane—the third-biggest event in the world outside the Olympics and the Soccer World Cup—just in time for our prized Suncorp Metway Stadium.

My government is the first government to introduce an integrated policy on events—events the Queensland way. It is the first state government to introduce a program specifically targeting the development of rural and regional events. It is the only state government whose major event corporation has officers outside the capital city.

Last week I sent out a reminder to all regional areas that communities wanting to get in on the inaugural round of Queensland events regional development program funding should get cracking. My government has provided an additional \$3 million injection over three years to ensure regional Queensland does not miss out on events and the jobs that go with it. This program, the honouring of an election promise, started on 1 July and is being administered by a Queensland Events Corporation secretariat based in Townsville.

My plea last week—and I again restate it here—was for all rural and regional members to take back to their electorates a reminder that the inaugural funding round is due to close on 17 August, with announcements to be made in October 2001. Organisations or event programmers need to get cracking now. The funding programs are to be twice a year. But this being the first, it is special and will mean closer attention by event organisers. We are delivering events to all Queenslanders.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### South Sea Islander Community Foundation

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: In September last year the Queensland government recognised Australian South Sea Islanders as a distinct cultural group and acknowledged their outstanding contribution to the development of Queensland. Community members joined us on the Speaker's Green for an

afternoon of fun and celebration to honour that great occasion. Now we are producing programs and initiatives that give form and substance to that official recognition by tackling the significant disadvantage faced by members of the South Sea Islander community.

Today, on behalf of the government, I am delighted to announce that the Queensland government has committed \$100,000 to establish a special scholarship fund to give young South Sea Islanders a better chance of gaining a tertiary education. The new Australian South Sea Islander Community Foundation that is being established will encourage more South Sea Islanders to continue their education. We are determined to improve access to higher education by young South Sea Islanders living in Queensland because a good education is one way to overcome some of the entrenched disadvantages facing the Australian South Sea Islander community.

Prominent member of the Australian South Sea Islander community and Australian Rugby League legend Mr Mal Meninga has agreed to be the official patron of the foundation. The funding is essentially social venture capital for a unique partnership which will give the Australian South Sea Islander community a lasting mechanism to encourage young people to enter university.

The foundation will be established under the umbrella of the Queensland Community Foundation, a public charitable trust established and managed by the Public Trustee of Queensland. The Australian South Sea Islander Community Foundation will be a perpetual fund, creating a perpetual legacy for the community. Corporate contributions to the foundation will be sought from companies and organisations that have a long history of association with the Australian South Sea Islander community.

This presents a unique opportunity for a range of sectors to work together for the benefit of Australian South Sea Islanders. The foundation will be managed by an independent board of advisers, comprising members of the business and corporate sector, but primarily Australian South Sea Islander community members. The board will consult with the community to determine how the scholarship will be structured to ensure that they provide maximum benefit to the community.

The majority of the Australian South Sea Islander community live in central and north Queensland. So the scholarships will be offered at regional universities. The first Australian South Sea Islander scholarships will be offered next year, with funding from Multicultural Affairs Queensland. Scholarships from 2003 will be funded from income generated from the foundation.

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Queensland Industry Development Scheme**

**Hon. T. A. BARTON** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for State Development) (9.50 a.m.), by leave: Encouraging the growth of Queensland's small to medium enterprises is of paramount importance to the Beattie government. In particular, this government is focusing on and encouraging this growth throughout the regions. That is why last week I was pleased to announce five Townsville firms as examples of recent recipients of my department's Queensland Industry Development Scheme—QIDS—who collectively received grants exceeding \$62,000 to help them boost their markets.

It is particularly pleasing to note that these five grant recipients combine with 33 Townsville firms that have collectively attracted more than half a million dollars worth of QIDS funding since the scheme's inception in 1998. I use this by way of example of this government's commitment to helping companies throughout Queensland's regions. For instance, since its inception, the department has approved QIDS funding of \$315,000 to Bundaberg, \$63,000 to Caboolture, \$348,000 to Cairns, \$240,000 to Gladstone, nearly \$2 million to the Gold Coast, \$371,000 to Ipswich, \$544,000 to Mackay, \$434,000 to Maryborough, \$17,000 to Mount Isa, \$605,000 to Rockhampton, \$668,000 to the Sunshine Coast, \$976,000 to Toowoomba and \$581,000 to Townsville companies.

The latest QIDS funding recipients in Townsville are Northern Project Management—the NPM Group—trading as Ark Homes, which plans to use its \$27,270 QIDS funding to develop an integrated transport system; Rockfield Technologies Australia, which plans to use its \$14,750 QIDS funding to prepare a business and marketing plan to help the company target future growth in Australia and in South-East Asia; Asian Paints, trading as APCO Coatings, which plans to use its \$9,000 QIDS funding to prepare a marketing strategy that will help it to increase its market

share in Queensland; Gough Plastics, which plans to use its \$6,015 QIDS funding to participate in the Queensland Manufacturing Institute's Proseed workshops and improve its factory layout; and Cardiovascular Technologies NQ Pty Ltd, which is using its \$5,000 QIDS funding to prepare a business plan to commercialise a heart arrest solution.

These firms are only a handful of the 722 innovative Queensland companies that this government has provided more than \$14.1 million QIDS funding to since the scheme was launched in 1998. It is all part of our plan to create a Smart State. QIDS was established to help Queensland business tackle a rapidly changing and highly competitive global marketplace. That is exactly what the Beattie government is doing. This scheme is a tangible way in which this government is helping businesses throughout Queensland's regions continue to develop their markets and expand.

QIDS is not a handout, but it is a dollar-for-dollar funding scheme that helps innovative Queensland companies help themselves. These grants are only one way that my department ensures that it meets its key objectives, which includes nurturing the viable development of Queensland business and industry and assisting Queensland businesses improve their business performance.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Roma Street Parkland

**Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (9.54 a.m.), by leave: Brisbane Roma Street Parkland is set to become a matrimonial mecca, with increasing public demand to use the site for wedding ceremonies and photo shoots. Since the parkland opened in April this year, nearly 60 requests for weddings and wedding photographs have been received by management. Hotels and reception venues in the near vicinity have requested parkland promotional material and the Department of Public Works has produced a wedding package, including a map of designated sites, a parkland guide, conditions of hire and application form.

The parkland has swiftly captured the imagination and affection of the public, and its exotic subtropical gardens and spectacular city views make it an ideal location for nuptials. Fees for weddings range from \$110 to \$220 for a two-hour booking to \$220 to \$440 for four hours, and this includes a parking bay for three cars and cordoning of the area. Roma Street Parkland also has 24-hour on-site security.

**A government member:** A wedding and a funeral in one go.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** It will be the member's funeral if he does not shut up. No fee is charged for photographs. However, advice is appreciated so that staff may organise access. Twelve wedding sites offer a range of settings, including waterfall backdrops, a lake-side meadow and a clubhouse terrace.

Photographers can utilise the Angiopteris Ravine, featuring the rare and endangered angiopteris fern growing in a misty, shaded cascading waterfall ravine; flowering annuals and water features in the Spectacle Garden, Pandanus Headland, featuring pandanus, banksias and Australian coastal headland species; the Fern Gully boardwalk; the one-hectare lake lined with louisiana iris and colourful waterlilies and inhabited by wildlife, including wood ducks and black ducks; and city views from the Allee Bridge, Fern Gully Bridge, The Lookout and Upper Parkland locations.

Roma Street Parkland is ideally located for weddings, just minutes from the city centre and easily accessible by private and public transport. I am delighted that Queenslanders are choosing Roma Street Parkland for such romantic and significant ceremonies. It is yet another tribute to the foresight and good sense of this government in taking on such an important redevelopment.

But there is more. Construction of a new children's playground will commence next week at the parkland. Forpark Australia has been awarded the contract to create a landscaped 'kidspace' near the popular Spectacle Gardens. The Department of Public Works will oversee the project, which will provide families with a fun, safe place for young children, with slides, climbing frames, rockers and monkey bars.

Roma Street Parkland is evolving constantly and this playground will add to the existing attractions, cementing its reputation of providing something for everyone. Seating, barbecues and pathways and the new playground are being provided at a total of cost of \$160,000 and the project will be completed in time for the next school holidays.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

**Hon. J. C. SPENCE** (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: Tomorrow and Friday I will be attending a meeting of state, territory and federal Community Services Ministers, including ministers responsible for disability services, in Adelaide. My aim over the two days will be to fight for a fairer share of funding for Queenslanders. This is funding that helps hold families and communities together and responds to the demands of a caring and humane society. This is funding that supports the homeless, helps protect women and children fleeing domestic violence, and gives greater dignity and independence to people with disabilities.

One of my top priorities will be arguing for a more equitable slice of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. This program—or SAAP as it is known—is a joint Commonwealth-state funded program assisting people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. The aim of SAAP is to provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services to help disadvantaged people achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance.

SAAP is underpinned by the SAAP Act 1994, a multilateral memorandum of understanding between the Commonwealth, the states and the territories, and a bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and each state and territory. For the record there are 190 SAAP funded services in Queensland.

The bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and Queensland was signed in October 2000 and that agreement will determine ongoing Commonwealth/state funding of SAAP IV until 2005. We direct the funds to where they are most needed. For instance, \$1.29 million went to address viability issues in the existing SAAP service system in January 2001, and a further \$880,000 of the growth funds was allocated to new and enhanced services in Brisbane, Caboolture, Sunshine Coast, Hervey Bay and Townsville.

In spite of these positive achievements, Commonwealth SAAP funding for Queensland lags behind our population growth. As it stands, Queensland receives 16.6 per cent of Commonwealth funding, yet we are home to 18.5 per cent of the nation's population. This equates to a shortfall of \$2.916 million in Commonwealth funding. This shortfall in Commonwealth funding is severely restricting Queensland's capacity to address the issue of homelessness, which, in relation to other states, is high in Queensland. In fact, according to an ABS report published in 1999, Queensland has 24 per cent of the nation's homelessness. Clearly this is a very important issue for some of our state's most vulnerable people.

Another concern is the federal government's arrogant refusal to answer a simple question about whether or not it will turn its back on people with a disability. More than two months ago I wrote to the federal Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Amanda Vanstone, requesting an assurance that she would honour a deal that her government made last year. This deal would ensure that people with a disability receive ongoing funding under the Commonwealth/state disability agreement after the existing agreement expires on 30 June next year. I have said in this place before that either the federal coalition is looking at a budget blow-out of almost a quarter of a billion dollars over three years, or it plans to betray Australians with disabilities and their families. I will again be asking Senator Vanstone for an answer. Her silence for the past two months makes me fear that betrayal is on the cards and that the Commonwealth plans to deprive Queenslanders of \$54.9 million over three years.

The disability services sector is also worried. Yesterday I received a letter from the Unmet Needs Campaign encouraging me to seek a reaffirmation of the funding commitment from the federal government. The Australian Cerebral Palsy Association has issued a press release warning that the shortfall in the coalition's forward estimates—

... is equivalent to 1800 people with severe and profound disabilities being deprived of the accommodation support they currently receive and depend on.

If realised, they and their families would be plunged into crisis.

These are the sentiments of a sector that will not tolerate broken promises from a mean and tricky coalition government. They echo the message that I will be sending Senator Vanstone in Adelaide this week. Queensland expects its fair share of Commonwealth government funding. We will not allow John Howard and Amanda Vanstone to turn their backs on Queenslanders who are most in need.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Fire Ants

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.02 a.m.), by leave: The Department of Primary Industries is continuing to progress preparations for the five-year eradication of fire ants. I can announce today that up to 410 new jobs in the fight against the exotic invader, the red imported fire ant, will be advertised this weekend. The new positions are for up to 350 field assistants, up to 40 team leaders and up to 20 inspectors as part of the five-year, \$123 million eradication campaign for fire ants. The field assistant positions will be responsible for undertaking surveillance and treatment processes as required. The team leaders will supervise and support the surveillance and treatment processes, while the inspectors are there to implement the restricted movement activities according to legislation.

The majority of the work will be located in the south-western suburbs of Brisbane and at Fisherman Islands where most of the infestations are located. If the eradication plan is successful, this will be the first time that the fire ant has been eradicated anywhere in the world. This comprehensive eradication plan aims to rid Australia of fire ants. Almost all of Australia is vulnerable to this invasive and uncompromising pest. We already have in-principle support from all other states, territories and the Commonwealth, and we plan to commence the full eradication campaign with the start of spring next month. The appointment and necessary training of these people will ensure that we can commence the eradication campaign on time.

The ant is a native of South America. It was able to breach the national quarantine barriers that are maintained by the federal government. The ant has caused enormous damage in the United States. It has been estimated that the fire ant could cost Australia \$6.7 billion over the next 30 years if it is left unchecked.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### 2001 Queensland Landcare Awards

**Hon. S. ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: Landcare and other community-based groups are the backbone of natural resource management across Queensland. Those groups comprise ordinary Queenslanders who voluntarily and willingly give of their time, energy and expertise to protect and sustain our environment. They are our front-line troops in the fight against land degradation. Queensland is fortunate to have this army of Landcare volunteers across the state who work tirelessly to tackle important environmental issues such as salinity, land degradation, water quality, erosion and nature conservation.

Last week I had the pleasure of officiating in Goondiwindi at the presentation of the 2001 Queensland Landcare Awards. Landcare as an ethic has thrived over the last 15 years. These annual awards acknowledge the work being done by ordinary Queenslanders to bring about a sustainable future for our state's natural resources. They provide an opportunity for us to congratulate some of the champions of our environment, whether they are school children, businesses, industry or community groups and they demonstrate the commitment that our Australian corporate sector makes towards natural resource management. Partnerships between Australia's corporate sector, government and the community are crucial to ensuring our future sustainability.

The theme of this year's Landcare awards was 'the Power of One' in recognition of the enormous voluntary work done by members of the 300 Landcare and catchment groups across the state. In this, the International Year of the Volunteer, the awards prove that everyone can make a difference.

I want to thank the Queensland Landcare and Catchment Management Council, the Border Rivers Catchment Management Association, and the people of Goondiwindi for hosting this year's Landcare awards. To all the winners, congratulations on your contribution to natural resource management in Queensland and good luck at the National Landcare Awards in Canberra next March.



## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Rural Fire Service Strategic Plan

**Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: This week I am releasing Queensland's first-ever Rural Fire Service Strategic Plan. I congratulate our Rural Fire Commissioner, Dave Luxton, and his staff on this excellent initiative. I am sure that all members of parliament who get a copy of this book from my office will find it an excellent plan.

The four-year plan will map the direction of rural firefighting in this state. It is the result of extensive consultation with peak industry bodies, local governments, and rural fire service personnel and volunteers. It was discussed and refined at a landmark conference in Rockhampton earlier this year.

The plan outlines a range of priorities for the management of rural fires and Queensland's rural fire volunteer system, which has so capably served our communities for over 50 years. The strategic plan focuses on responsible land management and community education, and includes a bigger emphasis on fire prevention and suppression activities. Enhanced training and firefighting skills, improved management systems and increased community awareness of the dangers of fire are also key components.

This strategic plan builds on the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority's strategic plan, which highlights the importance of strengthening partnerships with the community. Queensland's rural fire service supports rural communities, helping them to better manage the threat of wildfire by providing advice on fire management and delivering world best practice volunteer support. In this the International Year of the Volunteer, it is important that we recognise the invaluable work our volunteers carry out in the community. It is through their support that the rural fire service has remained one of the leading rural fire service organisations in the world.

The plan spells out the challenges facing volunteers over the next 10 years and highlights a range of projects and strategies designed to meet those challenges. These projects include—

- The development of a Rural Fire Service Management Plan;

- The introduction of the volunteer management research project;

- Working with volunteer and peak industry groups to develop and introduce a simple and non-threatening code of conduct;

- Developing a strategic recruitment plan aimed at retaining existing volunteers and a formal framework for selection and induction of new recruits; and

- Developing a communications structure which improves links between RFS staff, volunteers, QFRA and the Department of Emergency Services.

This plan further highlights the Beattie government's commitment to ensuring that all of our emergency services personnel are well equipped to carry out the very valuable roles that they play in the Queensland community.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Electrical Contractors Code of Practice

**Hon. G. R. NUTTALL** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.09 a.m.), by leave: I rise to inform members of the House of a new code of practice that is being developed for electrical contractors as part of this government's concerted efforts to improve Queensland's electrical safety record. This code will serve to make employers and workers acutely aware of their obligations under Queensland electrical safety laws. Specifically, it means that contractors will have to ensure, among many things, that—

- appropriate testing equipment is provided and used;

- auditing procedures are regularly conducted to ensure compliance with electrical safety standards, wiring rules and testing requirements;

- the contractor has procedures to ensure that work is carried out in a way that does not endanger workers or the public;

- there is suitable personal protective clothing and equipment and a procedure in place to address the hazards of working close to live wires and equipment.

The code of practice is crucial. As part of the government's electrical safety strategy, 100 electrical auditors have already been mobilised across the state to investigate the state of electrical contractors' testing equipment, contractors' policies for working live and the use of protective clothing. One hundred audits have already been completed, but the first 25 have been somewhat disappointing—

68 per cent of workers did not have insulated gloves available to them;

48 per cent were not wearing long sleeves or long pants;

70 per cent had improperly calibrated testing equipment.

The message to improve electrical safety has been loud and clear. Those people who fail to meet the standards in the new code of practice to be adopted and who fail the current inspections will be referred directly to the Electrical Licensing Board and face losing their license or having their licence suspended.

But the effort to improve electrical safety involves not just electrical contractors. Seventy per cent of all electrical incidents last year occurred in the home. Last week I visited Cairns and Mackay to launch a major advertising campaign aimed at the domestic and rural sectors. As well, through Ergon and Energex 1.5 million households throughout this state will receive brochures on the crucial issue of safety switches in the home.

As for the government, the independent review into the standard of investigations into electrical deaths by the Division of Workplace Health and Safety and the Electrical Safety Office has been handed down, and those recommendations are now being fast-tracked to cabinet. And for employers and workplaces, Workplace Health and Safety investigators will be auditing high risk electrical industries in Queensland to check for safety hazards in the workplace.

I look forward to updating members of the House on our efforts to improve electrical safety in Queensland. In the meantime I would like to thank the National Electrical Contractors Association, the CEPU, John Goss Projects, the Electrical Licensing Board and Energex for their support and input into the development of this code of practice.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Horses' Birthday

**Hon. D. M. WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (10.13 a.m.), by leave: Today is horses' birthday. I have just received a delegation from the Queensland Endurance Riders Association, which presented me with a lucky horseshoe for each honourable member. I have asked attendants to offer these to honourable members.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I am informed by a reliable authority that horseshoes should be hung with the open end facing up. If any honourable members have bad luck, they should blame the attendants; they advised me of this.

## OVERSEAS VISIT

### Report

**Mrs SHELDON** (Caloundra—Lib) (10.14 a.m.): I wish to report to parliament on my recent visit to Singapore in the first week of June to attend the second Australian/ASEAN Women Leaders Convention. This conference was a joint initiative of the ASEAN Business Forum—President Dr Jannie Tay—and the ASEAN Strategy and Leadership Institute. The convention brought together business, government, academic and NGO leaders. Issues that were addressed included creating opportunities out of today's challenges—women in business and management; women and entrepreneurship—transforming leadership in the 21st century; globalisation and its impact on women; women's contribution to nation building; the Internet and e-business—from idea to reality; being the best—personal stories of successful women; and expanding women's role in the new knowledge economy.

As fewer than 50 Australian women were invited, I was honoured when asked to attend. The rapport established between women in politics, government and business augurs well for the future, with women in Australia and all ASEAN countries represented. It would appear that regardless of race the same problems affect women of all nations, with the same hurdles to overcome and glass ceilings to be lifted. The plan is for future conferences to be held in Kuala Lumpur and Beijing. This sort of conference is a great opportunity for Australian women to show

their ASEAN counterparts that we can work together for the betterment of conditions of women in all our countries and promotes Australia as a nation interested in being an active and integral part of our region. I have enclosed a copy of the agenda for the conference.

In addition to attending the conference, I had discussions with Singapore tourism and hospitality personnel with regard to tourism and business opportunities in Queensland. I table my report.

## **OFFICE OF MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

### **Report of Expenses**

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (10.15 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the report of expenses for the Office of the Independent Member for Gladstone for the period 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001. I would also formally advise the House that the tabling of the report of expenses for the Office of the Independent Member for Nicklin will be delayed because of the member's current circumstances.

## **NOTICE OF MOTION**

### **National Parks**

**Dr KINGSTON** (Maryborough—Ind) (10.16 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

That this House calls on the government to honour the commitment of the Bicentennial National Trail and the promise made by the previous Environment Minister in relation to the RFA that as a result of government policy, there would be no net loss of access to the national park by recreational users.

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

### **Capital Works Budget**

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.17 a.m.): The notice of motion was very timely, given that horseshoes are currently being handed out to honourable members. It is about time the minister recognised trail riders' rights to the responsible use of national parks.

Yesterday I spoke about the incompetence, non-delivery and arrogance that has become the hallmark of this Beattie Labor government. Today I want to add to that list—a list that is growing day by day. One of the most important things for the development and growth of our state is a growth in capital works spending and the targeting of capital works at important projects that will make this state more efficient and a place that is easy for people to visit as tourists and when doing business.

Importantly, we are seeing a decline in capital works. Budget to budget the capital works spending in this state has declined. Last financial year we saw an underspend of \$280 million in capital works. It has to be concerning to the people of this state that we are seeing a cutback in capital works spending in Queensland—the last thing we need when we are trying to create employment and ensure that major projects go ahead.

We see non-delivery again with the tilt train, which is at least one year behind schedule. It now seems that the tilt train, which was designed to provide speedy travel between Rockhampton and Cairns, adding to the existing leg from Brisbane to Rockhampton, will take five hours longer than proposed. A tilt train is supposed to be designed for speed.

One of the most important tasks of government is to encourage investment in our state. The major way to encourage investment is by having a low tax regime. Overnight we have seen \$80 million in extra coal royalties ripped out of Queensland. How will that encourage investment in this state? The government received an extra \$130 million in coal royalties last year because of increased exports.

Time expired.

### **Telstra; Ms K. Brookes**

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Algeria—ALP) (10.19 a.m.): Telstra is a great Australian icon. Sadly, John Howard wants to fully privatise Telstra. Many Queenslanders are worried that if all of Telstra is sold services will suffer in regional and metropolitan areas. This week Telstra Corporation Limited

appealed against a decision by the ACCC, because Telstra wants to push up its long distance call rates. Labor Party members across the country, including federal Labor Leader, Kim Beazley, have signed a Telstra pledge as part of a national campaign to keep Telstra for all Australians, to keep Telstra in majority public ownership.

The federal Labor candidate for Moreton, Kathleen Brookes, is signing the pledge today in Brisbane. Kathleen Brookes has asked me to draw the Telstra pledge and the petition to the attention of members of the Queensland parliament. Kathleen is aware of the Telstra memo indicating that 600 jobs will be slashed from Telstra's national network solutions. Even more disturbing is the revelation that this is part of a wider plan that could see 70 per cent of job losses come from rural centres. Kathleen Brookes is also calling on the federal member for Moreton to stand up to his leader, John Howard, sign the Telstra pledge and save jobs and services in the telecommunications industry.

The Labor and conservative parties are miles apart. Labor is committed to majority public ownership of Telstra; the Tories want to sell off Telstra. Labor is committed to Medicare; under the Howard government we would need a credit card, not a Medicare card, for health care. Under Howard, elite private schools in the southern states get the million dollar bonuses while the public system is frowned upon. Queenslanders do not deserve the mean-spirited Howard government.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the next member, I recognise in the public gallery the Good News Lutheran School from the electorate of Mount Ommaney.

### **Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme**

**Mrs SHELDON** (Caloundra—Lib) (10.21 a.m.): I wish to raise an issue about the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme and how it is underfunded by this state government. In particular, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the son of Denise McNamara, Andrew McNamara, of 19 Helm Crescent, Wurtulla, in which she says that her son had waited for a wheelchair for well over 12 months. When it was unloaded from the truck it was filthy dirty, it took two days to clean, the cushions smelt awful and oozed a thick gooey substance, the colour scheme was all over the place—purple chipped paint, black and white head rest, blue arm rests and rusting—the two tyres were flat, and when they were pumped up they went flat again. After inquiring for some considerable period she was given two very heavy, thick tyres which would not work. Finally the chair was made usable by the community which came to her rescue after a radio interview was held.

She further brings to attention the fact that she has become aware of other families enduring the same sorts of problems over the past two years. One such case involved a girl from Kawana Waters State High School who has spina bifida and who has had the same manual wheelchair from year 8 to year 12. She has been waiting for a new chair for two years. Many children attending the Currimundi Special School have been on waiting lists for manual chairs for three to four years. A gentleman who lives here in Brisbane and who suffers from Becker muscular dystrophy has had his request for a power-operated wheel chair knocked back on several occasions because he can still stand up to urinate. He has suffered numerous injuries due to his falling constantly, and the doctors believe that has resulted from his not been issued with a chair.

What we see here are young children being left and neglected by this state government because it will not adequately fund the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme. When people need a wheelchair in which to get around and to get to school, as this young boy—Andrew—did, and cannot have it supplied in a fit state to use, let alone the use to which an ordinary person would want to put it, and when it is supplied in a filthy, dirty unworkable condition, they have to ask: isn't it an insult after waiting 12 months to then be delivered with such a chair? This needs attention, and it is needed right now.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the member for Albert, I correct my earlier welcome. The school in the gallery at the moment is St Augustine's School from the electorate of Currumbin. I say welcome to the school.

### ***Big Brother***

**Ms KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (10.23 a.m.): Have honourable members ever had the feeling they are being watched—and I do not mean by Matthew Franklin, Sue Lappeman, Paul Weston or the other members of the parliamentary press gallery; I mean having their every move and words

scrutinised by an unseen audience, having the most minute facets of your personality exposed for all the world to see?

Recently contestants from the reality TV show *Big Brother* were temporary residents in my electorate of Albert. They shared every waking and sleeping hour with 28 cameras and millions of Australians who tuned in daily to watch them. The *Big Brother* program was produced by Southern Star Endemol and Channel 10 at Albert's very own Dreamworld, Queensland's multi-award winning tourist attraction located at Coomera. I believe *Big Brother* should be taken as nothing more seriously than light entertainment. Not so light, however, are the economic spin-offs for the Gold Coast.

The state government's Pacific Film and Television Commission gave the production company a \$2.5 million loan—a loan, not a hand-out—which is repayable in a year. Southern Star also received \$300,000 in salary rebates. What does Queensland receive in return for so little outlay? A remarkable economic impact of an estimated \$19 million plus 140 jobs through tourism and post production spin-offs.

Dreamworld's CEO, Tony Braxton-Smith, and public relations coordinator, Scott Newell, gave me a tour of the *Big Brother* house last week, and I have the bunny ears to prove it. They said that the success of the inaugural show has guaranteed it is not just a one-off. Future productions of *Big Brother* and other programs are set to produce an ongoing tourism legacy and economic boost. In anyone's language that is a massive return on a comparatively modest investment. Honourable members, love or hate Sara-Marie and her bunny ears, *Big Brother* means big bucks for Albert and the Gold Coast.

### Water Resources

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (10.25 a.m.): The opposition has always supported, and will continue to support, a water reform process that ensures sustainable development of our natural resources based on creditable science that compensates for lost property rights. Yesterday in this House the Minister for Natural Resources admitted that he had surrendered a court case involving the amalgamation of water rights because 'the way the court case was proceeding'—

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I rise to a point of order. That statement is untrue and I ask the member to withdraw it.

**Mr SEENEY:** I withdraw it. The minister said—

... the way that the court case was proceeding and the evidence that was being adduced may not have been in the long-term interests of maintaining the integrity of the moratorium.

The case was surrendered to prevent the court formally ruling on the evidence which had established that the science used by the government in the process was badly flawed. The documents and the modelling systems that are the very basis of the water reform process were insufficient to support the government's case in court and were discredited under cross-examination. On the evidence of the government's own expert witnesses and consultants it became apparent that information that did not support the preconceived position was withheld from the process by the Department of Natural Resources and that the models used could be up to 50 per cent inaccurate.

It is impossible to think that responsible policy making by any government can proceed when based on processes that could not justify their conclusions in a court of law. Regrettably, the water reform process will have major detrimental impacts on individuals and communities throughout Queensland, and they have received no compensation and no compassion from this government. It is extraordinary that any government would cause major social consequences for people without ensuring that the scientific basis for the proposals were beyond question. It is unthinkable that they would pursue the dubiously based agenda without any concern for the socioeconomic effects on people and communities and without any compensation for those affected adversely. The minister's surrender in this case will confirm in the minds of many water users—

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Mr Speaker—

**Mr SEENEY:**—that the water reform agenda—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is a point of order.

**Mr SEENEY:**—is about unnecessarily restricted development of irrigation industry based on preconceived agendas.

Time expired.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I find that last comment untrue and offensive and ask it to be withdrawn

**Mr SPEAKER:** Would the member withdraw that, please, under standing orders?

**Mr SEENEY:** Which comment, Mr Speaker?

**Mr SPEAKER:** It would be much easier if you just withdraw.

**Mr SEENEY:** I did not make a comment directly related to the minister. Which comment would he like withdrawn?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** 'Such surrender by the minister at any stage in this court case.'

**Mr SPEAKER:** Withdraw it under standing orders. It is much simpler if you withdraw.

**Mr SEENEY:** As I understand it—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Do not argue about it. I am running this place, not you. Withdraw, please. If a member finds a statement offensive, they can ask for a withdrawal. The minister has done so. I ask you now to withdraw.

**Mr SEENEY:** Mr Speaker, because of my respect for you, I withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before calling the member for Capalaba, I now welcome in the gallery students and staff from the Good News Lutheran School in Mount Ommaney. Welcome.

### Dental Services

**Mr CHOI** (Capalaba—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): Recently, on behalf of the Premier, I attended the opening of the 30th Australian Dental Congress at the Brisbane Convention Centre. The President of the Australian Dental Association, Dr David Thompson, said in his opening address—  
The dental health of Australia's adults has degenerated to the stage where we are third last of some 21 OECD countries.

In commenting on the reason for such a sorry state of affairs, Dr Thompson further said that the position of the federal government in this matter is illogical and lacks compassion.

The world's population is increasing at about 19 million per year, which is the equivalent of about half a million new teeth every hour, or to fill a Commodore with two million teeth in just under four hours. That is a lot of teeth in anybody's language.

It has been said that dental pain is only second in magnitude to the pain caused by childbirth. In fact, for most members of the House, dental pain is the most severe form of pain they will ever experience. Unfortunately, the federal government did not increase funding for dental programs but in fact cancelled the Commonwealth dental health program, which previously provided essential dental care for Australians. The national crisis in dental health care has now reached disastrous proportions, with half a million Australians languishing on long waiting lists. Unless you are a polar bear like Ping Ping, you have to wait for a long time.

Once again, the Beattie Labor government has come to the aid of Queenslanders neglected by the coalition federal government. I congratulate the government and particularly the Minister for Health for putting Queensland first and for injecting \$5 million into public dental health services. I know that this will not remove waiting lists completely, but it is a good start. I call upon the federal government to reinstate the Commonwealth dental program. Once again the coalition government has proved to be out of touch, mean spirited, impersonal and lacking compassion. The Queensland Labor government has proved that it is governing for all Queenslanders and caring for all Queenslanders.

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

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Vehicle Pursuits by Police

**Mr HORAN** (10.31 a.m.): I refer the Premier to the fact that over the last six consecutive nights the police have been forced to pursue runaway drivers, mostly through metropolitan or Gold Coast suburbs. Most of us saw the disturbing pictures on television last night of a badly injured policeman being taken away by ambulance, and another chase occurred hours later last night. I ask: as existing penalties are no real deterrent, can the Premier give the parliament a commitment today that he will introduce tougher penalties in the interests of police and public safety?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I am aware of recent calls for the Esplanade at the Gold Coast to be closed during certain hours to stop the recent spate of hoon-like behaviour. In recent weeks a trial by Gold Coast police of partially blocking the Esplanade has been in place, with traffic reduced to one lane on Friday nights between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. and on Saturdays and Sundays between 4 and 6 at the corner of Hanlan Street. Since this trial began, the number of complaints about this issue has been dramatically reduced.

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am going to go through this. There are a number of issues here. Hoons are just one issue. Having said that, it is important that when considering measures such as this we take into account the broader effects such actions would have on the local community and visitors alike. With this in mind, further evaluation is needed in this area. This government is responsive to the needs of the people of Queensland. I am willing to consider any sensible option that will assist in ensuring the community is safe from inappropriate and dangerous behaviour by some motorists. I will therefore be asking the Minister for Police, the Honourable Tony McGrady, to investigate this further and any other appropriate action for targeting hoons and their dangerous behaviour. This government is committed to stopping this foolish behaviour by a small minority and will take whatever steps are necessary to achieve this goal. Let me make it clear that there are a number of issues here. One involves hoons on the Gold Coast. One involves under-age driving and threats to the community. This government will not tolerate it.

**Mr Horan:** I was asking about pursuits.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Will you stop being rude. Every day in this parliament the Leader of the Opposition denigrates this House. Can I simply be given the opportunity to respond? Thank you. Let me make it clear: it does not matter whether it is hoons on the Gold Coast or whether it is speed chases. These chases are unacceptable to the community and the police will have every support from this government to ensure that they stamp it out. It does not matter whether it is hoons on the Gold Coast, which is what this question referred to, or whether it is chases that endanger the lives of the community and endanger the lives of police.

Tony McGrady and I have discussed this issue on a number of occasions. He is ensuring through the commissioner that the police have the appropriate resources. One thing we need to do—and we will continue to do this—is ensure that police have additional resources. That is one reason why we are increasing the number of police. That is one reason why this government, through the budget brought down by the Treasurer and supported by the Minister for Police, is increasing the number of police. We are going to continue to do that because we need to ensure that there are enough police resources and police numbers to stamp it out. There are now very, very severe penalties for anyone who breaks the law. What we need to do—and I need the support of the member opposite to do this—is go out and say to any hoon or any thug, 'If you break the law, you'll go to jail.'

### **SunWater, Debt Management Policy**

**Mr HORAN:** I refer the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines to the bullyboy threats of the government's water provider, SunWater, to recover outstanding water bills in a way that, and I quote from SunWater's letter to irrigators, 'may well result in increased uncertainty, possible loss of water to farms and, in some cases, any current loans you may have that may be affected'. I also refer to SunWater's new debt management policy which, unlike any other public or private utility, provides for disconnection if a customer fails to pay their account and upon reconnection requires up-front payment of the projected water charges 12 months in advance and payment of a reconnection fee. This is plain arrogance. I ask: why has the minister allowed SunWater to abuse its monopoly over public water supplies?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I thank the member for the question. As the member would be aware, SunWater is a government owned corporation. It has responsibilities to provide water through a range of schemes throughout Queensland. The letter that the member referred to pertained to irrigators in the Burdekin irrigation area who have been in dispute with SunWater now for some time. Shortly after I became Minister for Natural Resources I received a briefing on the issues surrounding this particular matter in the Burdekin and in fact visited the Burdekin and met with the irrigators and listened to their concerns. As a result of that meeting, a number of actions were put in place to improve relationships between SunWater and the irrigators. It was hoped that as a result of that meeting the irrigators would then pay the bills that were quite legitimately charged by SunWater. The irrigators have chosen to continue their campaign based on the price paths. They

have an issue with SunWater with respect to the amounts that they pay which are known as amounts over the lower bound, which has historically been the case in the Burdekin.

These irrigators have chosen the particular path that they are going down and are continuing to refuse to pay the bills issued by SunWater. This matter has been going on now for over six months. The letters that SunWater have sent out are letters that it is required to send if it is to meet its obligations as a GOC, as a commercial entity.

**Mr Beattie:** You know why this started? Because when those opposite were in office they lied to them.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The point made by the Premier is an accurate one. In fact, recently at the Burdekin community cabinet the Premier and I met with irrigators and reviewed the issues put forward by them. We made it quite clear to the irrigators that unless they could provide further information to justify their stance, the existing price paths would remain. As a result of that, SunWater is doing nothing more than trying to bring an end to the current dispute that exists between it and the Burdekin irrigators. These are bills for water that they have used. They choose to run a campaign. SunWater is doing nothing that is considered unreasonable in any other commercial context.

### **Election of Senate Candidate**

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN:** I draw the Premier's attention to the way in which the National Party flouted constitutional convention last night by voting against the Democrats nomination to replace a Democrat senator. I ask: is the Premier aware of whether the National Party was united in this unconstitutional behaviour?

**Mr BEATTIE:** Interestingly, it was not. Before I come to that point, let me put on the record that last night we saw a party that is prepared to wreck the Constitution of Australia; we saw a party that has no regard for the rule of law. Members may remember that when it was in office in the 1980s the National Party and its members had no respect for the rule of law. Fitzgerald found them out. They got thrown out of office. What happened when they came back? Denver Beanland sat in here and disregarded the rule of law. They have not learnt a thing. As I said last night, my Labor government respects the Constitution. We will fight to preserve the Constitution against all of the wreckers.

It is interesting that last night all of the National Party members voted against the Democrats nominee. They were the only ones, but there were 11 of them. It seems that they were not of one mind. I note that the diary of the member for Cunningham, Mr Stuart Copeland, published in the *Toowoomba Chronicle* stated that at 6.30 he would attend the reception for the new Democrats senator for Queensland. I am happy to table that for the House. Did he defy his leader or did he not go? Did he just tell the people of Toowoomba he would go and then not go? Did he go? He did not go! So he has misled the people of Toowoomba and the people of his electorate. He was not only having two bob each way; he was being very dishonest. If he tells his people he is going to go there, he should go. Those opposite do not understand. We are honest; they are dishonest. Those opposite do not mind lying to their electorate. That does not seem to be a problem.

I share another interesting matter with the House. I happened to be surfing the Net, because the new Minister for Innovation says that that is something a Premier should do. I had a look at the Prime Minister's web site, which has a quiz for kids. It says that the quiz is intended for children of primary school age. Do members know what one of the questions is? It asks: 'Who is Australia's Deputy Prime Minister?' It is a very good question. There are three options: Peter Costello—well, he thinks he is; the Hon. John Anderson; and Senator Robert Hill. The Prime Minister does not know who the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia is!

### **Condamine-Balonne WAMP**

**Mr SEENEY:** Perhaps the House can now deal with some subjects that are important to Queensland. I refer the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines to his answer to my question asked yesterday in which he stated that his department withdrew from a court case involving the amalgamation of water licences at St George because 'the way the court case was proceeding and the evidence that was being adduced may not have been in the long-term interests of maintaining the integrity of the moratorium'. What adverse evidence was being



adduced and how did it threaten the long-term interests of the government's water reform process?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The evidence to which the member refers occurred during the cross-examination of one of the department's own hydrologists. It was highlighted during the case that in one particular instance the data collection method may not have accorded with the standard methodology. As a result, certain conclusions were made and an assessment was made of the likely path of the court case. So there was a minor discrepancy in terms of data collection.

As I said yesterday in my ministerial statement, by far the majority of evidence that was adduced, particularly from the appellant's own experts, went along these lines. I will repeat it for the member opposite, because after listening intently to the speech he made this morning I realise that he is so far off the mark it is not funny.

The appellant's own scientific experts conceded that the existing hydrology modelling and impact data relied on by the department was still the best available. They also conceded that if the amount of water being diverted from the system was in the order of 50 per cent on average, then a real connection between flow and ecological degradation would exist. Furthermore, they recognised that the approach by the department—that is, adopting the precautionary principle attached to such studies under the water resource planning process—was appropriate.

The point is made that often when science is challenged in a courtroom certain things can be misconstrued and people say things they otherwise may not have said. That is reality, but as a result of that concession—that one particular part of data collection methodology was not in accordance with standards—decisions were taken with respect to the future of that court case. Nevertheless, the integrity of the water resource planning process, particularly in the Condamine-Balonne, remains solid.

I am meeting with my interstate counterparts over the next week or so, I am meeting with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission next week, I met with greens groups yesterday and I will be meeting with representatives of the Queensland Murray-Darling Advisory Council next weekend. We will be going through the issues pertaining to this court case and mapping out where we go from here. We have not backed away from our commitment to sustainable resource management in the Condamine-Balonne. Nothing in this court case suggests otherwise.

### **Rural Areas, State Government Assistance**

**Ms BOYLE:** I refer the Premier to the important role government can play in improving the quality of life of people living in remote areas, and I ask: can the Premier inform the House of any recent initiatives of the Beattie government to assist Queenslanders in remote parts of the state? How does Queensland's approach compare with the approach taken by the Howard government?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the hardworking member for Cairns for the question. The Queensland government is committed to building up our regions and supporting people who live in the bush. I am delighted to inform all present that the government has set in place a program to improve telecommunications in far-north Queensland. The Minister for Innovation, Paul Lucas, the member for Burdekin, Steve Rodgers, and I announced this. Members can see on this map the area it will cover.

On 16 July, at the Ayr community cabinet meeting we announced that expressions of interest would be called, with nationwide advertisements, to provide telecommunications services in far-north Queensland. That is north of the red line the Minister for Innovation is pointing to. This initiative will mean better quality telecommunications for people in remote and isolated communities in the north and north-west.

This is a good example of how the government can use its buying power in a remote region. We want to deliver reliable, cost-effective broadband telecommunications services to the people of these areas. This initiative will provide a greater range of services, including better Internet access. My government has already spent \$170 million a year on telecommunications throughout Queensland. By aggregating all government communications in the north, we can ask the telcos to provide better infrastructure to get better services. In such a process, better infrastructure for government will also support better facilities for business and communities. It is a better outcome and it is thinking smart.

The initiative will promote economic development through increasing availability of broadband telecommunications carriage across the region, will obtain equitable pricing of carriage

services for government, businesses and the community, and will encourage the development of a skilled information and community technology work force in order to support local technical infrastructure. I congratulate the minister on this initiative.

In contrast, the Prime Minister pays lip service to the needs of the bush but does not deliver. I wrote to the Prime Minister in February, calling upon him to instigate discussions across all levels of government to consider establishing tax zones, especially in hard-hit areas. I table a copy of that letter for the information of the House. Nothing has been heard since. If John Howard is serious about creating jobs in regional Australia, he will use his lunchtime address at the National Press Club today to clearly state his position on establishing economic zones in regional Australia.

It is becoming increasingly apparent to me that for regional Australia to prosper government needs to provide incentives that encourage new investment. The Queensland government currently provides various incentives to attract new businesses and expand existing businesses in regional areas, such as those offered through the Queensland Investment Incentive Scheme. Overseas experience suggests that the most effective strategies to achieve employment growth in depressed regions include tax relief to the business community. The Commonwealth must look to establish such a strategy, particularly in areas such as Hervey Bay and Wide Bay. Those sorts of areas will benefit. Under this approach, new and expanding businesses could be provided with temporary tax breaks for up to five years to locate enterprises in regions suffering from high unemployment. It would provide fresh impetus for the diversification of regional economies.

### School Funding

**Mr FLYNN:** I direct a question to the Minister for Education. Whereas it is understood that the public and private sector schools complement one another, with the private sector taking over responsibility for what otherwise would be an insurmountable financial burden upon the taxpayers at the lower end of the wage-earning scale, can the minister indicate what steps the government or her department is taking to ensure that state schools receive a greater share of the funding cake, which undoubtedly favours the private sector given their existing fee structures?

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I also thank him for his clear support for the great work that is being done in the public schools across Queensland and by the teachers who teach in them. It would be good if some of the members on the other side of the House took a leaf out of his book and showed a similar level of support.

I understand the member's concerns about an increasingly unfair share of the cake from the Commonwealth to the public education system and its impact on regional Queensland. The concern that he expressed is being echoed in schools across Queensland. There is rarely a school that I go into where either the P&C president, parents, teachers or the principal do not start talking to me about what they increasingly perceive to be a very unfair system.

In light of that, I am delighted to inform the member that last week, at the ministerial council of education ministers, other state ministers also recognised this concern, and the majority of ministers voted to establish what we called a resources task force to bring the states and Commonwealth together around the table to look again at how we might more fairly distribute the resources that are there to make sure that not only public schools but all schools are getting the fairest share of the cake—not only that they get the fairest share, but that the community believes it to be a fair system. I think this is one of the most fundamental mistakes that Dr Kemp has made. He has failed to convince the Australian public that his system is fair.

It is even more surprising then that when the resources task force of ministers across Australia was formed last week, David Kemp, the federal Liberal Minister for Education, refused to allow the Commonwealth to participate in the task force. As members would be aware, he has over the last six months been vigorously defending his system and attacking state governments for the role that they have played in funding education. My challenge to David Kemp has been: if you are completely sure that your system is fair, and if you do believe the rhetoric that you have been out belting the state governments with around the country, then you will have no trouble participating in a task force to scrutinise expenditure across all levels of government. What is it that David Kemp is hiding from, and why will he not sit around the table with state ministers to ensure that we have a system that is fair and is perceived to be fair?

One of the real issues here in Queensland is that, because of our decentralised nature, we have an even higher reliance on the public provision of education than just about any other state in Australia. As other members on this side of the House would know, it is all very well for David

Kemp to talk about choice and parental choice, but the reality is that many communities in Queensland—

**Mr Bredhauer:** Eighty per cent.

**Ms BLIGH:** A significant majority of young people and children are in public education because it is the only choice available to them; the public provider is the only provider in town. Or it may be that there is a Catholic school, which is important for those people who want a Catholic education. But if you are not a Catholic and not seeking that, there is no choice other than the public system. Getting it right in the public system is very important for this government.

### **School Funding**

**Mr REEVES:** I direct a question to the Minister for Education. There has been a lot of debate about funding to schools recently. Can the minister report on any moves to resolve this issue?

**Ms BLIGH:** I am delighted to further discuss the issue of funding in our public schools. I believe honestly that this is one of the most important issues facing this country at the moment. It is a disgrace that the Commonwealth is so unwilling to reconsider the attacks that it has made and the unfair system that it has established.

As I said, last week the state ministers combined to establish a resourcing task force. David Kemp not only spat the dummy and took his bat and ball and went home and refused to allow the Commonwealth to participate in the task force; he has been claiming in the last week that this is an attack—this task force, this attempt to sit down again to try to get it right—by Labor ministers on small Catholic parish schools. That is an attempt, in my view, by David Kemp to distract people from the real issues. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I can assure the federal minister that the reality in Queensland is that we do not have the elite private schools that he is funding in southern states. There are 61 schools on the schedule 1 list that are seeing more than \$1 million of extra funding go into them, and only one of those is in Queensland. And none of them are outside south-east Queensland. There is not a parish school anywhere in Queensland that is getting the kind of extra support—in the vicinity of \$1.9 million—that places such as Geelong Grammar are getting in Victoria. It is regionally inequitable. It is inequitable across the sectors. And we will not step away from our fight to correct that.

Members would be aware that the Australian Primary Principals Association undertook a report earlier this year in which it expressed a great deal of concern across the country about the resourcing of primary students, particularly in comparison to the resourcing of secondary students, not only in the public system but also in the private system. It is an unusual step, I think, for all of the primary principals in this country to express a unified view on this, and it is important that ministers take that very seriously.

Queensland put this report on the national agenda, and it was referred by a motion that I moved at MCEETYA, the ministerial council, to the resourcing task force for its consideration. Unfortunately, because David Kemp had already taken what I think is an extraordinarily stupid step of refusing to participate in the resourcing task force, he now cannot participate in a discussion about the resourcing of primary and secondary schools. It is one of those things that, when you make a silly decision and you cut off your nose to spite your face, you find yourself increasingly in a corner—

**Mr Schwarten:** Without a nose.

**Ms BLIGH:** Without a nose; that is right. I am delighted to have the opportunity to say that Queensland supports the primary principals and Queensland supports a look at a federal and state level at the resourcing of both primary and secondary schools. We will not be playing the divisive game of David Kemp. We will not be supporting his attempt to hive off primary schools at the expense of secondary schools. We will support a national review.

### **Condamine-Balonne WAMP**

**Mr HOBBS:** I have a question for the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines. I refer to the admission in the Land Court by the Department of Natural Resources and Mine's expert witness, Dr Satish Choy, that only three single tests at just three sites were provided to support the government's conclusion that there had been significant ecological damage caused by water harvesting in the river system, but that if all of the available test samples in the lower

Balonne had been considered they would support a conclusion that the ecological condition of the system was fair to good. The minister has been caught out corrupting the scientific WAMP process. Why did his department deliberately withhold significant information—

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I rise to a point of order. I ask the member to withdraw that statement. It is both untrue and offensive.

**Mr HOBBS:** It had nothing to do with him; it was overall.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member said the minister had corruptly—

**Mr HOBBS:** Minister—

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

**Mr HOBBS:** I withdraw. Minister, why did your department deliberately withhold significant information from the Land Court?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The simple answer to that is that the court case did not go the full length, because a settlement was reached by the parties.

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

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

### Aviation Industry Training Centre

**Ms LIDDY CLARK:** My question is directed to the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth. I refer the minister to the need for Queensland workers to gain skills which meet the demands of highly specialised industries, and I ask: what is the Queensland government doing to provide training opportunities to equip Queenslanders for work in the aviation and aerospace industries?

**Mr FOLEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question and thank her in particular for her interest in a very important job creation and training initiative in her own electorate. In particular, a new state-of-the-art aviation industry training centre will be provided near the Brisbane Airport which will cement Queensland's role as the hub for the aerospace industry in the Asia-Pacific region. By being located at the Brisbane Airport, the centre will be in the heart of Queensland's growing aerospace precinct. That centre will take its first students in February next year. It will also help to attract aviation and aerospace industry employers to Queensland, creating a centre of excellence for the industry.

In its first year of operation the centre will train 200 aircraft maintenance apprentices, trainees and prevocational students. This number is expected to grow to 1,000 training places by 2005. This is a real growth sector for Queensland and the Beattie government is keen to maximise the job opportunities that it presents well into the future. The figures speak for themselves. Employment in the aviation industry has increased by an average of almost 20 per cent a year for the past 10 years.

The world-class training centre at the Brisbane Airport will bring together private training organisations, TAFE institutes and universities. It will provide training for cabin crew, aerospace medicine, air traffic control, catering and maintenance training. This is the Smart State in practice, and the Smart State is inclusive. It is not just about the high-tech wizards and the propeller heads; it is all about providing for the relevant support industries, such as catering, maintenance training—a whole range of things. The Smart State is about surviving and thriving in a changing economy based on information and knowledge.

The Queensland government is backing this project with appropriate funding to the tune of \$10 million over the next three years. Apart, of course, from apprenticeships and traineeships, much of the training will be delivered on a fee-for-service basis. This centre of excellence has already received support from Qantas, Virgin Airlines, Boeing Australia and the Brisbane Airport Corporation. But the first requirement in attracting investment in the aerospace industry is a skilled work force. I thank the honourable member for her keen interest in the arts, both the performing arts and the aviation arts, which I look forward to seeing practised in her electorate.

### **Suncorp Metway Stadium, Freedom of Information Application**

**Mr QUINN:** My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government and Planning. I refer the minister to a freedom of information application lodged with her department on 10 April seeking access to all documents in the possession of her director-general and senior planning officers relating to the impacts of the proposed redevelopment of Suncorp Metway Stadium, which included documents that were not tabled yesterday by the State Development Minister. I ask: given that a response to this application is now a month and a half overdue, why has my office not received a reply to the FOI application? When will these documents be released?

**Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM:** I thank the honourable member for the question. That application is being attended to. It is very comprehensive. A lot of information has been requested and it will be provided to him as quickly as possible.

### **Aquaculture**

**Ms JARRATT:** I ask the Minister for State Development: what is the government doing to further develop the state's aquaculture industry?

**Mr BARTON:** I thank the member for the question. Of course, the member's electorate has a number of potential sites for aquaculture development. She has continued to take a very positive attitude and has supported that industry in her area. It is a growth sector. Aquaculture is on the rise in this state because there is a continuing demand for quality seafood world wide.

There are economic benefits to come out of aquaculture planning and aquaculture development, particularly in the coastal regional areas of Queensland. The Department of State Development is continuing to work closely with the Queensland aquaculture industry to foster this development. Working with the regions in particular is important to this. In recent weeks we have done a lot of work in the Bowen region—in the electorate of the member for Whitsunday—because we are very confident that aquaculture has the potential to assist Bowen.

In recent years Bowen has experienced economic difficulties. However, it is a prime location for the potential further development of aquaculture, particularly prawn farms, and major investors wish to see that occur. Officers from my Department of State Development and the Bowen Shire Council are involved. Mayor Brunner has taken a particular interest as well. We have also met with state and Commonwealth regulatory agencies, because it is very important that we streamline the assessment and approval processes so that those investors know that, if they provide the information that is required and meet the standards that are required, their development approvals will follow.

My Department of State Development has also funded a \$24,000 study to identify sites in the Bowen region. Our challenge is now to take it to the next step. Having worked to streamline the process and identify the sites, we are now investigating further the issues that need to be identified and addressed. We need to market sustainable business opportunities to potential investors as well as those who are there already.

We believe that, in the Bowen area alone, aquaculture has the potential to create 200 jobs through \$60 million in investment. A range of projects are already on the table. We are looking at improving client services, identifying the sites, making sure that the streamlined assessment and approval processes are in place, working with the council and the other agencies to undertake public consultation, and educating the community about the benefits of aquaculture and the very high environmental standards that apply to the aquaculture industry in this state. World consumption is continuing to rise and we intend to be there to take advantage of it.

### **Radio Heritage**

**Mr LESTER:** My question is to the Minister for Environment. Is the minister aware of concerns expressed on Rod Henshaw's radio program relating to Queensland's radio heritage? I refer particularly to the search for radio memorabilia, and especially the part of Percy Brown, a former technician of the ABC, which took pride of place in the control room of studio 402, the home of 4QG, as it was then and, of course, now Radio National. I understand that the issue was raised by that icon Howard Ainsworth. He was an icon of 4QG, now a key figure at 4MBS. Will the minister ensure that this important piece of Queensland's heritage is secured and preserved?

**Mr WELLS:** Of course, all of Queensland's historical heritage is important—not only our property, not only our natural heritage, not only our built heritage but also our chattels that

represent an important part of our history. Honourable members would not expect me to know all the details of every piece of our chattel heritage. However, in this particular case, Percy Brown's port is very important and I do know a little bit about Percy Brown's port.

As I understand it, Percy Brown was a radio technician who used to work in the old studio at the ABC. He used to go in each day, put his port up on the shelf and there it would stay for the rest of the day. One day Percy Brown retired, and back in the 1960s, I think—

**Mr Swarten:** What was in his port?

**Mr WELLS:** The honourable member is being too inquisitive. I urge the honourable member to abide his curiosity for a moment and let me get to the point.

The port was sitting up on the shelf all day. One day Percy Brown retired and the port was still there. They left it there as a memory of Percy Brown. But the thing is—and now I come to the honourable member's interjection—nobody ever knew what was in Percy Brown's port and, as far as I know, nobody has ever looked.

I understand that staff of ABC radio checked the day before yesterday or yesterday—or whenever it was—to see whether the port was still there, and it was. But nobody knows what is in the port. Consequently, I thank the honourable member for his interest. I have decided that I will send a conservator to have a look at the inside of Percy Brown's port. This part of our heritage not only needs to be preserved—

**Mr Foley:** Is that Pandora perhaps?

**Mr WELLS:** The Minister for Employment refers to Pandora's box. No, this is not a situation of Pandora's box; this is part of our benign history, the history of radio broadcasting in Queensland. It needs not only conservation but also it needs interpretation, and my department is up to the task.

### **Drug Related Crime, Ipswich**

**Mr LIVINGSTONE:** My question is directed to the Minister for Police. I ask the Minister to inform the parliament what is being done to combat the drug problem in the Ipswich area in terms of police enforcement?

**Mr McGRADY:** I am sure that the answer to this question will not be as interesting or as exciting as the one about Percy Brown's port. I thank the member for the question about a recent drug operation carried out in Ipswich. The operation certainly made a dent in the local drug trade. This operation targeted offenders committing property related offences and those involved in the production and the trafficking of dangerous drugs.

As most of us in this chamber know, when a person develops a drug addiction it becomes a very expensive habit. That person soon discovers that the only way to pay for his or her habit is through crime. Many people understand why drugs and crime are linked. Therefore, it made sense for this operation, which is known as Operation Wood, to concentrate not just on drugs but also on the property crime associated with drug users.

Operation Wood is a great success story about the efforts of the Queensland Police Service to crack down on the drug trade in this state. At the end of this operation, 46 people were arrested and 150 charges were laid, including the trafficking, production and possession of dangerous drugs, robbery, fraud, and break and enter offences. Thirty-eight staff from the state crime operation command and 35 staff from within the Ipswich district were involved in the operation. The results of the operation speak for themselves. I congratulate the officers involved for their good work, and I am sure I speak on behalf of every member of this parliament.

This government is committed to combating crime and other social problems associated with drug use. Just yesterday the Minister for Health and I attended a ministerial meeting in Adelaide to discuss the problems associated with drugs in our community. Testament to our commitment is the half a million grant that the government is providing in this year's budget—which I should not mention—and that will certainly further enhance the service's capabilities in addressing drugs. Those funds will go towards providing drug detection machines, sniffer dogs and illicit market scans.

The other side of my portfolio is Corrective Services. Some very valuable work to fight the drug problem is also occurring within our prisons.

### CHOGM

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** I ask the Premier: given the list of militant groups that have indicated an intention to demonstrate at the forthcoming CHOGM conference and the government's direction to remove side-arms from police officers engaged in crowd control, what guarantee can the Premier give to those officers, their families and the community that appropriate safety and peace can be maintained without officers accessing this item of standard equipment?

**Mr BEATTIE:** Let us get one thing very clear: the decision in relation to firearms is not a government decision; it is a decision made by the Police Commissioner. All I have done is to explain what that decision is. I make that very clear. Therefore, the premise of the question is wrong, wrong and wrong.

Secondly, this has been a normal process that the police have pursued for some time. The reason for that is very simple. If in a demonstration there is a scuffle and a gun falls to the ground, it could well be the police officer who is shot. This is a sensible approach taken by Bob Atkinson and it is one that has the full support of the government.

CHOGM is an opportunity for us to showcase Queensland to the world and we will do that. We have 52 presidents and prime ministers coming, including, of course, Her Majesty the Queen. I do not want anyone to be under any illusions. Those police who are protecting Her Majesty and other visiting dignitaries will be armed. Of course, tactical response squads will be placed in nearby locations should they be needed.

We are seeking to show the world, in a very constructive way, how to run one of these major events. As I said in my ministerial statement this morning, this is an unprecedented year for Queensland. Never before in the history of the state have we staged such major events. Hosting the Goodwill Games, CHOGM and all the other events that I read out as the relevant minister for events demonstrates an unprecedented level of activity in Queensland.

CHOGM will be a major opportunity for us to showcase ourselves to the world. We are finalising the traffic plan at the moment, which is being done by the Minister for Police and the Minister for Transport in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council. There has been full consultation with Lord Mayor Jim Soorley. We will continue to finalise that plan.

I say this to the people of Brisbane and the people of the Sunshine Coast. When John Howard rang and offered us CHOGM and I agreed, it was on the basis that not only would Brisbane benefit but nearby regions such as Coolumb and other parts of the Sunshine Coast would also benefit. The Gold Coast is benefiting from the surf lifesaving event being held as part of the Goodwill Games, Brisbane benefits, and so does the Sunshine Coast. The whole of the south-east corner will benefit.

In terms of CHOGM, yes, there will be trying times.

**Mr Bredhauer:** The Queen is—

**Mr BEATTIE:** I have not announced that yet. It is a badly kept secret, of course. I should not confirm it on the record at this point, but that is true, too.

It is important that I say to the people of Brisbane, yes, there will be some inconvenience, but we are trying to keep that inconvenience to a minimum. All the preparations have been done properly—traffic planning, policing, coordination. There will be a major occasion at Roma Street, a Commonwealth people's day. We are working very closely with the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth government to make this a great success. I believe it will be.

### Eungella National Park

**Mr MULHERIN:** I ask the Minister for the Environment to please advise what steps his department is taking to enhance facilities at Eungella National Park?

**Mr WELLS:** I will take a quarter of a million steps to enhance the facilities of Eungella National Park. This is the announcement of the work of the honourable member for Mackay coming to fruition. For a long time now, the honourable member for Mackay has been advocating for Eungella National Park and I can now announce that it will happen.

A sum of \$200,000 has been allocated for better amenities, facilities, car parking, and landscaping at Broken River and \$25,000 to develop sky window and Peases Lookout. Those are only the largest projects in the package. There will be more than that.

The honourable member will be very pleased to know that popular visitor sites within the Eungella National Park will be upgraded as part of the \$12.2 million capital works program for national parks. The Capital Works Program is part of a record \$341 million allocation to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. These capital works projects create more jobs in regional areas, including employment for 100 young people through the Better Parks Program and the provision of up to 80 new ranger positions to improve park maintenance.

The environment is Queensland's most strategic asset. It is critical to our economic and social wellbeing, as well as to our quality of life. Our natural environment not only provides the life support system on which we all depend, but also is our natural capital and underpins Queensland's economic prosperity.

I mention also the Great Walks of Queensland Program. The Eungella area has been included in the five-year, \$10 million Great Walks of Queensland Program. In that context I mention the highlands project, which the honourable member for Mackay has not only been a supporter of but indeed he has also been the chief initiator and facilitator. With the highlands project, the honourable member has brought together a series of groups from the community—environmental groups, indigenous groups, developers, tourist organisations and conservationists—in order to achieve the kinds of outcomes that are best achieved and most truly optimised when one gets that degree of cooperation which is needed in the development of a national park area.

This sort of initiative will put Queensland on the international map as a nature based tourism destination. These are the sorts of initiatives that provide real benefits to regional communities. Eungella will be an example of what will happen in many parts of the state. These developments, being spearheaded in this case by the honourable member for Mackay but in other areas by other members, will make Queensland even more famous as an international destination and make our environment the envy of the people of the world.

### **Black Sigatoka**

**Mr ROWELL:** I ask the Treasurer: as the window of opportunity is closing for a successful black sigatoka eradication program and DPI staff were appointed three weeks ago, when will the state's share of the program's funding be made available?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** The funding for that will be made available through the Department of Primary Industries. Naturally, Treasury makes funding available. I will get Treasury to have a look at the issue that the honourable member raises.

**Mr Rowell:** I believe it has gone to Treasury. That is why I asked you the question.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** No, the Department of Primary Industries administers the programs. In the budget each year we provide funds to them. If there is something required outside of that they would make a request and that would be considered.

**Mr Rowell:** This is a state-Commonwealth program.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** The program is still administered by the Department of Primary Industries. Treasury simply makes funds available to departments to run their programs.

**A Government member:** Do you mean Treasury are not going to go and fix the bananas?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** No, we won't even straighten them.

**Mr Rowell:** It is a special program between the state and the Commonwealth.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** It does not matter how special it is; the Department of Primary Industries administers primary industry programs. Treasury funds departments to run their programs. If money is required, as there was for the fire ants, a request is made to Treasury. The CBRC considers that and funds are then made available to the department, which then runs the program. I think the question should have gone to the Minister for Primary Industries, but I will check with him and let the member know.

Interruption.

### **PRIVILEGE**

#### **Comments by Premier**

**Mr HORAN (11.23 a.m.):** I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. Earlier in question time the Premier attempted to denigrate a quiz for Australian primary school children. This was a



multiple choice quiz, providing three possible choices for each question. As the Premier said, it covered items such as who Australia's Deputy Prime Minister is, who the Australian of the year for 2001 is and what the two animals on the Commonwealth coat of arms are. It should be pointed out that the Premier attempted to make light of this Australian children's quiz and endeavoured to make out that the Prime Minister did not know who the Deputy Prime Minister was. I put on the record that this is a genuine Australian children's multiple choice quiz.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I want to know: does the Leader of the Opposition support Senator Robert Hill as the Deputy Prime Minister or not? That is the real issue. He should say whether he supports him or not. Could he answer in favour of Senator Hill?

**Mr HORAN:** Mr Speaker, I will continue my point of privilege. If the Premier wants to trivialise it that much, I ask him: does he support seeing the emu and the echidna, the kangaroo and the platypus or the kangaroo and the emu on the coat of arms? It is a pity that the Premier attempted to denigrate a genuine multiple choice children's quiz and twist it into the sort of pantomime we saw today.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Perhaps this would make a really good notice of motion.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Resumed.

#### Public Housing

**Mrs ATTWOOD:** I ask the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing: what is the state Department of Housing doing to address the need for low-cost accommodation in Queensland?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I thank the honourable member for the question and congratulate her on her continued vigilance to ensure that people in her electorate get a fair crack of the whip in terms of housing funding.

I am proud to be part of a government that treats affordable accommodation seriously. Since we came to government, we have increased the funding of Housing by \$100 million a year. A classic example of that is in the area of Aboriginal housing, where our funding level is approximately \$40 million a year. And what do we get from the Commonwealth? \$21 million! That is the stark reality of the federal government's funding priorities for housing. As I have said many times in this place, the federal government has walked away from its capital responsibility—a responsibility it has held since 1945.

Just last week we saw some more evidence of where those policies are taking it. The property owners of Queensland are complaining about moonlight flits. That phrase was coined back in the Great Depression for people who left overnight and refused to pay their rent because they could not afford to. I did not think I would live long enough to see that term coming back in vogue, but regrettably it is back in vogue in Queensland, because what we are finding—and these are the words of property owners themselves—is that people pushed into private rental simply cannot cope. We are going to see more of that in Queensland, because our capital response in this state is savagely reduced by the fact that the federal government has put more reliance on recurrent funding, in other words, providing people with rent assistance, rather than providing a capital response. We are going to see more and more of that sort of behaviour.

Unfortunately, where do these people go when they abscond? The answer to that is: who knows? The reality is that our waiting lists of some 25,000 people hardly offer any solace in that regard. The reality is that the capital response we can make to try to resolve that issue in the future is severely limited. Had it not been for the previous government's kowtowing to Canberra and offering up \$130 million out of the trust funds, which has severely impacted on our ability to provide a capital response, we might have been in a better position. But the truth is that I do not know where we will finish up with this.

Through our Brisbane Housing Company we are trying as best we can to provide yet another avenue and opportunity, with 600 units of accommodation over the next five years being provided through that not-for-profit agency. But at the end of the day we will see more moonlight flits in Queensland.

### Virtual World of Sport

**Mr BELL:** I draw the Premier's attention to his public endorsement last year of the Australian Ladies Masters Golf Tournament and its associated company Virtual World of Sport. Gold Coast investors provided funding as a result of his personal recommendation. It now appears that the company has no substance and its investors have lost their investment in full. I ask: were investigations made of Virtual World of Sport and its officers before his endorsement was given and, if so, what did those investigations show?

**Mr BEATTIE:** If my recollection serves me correctly—and I attend quite a lot of these events—all I did on the occasion the member referred to was attend the launch which, if I recall correctly, involved Karrie Webb. She was on a satellite link from the United States and we launched the event. The company was present there, because they were the organisers of it. But I do not recall particularly endorsing the company itself at any time. My involvement was simply to launch the event. Therefore, in terms of the company, I think I have dealt with that.

In terms of these events, what we have sought to do, whether it be golf or other major sporting events, is to get them located here. One of the best venues to locate events like this is the Gold Coast. One of the reasons I was on the Gold Coast for this announcement was to highlight that this event was going to be held. I obviously make no apology for doing that, because if there is an opportunity, whether it is the Magic Millions or some other major event, because event tourism is so important for the Gold Coast it is obviously important that the government supports those events.

I am aware that there have been some difficulties with this company. We are obviously trying to see what will be the long-term future of this event. There are problems. There are difficulties. I know that. But I do not recall at any time endorsing this company. Obviously I endorsed the event and obviously I endorsed Karrie Webb's participation in it, because she is a great Queenslander. When we were in Ayr for the recent community cabinet meeting we had an opportunity to see the theatre towards which she has donated money. Where is Steve Rodgers? He is sitting at the back up there. He pointed that out to me as we were going through Ayr where the community cabinet meeting was held. Karrie Webb is a great Queenslander and a great Australian.

I will go back and check my records. Either one of my staff or I will convey the position to the member. I do not recall endorsing any company. As Premier, I endeavour not to endorse companies. Obviously I will promote events and I will go out of my way to promote events because event tourism is important for the state. Queensland Events, of course, is a company of which I am the shareholder on behalf of the government, and it is accountable to me. One of the things we have to do in tourism is not just rely on our natural assets. That is important, but we use event tourism to attract people here. That is why the events like the Goodwill Games are so important. Not only will people come here to the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast; they will also go to Cairns, Townsville, the Whitsundays, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Gladstone—all those areas—and they will use that as an opportunity to have a holiday. So event tourism is designed to actually get people here.

In my long ministerial statement this morning I went through all the events that the Queensland Events Corporation is supporting. I have encouraged them—and they have done this very well—to go out and get events. Events lead to tourism booms and that leads to jobs—150,000 of them. I was delighted to see the latest survey indicating that tourism is going to be one of the greatest job growth areas for the country. That is good for Queensland.

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

## GAMING MACHINE AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 31 July (see p. 2029).

**Mr REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (11.31 a.m.): An important initiative of the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2001 is the establishment of the new fund to be known as the Major Facilities Fund, which is to receive a percentage of the monthly profit from gaming machines operated within category 1 licensed hotels that record a monthly metered win of \$100,001 and over.

The major facilities levy that is being introduced in this bill will be paid into the Major Facilities Fund. The first major project to receive funding in this way will be Lang Park. Old habits die hard and I still call it Lang Park. I do not think I will ever know it by any other name. Funding from this levy will not be restricted to sporting facilities, as cultural facilities will also be eligible. I want to

focus my comments on the need for such a fund to ensure that facilities such as Lang Park are built for the benefit of Queenslanders and many tourists. It is a bit of a follow-on from what the Premier was just speaking about in question time.

Brisbane's No. 1 tourism opportunity is being an event leader—the place where all the big events occur. This helps not only Brisbane but also Queensland. I will give honourable members an example. While I was on my honeymoon I spent a couple of days in Cairns. I was amazed at the number of Lions tour shirts I saw both where I was staying and also at different places I visited. This was nearly 10 days after the initial Lions game held at the Gabba. Without the holding of these games in Brisbane, hoards of people would not have been spending money in regional Queensland. Attracting people to the event in Brisbane meant that the benefits were spread far and wide—even as far as Cairns.

However, unless we have a world-class stadium we will not be able to attract these high-quality events. We now have a first-class oval shaped sporting facility at the Gabba, but we do not have a rectangular and state-of-the-art spectator facility that will be sure to attract the best of the best. One had only to go to the third State of Origin game to see why ANZ Stadium is simply not conducive to games of Rugby League or Rugby Union. No matter where people are seated, they are far away from the action. Spectators expect more from these first-class events.

The other problem with ANZ is that the flow-on effects of after match trade or before match trade for hotels, restaurants, et cetera are severely minimised by its distance from the city. Despite access to the world-class busway system that we have—and as the No. 1 busway ticket holder, I am fully aware of this busway system—it still takes considerable time to get out of the ground and into the city, whereas Lang Park is less than 10 minutes walk from restaurants, hotels and everything else that the city has to offer.

**A government member:** And the Caxton.

**Mr REEVES:** And the Caxton and the Paddo as well.

We need a world-class facility which is close to the city but does not have a negative impact on our budget. That is why the establishment of this fund is a win-win situation. Not only will jobs be created at the construction stage, but the operational stage will create a major shot in the arm in the area of tourism and hospitality in Brisbane and throughout the state.

Considering the problems with gambling and poker machines, I think the cap on the number of machines is terrific. I am sure that the recent announcement by the New South Wales government will ensure that we continue reviewing whether or not a further cap is needed. I have spoken to the minister and the minister assures me—and I have no doubts about that—that his department is looking at a lot of clubs that are being established. I am a bit concerned. A few years ago we introduced legislation to stop the licensed machine operators becoming entrepreneurial clubs as occurred under the old system of the member for Moggill.

I am a bit concerned that some unscrupulous entrepreneurs might see clubs as a way of getting around this present legislation. The minister has assured me that the Office of Gaming Regulation will keep a close eye on this and make sure that any new clubs or even present clubs have landlords and contract managers. It will be closely examined to ensure that the entrepreneurs do not look at the club industry in the same way as the hotel industry. I commend the bill to the House and I look forward to the major shot in the arm it will provide to event tourism for Brisbane and Queensland by the year 2003 with the Lang Park facility.

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (11.36 a.m.): I rise to support the bill before the House. Like many things in our society, gaming has both positive and negative aspects to it. Whether we consider the driving of vehicles, the consumption of alcohol or many other things in our society, we need to promote the better elements and to manage the negative aspects. I believe that the minister and this government are doing that in a very positive, constructive and successful manner.

Many speakers have spoken about what happened in decades past with money going south of the border and Queenslanders receiving no benefit except perhaps for some bus operators in south-east Queensland. We are now receiving considerable benefit from gaming machines. I support this minister and other ministers who are putting in place programs of social support where there may be problems with gambling.

I support the minister in his capping of the number of machines. I believe that there has to be a limit, that there has to be a control. I believe that the regime that is being put in place is a good compromise. I did have reservations about what the coalition did some years ago in taking

away the control and purchase of the machines and giving it to an outside gaming regulator. I believe that the regime that existed prior to the government agency being the purchaser and supplier of the machines had greater accountability and was less open to corruption. I do not think the privatisation that occurred under Treasurer Sheldon and Premier Borbidge at the time was the best for the industry, but it is here and we have to live with it now.

I do have a concern that major southern clubs are looking to establish large complexes under loopholes in the law or by trying to get around the intent of the law. The key thing is that the clubs should return their profits to their members and to the community. While I understand how the pubs need to operate, I see them in a different light. I speak from a background of my family being involved in the liquor and hospitality industry, from the Beaudesert pub to the liquor franchise at the exhibition grounds, for more than seven decades. Our family—in fact, four families—lived off the proceeds of what came basically from 10 days each year at the Ekka.

It is an undeniable fact that pubs have a responsibility to shareholders to maximise profits, and clubs have a responsibility to their members that profits are returned by way of better benefits for members and a greater return to the community. An example in my electorate is one of the largest clubs, the Kedron-Wavell Services Club. The amount of good that that club does in the community is just immense. Not only does it pay a huge amount of tax to the government, but in the broader community it is very supportive. I want to make two comments about Kedron-Wavell, because it has been knocked by a few people as being a big player, and maybe the tall poppy syndrome comes into play. Other clubs that were the natural competitors of Kedron-Wavell were in trouble, yet Kedron-Wavell actually provided administrative support to help those clubs stay alive. It is not in the business of driving other clubs out. It is in fact in the business of supporting them. It has been only too willing through its board and management to assist other clubs.

Kedron-Wavell Services Club has been extremely generous in assisting community groups like the Chermide Historical Precinct and a large number of schools, community groups and individuals who need assistance. It is also working on a housing scheme that it launched recently which will be of great benefit to the large number of returned service personnel in the area who are in their 70s and 80s. What this club is doing fits in very well with this government's policy on public housing. In fact, just across the road from the Kedron-Wavell development, the Minister for Housing, Robert Schwarten, is constructing another excellent development which will help seniors in the area.

I am sad to say that the pubs in my area give very little to community groups. The groups that they support tend to be those that use the pub as their drinking base, so the pub actually gets a good return on its contribution. The situation can be different in country districts because country hotels tend to have more of a community focus.

I do want to take to task a couple of comments made by the member for Cunningham, Mr Copeland, when he said that the money is coming from the country regions into the city and the Lang Park redevelopment. He ought to look at the figures. I remember listening to a list read out by former Minister Gibbs when he gave examples of the money raised by the large clubs in the south-east corner and its distribution to the various regions throughout the state. In fact, it is very clear that money raised in the south-east corner flows to regions outside of Brisbane. It is not the other way around. When people from Dalby, Beaudesert, Gladstone and the far west want to come to Brisbane to watch an international game, they will use the facilities in the south-east corner because there has to be a small number of large infrastructure facilities for those major events.

I reject utterly the trend that is coming through from some speakers opposite who claim that country areas somehow subsidise the city. It is quite the reverse. I have never met a person in Brisbane who has ever questioned the subsidies provided for electricity supply and other services to our regional areas. There has been no qualm about that. We understand that connecting electricity and providing certain other services cost more in those areas and we are happy to provide that subsidy. But what I do object to strenuously is to have it thrown back in our face when someone says that somehow the country pubs and clubs are subsidising the south-east corner. It is quite the reverse. I support the minister in what he is doing. In an area with delicate situations that have to be addressed and balanced, he and the government are doing the correct thing. I support the bill.

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (11.43 a.m.), in reply: I thank members for their comments in relation to the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill. The opposition raised a number of issues. One issue raised by most speakers was that they believed that in some way we were treating hotels unfairly as compared to

clubs. One question asked related to why the cap will not be applied to clubs as it is applied to hotels. The reality is that there was and has been an explosion in the number of applications made for poker machines in hotels compared to clubs. Just to give the House an illustration of that, when we announced that the cap was to apply from 8 May we included in that people who made applications for new liquor licences and 29 of them then made applications for gaming machines. So that 29 is on top of those who had already made applications for gaming machines in hotels or to increase the number of gaming machines.

I gave an undertaking to the Queensland Hotels Association that I would monitor the situation in relation to clubs as to whether the absence of a cap would create an explosion. Since 8 May, we have been knocked over with six applications—six. One was for two and one was for four. Members can see that there are not a great number of clubs looking for an extension to the number of machines. In fact, in that time a number of clubs throughout the state would have closed down because of the effect that the number of poker machines allowed into hotels would have had on them. To say that hotels are not being treated fairly is not correct. We will have to continue to monitor clubs, but there has not been an upsurge in applications in clubs, and nor has there been for a long time. The upsurge in applications was in hotels. Because entrepreneurs knew that they could get up to 40 machines, they have looked at where they could build taverns, hotels and convenient places to drink alcohol so that they could stick 40 poker machines there and make considerable amounts of money. That is something that is not desirable for our community. So we looked at that.

Last night the member for Cunningham raised the number of clubs in Toowoomba. I think he said that six clubs would have to pay something like \$70,000 a year for the levy and that that would have a detrimental effect on sporting organisations and others in that community. I asked him, as I have once before, to tell me which hotel will have to pay that much money for the levy, but he still has not done it. Because he has not, and whilst I will not name the hotels because it is their own private business as to how much profit they are making, the House should be aware that there are six hotels in Toowoomba which come into the range of paying the levy. So only six will pay the levy. The member for Cunningham said six of them would be paying \$70,000, but at the bottom of the range—

**Mr Horan:** I think he said six would be paying the levy because their winnings are above that line.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** He also said that they would be paying \$70,000 per year. I wrote it down when he said it. Let me tell the House the truth. The truth is that a hotel on the bottom level of the levy will pay around about \$3,500 per year and a hotel at the very top level of the levy will pay \$58,389 per year. So no hotels in Toowoomba will pay \$70,000. The hotel that will pay \$58,389 per year at present has a monthly metered win—the metered win is the gross win; hotels have to pay their outgoings in terms of machines—of \$196,000 per month or around \$2.4 million a year.

So for a \$2.4 million metered win per year we are asking them to contribute some \$58,000. I think if they want to support their local clubs and the people who come into their hotels and drink, they can still afford it. I think those things need to be said and put on the record.

I listened to the member for Moggill talk about the fact that there would be no confidence in the hotel industry. Only last Friday Liquorland, or Coles Myer, one of the largest companies in Australia, paid \$114 million for a group of hotels, most of which will be paying this levy. If it saw that as bad economics, it would not have done that. So even when it will be paying this levy, it can see this venture as something that will create a nice profit, otherwise it would not have been prepared to outlay \$114 million.

An opposition member raised the issue of Suncorp Metway Stadium needing to be paid for out of normal capital works funds and not by a levy. The opposition, right throughout the last election campaign and since, has continually said that Suncorp Metway Stadium should not be funded and impact on normal services or programs. We have developed a new levy so that no normal services or programs are affected by it. As soon as we did that—for the last year the opposition has been whingeing about it—an opposition member stood up in this House and said that we should have funded it out of our normal capital works funds. The opposition cannot have it both ways.

I refer to what Mr Copeland said yesterday. He said that about five hotels would pay the levy and it would affect them to the tune of \$60,000 or \$70,000 a year. Actually, there will be six and the amount will be from \$3,000 to \$58,000. That is certainly what he was saying, so either the

information his publicans have been giving him is wrong or what he told parliament yesterday is not really what he knows. I think he needs to get that corrected.

The other issue raised in relation to this fund went to the actual building of Suncorp Metway Stadium. The government has been criticised in relation to the need for that stadium and so on. I think we need to place on record once again the position of the National and Liberal Parties, firstly when they were in government and secondly during the last election campaign. When the National and Liberal Parties were in government they looked at building what they called a super stadium. That was to be a private enterprise development built at Hamilton. Then Premier Borbidge said that his super stadium would be a very substantial private sector development with minimum cost to the taxpayer. However, the report that was finally done by the private developers who were to build it for us free of charge revealed that they had changed the stadium from 65,000 seats to 50,000 seats. Honourable members should remember that the Suncorp Metway Stadium, which we are redeveloping for \$279 million, will seat 52,500. So the Hamilton project would have been slightly smaller than the redeveloped Suncorp Metway Stadium.

The report set out that the project would have required a direct government contribution of \$150 million in the form of the land at no cost, a payment from government of \$8 million a year for 15 years, or \$120 million, and the relocation of the port of Brisbane facilities at a cost to the port—that is the government—of \$157 million. When we add up the sums required in relation to that 'no-cost' stadium, we reach a figure of \$427 million. The opposition parties talk about the private sector proposal they were going to give us, yet that project would have cost the taxpayers \$427 million. And that was to be a free-of-charge stadium! Lucky they were not paying for it! That is considerably more expensive than the proposal to redevelop Suncorp Metway Stadium.

The fact that the coalition in government actually did that should confirm to us that opposition members know there is a need for a major stadium in the capital city, as does the fact that at the last election the then Leader of the Opposition, Rob Borbidge, made a commitment that as part of its major stadium policy it would scrap the redevelopment of Suncorp Metway Stadium and build a new stadium at the exhibition grounds, which we have already proven would cost more than the redevelopment at Suncorp Metway Stadium.

The issue people need to consider when they listen to this argument is that the National and Liberal Parties do agree that we need a major stadium in this state. They do agree that we need a major stadium in the capital city. The only difference between what we are doing and what they would do is that we are saving money. So the proposal we have is to redevelop Suncorp Metway Stadium and provide a stadium to the people of Queensland at a lesser cost than those opposite would have. I think they are the things that need to be considered.

We now have the final approvals in place for Suncorp Metway Stadium, and it is going to happen. I am sure that when it does people such as the Leader of the Opposition and members of the opposition will be the first through the gate saying what a great stadium it is.

Motion agreed to.

### Committee

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) in charge of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

**Mr HORAN** (11.58 a.m.): I just want clarification that category 1 refers to hotels and category 2 refers to clubs, in its simplified form.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** That is correct.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

**Mr HORAN** (11.58 a.m.): Clause 6 is the capping clause. In his speech in reply to the debate the minister spoke about the growth in the number of machines in hotels compared with the growth in the number of machines in clubs. I take his point. During my speech at the second reading stage I quoted Parliamentary Library research that showed that the number of machines

in hotels increased from 743 in 1992 to 13,360 as of June last year, and there has probably been some increase since then.

I think the point to be made is that the real increase in the number of hotel gaming machines really came about from the end of 1998 onwards when the laws that allowed hotels to have up to 40 machines in different coin denominations and so forth started to have some effect as they started to build and redevelop their hotels. To be fair to the hotel industry, in the early years when poker machines were introduced there was a great increase in the number of machines in clubs. It went from 3,730 to 8,813 to 12,147 to 14,309. So that was when the growth in clubs occurred. The minister made the point that the increase in the number of machines in clubs and the number of applications for new clubs or extra machines is not great. It is possibly reaching what one might call saturation point where, in terms of business, there is not much point in having any more.

To be fair to both the club and the hotel industries, I must say that the increase in the numbers of machines in hotels has occurred recently. The increase in the clubs occurred, of course, in the early years when poker machines were first introduced. At that time a lot of clubs thought it was going to be a bonanza. Some expanded too quickly. And, as the industry has settled down, some large facilities have been going well while others have been struggling. The more successful ones in many areas are the modest sized ones, such as bowls clubs, which have realised that they can operate with a certain number of machines and probably cannot extend their facilities much more; in other words, they are more or less living within their means.

This is about capping the number of poker machines in hotels. The whole intent of this bill is recognising some of the social problems and the economic issues associated with gaming machines whereby spending power gets diverted to clubs or hotels rather than being spent in food shops, clothing shops, and so on. Does the minister have any plans to bring in any form or cap for clubs? Does he see any need for a certain eventual number or for a system that has an annual modest increase applying to both? Is there going to be any form of a pool system that will apply to the hotels now that the number of machines is capped? As some of them leave the industry or do not wish to have machines, and so on, will they stay in a pool? And how will that pool be distributed, and to whom?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** The actual idea to implement a cap on gaming machines in hotels was not an idea that I had myself. It was actually given to me by a publican, and that publican has a number of sites. One of the things that he expressed to me was that the great explosion in applications for what one could really only call convenience gambling sites by people coming into the hotel industry eventually would damage or hurt the hotel industry or publicans themselves. After he had given me that idea, I had a look at some of those issues. To be honest, the unfortunate part for him was that doing that gave me the idea to introduce this levy; so he might not be too happy about that. But in terms of introducing a cap, it made good sense to me when I looked at the growing numbers of gaming machines in hotels.

There are a couple of issues that the honourable member raised. The cap is being implemented for hotels only at this stage because that is the sector that was growing greatly. We have given a commitment to the Hotels Association to develop with them a system whereby hotels that are not utilising fully their gaming machines will be able to trade them through a system that we are going to develop. And whereas we have a few ideas at this very early stage about how that can operate, it will take us probably nine months to actually develop that scheme, and we will need to legislate for that to happen. In doing that, we will need to be careful that, if a hotel in a small country area has some gaming machines, the owner of that hotel does not see more value in selling his machines, thus leaving the town without gaming machines. So there are many issues that we will need to consider in developing a tradeable commodity in gaming machine licences, and we will work through that with the industry.

In relation to the club industry and caps in that sector, we will continue to monitor the situation with regard to the club industry. There has not been an upsurge in applications in that sector and unless there is, I do not see any concerns there. In fact, clubs are closing down and handing back gaming machine licences rather than the numbers actually growing.

The member spoke about the number of gaming machines in hotels compared to clubs and the large chains. When gaming machines were introduced in 1991-92—and I was a member of the cabinet that did that—the basis of the introduction of gaming machines into hotels was to at least allow their clients to have the opportunity to gamble, not for publicans to use that as part of the profit-making process for their establishments. That change was made by the previous coalition government, which made a decision to change the applicable tax rates and, over a

period, to allow an increase in the number of gaming machines to 45—and we cut that back to 40—which meant that a lot of people made applications for gaming machine licences.

In my own electorate, a tavern now exists simply because the person who wanted to build that tavern could get poker machines—and for no other reason. But less than two kilometres away from that tavern is a licensed club which basically has gone broke because the tavern is well located. Private entrepreneurs will spend their money and do that, whereas clubs are traditionally located where their facilities are. They are not really in the prime locations within an area, but tend to be located on low-lying land or sports and recreation land where the clubs have their facilities.

A private entrepreneur who enters the industry is able to get 35 machines, I think, and start up a very profitable business; and a club that is just keeping its head above water will go down because it loses clients. Unfortunately, that has been happening more and more. I think that the cap and the slowing down of the building of those convenience gambling establishments will, in the longer term, help those smaller clubs. I hope that it does that. I think that it makes very good sense to have the cap which we are introducing here today.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

**Mr HORAN** (12.08 p.m.): The minister answered my query in his previous comments.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 9 and 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—

**Mr HORAN** (12.09 p.m.): This is the clause that introduces the new levy, the new tax. The minister does not like me calling it a new tax.

**Mr Mackenroth:** It says 'levy'. It says, 'Division 3—major facilities levy.'

**Mr HORAN:** The minister can call it whatever he likes, but to all intents and purposes it is a new and additional charge. The minister can call it a levy, or a tax—whatever he likes—but anyone who has to put their hand in their pocket and pay a levy knows what it is: it is a levy, it is a surcharge. The minister can call it what he likes, but we are calling it a tax, because that is what people understand it as, because it is new. During the last election campaign the government said that there would be no new taxes, but straightaway this has occurred, just like the government changed the royalties formula on coal. There were going to be no new taxes, but the government changed the formula so that the actual cost to companies of that tax increases dramatically.

The opposition has a major problem with this clause, because it is a new tax that has been foisted on people. Other speakers and I have talked about people who have commitments to pay off infrastructure. They work to their business plan, they work to what the taxes and charges of the day are. There has been a lot said today about how that infrastructure helps individuals. But infrastructure, be it new taverns or new hotels, brings some prosperity to an area. It brings a new facility. There are jobs for people building it. The people who fund it—be they a family organisation or a company—then have to repay the financing for it. They look at certain cash flow levels to be able to pay for that financing. We have a real issue with the principle of introducing a new tax when the government said that there would be no new taxes. We oppose this clause completely.

**Question—**That clause 11, as read, stand part of the bill—put; and the committee divided—

**AYES, 58—**Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bell, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Choi, E. Clark, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, J. Cunningham, English, Fenlon, Foley, Hayward, Hollis, Jarratt, Keech, Lawlor, Lee, Mackenroth, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Phillips, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Reilly, Reynolds, N. Roberts, Robertson, Rodgers, Rose, Schwarten, C. Scott, D. Scott, Shine, Smith, Stone, Strong, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Reeves

**NOES, 20—**Copeland, E. Cunningham, Flynn, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, Pratt, Quinn, Rowell, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Watson. Tellers: Lester, Springborg

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clauses 12 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—

**Mr MACKENROTH** (12.19 p.m.): I move the following amendment—



## 1. Clause 17—

At page 11, after line 22—

*insert—*

'(1A) Subsection (1B) applies to a relevant application if—

- (a) it is a relevant application mentioned in subsection (1)(a) that was made by a subsidiary operator relating to special facility premises; and
- (b) the applicant altered the relevant application before 5 p.m. on 29 June 2001; and
- (c) the alteration changed the premises stated in the relevant application to other premises; and
- (d) when the alteration was made, the chief executive was satisfied, on reasonable grounds, that the other premises were, or would be, relevant to a special facility liquor licence and the applicant would be the subsidiary operator of the other premises.

'(1B) The alteration to the relevant application is authorised to the extent it changed the premises, and the application continues to be a relevant application despite that alteration.

'(1C) Subject to subsection (1D), subsection (1B) does not limit the way in which an application for a gaming machine licence may be dealt with under this Act.

'(1D) A relevant application must not have been amended, and may not be amended, to increase the number of gaming machines stated in the relevant application.'

The amendment to clause 17 extends further the transitional arrangements proposed in new section 399. This would allow an application by a subsidiary operator of the holder of a special facility liquor licence who had lodged their application for a gaming machine licence prior to 8 May 2001 to alter their application with respect to the premises where they wish to locate their gaming machines. The amendment provides that the alteration to the application is subject to the following criteria, namely, that the application must have been altered with respect to the premises before 5 p.m. on 29 June 2001 and other premises were, or would become, relevant to the special facility liquor licence; and the chief executive is satisfied that the subsidiary operator who is the applicant for the gaming machine licence would be the subsidiary operator for the other premises to which the application is altered.

This amendment is necessary in order to provide consistency with the approach that applicants for general liquor licences who had not lodged their application for a gaming machine licence by 8 May 2001 could make an application by 29 June 2001. It relates to the specific circumstances that apply to special facility licences as opposed to general licences. The amendment further provides that an application which has been altered with respect to premises may not be amended to increase the number of gaming machines specified in the original application.

**Mr HORAN:** This amendment is being inserted after line 22 in this clause? My original question to the Treasurer was regarding clause 17(2), which states—

If the commission has not made a decision about a relevant application by 31 December 2001, the relevant application lapses at the end of that day unless the commission fixes a date under subsection (3) for it to lapse.

That almost reads like it may not be the fault of the applicant if the commission has not made a decision by that date. How is that catered for?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** The actual amendment that the member has before him allows for that to be extended to 30 June next year. So if it is not considered by then, it will not lapse; there is an allowance for it to go through to 30 June. I give the guarantee that none of these applications will not be considered by the Gaming Machine Commission as a result of the Gaming Machine Commission not doing its job. If the applicant has lodged an application—and they now have a time limit on them—but fails to do the necessary things in the time stipulated, and that applicant may be very much aware of what they need to do, that would be their decision not to do them and if the application lapsed as a result of that, the ball would be in their court. If it is as a result of the commission itself not being able to deal with them for some reason, and I do not believe that there will be a reason, we would take the necessary action to ensure that they were able to be considered.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 17, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 18, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

**Third Reading**

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

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL  
APPROPRIATION BILL****Committee (Cognate Debate)  
Estimates Committee A  
Report No. 1**

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The committee will consider the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill first. The question is—

That Report No. 1 of Estimates Committee A be adopted.

**Mr PURCELL** (Bulimba—ALP) (12.25 p.m.): I wish to speak to the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2001 for the Legislative Assembly. Firstly, I congratulate the staff who look after the members in this place for the pleasant and cheerful manner in which they go about their jobs and do the many things that they do for us. There are a few items that I would comment on.

I invite all the primary schools of my electorate that do government studies to Parliament House to see and absorb the atmosphere of this place. The attendants are the first contact for the teachers, parents and children. I hear nothing but praise for the manner in which they go about their job. I know from the way that they cheerfully and knowledgeably talk to the children about parliament that they do not treat it just as a job. I thank them for that, because they make the visit to parliament a highlight of the school curriculum and year. The attendants let me get away with a bit of political licence when I meet up with the kids. I am allowed to tell the story of the Labor Party and how it came about.

**Mr Seeney:** You could invite me over and I can tell the other side of the story.

**Mr PURCELL:** The member could do that also, but it would have to be the story about the demise of his party and how it is going backwards flat out in reverse.

We talk about the Labor Party, which has been around for over 100 years. It is a party that stands proud. It is the only party in this country to have been around for that long. It has stood the test of time and it will continue to stand the test of time.

When we are talking to students, we need to be factual. The first Labor Party in the world was formed in Queensland under the Tree of Knowledge at Barcaldine. That is a fact. I know that members of the other side find it hard to get over the fact that the country people and the workers in the scrub decided that they needed a party to get the foot off the throats of people such as the shearers, whose pay was being decreased as their hours were being increased. Kids should be told about that. They should also be told that the first Labor government in the world was formed in Queensland. What a great state! The longest serving Labor government is probably in power now and it will be in power for a long time.

All members invite guests into this House for lunch, dinner and all manner of reasons. The staff always make guests feel welcome and special. They go out of their way to be helpful, although sometimes that is not easy because people are not up to par all the time. However, we would never know it as it never shows. The staff are always pleasant. My guests in this place always comment that they are treated very well. I thank the staff for that and for the pleasant and cheerful manner in which they do their job. I know other members join me in offering those thanks.

I would also like to thank the Hansard staff again, as I did on the day of the hearing. It was a long day—just one of the many long days that we have in this place. Doug Rohl and his staff are the ultimate professionals. They are seen but never heard and they get it right and do a great job.

**Mr Schwarten:** They probably wish we were seen and not heard.

**Mr PURCELL:** They probably do. They seem to make us sound pretty good. We um and ah and say all manner of things, but it doesn't read too badly when they are finished with it. I thank them for that job and for what they do.

I thank also the Speaker and his staff for their cooperation during the hearing. They answered all questions put to them by the committee. All questions were answered fully. I know this will be covered by other members, but I thank the Speaker for the extra staff in our offices. I can inform the Speaker that the extension to my office has been completed by Q-Build. It was a

seamless operation with minimal disruption. It was done very professionally. I cannot believe how much larger the work area has become just by moving a wall. I see the budget of the Legislative Assembly as entirely appropriate and being spent appropriately.

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.31 p.m.): In joining this debate on the report of Estimates Committee A, I also wish to thank the Speaker and the staff of the parliament for their courtesies. This was an important estimates session for us, because we discussed a number of issues. We all recognise that Parliament House is one of the precious icons of Queensland well worth a visit by groups of children or other visitors.

Every visitor is amazed at the quality of this building. People find it hard to believe that in 1859 and in the early 1860s the artisans of this state were able to build such a wonderful parliament building of which everyone can be proud. It is also important that the stonework is being maintained. It can crumble and so on. If it is not looked after in a planned maintenance program every year, both outside and inside, we will not be doing justice to past and future generations. It is good to see that that is continuing.

We raised a couple of issues. One concerned staff and job security. We think very highly of the work undertaken by the Parliamentary Library staff and by the various committee staff. We brought up the issue of the external review that is under way. Mr Speaker mentioned that the review was looking at efficiencies and any duplication. The point that has to be remembered is that at times the workload in the Parliamentary Library is mammoth. During a parliamentary session and just prior to it many requests come in. During the parliamentary session members want things yesterday—immediately. It is the nature of politics that very often there are huge peaks and troughs in demand on library services. It is probably one of the most essential services in this place; accurate information and reference material assists in making our debate in the parliament sensible. All honourable members would urge Mr Speaker to consider carefully the recommendations of the review and make sure that we look after the job security of and overall service level provided by officers in the library and committees.

Some concern was expressed about security. It is far better to have a human presence, particularly if we have not remembered to bring our swipe cards. I acknowledge that the fence has probably provided some additional security. To many honourable members—and all the members who live outside of Brisbane—this place is their home for almost half a year. We live in our room upstairs and we attend parliament, committee meetings and go about our day-to-day business. Security is important for the staff and for honourable members. It is something that we would never want to see transgressed.

The issue of casual staff in catering services was raised. I wish to compliment the staff. We are here for long periods and this is our de facto home. It is nice to have full-time staff around. We can get to know them and that makes this place a bit more friendly. And that is not to take away from the professionalism of the casual staff.

I thank also the Hansard staff and the parliamentary attendants for the work that they do, particularly for their long hours and for meeting the demands that we put upon them. I mention also the work being undertaken in our electorate offices, where there are a lot of changes at the moment. This is happening in a reasonably timely fashion. There are a lot of new members and a lot of changes are taking place, particularly with respect to the second electorate officer. We were pleased that we were at least able to get relief staff—and I know this is pretty important to members like the member for Gregory—for those members who have single electorate officers but who have towns throughout their electorate. Under the original system they were to be replaced with an officer from one of the other offices—something that was not possible.

Finally, I thank you, Mr Speaker, for taking notice of the comments that we made. They are made in the spirit of making sure that this parliament is preserved for people and that the staff are well supported—they are great staff—and so that the amenity of this place is maintained.

**Ms KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (12.36 p.m.): As an educator I know that the best way to learn is through doing. I therefore appreciated the opportunity to be a member of Estimates Committee A for the very first time. It gave me an ideal chance to learn more about the issues covered by the relevant ministerial portfolios and to examine in detail the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2001.

Today I wish to speak to the proposed expenditures for the Legislative Assembly, under the management of Mr Speaker, the Honourable Ray Hollis. Compared to a minister's duties and obligations, the Speaker's responsibilities are often considered not as visible or not nearly as exciting. I was reminded of the reason for this as I watched a brilliantly directed and performed

musical, *The Man of Steel*, which the years 6 and 7 students from the St Stephen's College, Coomera, performed last Friday night.

To an observer, hard work, professionalism and dedication to achieving results can often make a complex task look easy and therefore undervalued. I think that is often what happens in the Legislative Assembly. As a newcomer to the House I have been thoroughly impressed by the professionalism, courtesy and excellent service extended to members, their families and electorate office staff by everyone involved in the Legislative Assembly. Like the children from years 6 and 7 at St Stephen's, Coomera, incredible dedication and commitment to achieving one's very best can produce magnificent results.

As a workplace, the Parliament House precinct is unique in Queensland in its functions and history. However, the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service are, like most other workplaces, facing environmental factors impacting upon their effectiveness. I refer here to the increasing demands of key client groups such as the parliament's committees, government departments, news media, educational institutions and the wider community. Of course, servicing these increasing demands costs money.

It is a reflection of the excellent management of the Speaker in juggling these demands of the Legislative Assembly that the proposed estimated expenditure for 2001-02 is \$51.82 million. This compares to the estimated actual for 2000-01 noted in Report No. 1 of Estimates Committee A of \$49.758 million. Considering the increase in client demand and the range of additional services now provided, with many of them now already implemented, I believe that the increase in expenditure of a little over \$2 million is certainly well worth the money.

I would now like to comment on some of the additional services to be provided by the Legislative Assembly to enhance services, particularly to members and their electorate officers, described in the 2001 Appropriation Bill. All members to whom I speak agree that the additional full-time EO staff member is well worth the \$2.5 million in the added efficiency and service that is now available to constituents. The Speaker advised the committee that the \$2.4 million previously allocated for the parliament's refurbishment programs will now be used to provide this additional staff officer in each member's office.

In my own electorate of Albert, the additional full-time position in my office has been tremendously important. It now allows me to be even more effectively involved and informed of the issues which concern the people of Albert. Constituent issues are able to be followed up more quickly and there has certainly been a quicker turnaround in response to correspondence. I am happy to announce that as from Saturday, 25 August my office at Mount Warren Park will be open on the last Saturday of each month from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. It is that additional staff officer that has made that possible, and I thank the Premier, the Treasurer and also the Speaker.

All employees have the right to work in safe and healthy workplaces. The funding of an additional EO has meant that my staff can now have a regular lunch break, relief from busy front desk duties and a safer working environment. Of course, it is of little benefit to have an additional electorate officer without adequate resourcing. I appreciate the additional computer equipment which is going to officers. I have also been informed that email facilities will soon be available in my office so that when I am in my parliamentary office I can connect with my electorate office.

It is said that the ship is only as good as its captain. The Legislative Assembly is fortunate to have a person who takes seriously his responsibility in ensuring that there is a properly functioning legislature for all Queenslanders.

Every time I walk into the parliamentary precinct I am reminded of the honour which has been bestowed upon me by the people of Albert. The professionalism by which Mr Speaker and all of his staff perform their duties simply encourages me to work harder and more effectively for my constituents. I strongly support the Estimates Committee A 2001 Report No. 1 and I commend it to the House.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.41 p.m.): I join the deliberations on the report of Estimates Committee A. I want to make reference to numerous issues in the time available. Firstly, I congratulate Mr Speaker on the improvements that he is endeavouring to provide here for the members and the people of Queensland. After all, it is the House of the people of Queensland. We are only the custodians of it, and I think we should never forget that.

The other important fact that I want to place on record here today is the great work performed by the staff of this place. I think that the staff of this place are on a parallel equal to nothing else. As a country member from a remote electorate, when I do come to Brisbane I

probably spend more time here in this place than many other members do. At any hour of the day or night I can walk down into the foyer and have a yarn to one of the security guards and just pass an hour or two, half an hour or even a few minutes. They are all fantastic blokes and they do a great job. It is not an easy job sitting there hour in and hour out.

I want to place on record my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all those security people and to all the people who work in Parliament House—the domestic staff, all the support staff through the chamber, the Hansard people, the Library and the whole lot. After all, these are the people who do make it work. When we are gone they are still going to be here.

As every one of the 89 members of this place would certainly recognise, the electorate staff are probably placed under more pressure than are members of parliament. They are the first line of response to problems, whether they be notified by telephone, letter or in person. I do place on record here today my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Carole Tanks, who has been with me in my Longreach office for 11 and a bit years, and also to Julie-Anne Evans, who has been with me in my Emerald office for a number of years. Both of these ladies do a great job. I express to them through this parliament my sincere gratitude and thanks.

**Mr Schwarten:** They win a few votes for you, too, I can tell you.

**Mr JOHNSON:** They certainly do. If those people do it right, it certainly consolidates our position. I have said it before and I will say it again here today: electorate officers are not political officers; they are officers for the people of Queensland, for the general public. They should never be politicised. I know that my ladies and the staff in the other members' offices would always do the same. I hope they do, because whether or not a constituent is a supporter of that member, they should be given the same attention as they walk through the door, make the phone call or write a letter to the member.

The other thing I want to put on record here today is my thanks to the government. I congratulate the government on having the vision to put in place those second electorate officers or support staff. I am in a precarious situation compared with some other members in that I now find myself with three major communities within the electorate of Gregory. As a result of the recent redistribution, I now have Charleville in the southern area of my electorate. It is a very integral and important part of the south-west. The office of my colleague Howard Hobbs, the member for Warrego, has been there for numerous years. He has now moved to Roma with the redistribution.

I will be placing that second officer in Charleville to enable me to represent those people better. Not only will the people of Charleville benefit but so will the people from Quilpie and further out who transcend on Charleville, and even the people in the electorate of Warrego who come up from Cunnamulla or somewhere. They always want that contact. I think it is paramount. I have been working very closely with the Speaker—and the Premier has also assisted—in trying to give me some sort of a presence. I know the honourable member for Rockhampton, the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, has been assisting to try to find a place out of which we may be able to operate, and I am truly appreciative of that.

I want to touch on the important role that we as members of parliament play. I just heard the member for Albert say how proud she is to represent the people of Albert. I think we are all very proud to represent our constituents. But the large area in electorates such as Gregory means that they are not easy electorates to represent. I see my colleague the member for Charters Towers sitting up the back. She is in a similar situation as are the members for Warrego, Mount Isa and Cook. The member for Charters Towers and I would probably have the most difficult task in this House in representing the people we are elected to represent. Because of the huge distances we have to travel in our electorates, our electorates are a lot different to the other larger electorates because of the geography. I say to the people out there whom we represent: we do the best we can. I place on record my sincere thanks and gratitude to Mr Speaker for the improvements that he is endeavouring to make.

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (12.47 p.m.): I was delighted to take part in Estimates Committee A. If time permits, I would like to touch on the security questions that were raised during the hearing of the committee, the questions as to what type of wine is consumed in this place and the enterprise bargaining agreement. First of all, though, I would like to join with other members in thanking all of the various officers of this House: the Clerk's office, the parliamentary attendants, the catering staff, the domestic staff, the security people, the Hansard people, the support staff generally, corporate services, property services, the library and the Q-Build people. All of these people have been very courteous and of assistance to me while I have been here. I

particularly want to mention Brenda O'Donnell, who performs the secretarial duties on level 11 of the annexe, and the people who helped us during the orientation period earlier in the year.

On the home front, my own electorate officer, Gwen Liesch, deserves special recognition for the task that she performs on my behalf similar to what is performed by other electorate officers referred to earlier. I would also like to mention Mary Kate Khoo and Michael Thomson, who have shared the second electorate officer's position.

I would like to congratulate the Speaker on keeping the increase in expenditure on budgeting provisions this year to within one per cent. Because of all of the extras supplied to us by way of second electorate officers, et cetera, this is a magnificent achievement.

I now turn to the issue of security. A question was raised during the hearing of Estimates Committee A in relation to the visible reduction in the number of security staff and the replacement of staff with electronic surveillance. The Speaker confirmed that the two people previously positioned on the front gate have been removed from that position and are now located in the House performing the function of ambassadors welcoming people to the House rather than as security officers deterring people from entering the building. That is a marvellous thing. My observation is that it is a welcoming place for people to visit. The Speaker also confirmed that technology has been introduced to try to improve security, particularly the swipe card technology. This has been an improvement, although it is my experience that one can drive into the back gates of Parliament House using the swipe card but there is some difficulty at times in raising the roller doors. That is an issue that might be looked at.

I was pleased to hear from the Speaker that no overall reductions in staff are to be made or have been made. The Speaker also confirmed that no complaints were received by him as to the conduct of security measures. At the estimates hearing Mr Speaker referred to the occasion of the unveiling of the portrait of Mr E. G. Theodore. I attended the unveiling and would recommend to all honourable members and to all members of the public that they should take advantage of the historical information that abounds in this House. It really is a tremendous asset for the whole of Queensland.

I turn now to the issue of wine. There has been a lot of criticism in the paper concerning the consumption of wines other than Queensland wine at Parliament House. The Speaker confirmed that that issue is being progressively improved. About 30 per cent of the wine consumed at Parliament House is now Queensland wine. All of the port is of Queensland origin. As time goes on, and as a result of a committee headed by Mr Keating, things should improve in that regard.

In relation to the EBA, things are on the improve. From all reports, Parliament House public servants are now employed on the same basis as other public servants throughout Queensland.

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel—NPA) (12.52 p.m.): All members should be very proud to represent the people of Queensland. It is because of their decision that we are here, and it is the way we act that keeps us here. I very strongly support our typing staff, that is, Brenda, Elaine, Aurora, Beverley and Jan. I do not know how these wonderful people put up with us at times, but they do an outstanding job. Then there is Nick Bannenberg and Helga Alemson at the Parliamentary Library. Members should stop to think for a moment as to what the staff of the library do for us and the requests we give them. Sometimes we need it quickly, and they still continue to do it.

We, as parliamentarians, and the public of Queensland are lucky to have our executive chef, Mr De Silva, supported by John and Ian. They do an outstanding job as well. They always keep the food coming for not only parliamentarians but also people from all over the world. We have to feed them properly, and that we do. I also make mention of those other wonderful people who look after us. Jaakko Ponsi is in charge and then there is Erin and Maureen. They are just wonderful, too. Mike Coburn from IT is just a great person. Steve Hill looks after many of our problems with beepers and so on. In relation to security, Kevin Jones does a good job. However, there is a bit of a problem with those gates. I did not like the security personnel being taken away. I know there are security cameras to take their place, but when the gates are being opened any creep could walk in and the camera may not pick it up. If that occurs, obviously there is a person within the building who should not be here. That is a legitimate criticism, not a political one. That issue should be looked at, as should the issue of the roller doors as mentioned by the member for Toowoomba North. That is a problem from time to time.

I do not know what to say about our Hansard people. How can they get any better at listening to our speeches and trying to make sense of them? I notice the Hansard reporter smiling at me. She must agree. Nevertheless, the service provided by the Hansard staff is wonderfully

appreciated. Angela and Robert in Travel Services are terrific. In relation to electorate officers, I have been very fortunate to have had only a few of them over the years, that is, less than 10 in my 27 years. Every one of them has been absolutely outstanding. I cannot put one above the other. They have all been great. My present electorate officers are Joy, Gail and Teresa. Gail has not been well in recent times, as people know, and she works when she can.

I also want to extend that tribute to the electorate officers of the member for Rockhampton and Jim Pearce. I am sad for your bereavement, Jim. Jim and I have a bit of a competition about our birthdays. We are running about even at the moment as to who gets to whom first, and there is also competition between our electorate secretaries and Kirsten Livermore's staff. We all have to work together up there for the betterment of the area. It is nice to know that our staff do not spar, even if we occasionally have to do it to keep our various supporters happy. Nevertheless, we do not do it too seriously. We always put people first.

One issue that worries me relates to allowances for mobile phones, which is about \$1,500 at the moment. Any shadow minister doing their job properly cannot possibly keep under that limit. That needs to be extended by about \$500 to cover the jobs on the run. People expect the answers yesterday and so members have to use their mobile phones. I do not know how members could possibly keep it under that amount. I mention this as a very legitimate request to Mr Speaker. I am supportive of what he has done. I would appreciate support on that issue. If members go over that limit on their phones, they have to pay for it. It is as simple as that. But I think the public is missing out because we are constantly watching what we do.

The work that the people behind the scenes in committees do is quite extraordinary. I cannot comment about individual people, but I have had the great experience of David Groth on the PCJC and Kerry Newton. They are absolutely outstanding officers—but they all are. They all do their own jobs. I do not want to single those two people out, but I have had clear dealings with them. The others are also absolutely terrific. I express on behalf of all members our extreme appreciation of what they do, the way they do it and the way they all work far and beyond the call of duty. They are also extremely efficient, and that does help. Those are just a few of my observations.

Sitting suspended from 12.58 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

**Mr CHOI** (Capalaba—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): I rise this afternoon as a member of Estimates Committee A to speak on the office of the Legislative Assembly. I thank the chairman, Pat Purcell, for his leadership and for his dedication to his responsibilities as chairman of the committee. I think it is correct to say that he did more work than anyone else on the committee, not to mention putting up with a few inexperienced new members of parliament, including me. I thank him for his patience and guidance.

It gives me great pleasure to speak about the office of the Legislative Assembly, because it is simply a job well done. The total appropriation sought for the parliament in 2001-02 is \$50.383 million, with an increase of just under three per cent over last year's appropriation. It is a lean and mean budget which still delivers efficiency and effectiveness, as well as value for money, for the people of Queensland.

There are substantial benchmarks in this year's budget. First I mention the allocation of additional staff for electorate offices. I make three comments from my own perspective, with which I am sure my fellow members of parliament will agree: thank you, thank you, thank you. I could not think of anything that would enable members of this house to do their jobs better—provide constituents with more timely services, be more accessible and be able to carry out better research—than having an extra pair of hands full time in the electorate office.

My electorate officer was doing a wonderful job, but he simply could not man the office and assist me sometimes to attend to matters out in the electorate. In addition, we are both male and inevitably look at things through the eyes of the male gender. Now I have a female assistant electorate officer. Soon I will learn how to look at things through the eyes of the female gender. If the positive influence of the female members of the parliament on this House is any guide, I can look forward to better and balanced perspectives and outcomes achieved by my office in the near future. I am confident that I am now able to provide faster and better services to my constituents. Thanks go to the Premier and the Speaker for making that a possibility.

One of the concerns I had when I first started in February of this year related to the lack of computer network facilities in electorate offices. In fact, members of parliament had no computer facility at all. Even if members had a laptop, they had to save their work on a floppy, walk over to their electorate officer and have him or her print it out. The lack of Internet facility at our

parliamentary offices was also a very sorry situation, particularly when we are trying to deliver a Smart State outcome.

I am glad to see that so much improvement has been made in just the last six months. Network facilities have now been installed in the electorate offices. We can also get access to the Internet and even share files with our electorate officers, check documents and so on. All of this can be achieved within the four walls of our parliamentary offices. I am looking forward to the day when we can do the same inside this chamber. Mike Coburn and his team ought to be congratulated on a top job well done in such a short time.

I have found the Parliamentary Library to be an excellent source of information. I take this opportunity to thank Nick Bannenberg and the staff of the Parliamentary Library for providing such as invaluable service to us in such a prompt and professional manner.

I also personally thank the staff of the Parliamentary Catering Division. The quality of the food and services is second to none. Judging from the ever-increasing waistlines of members, I guess no-one will disagree with me on this.

Keeping a record of parliamentary business is a very important task. As a two-finger typist, I know just how consuming and tiring it can be. I have always wondered how the staff from Hansard can do such a magnificent job, typing at a million miles an hour and yet managing to look so calm. I thank Doug Rohl and his team for keeping Queenslanders informed for generations to come.

The Beattie Labor Government is about honest, open and accessible government. This House belongs to the people of Queensland, and I am so pleased and encouraged by the fact that more and more people are taking the opportunity to see democracy at work first-hand by visiting Parliament House. I had some official visitors from China recently and they were very surprised at the openness of our institution. I could see envy in their eyes. If there is one thing that makes all this worth while it is hearing the leader of a delegation say to his colleagues, 'We ought to start to do this somehow.'

The Legislative Assembly of Queensland discharges a range of legislative and constituency responsibilities. The Parliamentary Service, under the Speaker's leadership, has provided excellent administrative and support services. Finally, I also acknowledge Mr Doyle, the Clerk; Mr Laurie, Deputy Clerk; Mr Hickey, Director of Finance; and Mr McDonough, Acting Executive Director of Corporate and Property Services, for providing the tools and the environment for us to discharge our duties to the people of Queensland effectively and efficiently.

Time expired.

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (2.36 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak in the committee stage and acknowledge once again, through Mr Speaker, the excellent work that is being done by staff. We really do have an outstanding parliamentary staff. We do not say these things because we just want to pretend it is the case; it really is the case. The staff have outstanding courtesy. There is outstanding professionalism. At times they are given quite demanding tasks and they seek to carry them out in an independent way, regardless of the political background of the people making the requests. That is true of staff in all areas, particularly in the library. I acknowledge the library staff, the Hansard staff, the catering staff, the cleaning staff, the committee staff and all other staff.

I particularly draw attention to library staff, given that the time and resources of members of parliament are limited. We really depend very heavily upon this research facility. As has been mentioned, there is a review under way. I suppose some of us are a little concerned that the outcome of that review be to enhance services, not to rationalise them. While I have not heard that rationalisation is being considered, that is the concern. We will keep monitoring that, because we feel very fiercely that the library does an outstanding job and we want to make sure that library research facilities are available to members, regardless of whether they are non-government or government, backbench or executive.

Electorate staff are so important. I put on the record my thanks for the additional position in the office. From a personal point of view, having been supplying a second staff member for a number of years, at a cost well and truly above the \$10,500 allowance—I know that other members do this also—it is a financial relief to get some additional assistance.

Many of us have recognised for years that it was not fair for our primary electorate officer to do the job without overtime or without time off. The reality is that these people have been doing



many hundreds of hours of unpaid overtime. It has been for the love of the public. They do it with courtesy. They do a very difficult job.

While I realise that these positions are available to everybody, be they ministers or backbenchers, they will certainly enhance electorate services. Things have changed a lot since the days when members did not even have a secretary and had to do their own typing or write their notes by hand. These days it is a very demanding job, and electorate officers provide an outstanding professional service when people are often distressed by circumstances and need a compassionate, courteous approach.

I commend my own electorate officer and the new staff. As I said, a lot of us have actually been funding that out of our own pockets, well and truly above our allowances, for a number of years as well as providing additional computers. So the new computer will certainly be a welcome relief to the one we have been thrashing for years.

I note the comment of one journalist who said that, as the opposition had lost staff quota after the election, we should pool this junior position and put it in Brisbane. That ignores the tremendous workload in electorates. It was totally unrealistic to expect existing electorate officers to continue to do the 50 or 60 hours a week that many were doing without any relief. This position is very important in order to provide relief to that staff member. It also recognises the reality that electorate work has increased incredibly over the last few years.

I know that for those of us in the opposition office who have fewer staff, that is just the reality; we have to look at doing more with fewer staff. But by the same token, I believe it would have been retrograde to take those positions away from the electorate offices, where our primary responsibility is still first and foremost to our electorates as well as providing those statewide duties. I want to put it on the record that I am relieved to see that position there, because it has been financially extremely expensive for a number of members to provide those additional services. I know I am not the only one doing that.

The parliament belongs to all Queenslanders. Parliamentarians across the political divide feel very fiercely about the need to maintain the resources of this facility. We believe that school students should have access to educational facilities. I know that there have been some cutbacks in the size of the tours in recent years. But I urge that they continue to be an area of great attention in the interests of the education of our young people so that they know that this House belongs to them.

We are fortunate to have a democracy that does not witness violence in the streets when there is a change of government. This is all part and parcel of our Westminster system of government. There is no ideal system, but this is a good system compared with what happens in many other parts of the world. That is the role of the parliament versus the executive—a very important voice for the people—and we want to see that maintained.

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (2.41 p.m.): As I noted in my contribution to a similar debate in the last parliament, I share the Speaker's view that this place is the people's House. Accordingly, I congratulate the Speaker and all the staff of the Parliamentary Service on their commitment to opening up the House to all Queenslanders. There have already been some outstanding examples of this process with the now annual open day timed to celebrate Queensland Day in June each year. I understand that this year approximately 3,200 visitors came through the parliament. That open day saw an invitation from the Speaker to a range of ethnic communities to exhibit and celebrate their culture as part of the fabric of the 21st century of Queensland, and their contribution was extremely well received by the many visitors on that day.

Even more important though is that, on a regular basis, the Sunday tour patronage has risen from an average of 10.6 persons in 1997 to the current 22.8. And whereas we acknowledge that the initiative to open on Sundays was Speaker Turner's, its success is in no small measure a result of Speaker Hollis' decision to open up the front gates of Parliament House facing George Street and the gardens. It makes Parliament House look a lot more inviting and part of the surrounds, which include the botanical gardens.

Within the parliamentary precinct, the Speaker and the parliamentary staff have done a lot to improve the historical interest of the original Parliament House building. The relocation of the portraits of the Premiers, Speakers and Clerks have tied in well with the excellent exhibitions on aspects of Australian history. It is good to see that the exhibitions are changing on a more regular basis so that there is something new for us to learn from.

I know that a number of visitors have commented that they have learned a great deal more than they might otherwise have expected thanks to the exhibitions developed by the

parliamentary education and training staff in the library. I am fortunate that my office is just outside the chamber. Often I am in there doing work and groups will come by. I meet some very interesting people—from a small group of two or three German travellers to a dignitary, the wife of a former New Zealand Prime Minister or a large group who may have come from a North American university. I believe the variety of people coming past my office is a demonstration of the value of this place.

I would hope that, through Tourism Queensland and other tourism groups, this House will become part of tourist brochures. But this will take some time. In the same way as people who travel to some of the larger cities of the world see particular attractions that must become a point to visit on their tours, let us hope that, with the botanical gardens, Parliament House, the footbridge, South Bank and the cultural centre forming a circuit, this will provide an even greater incentive for people to visit this complex.

I know that the Speaker has been a great sponsor of the various exhibitions here, and I thank him for that. So far the exhibitions have been about federation from a Queensland point of view and the abolition of the Legislative Assembly—the current one which I have not seen yet but will be doing so very shortly.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Legislative Council!

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN:** Was that a slip of the tongue? Freud would be having a field day with me, would he not? The Speaker and the Parliamentary Service staff should be congratulated on these initiatives, and I encourage them to continue promoting Parliament House as an important historical place in the development of our democracy.

When a number of people have spoken to me about the renovations to this place, I have said that Joh Bjelke-Petersen's views and mine are divergent on many issues, but I congratulate him on the move to renovate this building some decades ago. I said that if this building is only a building for 89 parliamentarians for about 60 days of the year, it was a waste of money. But if this is the people's House where, any day of the year—bar two—the people of Queensland and the children of Queensland can come through this chamber and this House and make it their own, then it was worth while. As other members have said, this building stands as a symbol of our democracy—that we have changes of government through debate and the vote, not through violence and the gun. This building, its architecture and its pleasant surrounds are excellent.

I thank the staff of Parliament House for their work and assistance. They are very professional in what they do. I hope that certain procedures within the chamber might change so that backbenchers get a greater chance to debate, but this has implications for staffing, for Hansard—table staff, catering and attendants—and I know that it would have budgetary implications. But it is something that I am sure the current Speaker will continue to address. I support the report before the committee.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (2.46 p.m.): I would like to pass on my appreciation to the chair of our committee, the member for Bulimba, Pat Purcell, who, in his own inimitable style, chaired the committee and enforced the rules. I thank the other committee members for their comradeship. I thank also the parliamentary staff, the Hansard staff and the Speaker and his staff for the obvious contributions that they made to the estimates process.

As I think nearly every member has already said, we have a great deal to be thankful for in this parliamentary precinct, not the least of which are the attendants at the external perimeters of the House and the attendants who give us almost anything—in fact, anything—that we need while we are actually in attendance in this chamber. They do a magnificent job. They are completely impartial. Their attitude to all of us is unchanging. Along with every member, I think, I value that impartiality.

I particularly also recognise the IT staff. They have always had a difficult job dealing with members of parliament, from the absolute troglodyte right through to the technocrat, and they do it with great aplomb. This workload is going to increase, no doubt, with the additional computers that are going into the electorate offices. I do thank the Speaker for those resources. It will add more to their workload. I have to say to you, Mr Speaker, that on no occasion that I can recall—and I have been here only six years—have I ever had to contact IT and received less than a very responsible and timely response. Certainly that is appreciated.

The electorate staff, too, perform a tremendous job in being fronts for us, particularly when we are out at functions or down here at parliament. They are invaluable. I thank, too, the Parliament House staff, Mr Doyle and his associates for the impartial advice that they give at any time that it is needed.

Mr Chairman, at the hearings I queried the reduction in the actual physical presence of security staff, and the Speaker responded to that with the acknowledgment that there had been additional technology included in the parliamentary precinct. I still remain concerned about a reduction in the actual number of people who are available for security, while acknowledging the technology that has been installed. Again I would reiterate that, should there be a breach of security, I would hope that any review of that breach would take into account a reduction in staffing numbers as a possible contribution, if you like, to any problems.

Mr Chairman, one of the things that I did want to pass on to the Speaker—and it did not actually arise in the estimates debate, so I do seek perhaps a little bit of your forbearance—is the appreciation of members of parliament for his thoughtfulness at times when things get difficult. As I said, I have been here only six years. We have had a particularly healthy time until more recently, when there have been a number of instances when people's health has been affected unexpectedly. I have to say that on the small number of occasions that I have been to see the Speaker to seek assistance or some consideration for those times that are unavoidable, the assistance that Speaker Hollis has given has been unquestioning. I value that. I think that there will be some challenges for the member for Nicklin to overcome in the future. Mr Speaker, given your support in the past, I expect that the support for Peter will be forthcoming, and readily forthcoming. We appreciate that, because it is at those times when members are perhaps vulnerable.

I thank again the catering staff for the work that they do and the people who do the maintenance around here. In closing, I would have to say that, in all the time that I have been here—although this debate is about the estimates for 2001—I have yet to experience an instance where members of the parliamentary precinct have been anything but courteous, helpful and supportive. I thank them for that. It cannot be easy for them in the job that they have to do. I want them to know that members of parliament value and appreciate the contribution that they make and the Speaker makes to this precinct.

**Mr QUINN** (Robina—Lib) (2.50 p.m.): At the outset, let me acknowledge in the gallery today Mary Hartstein and Aaron Debattista, my electorate officers from the electorate of Robina. Over a long lunch they were at great pains to impress upon me their value in assisting me to work in the electorate, and I acknowledged that—not that I needed any additional assistance over the lunchtime.

Over the past 12 months there have been a number of important advances in terms of assistance provided to members of parliament. I think that the initiative to provide an additional electorate officer to every member in the state has been a real boon to members, particularly those who represent electorates that have a heavy workload. In some respects I acknowledge the additional workload on members who represent large electorates—diverse electorates—where travel eats into their time and so they need that additional assistance. There are other electorates located in urban areas that have a multitude of problems that some other electorates do not have. I acknowledge that there is a differential in workloads and there was certainly a need to provide that additional assistance.

I also think that one of the great advances over the past 12 months has been the improvement in the range of technology that has been available to members of parliament, both in their electorate offices and also in parliament. I think that the advent of the Internet in electorate offices has been of real assistance in terms of research—in providing up-to-date material, research for speeches, for electorate inquiries, and for a whole range of other areas that have been sorely needed in the past. I think that has been a great advancement. It really shows that members of parliament understand what it is like to have access to the latest information and can familiarise themselves in terms of using the Internet, as most people do these days, particularly young people. I also think that the advent of email between parliament, electorate offices and members of parliament and the improvements in terms of using video on demand that is now available in the parliamentary precinct have been a great advancement as well, particularly if members are researching topics or looking back over old news clippings, whether they be in the electronic media or the print media. I think that they have been of enormous importance and assistance.

I think all of these advances wrapped up together are necessary not only in terms of the way in which we operate but also in the message that we send out to the general public and other people who come to Queensland to see how this parliament operates. If we are going to have a Smart State, one of the things that we have to have is smart people using smart equipment. We cannot enhance our own ability or reputation about wanting to embark upon the journey of using

IT, biotechnology and a whole range of other things that are coming on the horizon if we do not have people skilled in the tools that underpin that advancement.

As members of parliament, I think that we have a responsibility—indeed, an onus is on us—to use that sort of equipment in our daily lives so that everyone else can see how we can master that technology. We can set the example and they can follow us, hopefully. I think that is one of the good things about Mr Speaker's initiatives in these areas. It really shows that we are willing, even at our age in life—and, quite frankly, many of us are past the age at which we would think about going back to TAFE or undertaking another course at university to grab those skills—to master those skills in our own time and set the example for others to follow. I think that is very important.

The last thing that I would like to say is that I do not think many of us understand or appreciate the historical significance of this George Street precinct of Brisbane. We ought to be doing everything in our power to make sure that the buildings in this part of town are maintained to the best possible standard. Unless we maintain these historic buildings for future generations, it is for easy them to fall into disrepair. We saw what happened to this House. Fifty or sixty years ago before it was refurbished, it reached the stage where the West Indian termite—or whatever it was—almost had the place in a crumbling heap. It was not until right at the very last moment that we managed to save this historical building. The government stepped in and restored the place before it was past saving and likely to fall down. Mr Speaker, I support all the measures that you take in terms of keeping the stonework, the woodwork and the gardens up to the required standard and preserving this building in its historic context of being located near Old Government House, the Mansions and the Lands Office in the George Street precinct. I think that it is terribly important that we preserve these buildings for future generations. As other members have said, at the moment we are the custodians, not the masters of the game.

Time expired.

**Mr SPEAKER** (2.56 p.m.): May I say thank you to all members of the committee for their, in the main, very kind words about the running of this parliament and the Parliamentary Service. This is my fourth budget as the person in charge of the Parliamentary Service. The emphasis that I have placed on this area over the past three years has been on the service area. Through the wonderful work of our parliamentary staff and through giving that service to our members—whether it is in the form of IT, the facilities in our electorate offices or the facilities in our annexe offices—we are able to help our constituents, the people of Queensland, whom we are all here to represent. If we can do anything in this House through the Parliamentary Service to improve that service to our constituents, then I think that we do a good job.

Today, a couple of comments have been made about the Parliamentary Library and the library review. I thought that I answered questions very clearly at the estimates hearing about that. From time to time any manager, whether it is the Speaker of the House or a minister, needs to look at how sections under his or her control are operating. That is the whole idea of the review. The Clerk of the Parliament, under the Financial Administration and Audit Act, and I, under the Parliamentary Service Act, have a duty to do this from time to time. We have carried out quite a few reviews and there will be more to come. There is certainly no way that these reviews are designed to create job losses or changes of any great significance; they are all about improving efficiency and letting us know how efficient those areas are.

I have not received the full reports yet, but I can tell members that I have read the report on the parliamentary committees section, for instance, and it is a glowing tribute to the work of that program. I think that it is really important that, when we have queries about efficiencies, we can produce that report and say, 'Yes, we have had a review and this is what they are doing and we are very happy with the job that they are doing.'

A couple of members spoke about the historical significance of this place. As members know, we have changed around a lot of things. We have done a lot with the Speaker's gallery, the Premier's gallery, the Clerk's gallery and also what I call the local government corner. We have the Centenary of Federation rooms and we also have the exhibition foyer, which now holds an exhibition on the abolition of the upper house. All of those things are part of making this place more attractive to the people who come here. I have found that, since we have been carrying out these improvements and, more particularly, placing the inscriptions beside the portraits which tell people about the persons whom they are looking at, the tours are taking a lot longer to conduct. People are gaining a greater appreciation of this building.

Over 100 people came to the opening of the exhibition on the abolition of the upper house. We have received several letters to say how good it is that we are doing something about the living history of this place, rather than just hanging up a few portraits of people whom no-one knows anything about. When we hold the estimates hearings next year, I hope that members will hear about a war service exhibition on all the parliamentarians who have carried out war service. We hope to do an exhibition on the 19 years of Joh. All of those things are important, so that visitors realise the significance of the place and of the people who worked here. This place was a part of their lives for many, many years and we should recognise their contribution to the state of Queensland.

A question was raised about the mobile phone limit. Unfortunately the member for Keppel is not here at the moment. We had this argument last year as a difficulty had arisen when one member absolutely exceeded all expectations on mobile phone costs. It is my responsibility to make sure that we rein in that sort of problem. We looked at the averages. The average spent on mobile phones is \$800 per person. Therefore, I think a \$1,500 limit is fairly reasonable, because that is nearly double the average use. Whilst there are some concerns about that, I would urge all members of the shadow cabinet to lobby Ministerial Services Branch for extra funding for phones.

If we again did what we did two or three years ago and took away the limits on phone use, things can happen that can cause a problem with my budget. I am proud of the fact that, with the four budgets that I have been in control of, we have never gone over budget. We have always kept within budget and improved services at the same time. The bottom line for any manager is to say, 'We have so much money to spend. We will ensure that it is not only spent efficiently and on increasing services to members, but also spent with a regard to the fact that we have to keep within the budget.' If shadow ministers really want to do something about changing the limits on mobile phone expenditure, I urge them to lobby the MSB. In the next two years as Speaker, I will continue to ensure that this House remains the people's House.

Report adopted.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

### **Appropriation Bill Estimates Committee A Report No. 2**

**The CHAIRMAN:** The question is—

That Report No. 2 of Estimates Committee A be adopted.

**Mr PURCELL** (Bulimba—ALP) ( 3.02 p.m.): I wish to speak to the Appropriation Bill for the proposed expenditures of the Premier and Minister for Trade; the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport; and the Minister for State Development. Before I go into detail, I thank the ministers, ministerial officers, their departments, independent agencies and GOCs for their appearance and the manner in which they answered the questions that were put to them by the committee.

Also, I thank the committee members for their hard work, diligence and commitment to the job at hand: firstly, the Deputy Chairman, Mike Horan, the member for Toowoomba; his deputy, Vaughan Johnson, the member for Gregory; Mrs Elizabeth Cunningham, the member for Gladstone; Mr Michael Choi, the member for Capalaba; Ms Margaret Keech, the member for Albert; and Mr Kerry Shine, the member for Toowoomba North. The process worked very well. Everybody who took part in this process learnt something and we will continue to learn from estimates—that goes for everybody from the Premier down. We all learn from the process and the parliament is enriched by the information that we gather from looking at budgets and asking departments questions about the expenditure of this place.

There is one person whom I would like to mention as I neglected to thank her on the day. I will do that now on behalf of the committee. I give many thanks to Leanne Clare, our research director. Leanne did her job efficiently, thoroughly and with a minimum of fuss. I also thank her personally for the help that she gave me and for the long hours she put in to ensure that deadlines were met and that all committee members were kept well informed of what was happening with the committee. Thank you very much to Leanne.

I turn now to some of the information gained by the committee at the hearing. This is a good news budget for all ministers. In his opening address, the Premier mentioned the good news

about Queensland's credit rating. If this budget were not a good budget, the hard reality is that the market would soon mark us down. This government is AAA rated. We tend to forget that we are the only state in the Commonwealth and, possibly, in the world that is net debt free. The money that is invested for public servants and people who work for the government is there. Theoretically, if the wheels stopped turning tomorrow, we could pay all our debts. We could pay everybody everything that they were owed. Of course, that will not happen, but it is a good position to be in. That is the good news of the budget. We have an expanded budget for 2001-02 that continues to build on the very honest work that was done by the previous Beattie Labor government.

I turn to the part of the Centrelink report that relates to unemployment. That is a little bit out of context for the simple reason that the budget states that we will maintain an unemployment rate of eight per cent for the next 12 months. This state continues to grow its employment rate by about 20 per cent. That is faster than any other state in the Commonwealth. Internal migration continues into Queensland. Everybody wants to live in Queensland. People come here because of the jobs. We have the highest participation rate per head of population of any state in the Commonwealth. We say, 'If you want a job, come to Queensland and we will endeavour to give you a job.' People will continue to come here in their thousands.

I remember when the Commonwealth Games were held in Brisbane and the excitement and wellbeing that was felt throughout Brisbane, Queensland and even Australia. The Goodwill Games are coming here and I do not think that that has really hit home yet with Queenslanders. It is estimated that \$340-odd million will be pumped into the economy through those games. Hundreds of millions of people throughout the world will get to look at our state and Brisbane. That is a good news story that is not being told. I urge members on both sides of the House to advertise that as best they can. I support the report before the committee.

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.08 p.m.): At the outset, I thank the member for Bulimba for his stewardship of the committee.

**An honourable member:** He did a good job.

**Mr HORAN:** He did a good, firm job. He was ably assisted by his deputy chairman on telephone hook-ups. I thank all the members of the committee. It was a courteous committee and we worked well. I join with the chairman in thanking Leanne Clare.

I wish to speak particularly about some of the issues that I raised in the Statement of Reservation. Firstly, I raise the issue of the role of the Children's Commissioner. I spoke about this because of our concern about the waiting lists for the assessment of young children who are at risk of sexual and physical abuse, so that they can have care and protection. It is very important that one of the roles of the Commission for Children and Young People is to monitor the processes and practices of people who deliver these services.

It was pointed out to us during the questioning that the commission is not a service provider in the sense that the Department of Families is. We certainly recognise that. But it is there to monitor those processes and practices. That is one area that does need monitoring. We would be prepared to support the government if it wants to change the legislative base. But we cannot have a department that has primary responsibility for assessment, care and protection not providing that protection in a timely and urgent fashion.

One of the other aspects of our questioning concerned performance bonuses. The Auditor-General and the Premier indicated that they are going to move to tabling the total amount of bonuses paid to CEOs but not the individual amounts and not any of the detail about the performance targets to be achieved, whether they have been achieved and the criteria for determining whether the CEOs receive the payment. We again used the example of the Department of Families. Is one of the performance targets the timely assessment of these young children who need care and protection? Has that target been met? Was the bonus paid? Even if the bonuses are not paid, it probably means that the performance was substandard and therefore there needs to be some recognition that the CEO is not doing his job. It is not simply a matter of paying or not paying the bonus; it is a matter of whether the job and the prime targets of the government are being achieved.

In relation to the unemployment rate, we made the point that if an average of eight per cent unemployment is to be achieved for the entire 12 months, if in the first month of the year unemployment was at nine per cent it means that it will have to come down to at least seven per cent to try to achieve that eight per cent average. We would like to push the government away from having the worst figures. We should be above average in this state in spite of the labour

force growth we have. We have a two per cent growth in employment and a two per cent labour force growth, which cancel each other out. We are going to continue to push the government to provide for more targeted schemes to work out in what regions the unemployment is occurring, what the age groups are and what sort of job creation is needed in those areas to target unemployment and bring it down.

In relation to national competition policy, we saw that \$248 million has been paid to the Queensland government since 1997-98. The Treasurer was unable to outline how the NCP payments paid in the past financial year and those that will be paid in the current financial year were broken down, because \$134 million in NCP payments was budgeted for 2001-02. He was able to tell us, though, that \$12.9 million was withheld as a result of an adverse assessment of water reform within the state. Our questioning was designed to find out how much was paid because of dairy deregulation and to try to get to the bottom of why this government did not pay a single dollar in assistance to the dairy industry.

Capital works is of great concern to us. Last financial year, \$280 million was not spent on capital works. On a budget to budget basis the actual expenditure on capital works has declined. We were also very concerned that there was an \$820 million deficit for the past financial year compared with a forecast surplus of \$29 million. The previous year had a surplus of \$1,062 million. That surplus of \$1,062 million has become a deficit of \$820 million this financial year, giving a total negative turnaround—

**Mr Mackenroth** interjected.

**Mr HORAN:** It is like having a business that makes \$100,000 one year and the next year loses \$80,000. Those were the concerns we had and which we raised in the statement of reservations.

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (3.13 p.m.): I take the opportunity to thank the committee for its detailed examination of the units and independent agencies contained in my portfolio. The scrutiny of budget items by estimates committees provides an important opportunity for public scrutiny of ministerial expenditure proposals and performance, ensuring ministers are held accountable for public spending. I note that the majority committee's report supports the expenditure proposals for which I have ministerial responsibility. I acknowledge that and thank them.

I now turn to the statement of reservation submitted by the Leader of the Opposition. I will deal with it in parts. Let us deal with the Children's Commissioner. Firstly, I would like to clarify the differences in the roles of the Commission for Children and Young People and the Department of Families. The functions of the commission include dealing with complaints about services provided to children in state care and monitoring and reviewing the delivery of services to children. On the other hand, the Department of Families' role includes providing or helping provide services for the protection of children and responding to allegations of harm to children.

I tried to explain that at the committee. I reiterate it here. I acknowledge, as I did at the hearing, that the government needs to do more in the area of child protection. The fact is that we have inherited a child protection system that has been underfunded by many Queensland governments and we are now playing catch-up in terms of funding. Honourable members should remember it was this government that set up the Forde inquiry because we were concerned about the abuse of children in Queensland institutions. Honourable members should also note that my government has allocated more money in this area than any other previous state government in the history of Queensland. In addition, we have made a commitment to find an additional \$100 million over four years to fund child protection initiatives.

The second point relates to performance bonuses. The Leader of the Opposition referred to that again today. I note from the report that Mr Horan has also made comments about these bonuses. Once again, as I said at the hearing, the possibility of a bonus payment for CEOs is one of this government's key tools to encourage and recognise public sector performance. CEO performance agreements place great emphasis on achievement in the government's key priority areas.

Given the significant responsibilities of departmental chief executives in managing multimillion-dollar budgets, it is absolutely imperative that we have in place a performance management system to ensure the effective operation of the public sector. It is a management tool. I am surprised that a conservative party would oppose sound management tools. I am convinced that this performance management system delivers significant results and benefits to

the Queensland community, just as I am convinced that it ensures that taxpayers' money is being spent in the best possible way. It is about outcomes.

The process for managing performance agreements and payments has been and will continue to be subject to the Auditor-General's scrutiny to ensure the probity of any payments made. I have in good faith considered and accepted the Auditor-General's argument about making available detail on the total money paid by this government in bonus payments. I agree that the public has a right to know how their taxpayer dollars are being spent and I have committed to providing this information as a total amount representing all of the moneys paid to CEOs by way of performance bonuses. Honourable members should note that this is in fact the first time that such information will be made available. The performance of CEOs is not about politics, it is about getting the best performance out of our CEOs for the people of Queensland and saving money.

Mr Horan also expressed concerns regarding unemployment. It is acknowledged that it will be difficult to reduce the unemployment rate to five per cent by 2003 in line with the government's target, particularly given the recent and regressive policies of the federal government, in particular the GST. But in the 36 months since my government came to office 93,900 new jobs have been created, 45,000 of which are full time. The coalition in 28 months of government created only 21,700 jobs. The government remains committed to jobs, jobs, jobs. My government's comprehensive long-term Jobs Plan, including the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative, is working. As part of our Jobs Plan, the government has introduced a number of new job creation initiatives, including programs which target disadvantaged youth and unemployment amongst mature-age persons. However, we urgently need a federal government that will focus on the philosophy behind our Smart State strategy and on value adding to traditional industries, such as AMC. Let us see what happens.

In relation to capital works, the \$5.115 billion budgeted for the state's 2001-02 capital program will have a significant effect on employment, supporting some 46,300 full-time jobs. The government's commitment to building Queensland's regions is also reaffirmed, with 58 per cent of capital expenditure allocated outside Brisbane's Statistical Division. We are responsible for 27 per cent of all capital expenditure by state governments in Australia, yet our population is only 18 per cent of the total of Australia. Our Capital Works Program leads Australia. The range of major capital initiatives includes grants and subsidy programs to improve local government infrastructure and services, the Triple R maintenance program, from which almost 900 schools will benefit, and the provision of additional capital over the next five years.

I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my contribution in *Hansard*. There are a couple of matters that the Leader of the Opposition raised that I would like to respond to. It is only a small amount.

Leave granted.

A range of major capital initiatives include:

- grants and subsidy programs to improve local government infrastructure and services;
- the Triple R Maintenance Program of which almost 900 schools will benefit from this school maintenance program; and
- the provision of additional capital over the next five years to rebuild and redevelop the State's nursing homes to ensure facilities are safe, modern and comfortable and equal to or better than Commonwealth accreditation standards.

With respect to the decrease from the 2000-01 budgeted capital works estimate to the 2000-01 estimated actual—

... the estimated actual reflects more up-to-date information on the capital program such as changes in the timing of capital expenditure from one year to the next or a change in focus to more urgent Government priorities.

Deficit

Finally, I turn to Mr Horan's comments about the Government deficit.

As outlined clearly in the Budget Papers, the forecast deficit in 2000-01 was not due to any change in fiscal policy or to policy decisions. The three factors that contributed to the forecast result are:

- The accrual recognition of costs associated with the collapse of HIH Insurance;
- The accrual recognition of the transfer of the assets of the Townsville-Thuringowa Water Supply Board to local government as part of water reform; and
- Lower rates of return on funds set aside to meet future liabilities such as superannuation.

Queensland's strong balance sheet meant it was well placed to manage the adversities that arose during 2000-01, without impacting on service delivery.



**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.18 p.m.): Today, in relation to Estimates Committee A, I wish to speak about state development and address a number of issues. Unfortunately, the AMC project is in a state of failure.

**Mr Barton:** Not yet it is not.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I hope it is not. I will touch on that in a moment. The other point I want to touch on is the South Bank pedestrian bridge and the Chevron gas pipeline, which was a so-called signature project of the Beattie government on coming to office in 1998. The point I make is that this is a very important piece of infrastructure to the ongoing viability of the industrialised capital works programs that we are trying to get in place in central Queensland. Places such as Gladstone and Townsville can certainly take great advantage of this project.

I say to the minister of the day in a bipartisan way: we certainly want to see that gas pipeline become reality. If there are obstacles there, I plead with the minister to tell the people of Queensland what they are. Do not hide the problem. We are about trying to get that ongoing viability working and working with those companies who want to be party to it. It is absolutely paramount that we see projects put in place that are going to become reality and are going to be beneficial to the ongoing viability of the industrialised capital works program that this government has put in place and that are going to support the ongoing viability and the development of this state for a long time to come.

I want to reflect on the pedestrian bridge at South Bank. At the budget estimates hearing the minister said—

I must say that I am not hiding or running to cover. I am happy to sit here all evening if necessary and answer any questions you have about this bridge ....

He went on—

I have a lot more information here on the bridge and I am only too happy to advise the committee. I am not hiding. Anything you want to know about the bridge, Mr Johnson, I am happy to answer.

The point I make is that if there is a problem, the government should tell the people what the problem is. It should not run away from it. My old man always told me that the truth will keep you free. But at the end of the day the government is running the biggest business in the state. It is a \$19 billion state budget. I believe that the people of this state are entitled to know precisely where that \$19 billion is going to be spent and how it is going to be spent. In business we do make mistakes; there are hiccups. We have had losses ourselves. I am a businessman, too, and in times past I have lost a lot of money. But on the other side of the equation, what you lose on the merry-go-round you try to pick up on the swings. That is what it is all about. It is not about saying here today that the government has made a blunder on the footbridge. All we are saying is that if there is a problem they should tell us. The media has picked it up. They want to know what the problem is and we do, too, so that the people can know. The FOIs that we ask go on and on, but at the end of the day the minister will not come clean on what the real problem is.

**Mr Mackenroth:** The real problem is that you haven't got faith.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I have got plenty of faith. We do have faith. Some of those people whom the minister now has in charge of that project are very able engineers—and the Treasurer is not listening. If those people had been put in place on that project in the first instance, we would not have the hiccup we have now and the minister would not be in that embarrassing, compromising situation that he is now.

**Mr Horan:** Badly planned.

**Mr JOHNSON:** It was badly planned, as the Leader of the Opposition said.

Again, I come back to the AMC situation. I took the interjection from the minister from the start. We all want to see the AMC project at Stanwell become reality. In business there are always little issues that can cause embarrassment or heartache to the person who is trying to put that project in place, but you have to keep an open door policy and cooperate with those people and you have to continually follow up. If there is a problem and if the government has to talk to the federal government, they should not be embarrassed about it. The minister knows as well as I do that it is going to be a great business for Queensland. It is going to be a great employment generator for Queensland. The opposition wants to see it become reality as much as he does because it is a fantastic concept. The mineral in question is going to be a great mineral in the future and one that is going to play a great role in the future of this nation.

**Ms KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (3.24 p.m.): In speaking to the Appropriation Bill 2001, I rise in support of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer's expenditure in his portfolio. In particular, I focus on

the government owned corporations dealing with green energy. Queensland provides some of the cheapest electricity in the world. To develop our state further and to grow more jobs it needs a competitive supply of energy provided at competitive prices. Even to this day Queensland relies almost entirely on a coal generated power supply. In fact, around 97 per cent of electricity generated in Queensland is fuelled by coal.

Since large volumes of gas at competitive prices are not currently available, Queensland must diversify its sources of energy by offering cleaner energy supplies. Such a strategy has been estimated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 30 million tonnes over 10 years. This is equivalent to removing the greenhouse gas emissions of around one million cars. That is good news for not only all Queenslanders but all inhabitants of this planet with which we share.

The Deputy Premier's report *Queensland energy policy: a cleaner energy strategy* describes the government's program for the development and purchase of green power. This has been shown by research as being one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting renewable energy projects. I am happy to say that the Queensland government is the largest purchaser of green energy in the state. Not being complacent, however, the Beattie Labor government wants to do more to produce not only a Smart State but a clean energy state. From 1 July 2001 the Beattie government will lift its green energy purchases to five per cent of total electricity purchases. This may not seem like a lot, but it will actually make Queensland the Australian leader in such purchases. Such a commitment will require additional renewable projects to produce green energy.

In my electorate of Albert, a leader in the state in sustainable energy projects I am glad to say, two exciting projects have already commenced. When these projects are fully operational they will contribute significant amounts of green energy to the grid system. At Rocky Point sugarmill a cogeneration plant has been developed by one of Queensland's very successful GOCs, Stanwell Corporation Limited. Stanwell is constructing a \$50 million plant to generate up to 160,000 megawatt hours of green energy, providing an annual supply of electricity to more than 18,000 homes. The Rocky Point plant will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 130,000 tonnes. The plant will be fuelled by biomass energy sources of bagasse, the waste fibre from the sugarmilling process, and green waste from old timber. It will also produce steam and electricity for the sugarmill and nearby ethanol distillery.

The other green energy project I would like to discuss does not involve a government owned corporation but it also has my full support. This one is the development of a wind farm at Norwell at Jacobs Well. It will be constructed by Raco Resources Pty Ltd. It is a Queensland registered company and will employ 20 local people when completed. Twenty people might not seem like a lot when we are looking at tens of thousands of jobs, but it means a tremendous amount to those 20 families whose breadwinners will now have a job.

This wind farm will involve the construction of 33 wind turbines, each 55 metres high and with a three-blade rotor blade mounted at the top. Each of the blades will be up to 30 metres long. The installed capacity of the wind farm is proposed to be approximately 30 megawatts. This will be transmitted by overhead cables to the Yatala substation and will be transformed into 66 kV power for connection to existing overhead transmission lines. Stanwell will then sell this power to the grid system and supply up to 40,000 homes with power.

These projects are a fine example of sustainable energy projects for the Smart State, a state which is increasingly being powered by smart green energy and smart green jobs. I commend the appropriation bills to the House.

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (3.29 p.m.): I want to concentrate on a couple of issues raised in report No. 2 of Estimates Committee A. I particularly want to comment on the government's intention to forge ahead with the amalgamation of the Criminal Justice Commission and the Queensland Crime Commission. I have not completely formulated in my mind at this stage whether I am absolutely in favour of what it is going to do or not, but a number of questions need to be answered and a number of issues need to be considered when the government goes ahead with this plan, whenever that may be. I am yet to be convinced that there is any good public policy reason for doing this and that it will make these organisations, which currently work separately but in consultation with each other, work better when they are amalgamated. They are matters that the government will have to convince us of if ultimately it wants the support of the official opposition in Queensland for its intention.

The Crime Commission and the CJC were taken apart about three years ago for obvious reasons. At the time it was felt that the Criminal Justice Commission was not necessarily fulfilling

the entire role set out for it. It was felt that it would be better to establish a Crime Commission to look at issues of organised crime and paedophilia in Queensland and a separate Criminal Justice Commission to look at issues of official misconduct, education and investigation to ensure that Queensland had an efficient and effective public sector following the guidelines one would expect, and to ensure that the people of Queensland could have a greater degree of confidence that their concerns over official misconduct and the misappropriation of public moneys would be better investigated.

Generally, the current system has not worked too badly. It has worked fairly efficiently. Therefore, I am a little bit confused and a little bit bemused by the lack of reasoning the government has put forward to date to justify this amalgamation. One real concern that has probably acted as a major impediment to the Crime Commission being able to completely fulfil its role is that it is basically like putting your best guard dog on a leash and not letting it off that leash; that is, the government has not come forward with the appropriate tools to assist it in doing its job. There needs to be proper confiscation of criminal assets legislation, legislation that has been lagging in this state for a long time. One of my cautions to the government is that if it thinks it can amalgamate these two bodies to make them work more efficiently without giving them those necessary tools it will be terribly disappointed. I ask ministers present in the chamber today who will be part of the cabinet discussions to ensure that, as the government goes about building this anti-organised crime and official misconduct organisation, it considers giving it the tools it needs to do its job.

I turn now to the portfolio of State Development, and I suppose this is a bouquet for the government. I am not sure if the minister is listening, but I commend the government for the work it is doing proactively in a partnering way in my electorate with the Stanthorpe Shire Council in developing the Wallangarra rail precinct. On many occasions the government puts money into projects and it is hard to see any tangible benefits forthcoming. However, the government has been good enough to invest around about \$400,000 while the Commonwealth government has invested a slightly lesser amount of just over \$300,000 in developing this precinct. There have been other benefits as well under the Community Employment Program under the stewardship of the Minister for Employment. This is all about ensuring that there will be ongoing and justifiable jobs growth in that part of the world. In actual fact, that precinct is going to be the concentration for the Centenary of Federation celebrations in October. I know the Premier will attend, as will the minister.

There will be an opportunity for the government to be able to fully judge how the money it has invested in this project provides not only jobs but also economic development opportunities for my part of the world. I am very thankful to the government for doing that. However, I do have a concern in relation to the cutting of the capital works budget, as was elucidated in committee discussions a few weeks ago. We have to invest in infrastructure and, in turn, our future. The cutting of that particular budget by around about \$200 million is not going to provide the necessary investment in infrastructure in this state.

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (3.34 p.m.): Firstly, I thank all members of the committee for the work they did and the excellent way that they conducted themselves at the hearing. I will be happy to go back any year. I want to firstly talk about the dissenting report of the Leader of the Opposition. With regard to Mr Horan's comments about NCP, I can advise members that, while responsibility for significant elements of NCP lies with the state and territories, most of the financial return from reform accrues to the Commonwealth. This is because increases in income and business taxation revenue associated with greater economic activity flow to the Commonwealth. In order to share the returns generated from reforms across the community, the Commonwealth makes NCP payments to each state and territory. The NCP payments are provided as untied Commonwealth payments to the state.

Earlier the Leader of the Opposition said that I had refused or could not answer a question at the estimates in relation to the payment for dairy deregulation. There is no break-up. I did not refuse to answer the question. There is simply no answer to the question, and the member has to accept that. When we receive the payments at the end of the year, we do not get a list saying, 'This much of the money is for this and something else is for something else.'

**Mr Horan:** You admitted that you didn't get 12.9 because you hadn't done the water reform.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** Yes, because we are down to get so much money. When we get our payment but do not get the full amount, the Commonwealth advises us that so much has been deducted for this reason. It does not say to us that we are getting this much for this specific item

or this much for another item. So there is no answer to the member's question in terms of us being provided with different amounts of money for different activities, because we are not paid for that. The money is not paid to us for those reasons. That is how that happens. So there is not an answer to that question. I did not refuse to answer it and it was not that I could not answer it. I explained this at the estimates, but the member either did not understand it or refused to understand it. In relation to dairy deregulation, unlike the federal government, the Queensland government has contributed funds from its own budget to assist the dairy industry.

The second issue raised in the dissenting report was capital works. The Leader of the Opposition stated that capital works on a budget-to-budget basis has been reduced. This decrease largely reflects the progressive movement towards a long-term sustainable capital works program following the completion of major projects such as the Pacific Motorway, the South East Transit Project and the Statewide Health Building Program. This movement towards a sustainable capital works program and the trend towards a strong budgeted operating position highlights the government's responsible fiscal management. The \$5.115 billion budgeted for the state's 2001-02 capital program will have a significant effect on employment, supporting some 46,300 full-time jobs. The government's commitment to building Queensland regions is also reaffirmed, with 58 per cent of capital expenditure allocated outside Brisbane's statistical division. A range of major capital initiatives will be started.

With respect to the decrease from the 2000-01 budgeted capital works estimate to the 2000-01 estimated actual, the estimated actual reflects more up-to-date information on the capital program, such as changes in the timing of capital expenditure from one year to the next or a change in focus to more urgent government priorities. In relation to the surplus and deficit, and as I explained at the estimates hearing in relation to the negative turnaround that has been quoted in the report and quoted during the hearing, it is incorrect to use a figure such as that because we are not looking at it in accrual accounting terms.

Sure, if we were operating under cash accounting and we actually carried forward a billion dollars, spent that money and then ended up with a deficit, what the member is saying could be seen to be correct. But that is not what is in fact happening. In accrual accounting terms, in the previous year we did have a net operating surplus of some \$1.062 million. That money does not carry forward on the books; it goes into the investment fund and is not able then to be used in the way the member is trying to use it.

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (3.40 p.m.): It gives me a lot of pleasure to rise to speak on report No. 2 of Estimates Committee A. I will dwell on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and later deal with the Children's Commission and then State Development.

As the Premier said, performance bonuses are a management tool that all business people use and use very effectively. Incentive bonuses are part and parcel of employing people nowadays. The difference between how business uses incentive bonuses and how the government uses them is that in business they are clearly identifiable. The transcript of Estimates Committee A shows a refusal to answer by the directors-general in respect of individual performance bonuses. It seems to me that, in the interests of government accountability and transparency, the taxpayers of Queensland have a right to know which directors-general are performing and which are not. Indeed, who decides the benchmarks? From what base is the remuneration of a director-general calculated? Indeed, who sets the performance criteria? In answer to that very question Minister Spence admitted that ministers are not asked how much of the performance bonus should be paid to the director-general. It seems to me that a number of questions should be asked.

I am certainly not against performance bonuses—I think they are a very important management tool—but I do think, in the interests of transparent government, they need to be identified and brought out into the open. Directors-general are employed by the taxpayers of Queensland and the sorts of performance bonuses they receive and how they are paid should be clearly identified.

I find it difficult to understand why the Children's Commissioner does not have the power to act upon concerns relating to unassessed cases in the Families Department. As I understand from the estimates, there were 2,249 complaints, and we do not really know what has happened to them. The assessments are supposedly carried out within 28 days. I think a lot of questions need to be asked in respect of the way the Children's Commissioner is able to handle those cases. Children are our biggest resource and we need to look after them.

I refer to the Dalrymple Bay lease. As most members would know, Dalrymple Bay is a big part of my electorate and contains a very significant piece of infrastructure. It is disappointing to see that the National Bank has withdrawn from that negotiation. I would expect that that is continuing. It is of concern to me that we have gone so far down the track and suddenly things seem to have fallen over.

**Mr Mackenroth:** Nothing has fallen over.

**Mr MALONE:** That is fine. It is later than was expected, as I understand. Quite a substantial amount of investment is to take place at Dalrymple Bay. Maybe the government's grab for royalties has a bit to do with it. Where is the budget left in light of the \$100 million that may not be forthcoming from the National Bank syndicate? There are certainly interesting questions that need to be answered.

I refer to the Australian Magnesium Corporation. A lot of people are very keen to make sure that resource is developed and the project moves ahead. It has been on the cards for a long time and it is a tremendous resource. Certainly I am very keen to make sure it goes ahead.

Time expired.

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (3.45 p.m.): I join with other members in expressing my appreciation to the chairman, the deputy chairman and the secretary to the committee, Leanne Clare, for the way in which they performed their duties. It was a pleasure to serve on Estimates Committee A.

A couple of the matters I will deal with today are the responsibility of the Minister for Sport—that is, certain grants to Toowoomba—and another relates to the announcement made by the Minister for State Development during the estimates hearing of the commitment to the Charlton/Wellcamp industrial estate.

The Minister for Sport provided a list of the grants that have been made in recent times to the electorates of Toowoomba North and Toowoomba South. Under the Sport and Recreation Minor Facilities Program the Toowoomba City Council was given an allocation in respect of an outdoor tennis practice wall at Harlaxton, and the Metropolitan Cricket Club was given an allocation for cricket practice nets.

The Sport and Recreation Community Facilities Program saw some major commitments made to Toowoomba. An amount of \$270,000 was allocated to the Harristown High Community Recreation Facilities Management Association, and the Queensland Police Citizens Youth Club was allocated \$431,946. Both of those amounts were of great significance to those bodies. They are in the electorate of my colleague the member for Toowoomba South, but they are of benefit to all people who live in Toowoomba.

I turn to the National Standard Sport Facilities Program. The Toowoomba Sports Ground Trust was allocated \$750,000 and the Royal Agricultural Society of Queensland was allocated \$850,000. They are very significant grants that have in recent times been made to Toowoomba and they are greatly appreciated.

One project was mentioned in the list as not having been granted. It gives me great pleasure to find out subsequently that it has recently been approved in the latest round. That is an amount of \$50,000 under the Sport and Recreation Minor Facilities Program to the Toowoomba Cricket Association to help with the construction of a clubhouse.

**Mr Mackenroth** interjected.

**Mr SHINE:** We hope that is the case.

I now refer to an answer given by the Minister for State Development relating to the Charlton/Wellcamp industrial area. The minister confirmed the commitment of the government to the industrial estate. He acknowledged that there has been a shortfall in industrial land in Toowoomba and that there is a need for such an estate to be provided. He confirmed that an area of 1,600 hectares is planned to be used for this purpose and that the area in which it will be set up is strategically located and has national significance, bearing in mind the second range crossing, the proposed inland rail line and, of course, the existing road structures. The minister confirmed also that the State Development Department has agreed to purchase some land for this purpose, and his department has agreed to work in and dovetail with the private ownership of property at Wellcamp. Likewise, the Toowoomba City Council has agreed to assist with sewerage and other infrastructure.

This is further evidence of a commitment by the Beattie government to the Toowoomba area in the last six months. First of all, we heard about the new Toowoomba Police Station, then the arrival of Suncorp Metway and then the holding of the community cabinet meeting at Highfields in Toowoomba. These things indicate to me a commitment by the Beattie government to the Toowoomba area, and I thank the government for its consideration.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (3.50 p.m.): I thank the Premier and his staff, the Deputy Premier and his staff, and the Minister for State Development and his staff for the input that they provided to the estimates process. And, again, I thank our committee chairman.

A broad range of areas are covered by these ministerial portfolios—issues that are obviously too broad to make comment on all of them. But there were a number of issues that we did discuss that have implications, particularly, for rural and regional Queensland. It was good to see in the discussions with the ombudsman, Mr Albietz, that the outreach visits to regional Queensland are not only going to continue but that there is an intention to increase those visits to allow better access by regional Queenslanders to the ombudsman. This serves a number of purposes, and I commend the ombudsman for this initiative and the government for the funding of it. Many of the people who approach the ombudsman's office do so after a period of protracted mediation or consultation with the government body with which they have their difficulties, and it alleviates the frustration that they are feeling to be able to speak face to face with a member of the ombudsman's office to discuss those issues.

It has also been encouraging to see that the waiting time for the ombudsman to address issues is gradually reducing. Sometimes the period between when a matter was referred to the ombudsman's office and when his office actually dealt with it was so protracted that for many people it was too late, if you like, to give them real relief. There was some debate about the \$1.8 million increase in 1998-99. And in spite of the way that the Premier addressed the questions, I believe that the impression was intended to be given that there was an ongoing increase in Mr Albietz's budget. The reality is it was a one-off increase that was being maintained, and the impression that was given was different from the reality.

It was also interesting, I think, to note the change in the last couple of years in the role of the CJC. The last estimates committee that I attended which actually examined the CJC's budget was held at a very political time. It is good to see that, with the new CJC chairman Mr Butler, that role has become much more impartial and that the role of investigating and reporting on what are very sensitive matters has become his main focus.

One of the issues of concern that other members and I raised during the estimates committee process was the impost on departments of the equity return. Whereas it has been explained to us that the equity return obligations were initially funded, Mr Bradley himself indicated that they were funded initially and that, over time, agencies will be able to obtain savings from that if they make more efficient use of their assets, reduce their level of asset holdings, and so on. My concern remains that, for many departments, there is no opportunity—or very little opportunity—to reduce their asset load, because the nature of the departments and their responsibilities means that there is only one direction for that asset holding to take, and that is an increase in assets. I do believe, and continue to believe, particularly of departments such as Police, Education and Health—those ones where built infrastructure is intrinsic to the efficient provision of services for members of our community—that the equity return over time will be an impost on the people of Queensland and there will be very little to give to the community per se as far as services are concerned, in fact nothing, and it will just be an opportunity to make a somewhat subtle income for the Treasury.

The only other comment that I will have time to make on this estimates committee relates to the interesting interchange between the Treasurer, Minister Mackenroth, and the member for Moggill with regard to Queensland's investment in the power infrastructure in South Australia. A significant long-term investment in infrastructure upgrade in South Australia is required—over \$200 million—yet we have calls from electricity generators and the community here in Queensland for infrastructure here to be improved. So whereas that interchange may have some underlying economic wisdom, for those people who have power poles in front of their houses that require immediate upgrading, or for concerns held by other people, that investment should be questioned.

**Hon. T. A. BARTON** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for State Development) (3.55 p.m.): I would also like to thank the chairman and the committee members of budget Estimates Committee A for the way in which they conducted themselves. It was a pleasure to be working with Pat Purcell again. In recent years I have appeared before budget Estimates Committee B. Pat was the chair

of Estimates Committee B, and now he is the chair of Estimates Committee A. So he has brought to Estimates Committee A those standards that he used to put in place with Estimates Committee B. He had a very good team, certainly in terms of the government members, who asked some searching and compelling questions that allowed me to put forward the best information about what a great job my Department of State Development does on behalf of all Queenslanders.

I also have to comment that I have noted the statement of reservations by the Opposition Leader. I have noted that he did not comment on me personally in any negative way in that statement of reservations, and I thank him for that. He certainly did make some comments about AMC. I find it a little sad that he made the comment that AMC had failed to raise its equity at that point in time. But again, as the Premier and the Treasurer have already indicated, the game is not over yet. In fact, while there can be no surety that AMC will get up, we certainly are not so much following the advice of the member for Gregory but, in line with the comments that he made, we have been working with the federal government, and we continue to work with the federal government—as we continue to work with the company—to try to put together a package that will allow that great project to succeed. It is a very important project.

I think the Opposition Leader needs to know that while people are out there in the equity market with prospectuses, there are limits to what can be done in the run-down until the close, but we are still working through that. I want to say to the Opposition Leader that it is not over yet. But if he wants to help, by all means; we would like that bipartisan support. But he should ring his federal colleagues, because they are the key people who need to come in and at least match the level of support that the Queensland government still has on the table. They have come in in the past—not at the end with equity—but it is very important that they be in the frame at this point.

My department and the estimates demonstrate what we are all about. My department's primary focus is about achieving sustainable jobs in Queensland. We work with small business. We work with medium-size enterprises. We work with the major projects. We work on the infrastructure planning. And we are working up the PPP arrangements. We are the department responsible for the regional development of this state. We do all of those factors in partnerships with business at all levels, with local government—various local governments of all political persuasions, from the small to the biggest—with the federal government and with community organisations.

The report from budget Estimates Committee A—the excellent majority report—also talked about a range of things that we are doing. It talked about our target industries—light metals, aviation, biotechnology and information technology, and value adding to food. We heard the Premier this morning, and myself yesterday, in ministerial statements talking about the Orafti package. We have talked about minerals and value adding to minerals, new minerals development, the manufacturing industry and how we make sure that we get the best out of our manufacturing industries in this state as we value add to food and to minerals.

I would just like to talk briefly about the pedestrian bridge for a minute. I again want to put it on the record that I have always been prepared to answer every question that is asked of me about it. I made the comment that the member for Gregory spoke of it at the estimates hearing. He wanted to sit there all night and ask me questions about the South Bank bridge. I was prepared to continue to answer his questions and provide the detail. If you are not prepared to ask the questions, you do not get the answers.

The PNG pipeline is another one that I have explained a number of times before in this parliament. I believe I did that also at the estimates hearing, but it bears repeating. It is a major project, but we cannot create a market that is not there. The government has put the policy in place and we have put the support in place with our initiative to have 15 per cent alternatives to coal and energy generation. The major proponents, Exxon, Oil Search and Chevron, are out there testing the market now. At the end of the day, they have to make a commercial decision about whether it is viable.

**Dr WATSON** (Moggill—Lib) (4.00 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to enter into the debate on Estimates Committee A. In doing so, first of all I thank the members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to ask some questions of the Treasurer during his time before the committee. I appreciate particularly the courtesy given to me by the Chairman, the member for Bulimba, and the Deputy Chairman, the member for Toowoomba South.

Today, I would like to raise a few issues that I did not have the opportunity, because of time constraints, to raise during that series of questions. I am going to concentrate mainly on the

economic and statistical research section of the Treasury Portfolio Statements. When I looked at the economic and statistical research section for last year's budget and for this year's budget, I noticed that one area had dropped out of this year's budget papers, and that was the coordination of the labour market focus group and the whole-of-government labour market research agenda.

I noticed that, for this year, the government—and in particular Treasury—has downplayed the emphasis on labour market research. I took the opportunity to look at the portfolio statements for the Employment Minister to see whether or not that area had been picked up in another government portfolio. It certainly was not emphasised there. That leads me to the conclusion that, in terms of labour market research and in terms of having any focus on labour market research, this government, which was elected for its first term on the chant of jobs, jobs, jobs, in this term has certainly failed to continue that kind of supposed emphasis.

I would have thought that if the government was really interested in generating jobs, one of the things that it would want to do would be to make sure that it was looking at every possible avenue for creating jobs and looking at every aspect of the labour market. The fact that that area has dropped out of the Treasury Portfolio Statements and has not appeared elsewhere within the government portfolio statements would seem to indicate to me quite clearly that the government has changed its emphasis on that area.

The second aspect of economic and statistical research that I found interesting, and which did appear in other parts of the portfolio statements, was the fact that the government has continually changed the measures. On pages 31 and 32 of section 1 of the portfolio statements, in terms of quantity, eight of the 10 output measures are new measures. The first two have been dropped out. In terms of quality, one out of the three is a new measure; in terms of timeliness, two out of the four are new measures; and in terms of location, one out of the three is a new measure. The concern that I have is that if the government has changed the orientation of the budget to an output-oriented budget process—and that is reasonable and appropriate—it cannot continually change the types of measures that it is using if it is going to have any comparability from one budget to the next.

I notice that just before the budget was handed down the Treasurer brought in an updated Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility. One aspect of that was transparency and accountability. We do not get transparency and accountability if the government continually changes from one year to the next the measures that are being used. I hope that in the future we see some consistency in the output measures that are being provided in the budget statements to allow at least some idea of accountability and transparency.

I know that things have changed and I know that the government's argument is that it is adding some more detail. But the point that I want to make is that the government has dropped out things. By doing that, it makes it impossible for an opposition, or other people in the community, to make comparisons. I think that if the government is interested in accountability and transparency, that is an issue.

Another point along the same lines, which I made during the budget debate but which I repeat, is that in budget paper No. 2 the government has dropped out the presentation of the budget in terms of generally accepted accounting standards. The government has reported everything in only GFS format. That is fine if we are looking for comparability across governments in Australia, but it is not fine when we are trying to compare across different kinds of organisations. I would like to see that come back into the budget process in the future.

Time expired.

Report adopted.

### **Estimates Committee B Report**

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Mr McNamara): Order! The question is—

That the report of Estimates Committee B be adopted.

**Mr WILSON** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (4.06 p.m.): As Chair of Estimates Committee B, it gives me great pleasure to speak in support of the report that has been tabled in the Parliament. Estimates Committee B covered the portfolio areas of Attorney-General, Justice, Police, Corrective Services, Tourism, Racing, Fair Trading and Liquor Licensing.



The estimates committee process is extremely important. The budget was tabled in this House on 19 June and on 22 June the House referred these portfolio areas to Estimates Committee B for examination in detail in terms of how the appropriation bill affected those portfolio areas. The committee process is an important one for guaranteeing scrutiny by the parliament of the proposed expenditure by the government in the relevant areas. It enables public exposure so that the community can be satisfied with the accountability of the government in terms of its expenditure and in terms of its policy direction. Of course, the committees function in an open arena. The public and the media are able to have access to the committees.

On behalf of the whole committee I want to express my appreciation for the contributions made by Ministers Welford, McGrady and Rose to the estimates committee process. Also on behalf of the committee I express my appreciation to the ministerial staff, the departmental staff, the parliamentary staff and the support staff, particularly those who assisted the committee. I also extend my thanks to each and every one of the committee members for their contribution and their involvement.

I make the overall statement that across those three portfolio areas I am incredibly impressed by the responsive performances of the relevant ministers and their departments. They confirmed my confidence, as expressed previously, in this fourth Beattie Labor government budget.

In the time available it is not possible to cover all of the important areas of the three portfolios examined by the committee. Instead I will focus on key initiatives in the Police portfolio. The Beattie Labor government's commitment to being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime has never been more evident than by this year's allocation to the Queensland Police Service—the largest allocation in history. This record budget totals \$870 million for operating costs, which represents a massive \$69 million or 8.6 per cent increase over the previous financial year's allocation. The budget also allocates \$86 million for capital spending.

The Police budget offers a plethora of highlights, including 300 additional police, 60 additional civilian positions, the continuation of the service's 10-year capital works program, and to that we need to add spending in the order of \$2.5 million for communication upgrades and enhancements, half a million for forensic science enhancements, \$7.5 million to increase the services available in the scientific facilities area, \$7 million for new computers, a further half a million dollars to enhance the service's capability in addressing drugs and \$1.9 million for the statewide provision of DNA services.

In addition to this, all communities will appreciate the importance of having police beats and police shopfronts to provide a strong and visible police presence as a deterrent to crime. The Beattie government's commitment to 10 new shopfronts and 10 new police beats in this term of government has received a healthy start, with six new neighbourhood police beats being funded in this budget at Holloways Beach, Tullawong, North Ipswich, the Redbank and Goodna area, Rochedale South and Oxley. Four new police beat shopfronts will also be established soon in Cannon Park, Castletown, Springfield and Morayfield. There is also a busy schedule this financial year for the construction of new police stations at Calamvale, Fraser Island and Loganholme, for replacement police stations at Agnes Water and Eumundi, and replacement police stations and watch-houses at Palm Island and Toowoomba.

When that is added up, it is obvious that community safety is being placed high on the agenda in this budget and it shows that the Beattie Labor government's commitment to the Queensland Police Service is unquestionable. The budget will ensure that the Queensland Police Service is in good shape and more than adequately funded into the future.

I was further encouraged by the announcement in the estimates committee hearing that another key election commitment is being met by the introduction of the first five tactical crime squads by the end of the year. During the course of this term, 16 squads will be set up. Those squads will consist of 14 officers and will be introduced over a period. I urge the House to support the committee's recommendations.

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (4.11 p.m.): I thank other members of the committee and, particularly, members of the committee secretariat for the work that they did during the estimates process. I am not sure that I would absolutely agree with the chairman that everything was as rosy as he sought to elucidate. I found some issues were concerning. I would like to speak about the two ministers of the portfolios that I had the opportunity to question, those of the Attorney-General and the Minister for Fair Trading. Generally, they entered the process with

a fair spirit of cooperation and attempted to provide the information that I required. However, some issues were raised that I do have some concerns about and I want to touch on those.

I asked the Attorney-General about staff in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. I asked if he could provide a breakdown of the crime rates across Queensland and the work of those particular offices. From reading the budget it is clearly intended that staff numbers across Queensland are going to be maintained. However, there are some areas of concern. In particular, if one looks at the Toowoomba Office of the DPP, there has been about a 50 per cent reduction in the number of people who actually prosecute. There has been a reduction from four staff down to two, and they are the people who hold positions above administrative positions. That is of particular concern.

The Attorney-General sought to justify this by saying that it was okay because there has been some drop in the number of matters being referred to that particular office. I find it extremely strange that the budget papers also contain an indication that crime is increasing, yet we are going to be cutting the number of DPP staff. This is particularly concerning for other areas across Queensland. If the Attorney-General wants to use that logic, then places such as Maroochydore, which has seen a reduction in its case load from 1,010 to 839 in the last year, would also have to see a commensurate reduction in staff. The same sort of thing would apply for Beenleigh and Townsville according to figures provided in answers to questions on notice.

Another issue that concerned me and that I brought up at the committee hearing is the operation of the drug courts. I will concede that this Attorney-General has only taken over this matter in recent times and is probably trying to close ranks to ensure that what he has been left with is going to work reasonably well. However, it is quite clear that the intention of the government now, following the two years of the trial, is to have half the number of people going through the program than was originally intended. The previous Attorney-General had said that about 600 people would be involved; the current Attorney-General is indicating about 150 each year. I accept that, but certainly it is not the original intention. It appears to me that that indicates a lack of appropriate resources and commitment to the program.

There are other issues that concern me with regard to drug courts and the Attorney-General knows what they are. I have always indicated that there needs to be at least two, if not three, regular drug tests of participants each week. In answers to questions I asked on notice, the indication from the Attorney-General was that each week there are only, on average, about 1.23 to about 1.25 tests done on individuals. That is the range that I can work out. That is not good enough. It needs to be improved in line with other states. That is of particular concern to me. It was indicated to the committee that 26 people had absconded from the program. One of those has been at large for 46 weeks. That person may have been caught by now. Four of them have absconded for between 12 and 13 weeks and a whole raft of them have absconded for up to 38 weeks.

Another matter that I would like to touch on very briefly relates to the answers given by the Minister for Fair Trading on her portfolio of censorship. I asked her about the compliance checks that she was undertaking of sex shops to ensure that they were not selling illegal videos. She has indicated subsequent to the committee hearing, in an answer to a question on notice, that there had been no compliance checks in the year 2000-01. That is an absolute mockery, because people are not going to voluntarily report finding outlawed videos in those places. It is up to her department to allocate the resources to ensure that there are regular and proper compliance checks and prosecutions, rather than having to respond to pressure from the opposition and the *Sunday Mail*. It is appalling that we have a minister in this state who is not ensuring that one part of her portfolio is being overseen properly and that the law is being upheld.

**Hon. R. J. WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (4.16 p.m.): I thank all members of the committee for their work in the estimates hearings. As I indicated in the course of the hearings, I believe that this budget demonstrates our government's commitment—the commitment of a true Labor government—to making justice accessible to all Queenslanders. Not only are we providing further protection for people's rights; we are also contributing to our government's goal of making communities safer. It is an opportunity for Queenslanders to focus on the differences between our government and the opposition parties.

We are delivering like never before on legal aid. Over the next four years an additional \$10 million will ensure that legal assistance is available to those who need it most. Two million dollars is being allocated over the same period to community legal centres as a result of a landmark funding formula between the Legal Aid Office and the Independent Community Legal Centres Association. For the first time ever, this will ensure job security for staff in community legal

centres and give them the motivation to get on with the job of providing access to legal education, legal information, and advice to communities right across Queensland.

Since we came to office, the state's contribution to legal aid funding has risen by a full 50 per cent from \$14.4 million in 1997-98, the years when the coalition was in office, to \$22.4 million in this financial year. That funding is now a full 150 per cent of what it was only a few years ago. The attitude of the conservative parties, the Liberal and National Parties, to legal aid is best demonstrated by what their colleagues are doing at the federal level currently. They have abandoned disadvantaged Queenslanders and slashed their contribution to legal assistance.

The member for Southern Downs spent some time in the estimates hearing talking about the drug courts. I believe that the drug courts have been an outstanding pilot program. It is true that not as many people are being dealt with through rehabilitation orders as had been anticipated. The level of assistance and rehabilitation supervision provided by Corrective Services and Health staff has been much more intensive than anyone, regardless of the politics of the government, would have anticipated.

I think an average of more than one drug test a week is more than enough in a pilot program. I do not know whether the member for Southern Downs thinks that people should be tested every day, but the reality is that it would be prohibitively costly to run the program any more intensively in terms of the level of supervision than is currently occurring. What I suggest to the member for Southern Downs, or indeed any other honourable member who would like to be better apprised of how the drug courts are operating, is that they go down to the drug courts at Beenleigh or Ipswich and see how they operate. All of the feedback I am getting, not just from government departmental officials but also from people outside the system, is that they are functioning extremely effectively. The relationship that has developed between the rehabilitating offender and the magistrate in these courts is quite exceptional and is truly different in our legal system. It is proving to be a real success.

There are a number of people who fail to complete the program or who from time to time lapse. That is the nature of any addiction, whether it be to alcohol, marijuana or drugs of any kind. But most of those people manage to get back on the rails. It is true that some do not, and for them the consequence is to go to prison. So in that sense the system works. What we are at least doing—and I know the opposition supports this, because it shared the concept in prospect—is seeking to keep out of prison people who have some prospect of rehabilitation. I thank all members for their contributions.

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (4.21 p.m.): I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments about Estimates Committee B. The chairman of the committee said in his report to the House that the estimates committee process is important. It is and it can be valuable when it is conducted properly. However, I think Estimates Committee B was not conducted properly with respect to the portfolios of Police and Corrective Services, of which I have carriage as the shadow minister.

It is pretty safe to say that the whole episode was a complete waste of time and money because of the attitude adopted by the minister. His approach of reading answers from a prepared script that had nothing to do with the question and taking a full three minutes to read that type of answer simply turned the whole process into a farce. It is worth noting that not all estimates committees this year were like that, but this one was particularly bad in that respect. It did not fulfil the purpose of the estimates committee. It was a waste of my time, a waste of the minister's time and a waste of the time of the very senior police officers in attendance. Unless the people who chair estimates committees are prepared to bring that sort of thing to a halt and allow a proper interchange and force a minister to answer questions at least with some relevance, the whole process should be abandoned completely. It is a complete waste of time and money when it is conducted in that manner and it certainly adds nothing to the reputation or credibility of the minister.

The budgetary approach to the portfolio of Police and Corrective Services reflects the attitude that the Labor government has to the Police Service. It has become a convenient political football that the government squeezes for maximum publicity. But their attitude to the police, in my opinion, is open to question. Our police do a heck of a tough job and they are taken for granted most of the time by most of us. They deserve the best in terms of facilities and equipment.

A good example of the real approach of this government to the Police Service is the police capital works budget, which was cut by \$4.4 million. For the first time in its history, the Police Service was forced to borrow. It was forced to borrow \$22.2 million. This is a Police Service that

has to put up with old and unsuitable police stations up and down the state. Almost everywhere I go in my shadow portfolio I find examples of police stations that are old and overcrowded and of policemen being accommodated in dongas and old suburban houses that have problems with security and overcrowding and certainly are not suitable for modern policing. That is the reality of the issue that the minister and the government have tried to gloss over in the presentation of this budget. It extends through to the police academy and police housing. Members should travel around and see some of the housing that police officers have to put up with in rural and regional areas. The rhetoric from the minister and the government is so much different from the reality.

We also expressed concerns about the operational budget that the Police Service has been asked to work with. We tried to explore the overemphasis on traffic management and the revenue from speeding fines. Without exception we could not get an answer to any of the questions that we asked. It is worth noting that what we are talking about was whether or not the minister's and the department's allocation of resources was according to the right priorities. When we look at a comparison of the resources that the Drug Squad was given and the resources the Traffic Branch was given, it is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that the priorities are all wrong.

In terms of the Corrective Services side of the portfolio, it is safe to say that the estimates committee merely reinforced the pretty obvious position that the minister has made an absolute shambles of that side of his portfolio. I take the opportunity to repeat the call that I made in the press for the minister to be replaced. He is quite simply unable to cope with that portfolio. It is pretty obvious that we have had a panic situation in terms of prisoners on leave, and the number of escapes and absconds is something that is of concern to all Queenslanders.

**Ms JARRATT** (Whitsunday—ALP) (4.27 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the report of Estimate Committee B, which examined the portfolio budget papers of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and the Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading. This being my first involvement with estimates hearings I feel I must comment on the professionalism of all involved and pay a special tribute to the ministers involved on the day. I congratulate them on the depth of knowledge they displayed with regard to their respective portfolio areas and the courteous and respectful manner with which they responded to members' questions.

**Mr Wilson:** They certainly left the opposition for dead.

**Ms JARRATT:** Indeed. In speaking to the report I intend to highlight a range of issues raised during the committee. The first of these relates to the opening statement made by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice in which he outlined budget initiatives designed to deliver on the government's commitment to the creation of an equitable justice system which provides protection for people's rights and contributes to the development of better and safer communities.

One of the principles that lies at the very heart of a healthy democratic society is that of equitable access to the justice system. I was therefore pleased to note that \$10 million has been allocated to Legal Aid Queensland over the next four years to ensure that legal assistance will be available to those who need it, not just those who can afford it. This initiative will be of enormous benefit to a range of people in Queensland and will most especially benefit the socially and financially marginalised citizens of our state.

I note also that additional funding has been provided to support the ongoing drug court trial in south-east Queensland, as well as looking to expand the initiative into regional areas of the state. Dealing with the issue of drugs in our society is difficult and fraught with emotion, but I am proud to note that the Beattie government and the Attorney-General are not ducking the issue; rather they are meeting it head-on. I applaud the leadership displayed on this issue, despite the best attempts of some sections of the media to derail the process. I also note with pleasure that the initiative has the bipartisan support of the member for Southern Downs. It is this type of cooperation that ultimately gives us the best chance of responding in a meaningful way to the very real issues surrounding substance abuse.

During our examination of the portfolio budget for the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, I was pleased to note that the drug court trial is supported by the Department of Corrective Services through the provision of case management, which includes a program of intensive supervision. I applaud the multi-department approach taken on this issue and would urge all ministers to consider how they, too, can join the cooperative fight against drug addiction. Finally on this issue, I welcome the proposed expansion of the concept of drug courts to north Queensland, where I am sure their introduction will ultimately provide an opportunity for people in my own electorate to break their drug habit by undergoing rehabilitation instead of going to jail.

I turn now to an examination of the budget for the Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading. This is an area of the budget in which I take special interest as tourism is a major source of wealth and job creation in my electorate of Whitsunday. It was, therefore, heartening to receive the minister's assurance that base funding for Tourism Queensland and regional tourism organisations such as Tourism Whitsundays has indeed been significantly boosted over the past two budgets. This is a welcome budget initiative as funding for regional tourism organisations provides these bodies with the means to continue the fantastic work they do in promoting and growing this vibrant industry.

At this point I would like to pay tribute to John Dean, the Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Whitsundays, and the board of Tourism Whitsundays whose leadership, hard work and vision has helped to make the Whitsundays a recognisable, desirable destination that offers a quality product. Nowhere was this more apparent than at the recent state tourism awards where local operators were successful in winning five awards. Seven other local operators were finalists in their field. I congratulate all winners and finalists on their superb contribution to their industry.

I wish also to highlight the minister's reference to the growing tourism strategy. This is a strategy for a whole-of-government approach to the tourism industry that aims to make all areas of government aware of the policy, planning and funding linkages that exist to support and grow tourism initiatives. I commend the minister for her enthusiasm and commitment and I applaud her efforts on behalf of the people of Queensland towards making tourism the No. 1 industry in the state. Indeed, if today's *Courier-Mail* is to be believed, this objective is well on the way to being met with headlines declaring 'Tourism set to kickstart employment' and the story detailing the high level of confidence in the industry allied with a readiness to take on more employees. This is great news for Queensland. Again, I say: well done, Minister.

Finally, I take this opportunity to give due recognition to the committee chair, my fellow committee members and the research director, Andrew Timperley, for their fine work. I commend the report to the House.

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (4.31 p.m.): In speaking to this estimates committee report, I want to touch on some of the issues of tourism. We all note that tourism is a growth area in Queensland and has tremendous potential for growth in jobs and for doing a lot about the unemployment statistics. However, it is very disappointing that this government is actually spending less on tourism than it was three years ago. It is spending less on events tourism than it was a number of years ago. It is spending less in marketing. When there is so much potential in this industry to further cut the unemployment figures, you would think that this government would put the funds into really growing tourism. I acknowledge the Growing Tourism strategy which currently is just a glossy brochure, the details of which have not been released publicly. We will certainly be looking forward to seeing the detail of that particular policy.

I note that the minister says it will be funded from existing budgets. But, as I have stated, we have seen something like a \$5 million fall-off in funding to tourism in the last three years. During the estimates process the minister said that another \$2 million should have been accounted for in the budget papers but it was not because they were a bit late getting the details to the printers, and that was for the Goodwill Games. I would accept the minister's explanation in this regard except for the fact that the budget papers did mention the Goodwill Games funding but that the \$2 million funding did not appear in the bottom line of the budget papers. So regardless of that discrepancy in the budget papers, there has been a significant fall-off in funding in events tourism also.

Since the estimates process it has come to light that outback tourism offices are being relocated. Here we are with the Year of the Outback next year and outback tourism offices are being relocated from the outback to Brisbane! It seems crazy to think that that job should be done and that those policies and directions should be formulated in Brisbane. The people of the outback are asking why their offices are being taken away. I think they have a right to be angry. They have a right to ask how it could really be in the best interests of promoting outback tourism to no longer have those officers there at the coalface with those who are delivering the services and trying to promote the wonderful tourist attractions in our outback. I would like to bring this to the attention of the House.

We note that the inbound tourism operators will welcome the moves that the minister has mentioned in regard to the industry code of conduct. Obviously, this is something that the industry is very keen to see happen quickly. One aspect that I feel needs attention in the liquor licensing area, which is also part of this portfolio, is the fact that the minister did not know that the department had failed to meet its targets in terms of putting liquor licensing officers into

indigenous communities. Considering that there is great concern about problems in indigenous communities—and I acknowledge there are problems in white communities as well—this delay as outlined in the budget papers is extremely disappointing. I think this shows that there needs to be better coordination and direction in achieving these objectives and trying to address these problems.

The draft Queensland cruise shipping plan was mentioned in budget papers several years ago and it is mentioned once again in these budget papers. The minister said that the draft will be available to the industry fairly soon. We acknowledge that there is tremendous potential once again not only in the south-east corner but also throughout regional Queensland to really develop this industry. It has taken years for us to see even the draft of the cruise shipping plan. There is so much potential not only for the bigger craft but also for some of the super-yachts—the maxi-yachts—to really take that industry into the regions and to value add to our tourism industries in these areas.

In short, what we see in relation to the tourism industry is a lot of lip-service with the Premier standing up here in parliament this morning talking about events and then spending less on them. At the end of the day, if the government wants to maximise tourism and maximise the jobs, the Premier cannot get up in this place and say that he supports tourism and then not supply the level of funding that was supplied several years ago. That just does not make sense. It does not maximise the jobs that this great state could really see come about in the tourism industry. As I have gone around talking to people, I have found that it seems the government's actions have not instilled a lot of confidence in the tourism industry that there is recognition that it really is an engine-room industry. The government has to recognise that by putting its money where its mouth is and really funding the programs not only in marketing but also in infrastructure over and above existing programs.

**Hon. T. McGRADY** (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (4.36 p.m.): I initially express my thanks and appreciation to the chair of our committee for the very professional way in which he conducted the proceedings and also to all of those members who participated with their questions and comments. It is regrettable that the shadow minister once again played the man rather than the ball, but I will ignore the comments he made.

The important thing about the estimates debate is that it ensures that the various ministers really get to understand their portfolio and, in particular, how it works. I recall that when the estimates process was first introduced into this parliament there was a lot of opposition. Over the years it has proven to be highly successful and certainly makes the operations of the parliament tick. It gives the backbenchers the opportunity to question ministers, and I think that is important.

I will just comment briefly on the police side of my portfolio. Despite some of the comments which have been made, this year's budget gave the Queensland Police Service an 8.6 per cent increase. It is the largest budget that the service has ever had. I want to stress that: it is the largest budget that the Queensland Police Service has ever had. There will be around 300 additional police officers this year. The increase will be the same each year until 2005, when we will review the situation. Contained in these budget documents is funding for new police stations around the state or renovations to existing ones.

Everywhere I go—and I am getting around to a lot of the police stations—community members are saying to me that what we need is more police, more police stations, more shopfronts, more police beats and more police youth clubs, and in recent times they are wanting liaison officers. We will eventually fulfil the requests that have been received, but nobody can deliver the wish list which people have put together.

The fact that the police budget has increased by 8.6 per cent should demonstrate to this parliament and to the people of the state where our priorities lie. It is easy for people to put numbers or names in a hat and pick them out and say, 'You should be spending \$12 million here or \$6 million somewhere else.' Life does not work that way. Rather, we are saying to the people of Queensland that we have priorities, and this budget addresses those priorities.

One vital initiative contained in the budget is the flying squad, which consists of a group of men and women, mostly detectives but also uniformed officers. If there is a drug-related problem or crimes against property, the flying squad can immediately go to that place to assist the local police. They will not take the place over but will assist the local police. That is an initiative of this government.

During discussion at the estimates the same old issue was raised, and it was raised here again today. The shadow minister is once again trying to allege that the Police Service is \$22.5 million worse off this year because of some sort of loan. That was explained to him in detail at the estimates hearing. It was explained to him in the media. We also gave him an invitation to come and sit down with us so we could give him a lesson in how budgets are framed. He is trying to scare the people. He is a phoney. He is a fraud.

The other point I want to raise in the short time that I have left is CHOGM. Those opposite are trying to give the impression that we do not have sufficient funds for CHOGM. They are trying to make out that we do not have sufficient funds in this budget to pay overtime. That is a complete and utter nonsense. As I explained, we have a memorandum of agreement with the Commonwealth. It will be financially supporting and assisting our Police Service and emergency services. We have assurances from Treasury that there are sufficient funds to meet all the—

Time expired.

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel—NPA) (4.42 p.m.): I firstly convey my appreciation because construction of the North Rockhampton Police Station has commenced. This will be an excellent amenity to north Rockhampton, which has approximately 75 per cent of the population of the city. There was previously an old police station not very far away from the Rockhampton Central Police Station. I made a pact with the people of north Rockhampton when I was running for office in 1992 that I would try to obtain a Medicare service, an ambulance service, a fire station and a police station.

I am very happy to report that all of those facilities have now been delivered. I do not take full credit for all of these things. Despite our political differences, we work as a team in north Rockhampton. We have all played a role. However, I played a particular role for my area and have pursued those issues day in and day out. I have had fights not only with the conservative government but also with the Labor Party government in the interests of the people of north Rockhampton. My next project is to secure an outpatient centre for north Rockhampton.

I appreciate the fact that over time additional police officers have been allocated to Yeppoon. However, we are behind the eight ball in this area. At times the area has had only 11 uniformed officers when the established norm is 15 personnel. The area is also down one detective, that is, from three to two. There are three Water Police, which is the full complement at the present time.

I am also very pleased to report that our very hardworking officer in charge, John Hemray, who unexpectedly suffered a stroke, appears to have got over it and is now back on duty. I am very happy to report that. I just hope that he does not overdo things and find himself in bother again. He is an excellent police officer with a very good command of his men and women. He looks after us as best he can. However, Yeppoon needs more officers. I have spoken to the minister about this. He has been courteous, and I appreciate it. Further action as soon as possible would be very much appreciated in the interests of the people. I will continue to pursue that issue.

Cawarral also needs a police station. Cawarral is a small town in the middle of Keppel Sands, Coowonga, Mount Chalmers and Tungamull. There is a police officer to patrol the busy connecting road between the Emu Park-Rockhampton Highway and the Yeppoon-Rockhampton Highway. At the moment it is only a demountable police station. I believe it is time to start planning a proper police station so that it can be built in the not-too-distant future. If that were the case, that police officer could anticipate many problems around the area before they occurred.

Another issue of concern is drugs, and so it should be of concern to each and every member of this parliament. Drugs seems to be the one issue that no government, no political party or any other organisation in the world is getting on top of. We now find that even more awful drugs are coming into our country. Everybody is doing a good job in trying to overcome the problem, but there are professional mongrels out there who are doing the wrong thing by our young people and some of our older people. I call on this parliament, the Commonwealth government and everyone else to forget about politics and get on with the job of trying to overcome the horrendous drug problem that we have in this country. The drug problem seems to be getting much worse more quickly in this country than in other parts of the world.

**Mr LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (4.47 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to support the report of Estimates Committee B. Firstly, let me record my thanks to the parliamentary staff, particularly Andrew Timperley, the research assistant, and Merle Lockett, the executive assistant. I also thank the Hansard reporters and the ministers and their departmental staff for the very

professional manner in which they approached this estimates committee hearing. Thanks also to our chairman, Geoff Wilson, for his efficiency, fairness and good humour during the hearing. I certainly disagree with the member for Callide, who was critical of the chairman. But, of course, he did not say anything about it at the appropriate time. Thanks also to the other members of the committee.

It is not possible in the time available today to cover all aspects of the committee's report. However, I will touch on a few of the more important issues. In relation to the Attorney-General's portfolio, \$10 million has been allocated over the next four years to Legal Aid Queensland. The minister mentioned—and this is an important issue, certainly to an old solicitor like me—that Legal Aid funding has risen 50 per cent from \$14.4 million in 1997-98 to \$21.7 million this financial year. That benefits a range of disadvantaged groups in our community, including indigenous women, assault victims, the mentally ill, children and so on.

The drug courts trial being conducted at Southport is an opportunity to break the drug cycle and to benefit offenders by offering them a chance to rehabilitate rather than go to jail. Another \$1.6 million has been allocated for the drug courts trial.

Another important issue in the Attorney-General's Department is the State Penalties Enforcement Registry. The purpose of that program is threefold: first, to ensure that the imposition of fines remains an effective penalty for our courts and that fines are recovered; second, to ensure that fine defaulters pay their debts to the community; and, third, of course, to keep fine defaulters out of jail. It is a system designed to provide people who have had a fine imposed on them with the greatest possible opportunity to pay that fine.

Some of the matters relevant to Police and Corrective Services have already been mentioned by the minister. The Tactical Crime Squad is a particularly welcome initiative. One of those squads will be located on the Gold Coast. The Beattie Labor government of course recognised the need for a balance in corrective services between providing funding for capital works and so on to ensure that prisons are secure and providing funds for rehabilitation.

The member for Callide made an attack on the minister and provided a reservation statement to the committee report. He said in that statement—this comment is indicative of the whole statement—that it was confirmed there had been 41 escapes and absconds from custodial correctional services in the past year, an unacceptably high number for which the minister must take great responsibility. The fact is that in 1997-98, under the coalition government, there were 53 absconds and escapes, and in the previous year there were 68. That just shows the hypocrisy of the member for Callide. This dissenting report is nothing but a montage of selective facts and misleading and politically motivated assertions. He refers to the credibility and reputation of the minister. Certainly this statement does nothing for the credibility and reputation of the member for Callide, but then I do not suppose he has much to worry about in that regard.

In the time I have remaining I will deal with the portfolio of Tourism and Racing. First, I am pleased to see that the \$2 million training track subsidy has been continued. I say that probably with a bit of selfish interest because, although it goes through the Queensland Principal Club, \$240,000 goes to the Gold Coast Turf Club, the largest training facility in Queensland. It has almost 600 horses in training at the Gold Coast. That club is very appreciative of the training track subsidy.

Time expired.

**Mr FLYNN** (Lockyer—ONP) (4.52 p.m.): One of the things I have noticed in this House is the propensity of members to fall into the trap of making repetitive speeches. Sometimes it is quite necessary, but I do not intend to take up the time of the House by repeating comments made particularly by the member for Southern Downs and also other members of the opposition in relation to the portfolio of Police and Corrective Services.

Overall, I was quite satisfied with the presentation by the Minister for Police to the estimates committee. However, I will revisit the issue referred to in a question I placed on notice. I am not asking the minister a question here, but merely raising the matter in order that he consider it. I questioned the financial resources available to police in remote areas to support hardware supplies, software and staff training. In his reply the minister indicated that the service is implementing a range of strategies for software and hardware support. Despite asking a supplementary question during the hearings, I was unable to elicit any figures.

Whilst I accept the intent of both the government and the service to in fact provide such support, I have grave concerns, in the absence of a specific budget, that we will return to the events and habits of yesteryear, with police training themselves and tinkering with expensive IT



products of which they have little knowledge. At this point I simply ask the minister to remind the service that, with our move towards the Smart State, we must be certain that our country cousins do not miss out on training in using resources now integral to operational policing.

I am extraordinarily concerned also about the lack of expenditure in areas of vital workplace health and safety, most particularly watch-houses and police stations. Whilst Beaudesert is not my electorate, it is well known that I served there as a police officer. I must here reiterate the totally unsatisfactory state of the watch-house at Beaudesert. I concede that the Commissioner of Police took my point on that issue and undertook to examine it. Despite this, I must urge the minister to ensure that we do not wait until it is too late to spend some money on that particular watch-house, as it is a suicide waiting to occur.

This matter has been addressed, not only by the officer presently in charge of that station, but also by most who have gone before. Their concerns have fallen to a large extent on deaf ears on the part of governments of both political persuasions. I have personally experienced the situation of a rather small person succeeding in forcing half his body out of the space in the door provided for feeding. The prisoner was close to cracking his ribs and found it hard to breathe. Whilst calling the fire brigade was considered, we succeeded in a rescue with a bar of soap. I ask the minister: please, before this gets more serious, fix it.

These kinds of problems are endemic—no more so in my electorate than in any other, but having seen these establishments I am ashamed to put human beings in them. We know that the minister is aware of these issues, but the government cannot place them too far down the priority list. Poor workplace conditions frequently lead to poor workplace performance.

Finally, I ask the minister to recall his answer to my question on notice No. 10. I asked if there was any flexibility in the budget guidelines permitting the Queensland Police Service to adjust regional and district budgets without impacting on the operational divisional level. In his reply he identified the fact that his office does not address the adjustment of budget allocations to operational functions. I ask the minister to examine the possibility of requiring overshoots in budget at senior level to be directed upwards rather than towards operational levels, which makes it easier for some management to correct budgetary inefficiencies in their own office.

Overall, I believe that the core of the service would support at least the efforts of the minister and the commissioner, but I must say that their efforts do not always translate into satisfactory results. The fault, I believe, may lie with a lack of coordination between the service's bookkeepers and the people who spend the money.

There are many miles to travel before the financial approach to policing is anywhere near perfect. Might I suggest to the minister that he be careful examining what might be termed by the QPS as wish lists from the divisional level and comparing these with the undoubtedly sanitised final report from the service bean counters. With these reservations, I was by and large satisfied with the intent of the budget.

**Hon. M. ROSE** (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (4.57 p.m.): I first thank the member for Ferny Grove for the excellent work he did in chairing the committee and for the conduct of the committee. I also extend my thanks to all members. I am pleased that the committee has recommended the proposed expenditure for the Department of Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading as outlined in the Appropriation Bill 2001.

As I said to Estimates Committee B, the 2001-02 financial year will be one of enormous challenge for the Department of Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading. Tourism is the second largest employer in this state, generating almost 150,000 jobs. This government will continue to ensure that Queensland remains top of mind for both domestic and international visitors, and initiatives within the budget provide continuing support for industry growth.

We will implement the Growing Tourism strategy—a blueprint for a whole-of-government approach to tourism and developing regional tourism. As part of the Growing Tourism strategy, a tourism aviation strategy will be developed to encourage international and national airlines to introduce new or expanded services to Queensland. This strategy, once developed, will position Queensland to be the most accessible Australian destination for both international and domestic travellers.

In this financial year Tourism Queensland has been handed record base funding of \$39.4 million. There is an additional \$1 million for international and domestic marketing, \$2 million for leverage off the Goodwill Games and another \$2 million for convention and incentive marketing. I am disappointed that again the member for Maroochydore claims there has been reduced funding for tourism. I say again: Tourism Queensland receives record base funding. It is

the highest of any state tourism organisation. Special funding is allocated for a specific purpose for a specific time but is not part of the base allocation. It now has record base funding—higher than any other state.

In support of the Beattie government's commitment to regional Queensland, our 14 regional tourism organisations will share an extra half a million dollars, taking total government support to \$5.1 million. Tourism Queensland will pay a GST component to ensure that the federal government's tax does not erode the marketing of the regions. The same payment will be made to our six convention bureaus.

The extra support for regional tourism complements the government's \$1 million a year regional events development program, which I recently launched in Townsville. In conjunction with the Department of State Development, we will also complete a cruise shipping plan that will reap rich rewards for the state, work to boost access to Queensland and continue to grow convention and events tourism. Tourism Queensland will also develop Internet gateway sites to target specific overseas markets: the US, the UK, Singapore, South Africa and the Middle East.

One of the most significant pieces of fair trading legislation, the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000, came into effect on 1 July. This legislation takes the industries into the 21st century and provides greater levels of protection for consumers and improved industry standards. It was introduced after exhaustive consultation with industry groups, consumers and other interested parties. Prior to implementation, the Office of Fair Trading conducted an extensive education campaign which attracted thousands of industry representatives and consumers to sessions across the state. More than 5,000 industry people and consumers attended the education sessions—3,900 for the real estate property sessions and around 1,200 for the motoring sessions.

In 2001-02, the Queensland Building Tribunal will receive an additional \$600,000. This funding boost will enable the tribunal to expand its jurisdiction to include commercial building disputes. Funding will help the tribunal to resolve domestic and commercial building and related disputes as quickly, economically and informally as possible. The Office of Fair Trading is taking a leading role in progressing an Australiawide system for alerting states and territories to scams and consumer complaints of national significance. The need for this type of alert is becoming increasingly important because of the effect of globalisation and the increasing speed with which scams can now spread throughout Australia and the world. The system will provide a means for sharing information between jurisdictions nationally and internationally.

The Liquor Licensing Division will continue to spread the responsible consumption of alcohol message across the state. In continuing its work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop relevant and workable solutions for the management of alcohol within their communities, an additional indigenous liquor licensing officer will be employed this year.

This budget again provides strong financial support to the Queensland racing industry via the Training Track Subsidy Scheme. In 2001-02, \$2 million has been allocated for the maintenance of training facilities established by racing clubs.

In closing, I would like to place on record my sincere appreciation to officers of the Department of Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading and Tourism Queensland for their highly professional work in preparation of the budget 2001 and the estimates process.

**Mr BELL** (Surfers Paradise—Ind) (5.02 p.m.): In making comparisons, I think that it is always important to ensure that one compares apples with apples. Although I have heard what the Honourable Minister for Tourism has said about comparing last year's funding and this year's funding for tourism, I have to agree with the honourable member for Maroochydore that at least in real terms—that is, allowing for inflation—tourism funding appears to have diminished. I accept the minister's statement that Tourism Queensland might be receiving record funding, but that does not mean that that is the correct amount of funding allowing for inflationary influences.

On page 2-7 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements it was indicated that last year the actual funding for Tourism Queensland was \$42.919 million and that the funding for this year was to be \$42.397 million. That is total or gross funding. I accept the explanation by the minister and her officers that this, which amounts to a reduction even in money terms, was the subject of explanation when one considered special grants. I agree that one has to take into account special grants when considering the total funding. However, when comparing apples with apples it is surely necessary to compare last year's base funding with this year's base funding or, alternatively, last year's base funding plus special grants with this year's base funding plus special grants.

I put it to the minister in the estimates committee that, comparing the two base years on the figures which the minister gave to me—they were not actually stated in the budget papers that I could find—last year's base figure of \$38.914 million compared with this year's base figure of \$39.397 million was only a fraction of the inflation rate increase. I said to the minister—

Finally, comparing the two base years, it would seem to me that the increase in actual money terms is roughly half a million dollars, which you referred to before, but there is no accounting for inflation at all. It would seem that the base in real terms has not kept pace with inflation. Is that correct?

The minister referred the matter to Mr de Waal, one of her senior officers, who said—

Certainly, there is a \$500,000 differential, as you have identified. As the minister has pointed out, the substantial incremental special grants that have been awarded will more than compensate ...

We either compare base with base—in which case we find an increase that does not keep pace with inflation—or we compare base and special grants with base and special grants, as Mr de Waal suggested. And in that case we find that the figures have gone down without even considering the matter of inflation.

I am rather concerned that tourism funding is, in fact, diminishing. I believe it should be increasing rather than diminishing. If I am wrong in my comparisons, I would be very grateful if someone pointed out where I am wrong. I cannot find any other base for the purpose of comparison of last year and this year. Nonetheless, the government must bring down its budget. I will not be opposing this motion. I will certainly be supporting it.

Report adopted.

### **Estimates Committee C Report**

**The CHAIRMAN:** The question is—

That the report of Estimates Committee C be adopted.

**Mrs LAVARCH** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (5.06 p.m.): Firstly, I would like to make a couple of general comments. It was an honour and a privilege to chair this estimates committee. I take this opportunity to thank my fellow committee members for their diligence, cooperation, assistance and commitment to the estimates process. One of our members is the member for Nicklin, Peter Wellington. I take this opportunity to wish Peter well and say that it is sad that he is not here to participate in the debate this afternoon.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the committee staff, the research director, Rob Hansen, and the administrative assistant, Tania Jackman, for their hard work, assistance and overall guidance. I also place on record my appreciation of the work undertaken by Hansard and the attendants for the committee during the public hearing. I acknowledge the cooperation of my colleagues the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads, the Honourable Steve Bredhauer, the Honourable Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, Robert Schwarten, and the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy, the Honourable Paul Lucas. I also acknowledge the assistance of their departmental officers in making information available to the committee.

In recent times there have been some who have questioned whether the estimates committee process is worth all the time, energy and resources allocated by departments and government agencies having regard to what is revealed at the public hearings. I firmly believe that the introduction of estimates committees by the Goss government was, and continues to be, a major positive reform and step forward for the Queensland parliament. It may well be that little is revealed during public hearings that is not already on the public record. But all this does is indicate how transparent and accountable the government is. But by the very fact that this process exists, I believe that departments and the executive are kept accountable not only to this parliament but also to the general Queensland community.

I also place on record a suggestion for the estimates committee next year which will examine the portfolio area of Innovation and Information Economy. As this was a new portfolio with what could be considered a small budget allocation, it was resolved by the committee to allow one hour and 15 minutes for questioning at the public hearing. On the day, it became obvious to me that this was insufficient time to properly examine the budget of this portfolio. Therefore, it is my suggestion that a longer period for questioning at the public hearing be allowed in the future.

I turn now to the report. Estimates Committee C examined the portfolio budgets of Transport and Main Roads, Innovation and Information Economy and Public Works and Housing. The total

appropriation provided to the Department of Transport and the Department of Main Roads for 2001 is \$2.96 billion, the total appropriation for Innovation and Information Economy for 2001 is \$180.39 million, and the total appropriation provided to the Department of Public Works and Housing is \$434.138 million. The report sets out issues that the committee raised with each minister and gives a snapshot of both the questions on notice and the questions without notice that were asked at the public hearing.

In relation to the portfolio of Transport and Main Roads, I was delighted to hear about the progress being made on the Petrie to Kippa Ring rail link. While the minister stressed that he would not be promising or announcing the construction of this rail link, I must say that he has certainly progressed this proposal further than any previous Transport Minister has in the hundred years or so that this project has been mooted. I also make particular mention of the work and programs being undertaken by Citytrain in relation to safety and security and their anti-graffiti program. In particular, I mention the work being done at the Lawnton Railway Station. I also want to make particular mention of the revelation that Citytrain collected \$37 million in GST in the year 2000-01. In relation to the Department of Main Roads, the minister revealed the lack of commitment by the Howard federal government on very much needed national road projects in Queensland. This affects the people of Pine Rivers and Caboolture owing to the lack of funding to six-lane the Bruce Highway all the way to Caboolture.

In relation to the portfolio of Innovation and Information Economy, I congratulate the minister on increasing my knowledge and enthusiasm for what his department does. I also congratulate the minister on departing from normal procedure by showing the committee, not telling us, about what his department does. I urge all members to acquaint themselves with the work, projects and programs of this department—projects and programs such as Reef Net, Access Queensland, i-STAR, ISUS and CSDP. Further, bioprospecting, biodiscovery and biotechnologies are all words that we need to learn.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.12 p.m.): In common with the member for Kurwongbah, today I would like to put on record my sincere best wishes to the member for Nicklin, Peter Wellington. I wish him a speedy recovery and I hope and pray that he will be back in the chamber and back in Nicklin before too long in a very able and healthy capacity. I wish Peter well.

Unfortunately, I have to report that again the committee hearings revealed the arrogance, incompetence and non-delivery of the Beattie Labor government, in particular of the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads. In answer to my questions, the minister had to admit a litany of budget blow-outs, project delays and failures to spend allocated funds at the very time when Queensland, under the direction of the Labor government, leads the Commonwealth in unemployment. It is almost criminal to have millions of dollars carried over because of the incompetence of this government. In Transport, the carryover from last year was \$117 million.

Some other examples include the Inner Northern Busway. The cost of the Inner Northern Busway has blown out from \$76 million to \$135 million. The cost for the South East Transit Project has increased from \$392 million in last year's capital outlays to \$599 million this year. I remind members that the cost of the Pacific Motorway between here and the Gold Coast was between \$750 million and \$900 million, depending on who they believe. Yet this government has spent two-thirds of that amount between here and Springwood.

The same applies to the Department of Main Roads. For example, the cost of the Nundah bypass has increased from \$35.2 million in 1998-99 to the current budget of \$50.7 million. Of the \$18 million that was allocated for the Gateway Motorway to Dohles Rocks Road, only \$12 million was spent. In terms of the duplication of the Bruce Highway between Yandina and Cooroy, of the \$32.5 million that was allocated last year only \$21 million was spent. Last year the Leichhardt Highway Dawson River project was allocated \$3 million. Do members know how much was spent? Absolutely not a brass razoo! The port of Brisbane motorway, which has the distinction of being the only major project actually initiated by this minister in three years, has increased in cost from \$111 million to \$121 million. That is a project that I support totally and one that I hope the minister can make absolutely certain is fast-tracked to enhance the export earnings of this state.

The minister admitted that the missing link in the Inner Northern Busway will be filled by two bus lanes along George Street. The certain result will be the further paralysis of the CBD, all because of the minister's inability to handle the Lord Mayor and to manage his bureaucracy. I say to the minister that he has to ride roughshod over him.

**Mr Bredhauer:** He said nice things about you. He said that you weren't a bad old bloke.

**Mr JOHNSON:** He reckons I am all right, but I have not heard what he has said about the minister.

The whole fraudulent saga of the recent rail fare increase has been referred to the ACCC. We will see how this government's arrogance goes down with Professor Fels.

The Cairns diesel tilt train is a scam. It always was and always will be. We will finally get the real cost, whether we get it through FOI or whether we get it through the media, or whatever. I say to the minister that I have correspondence from the former CEO and other people within QR saying just how much that project will cost. It far exceeds what the minister is saying. Taxpayers' money is being wasted on this minister's toy train while people are dying while waiting on hospital queues, while little old ladies are being bashed in their homes, while our kids are being subjected to a substandard education and while people in my electorate bring up families without the benefit of electricity.

From an administration point of view, the portfolio is a shambles. In the marine area, in addition to allowing tankers to rip the reef apart, the minister has been unable to introduce hull identification numbers to protect vessel ownership. He has scrapped the on-board treatment of sewage on recreational vessels because it is all too hard. He cannot even manage to administer the issue of marine pilots in his home town port of Cairns. He has the contracts issued and then he has to suspend the contracts because the pilots have not been trained. I say to the minister: please take control of this situation.

On the public transport front, we have a rumoured integrated ticketing project, which has been around for longer than the minister and is more likely to outlast him. We have one of the major regional bus companies telling the minister where to put his so-called commercial contracts. We now have the Brisbane City Council running services in the north-west Brisbane suburbs and shires at service standards inferior to those of the previous operator.

Time expired.

**Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER** (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (5.17 p.m.): The member for Gregory must have been at an estimates committee meeting different from the one I attended, because there he was, all meek and mild and eating humble pie all the time and being very nice, yet he has come in here today—

**Mr Johnson:** I asked you questions and you didn't answer them. How many of them did you answer?

**Mr BREDHAUER:** Ever single one on both portfolios. Obviously, the member took his angry pills before he came into this place, with his chest all puffed up to give me a bit of a towelling up, and he thinks that he has done a great job.

Let me start where he finished. I have a confession to make. The member for Gregory and the *Courier-Mail* are right. The cost of the tilt train project is \$138 million. The tilt train is going to take 26 hours to run between Cairns and Brisbane. Services are not going to start until 2003 after we take delivery of the units in 2002. I am very pleased that the member for Gregory and the *Courier-Mail* have finally twigged to the fact that those facts are true about the tilt train. Do members know why I am pleased that they have twigged to that? Because I put out a press release, which said in part—

The two new trains, to cost \$138 million ... Travel times between Brisbane and Cairns are likely to be cut by more than five hours to 26 hours.

And—

The new trains are expected to come into service in late 2002.

Do members know when I put out that press release? On 2 August 1999! The second anniversary of that press release is tomorrow. Yet today we are debating it. The member has been up and down the coast of Queensland whipping up apathy —

**Mr JOHNSON:** I rise to a point of order. The former coalition government and the former Goss government put in place a \$650 million upgrade of the main line. That was part of the operation between here and Cairns. The minister has had to go and spend now probably in excess of about \$400 million to upgrade that northern line so that he can run the tilt train. The minister should add that on to the bill.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Ms Phillips): Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** Madam Temporary Chair, he is taking my time and that is not fair. He has been up and down the coast of Queensland, whipping up apathy for the last 48 hours. I will tell

members what they did in Bundaberg. The local newspaper sent someone down to the train station to meet the tilt train. Everybody said, 'The tilt train is fantastic.' They went to Rockhampton and asked the people what they thought about the tilt train. They said, 'We think it is fantastic.'

**Mr JOHNSON:** I rise to a point of order. I made no mention of the tilt train from Brisbane to Rockhampton. I am talking about the concept from Rockhampton to Cairns. I ask the member to withdraw.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I withdraw. The tourism industry in Cairns has been onto me, wanting to know when they can get the promotional material for the new tilt train. The tourism industry in Mackay has been onto me. The only person who is out of step in this march is the member for Gregory. He does not want us to provide services to the people in regional Queensland. Up and down the east coast they are waiting for it: in Mackay, Townsville, Ingham, Innisfail and Cairns. All the member opposite can do is knock, whinge, whine and carp. While he whinges, we work. I am working to deliver it.

I am pleased that the member has finally discovered what I issued in a press release two years ago tomorrow. I offer my congratulations to the investigative journalists from the *Courier-Mail* who have suddenly tumbled to something that I published in a press release two years ago. At that time I went to Walkers and I met the 200 workers there, 80 of whom who have been employed directly as a result of this project. I have been found out by the member for Gregory. I told him at the estimates committee meeting last year, I told him at the estimates committee meeting the year before, and I told him at the estimates committee meeting this year. I put out a press release about it and it has finally sunk in. After all that time, it has finally sunk in.

I wish to talk briefly about an issue affecting my electorate. A group of people on Thursday Island petitioned me about a small-boat facility, the Idabu pontoon. They say that it is not big enough and needs extension. Unfortunately, that petition was not in an appropriate form to be tabled in Parliament. About 250 of my constituents signed the petition. I want them to know that I have received it and have had discussions with the Torres Shire Council. As part of our maritime budget we are seeing if, along with a range of other maritime priorities that the council is looking at, we can do something about that. I appreciate their concerns. Everybody on Thursday Island owns a dinghy, as the member for Burnett knows. He spent about half an hour in my electorate before he got an invite to go fishing. I want these people to know that I am chasing that up for them.

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (5.22 p.m.): In rising to participate in the debate on the report of Estimates Committee C, I would like to thank the committee for its indulgence in allowing me to be a guest of the committee and to question the minister responsible for the Innovation and Information Economy portfolio. It is unfortunate when the opposition is much reduced in size and we have to take on a range of portfolios, because we do not always have the chance to fully participate in the committees that we shadow. However, I enjoyed the opportunity and, once again, I thank the committee for its indulgence.

I found the process interesting because, as the chairman of the committee indicated, it is a new portfolio. I would concur that there was not necessarily enough time to completely examine all of the aspects of expenditure. Once we actually started looking into the portfolio, questions were asked that led to another question, and another and another. Once the time was shared around, we did not necessarily get the full chance to explore the issues as we would have liked. Therefore, one can sometimes get accused of bogging down on a certain thing, although it is just that some answers lead on to other things. I am not sure what an appropriate time arrangement would be. That would be up to the committee next year. I think that somewhat more time than we had would be appropriate—maybe another half an hour. I do not want to be seen to be churlish, but I believe that when one considers the magnitude and the significance of the portfolio it is important that we have an appropriate amount of time.

As this is a new portfolio, the minister has taken to it with a great degree of enthusiasm. He walked into the committee the other day with props, and I note that he has slightly bigger props today. I wait to see what he is going to show us. It is the same sort of thing: a clear looking tube that he will shine a light through. He also used another prop the other day. It was certainly a high-tech committee appearance from the minister and his director-general. I make the point that, for a committee that was using so much high-tech, I had never seen so much paper floating around. I think that there needs to be a greater refinement of the search process that is necessary to ensure that the briefing is obtained quickly.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am sure that the minister knows exactly what I am talking about. It was commendable, because it is important with a portfolio such as this that the minister engages the latest technology. However, there certainly needs to be a greater degree of refinement.

I asked a number of questions of the minister, including questions about the issue of bioprospecting. The minister indicated—and I concur with him—that Queensland has a vast amount of natural resources, both flora and fauna, that provide a host of opportunities in pharmaceutical development and a range of other areas. That involves not only our land but also the oceans and river systems. One only needs to look at the discoveries that have been made in our rainforests and so on over the last few years to see the wonderful wealth of untapped resources that could allow us to provide a better and healthier society.

I raised with him the possible impact of native title on bioprospecting and the regime that he is developing. The minister indicated that he does not believe that there will be a problem in that area. In response, I indicated that we need to take this very seriously because these things do evolve. As we sit here today we may think things are going well, but we need to be very careful that, in the future, something as important as bioprospecting is not held up in any way because of some jurisdictional or land ownership issues that we have to resolve. I commend the minister for doing that.

Telecommunications is a very important area. At the committee hearing the minister talked about Reef Net, and I commend the government for that initiative. Whilst I know that the government is engaging proactively with and is partnering communities to provide the catalyst to bring better telecommunications to many areas throughout Queensland, there is still a role for government to play in mobile telephony. The minister's department has been involved in sponsoring mobile telephony sites throughout Queensland. I hope I am not being uncharitable to the minister, but I understand that he has sponsored Networking the Nation projects that have been put forward. There is a case for government to put forward some money as well.

Time expired.

**Mr McNAMARA** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (5.27 p.m.): I was very pleased to take part in the hearings of Estimates Committee C covering the portfolios of Transport and Main Roads, Innovation and Information Economy and Public Works and Housing. I wish to acknowledge the very smooth and efficient way in which the hearings were organised and run by committee chair, Linda Lavarch. I think I speak for all members of the committee in saying that the preparatory meetings and the hearings themselves were conducted openly, expeditiously and without rancour.

Indeed, I would like to specifically note that the deputy chair, Vaughan Johnson—although he has, unfortunately, overdosed on angry pills this evening—and other non-government members of the committee used the hearings in the manner in which they are intended, that is, as an opportunity to examine government expenditures, but without artificial hysterics. As a new member in this place I am always pleased to be able to tell my constituents that the workings of the parliament are, in the main, conducted with courtesy, good humour and a genuine desire among members of all political colours to do the best for the people of Queensland.

I also wish to congratulate the ministers, Steve Bredhauer, Paul Lucas and Robert Swarten, for their comprehensive knowledge of the extensive operations of their portfolios. It is a credit to the three ministers and their ministerial and departmental staff that the hundreds of questions asked throughout the day were answered immediately and in detail.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the Transport Minister's preparedness to commit publicly to a timetable for the construction of a new bund wall at the Urangan Boat Harbour. Construction of the new wall, which will create a convenient and substantial spoil disposal area, will be started in the first quarter of next year and will be completed in time for the next scheduled dredging of the harbour in 2003. This information has been extremely well received in Hervey Bay, giving whale-watch and commercial fishing boat operators certainty of access for vessels and also allowing for the growth of a new market for ocean-going deep keel yachts to visit Hervey Bay.

I applaud the enthusiasm with which the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy conducted his part of the committee hearings. Like the minister I, too, am of the view that fantastic career options are available for our young people in the emerging industries of information technology, telecommunications and biotechnology. In Hervey Bay our high schools and the University of Southern Queensland are well aware of the current shortages of IT graduates, and the minister's commitment to growing this sector in regional Queensland is warmly

welcomed. The Access Queensland project, completion of the Reef Net and the aggregation of government demand to improve telecommunications and Internet access are all important to the residents of regional centres such as Hervey Bay.

I would also like to note the extremely open and helpful attitude of the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, Robert Schwarten. The minister is responsible for a hugely diverse and important portfolio, but it is at the heart of what this Labor government is all about. By his commitment to Q-Build in particular the minister has imbued a sense of optimism in the staff of his department. I can inform the House that I am aware that staff in the Departments of Public Works and Housing appreciate the support of the minister and the security which his ongoing commitment provides.

Another matter which is frequently raised with me is the State Purchasing Policy. The policy is unique in Australia and sets a high benchmark for other states. The new policy aims to advance the government's priorities, ensure probity and accountability for outcomes and achieve value for money. A major shift in the new policy was the widening of the definition of 'value for money'. Under the new policy, a range of factors, not just the lowest price, must be taken into consideration. These factors include the contribution a particular purchase or contract may make to local employment, training, regional development and environmental spin-offs. I congratulate the minister on his work in driving this very important policy reform.

The *Hansard* record of the hearings of Estimates Committee C taken as a whole shows this government's commitment to building the Smart State and improving services, particularly in regional Queensland, while all the time acting with heart and compassion. The massive roads and transport spending outlined by the Minister for Transport, with more than half of the works being undertaken outside the south-east corner of the state, delivers for my electorate, which is three and a half hours driving time from Brisbane. The Smart State projects being advanced by the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy are vital to job prospects and equitable telecommunications access for people in Hervey Bay.

The Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing provides substantial and essential housing stock for the less well off in my community and maintains the necessary public works construction capacity, which I strongly support.

It was a privilege to be part of the hearings of Estimates Committee C this year and I thank all those involved, including the committee secretariat and the *Hansard* staff.

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (5.32 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak to the report of Estimates Committee C in relation to Public Works and Housing. In doing so, I commend those involved, particularly the minister in charge of the area for which I am the shadow minister—Public Works and Housing. I acknowledge the forthright and courteous way in which he answered questions. I appreciated that, because sometimes estimates hearings are adversarial. Members of the shadow cabinet appreciate it when questions are answered in a reasonable manner.

I raised a number of issues with the minister and I will go through them one by one. In the area of public works, the Woorabinda Community Council indicated that it has dispensed with the services of Q-Build simply because of the expense involved in using Q-Build to build and maintain its facilities. The minister indicated that he would brief me in respect of that matter and take the question on notice. The reason behind that was that Project Services in particular, I believe, cost the community \$400,000 in terms of consultative work for a \$1.2 million project.

When I asked the minister about the pedestrian bridge he was very careful to keep away from that, indicating that if the department were in charge of building that bridge it would have made sure that it was progressed in a better manner. He indicated quite clearly that the department is not a construction authority for bridges.

In relation to Lang Park, the minister gave assurances to the committee that his belief would be that the redevelopment of Lang Park would come in under budget and on time. That is good news even for those who are not particularly interested in Brisbane's Lang Park stadium.

In relation to backflow prevention devices, which have been of concern to this parliament over quite a period, it is of concern that only 475 of 1,192 high-risk sites have had backflow prevention devices implemented. The remaining 717 high-risk sites will be assessed over the next two years. To me personally that is of concern. Obviously, we have to take that on board and see where we go with it.

In relation to asbestos removal from government buildings, obviously some of which will be school buildings, to date only 486 of the 1,880 buildings containing asbestos materials have had



asbestos removed. There are high-risk sites in terms of asbestos. Those who understand the asbestos problem know that the loose grain material in lagging and other aspects that are basically close to where humans work and play can be of danger, especially where asbestos is part of the roof complex. Often that is quite secure and the only problem with it is usually when the asbestos is being removed. I understand that it will take some time and will be a huge cost. There is still a lot of work to do in that area.

I turn now to Poinsettia Press, which was a Brisbane City Council operation that was taken over by the department in the deal of a lifetime in that it needed to employ only four permanent staff out of a staffing level of about 20 to have it passed across to it at no cost. I was very impressed that the department was able to take on board that operation at a very low cost. It was certainly the deal of the century.

In relation to termite control operators, who come under the control of the QBSA, this is of concern to all of us. I was heartened to hear that some work is being done in that area. We need to keep on top of that. There is a huge latent problem out there. If it is not kept under control we will have to face some huge issues.

There were some problems with the Cairns Convention Centre. Interestingly, the construction engineers, Ove Arup, are also the engineers in charge of the footbridge. Perhaps there is a connotation there.

In relation to housing, there are issues involving the placement of people in crisis accommodation. I believe the minister answered very substantially in respect of that matter.

Time expired.

**Hon. P. T. LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Innovation and Information Economy) (5.37 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to contribute to the finalisation of the budget process in relation to the overall debate and the report of Estimates Committee C. I firstly thank the chair, the member for Kurwongbah, and also the deputy chair and other members of the committee. I enjoyed the estimates committee debate. I was pleased that members from both sides of the House took an interest in the matters that concern my portfolio and other portfolios.

One of the things about innovation and the Smart State is that it is not something that is always easy to explain. We have to take a long-term view. I was particularly pleased that members of the committee were prepared to engage in looking at how we see ourselves as a state in future—not just today—as part of that planning process. I thank the director-general and my department for the manner in which they provided me with information and briefings in relation to the budgetary process. It is critically important to the accountability process that ministers are adequately able to answer questions asked of them in the estimates debate, which gives the parliament, through its members, the opportunity to scrutinise the budgets of portfolios.

One of the great things about my portfolio is that it is one of the key drivers of the government's Smart State strategy. It looks at the future and the outcomes for all of Queensland. One of the key budget initiatives that I am very proud of is the \$100 million Smart State Research Facility Fund, and the Premier has spoken about that before. That is about a capital infrastructure fund that leverages off other investment that institutions might be able to get. Private sector partners, of course, will be interested in investing when you have something that is provable and that will create jobs in Queensland.

We are not about sending our biodiversity overseas anymore. We have top science done here right throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. I see that the member for Tablelands is here. We know what is going to happen at Mareeba. There is some great stuff going on there. It is not going to happen in south-east Queensland. It is the Smart State, not the smart south-east Queensland.

Another important item of expenditure is \$16.6 million for Access Queensland. That is a multi-channel service delivery mechanism of the state government. That is 24 by seven service delivery. The highest uptake of IT is in rural communities, because people in rural communities have to use it as a method of communication. We have a challenge in terms of penetrating with lack of bandwidth, and I am working with my colleague the Minister for State Development on my contribution towards his state infrastructure plan. Bandwidth is a critical part of state infrastructure.

Access Queensland also has benefits not only in providing services online and enabling services like QGAP officers and other public servants to perform their tasks even better but also in the actual process of business re-engineering—seeing why in the public sector we have to have three blue forms on a Wednesday and six red ones on a Friday and 'we do it this way because

we have always done it this way'. The actual process of business re-engineering is positive in itself, even if we were not going to look for an online solution.

Other things include our support for the pharmaceutical centre of excellence and our development programs such as i-STAR—Industry Skills Training and Role model, the Community Skills Development Program and the Innovation Start-Up Scheme. While I am speaking about the Innovation Start-up Scheme, I must say that the innovation that we have going on in this state never ceases to amaze me.

This piece of optic fibre that I am holding is from Poly Optics, a Gold Coast company—and more than half of the ISUS funding has occurred outside Brisbane—and it is operated by light emitting diodes which put a light in it. It has very low voltage and can be used for drink cabinets. It can also be used in pools, and we all know the problem in the past with electrocutions in pools. With this optic fibre, hardly any electricity is applied. You can apply it from a source elsewhere or you can use the characteristics of optic fibres in another capacity. The second fibre that I have here does not transmit light out the side; it transmits it out the end.

This company is developing much narrower fibre optics for use in dental probes that are disposable, and that has an enormous mass market overseas. Again, this is the sort of stuff that Queensland businesses are doing. We should never, ever undersell the innovation and the technological know-how that is going on in our state. Whether it be on farms, for example the robocrop in north Queensland, or whether it be this sort of stuff on the Gold Coast, this sort of innovation is going on throughout the length and breadth of Queensland.

I mentioned telecommunications earlier. It is a source of great regret of mine that the federal government raised \$30 billion from the sale of half of Telstra, \$6 billion of which would have been Queensland's share, yet it still will not put mobile telephone towers on the major highways going west from the coast. That is a disgrace. This government is being smart about our telecommunications spend. We spend \$172 million a year. We have set up Reef Net. That is by government simply marshalling its purchasing power. Next we are going to aggregate government demand in north Queensland, far-north Queensland and north-west Queensland to see what we can do in terms of leverage infrastructure. People in remote and rural Queensland have a right to expect better service in terms of telecommunications. We think we can do that by what we are buying. It is a very exciting portfolio to lead.

Time expired.

**Hon. K. R. LINGARD** (Beaudesert—NPA) (5.43 p.m.): I noted the altercation between the Minister for Transport and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. On behalf of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition I table this document which states—

A Beattie Labor Government will introduce new diesel powered Tilt Trains to double the number of Brisbane to Cairns rail services and cut travelling time from 32 hours to 20 hours.

This is the pre-election release that was authorised by Mike Kaiser. I table that because it obviously vindicates the statements of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the promise was most definitely 20 hours.

I am concerned about what happened at estimates in relation to school buses. The continual fob of the ALP government pre-election and at present shows that we have to have a major tragedy on a school bus before something is going to be done about seatbelts or the problem of students standing on school buses. There is no doubt that, if the government limits the number of students standing on buses or if it says that seatbelts must be introduced into school buses, it will cost the government money. However, the government does not worry about telling private bus companies that they must have seatbelts and it does not worry about telling car manufacturers that they must have seatbelts, because that does not cost the government money; that is something which must be implemented by the private sector. So we continue to see the ALP government fobbing about the problem of school buses.

This is not just something that was raised in the Beaudesert electorate by a group called the Bus Action Committee; this has been around for a while. I note that the member for Fitzroy is in the chamber. He was involved in an altercation about exactly the same thing. But still we see the ALP government not doing anything. I see in estimates that Mr Bredhauer said in answer to a question from the shadow minister for transport—

No. The commitment that we made prior to the last election was to establish the task force and then to work on its recommendations.

The ALP government could find itself in the extremely embarrassing situation very soon in which there is a major accident and all of these statements made by the Minister for Transport are going

to come back to haunt him. There has been continuing concern, firstly, about the number of students standing on school buses that are travelling in areas which have speed limits of 100 kilometres per hour. This was a real issue before the last election, especially in the area of Beaudesert where we had some very aggressive lobbyists. One lady who comes to mind has now written to me. She states—

So far, I've been banned from speaking to the entire Queensland Transport Department via a voicemail message left by Steve Bredhauer, because, as he said in the voicemail message—he took exception to a radio interview I did on 4BC. Questions I put directly to Peter Beattie about the basis of that ban remain unanswered to this day. My application to join the Labor Party has been rejected—and despite asking the question 'why?' repeatedly ... not one single, solitary coherent reason has ever been given to me.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr LINGARD:** No, she has not applied to come into ours. Then the other day this lady and another lady who stood at the last election were not even allowed to hear the bringing down of the interim task force report. They were held outside by two security people. They were not allowed to even go to the bringing down of the task force report. They are not allowed into the ALP, and that is okay. But now they are not allowed to talk to the Transport Department. Of course, Steve Bredhauer said that it was not on until I produced in this parliament a copy of that particular document.

What did we see before the last election? We saw a whole lot of interim measures to try to fob off this issue of school buses. We saw the minister say that students can now stand on buses not for 20 kilometres but for 18 kilometres. He limited the distances that a bus can travel with children standing. What else did we see before the last election? We saw that he said that buses can no longer travel at 100 kilometres per hour. They can travel at 80 kilometres per hour, but they can still travel in areas with speed limits of 100 kilometres per hour. That is an absolutely ridiculous situation.

Then before the last election we saw a continual fob about the limitations of certain areas. We in the opposition have always said that surely the minister can extend the policy of limiting students standing on buses that travel in dangerous areas. Mount Tamborine and areas around Atherton would be typical examples. Surely he could limit students standing on buses that travel on roads that have other traffic travelling at 100 kilometres per hour, but nothing has been done except in the area of Beaudesert where the Bus Action Committee was working.

Time expired.

**Ms PHILLIPS** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.48 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee C. As a member based in north Queensland, I am very interested in the particular portfolios we examined, and I take this opportunity to speak briefly about issues relevant to my electorate within each of them.

Transport and Main Roads are very important in the vast distances of north Queensland. Firstly, I am very pleased that additional funds have been allocated for the Townsville Railway Station. Almost \$24 million will be spent. This will include considerable track work and realignment, as the new station will be located on the southern side of Charters Towers Road. This will eliminate the current track loop, and that is very important for when we start operation of the tilt train. Efficient, modern, fast train travel will help to reduce the isolation that we experience in north Queensland. The Minister for Transport also made a commitment that the current heritage railway station would be retained as the administration centre for the northern region of Queensland Rail. A rail line into the station will remain to allow train entry for important historic and heritage occasions.

The Transport budget also includes funding of an election promise of 100 new school crossing supervisors. Research reveals that one of the biggest safety issues for children travelling to school is actually crossing the road either on their way to school or when they arrive at school. I have personally lobbied hard for additional supervised crossings and am hopeful that as a result we will see an increased number of lollipop people around my electorate. North Queensland is also concerned about main roads. I was very disappointed with the Commonwealth government's meagre increase in RONI funding for National Highways. The Commonwealth transport department has already acknowledged that Queensland has the worst National Highway system of any state in Australia, yet it continually fails to allocate the funds.

A typical example of this is the federal government's refusal to come to an agreement to fund the Douglas Arterial Road through Townsville and over the Condon Bridge into Thuringowa. This is part of the Townsville ring-road, the National Highway. In response to my question during

the estimates committee, the Minister for Main Roads gave an undertaking that the state government would go ahead with the construction of this project provided that the Commonwealth paid back the funds over a certain period. This very generous offer has been made directly to the Commonwealth, yet it still refuses to commit the funds. The people of Thuringowa deserve better treatment, and they are beginning to demand it.

North Queensland has an abundance of opportunities for research and the development of bioprospecting and biodiversity. The Minister for Innovation and Information Economy expanded on these possibilities during the estimates committee. An example he gave was biodiscovery at the Australian Institute of Marine Science where scientists are developing a low-allergenic sunscreen using coral extracts. It is expected that this product will be on the market by 2005. James Cook University and AIMS are also in partnership with Nufram to develop a herbicide from coral. The Premier recently signed an agreement with AIMS to seek to secure a percentage royalty payment out of successful exploitations it comes up with. All of this is of maximum benefit to north Queensland in not only scientific excellence but also local jobs for our JCU graduates who come to study here from all over the world and should be encouraged to add to the 'brain bank' we can develop in our own backyard.

Training for skilled jobs is also being taken very seriously by the Minister for Public Works. He informed the estimates committee that there are presently 385 apprentices with Q-Build, including 32 in the Townsville-Thuringowa region, and that a staggering 97 per cent of these apprentices get through their time successfully. School-based apprenticeships are another feature. Industry is starting to realise that there are lots of advantages in getting kids out of school and into apprenticeships. Further, the minister informed the committee about the highly successful Community Renewal Program which is already happening in 13 communities and which is soon to be introduced to Rasmussen in my electorate. The Community Renewal Program seeks to promote safe, healthy and confident communities in areas facing significant social, economic and locational disadvantage. So far, the projects have seen real outcomes in terms of employment, crime reduction, people's satisfaction with their living environment, family support and improved educational outcomes.

Time expired.

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (5.53 p.m.): I rise to participate in debate on the report of Estimates Committee C. I note that over 40 per cent of the Transport and Main Roads budget is earmarked to be spent in the south-east corner of this vast and decentralised state. Although the wealth of this state comes largely from the rural and regional areas of Queensland, people in rural areas feel that we are always the last to receive the benefits of that wealth. I note that the minister acknowledges that Queensland has the worst National Highway system of any state in Australia. Naturally, that is more noticeable to people in rural areas than to the population in the south-east corner. Of the \$2.1 billion Main Roads budget sustaining 17,500 jobs, it is interesting to note that about 30 per cent of the funding comes from the Commonwealth government.

In answer to questions during the hearing, the Transport Minister commented on several occasions that it was always a challenge to keep adequate work up to railway workshops, especially in Townsville, yet we have severe shortages of rolling stock and associated infrastructure throughout rural Queensland, especially north of Townsville, particularly in respect of the servicing of saleyard requirements. The minister was certainly caught napping on this one. Towns such as Springsure, Charters Towers, Nebo, Sarina, Miowera, Mareeba and Longreach have all experienced problems with a lack of Q-Rail services—problems not experienced before. In far-north Queensland, the non-availability of reliable rail services has seriously impeded our beef and pork industries. Adverse outcomes from this acute shortage is the use of alternative road transport which in turn increases the amount of heavy vehicular traffic and places added strains on country road systems, which are not built to cope with these heavy load vehicles. This results in the roads breaking up and subsequent increased maintenance costs to government and much higher risks of accidents.

I also want to comment on other issues raised which affect my electorate. The Transport Minister stated that a lot of money was spent on roads around the Tablelands as part of the sugar roads package. We are thankful for the recent upgrade on the Atherton-Herberton Road and the current work on the Gentle Annie back road between Millaa Millaa and Ravenshoe. Neither of these roads are on sugar routes. Apart from them, we have had piecemeal repairs and maintenance on other roads, including the main sugar routes to the South Johnstone sugar mill. Some people call it a bandaid job or a Claytons job—jobs when you have not done a job.

A common complaint heard in our part of the state is that road foundations are inadequate to cope with the heavy vehicular traffic now traversing the roads or for our very wet tropical conditions. Those are the main reasons the roads break up so quickly after construction. Many have seen roads breaking up almost as soon as the bitumen has dried. However, to conclude on a positive note, we are happy to have our antiquated bridge at Yungaburra upgraded and a commitment in the budget to replace the frequently flooded one-lane bridge at South Johnstone. We are appreciative of that.

**Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (5.56 p.m.): At the outset, let me say that as a minister accountable to this parliament the estimates committee process, which was established under a Labor government, is a very good process, one that assists ministers to ensure that departmental officers are accountable. To that end, I compliment every member of the committee for the effort they put into asking very reasonable and informed questions, and that applies across-the-board.

However, I want to refute a couple of points made by the member for Mirani. The first of those is that somehow or other I indicated that I would have done a better job on that bridge over there than my colleague or anybody else. The fact of the matter is that the second part of what the honourable member said is correct. This project has nothing to do with the Department of Public Works and we have never, ever built a bridge in this state. I like it that way, and we will keep it that way. So there should be no suggestion of motives. The fact is that it has nothing to do with the Department of Public Works and should not have been raised.

With regard to the \$400,000 at Woorabinda in relation to the Project Services fee, it is my information that that money was not charged for merely \$1.2 million worth of work but was spread across a number of projects for the whole community. Clearly, Project Services has to charge a fee just like any other building consultants would do if they were to build something at Woorabinda. I have to say that I was very disappointed that Q-Build's efforts in Woorabinda were not reciprocated. We embarked upon a very expensive project to train apprentices in that community.

I know that the previous CEO of Woorabinda, Mr Horan, was less than helpful in our quests to provide a streamlining of work and an assurance that that work would be carried out over a number of years so that people would get the necessary training. I think Q-Build did a damn fine job there, and I have already said so publicly. Q-Build is not faultless, and it does a lot of work, to the tune of half a million jobs a year. It trains something like 350 apprentices and has work tied to subcontractors from one end of the state to the other. As the member for Hervey Bay said, Q-Build is an agency that delivers real outcomes for young people and ensures that the state's built assets are well maintained within the budgets we have to work to.

Poinsettia Press was a good deal as far as I am concerned. We are getting \$2.8 million from the Brisbane City Council per year to run that. That is guaranteed work. There were 23 employees on the books but only nine came over. It certainly proved to be a good business.

I concur with the member for Mirani that the issue of termites needs careful consideration. I can assure the House that that is in fact occurring. I met with the BSA again this afternoon to discuss issues such as this. I can assure the House that that situation will continue to be monitored.

I refer to the prevention programs relating to asbestos and backflow. They are designed under a risk management strategy. To that end, of course we cannot do those projects all at once. Both of those projects, which were introduced by the Goss Labor government, were continued in their current form under the Borbidge government. I can assure the House that the risk management process, which has been investigated by the Public Works Committee, has proven to be a very proper process, given that governments do not have an endless supply of money. There has been no incidence of backflow contamination in Queensland in the last 12 months that I am aware of. Certainly there has been no loss of life, as was predicted by that grubby program *A Current Affair* a couple of years ago.

Time expired.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (6.02 p.m.): In rising to speak to this report of Estimates Committee C, I have to say that I think the member for Nicklin would much rather be here to comment on it himself, as he was an attendee at that estimates committee hearing. However, on behalf of people living in regional Queensland I take the opportunity to commend the Minister for Transport and his department on the quick action that was taken—it was discussed at the hearing—with regard to the restarting of regional air services when Flight West

withdrew its services without notice. I know that it affected Gladstone, Thangool and quite a number of western Queensland towns. In the case of Gladstone, while we still had Qantas as a carrier the services were insufficient. There are too many passengers for one carrier and perhaps not enough for two. I commend the minister for his quick action in addressing the loss of that service to regional and western Queensland and for the resulting return of services that he provided.

I refer to the School Transport Safety Task Force. I have had some contact over time, including during the time of the task force's operations, from people expressing disappointment with the make-up of the task force. That disappointment has been well documented. However, I think the most recent interview of the chair of the task force and the preliminary comments of the task force on the results of that investigation have only added to the concerns of those in southern Queensland who instigated the move to have school buses fitted with safety belts.

I do not believe there was an expectation on behalf of most people in this state that every school bus would have seatbelts installed overnight. There was an acknowledgment, from those whom I spoke with anyway, that installation would have to be incremental, in recognition of the high cost to bus owners and to the government, that services such as new buses would come fitted with seatbelts, and that services such as 100-kilometre routes and services over gravel roads should get first attention for the installation of seatbelts and installation would then be carried out on services over the 60-kilometre routes and bitumen roads and so on.

It is disappointing that it appears, on the basis of the information that has been made available so far, that the issue of seatbelts on buses will hardly receive attention in the sense of a planned program for implementation. Rather, safety improvements will concentrate on roll bars and so on rather than bus seatbelts. This matter was raised by members of the south-east corner in particular.

The Minister for Innovation and Information Technology I guess lived up to the expectations of those of us in the committee room. In the hearings we discussed the IT job opportunities and the IT&T careers kits that had gone to the schools. I commend the minister on the holistic approach his department has taken to those jobs. I think there are many young people who have a rather singular idea of what an IT career involves. I think those kits, if they emulate the statements made by the minister in relation to IT&T careers, will open the eyes of many young people, and older people, to the breadth of IT career opportunities that are available.

In the short amount of time I have left I would like to address the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, who, as I have said on other occasions, is a great ambassador for that portfolio area, particularly public housing for people whose income and economic needs require that they rely on public housing for appropriate accommodation. The minister has a great heart for these people, which is reflected in the programs that in great measure are implemented.

I commend the minister on the Q-Build apprenticeships. With oncosts, including workers compensation and the tax implications, many small businesses simply cannot afford to entertain the idea of taking on an apprentice for the full period of the indenture and they rely on things such as the group apprenticeship schemes. Q-Build is leading the way in ensuring that a high level of apprenticeships is retained in the Public Service. I commend the minister for that work. Many of the big businesses that would have the capacity to train young people look at the bottom line only and do not invest in the future by way of apprenticeships.

Time expired.

Report adopted.

Progress reported.

## NATIONAL PARKS

**Dr KINGSTON** (Maryborough—Ind) (6.08 p.m.): I move—

That this House calls on the government to honour the commitment of the Bicentennial National Trail and the promise made by the previous Environment Minister in relation to the RFA that as a result of government policy, there would be no net loss of access to the national park by recreational users.

In 1972 R. M. Williams gained widespread support for the idea that the Australian national horse trail should be formalised as a Bicentennial National Trail to, first, commemorate the spirit and courage of the pioneers who, with horses and bullocks, opened up this country; and, second, establish an Australian icon and identify a scenic and historic route which could be traversed by tourists utilising various modes of transport.

Mr Williams dispatched Dan Seymour to ride northwards along stock routes and historic trails, gathering local information as he went. Subsequently, the trail was marked and mapped by Mike Allen and Brian Taylor. It runs from Cooktown in the north to Healesville in Victoria. They found that the trail they formalised closely followed the actual trails used by our pioneers and by Seymour.

On 18 August 1998, Queensland National Parks and Wildlife published a relevant policy statement and released it through the EPA. In the Protected Area Policy—Horseriding on Protected Areas—it stated—

A government commitment has been given to the maintenance of access for people, including horseriders, along the bicentennial national trail, which runs from the border to Cooktown and crosses protected areas in several instances.

In the explanation, this document states that horse riding is contrary to the scientific management principles of a national park, but it does not scientifically substantiate this statement. The document then goes on to say that horses may be permitted on grazing leases over national parks. I am fascinated to know how the undefined danger horses pose to the environment can vary between a national park and a national park subject to a grazing lease.

At the same meeting the Australian Trail Horse Riders Association was formed with the aim of promoting the national horse trail and other trails for recreational use. It is vitally concerned that access to trails is maintained for a variety of recreational purposes.

The member for Everton, whilst he occupied the Environment portfolio, promised that he would create a 'forest park tenure' and that there would be 'no net loss to recreation'. I repeat: no net loss to recreation. The honourable minister has not lived up to his tenure promise; and by the rapidly increasing pile of faxes arriving in my office, I can assure the House that the number of people who do not trust this government to honour his access promise is growing exponentially.

The Environmental Access for Recreation Federation Inc. and the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation were formed because of the intransigence of this government in the face of reasoned, responsible requests. These bodies represent trail riders, endurance riders, pony clubs, the Queensland volunteer mounted search organisation, mountain bicycle riders, four-wheel-drive clubs, trail motorbike riders, campers and lapidary clubs—quite a reasonable section of the community.

The minister should note carefully that these people are doing their homework very carefully. To illustrate, the Australian Trail Horse Riders Association has what I would call a code of ethics—the 13 golden rules for the environmentally aware horse rider, as it calls them. The Caboolture Trail Horse Club Inc. wrote to the minister on 14 June this year presenting him with evidence of long-used trails not causing environmental damage. The Illawarra Horse Owners Association presented opinions from Professor David Hodgson from the University of Sydney which stated—

With reference to contamination of local water sources, few, if any, environmental pathogens are excreted in horse faeces. No giardia from horses have been shown to be transmissible to humans.

Therefore he concluded—

Horses pose little, if any threat—certainly less risk than many of the other domestic and wild animal species.

He continued—

There is little difference between the potential for spread of noxious weeds in horse faeces than that posed by bird and wildlife species already inhabiting national parks.

The Sunshine Coast Area Trail and Endurance Riders Inc. and the Queensland Endurance Riders Association have distributed an article titled 'The Impact of Horse Riding in Nature Reserves' taken from the journal titled *Tracks*. James Elsbury has addressed the question of environmental damage caused by ridden horses. Is it fact or is it fiction? Are the accusations so obviously impacting on the minister's policy advisers based on good science?

The Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies at the Australian National University was consulted. Dr Sara Beavis delivered her 67-page very reassuring report—reassuring for horse riders, that is—on 15 March 2000. Having read that report, I am amazed at what I am hearing from responsible horse riders.

Dr Freudenberger of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology has established that horses should not be condemned because they are hard-footed animals, and humans and our native marsupials are soft-footed animals. The important issue is one of stocking rate. He concluded that given that recreational riders are relatively few in number, their impact in terms of equivalent

stocking rate is probably negligible. But he concluded also that excluding rabbits, wallabies and wombats was the most significant single variable influencing the number of weeds present in national parks.

Through you, Mr Speaker, I strongly recommend that the minister should read these reports before his officers ban trail riders from places such as Kroombit Tops, as is being threatened at the moment, because these moves would embarrass him further.

National parks and the Department of Environment are currently annoying a lot of thinking people and rapidly losing credibility. They appear to make two basic assumptions which are insulting to many graziers and people who enjoy their recreation in the outdoors. Those assumptions are: firstly, only personnel within those two departments have any knowledge of sustainable natural resource use and environmental risk assessment; and, secondly, all citizens not within the holy confines of those departments are environmental vandals.

Mr Speaker, through you, I suggest to the minister that he and his advisers listen carefully to responsible and experienced people—not housed in comfortable offices in Brisbane—and in particular, in this instance, listen to the recreational horse riders who are well researched and support this motion.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (6.16 p.m.): I rise to second the motion. The matter of recreational users' access to national parks is one which affects many people in our community. Access is gained throughout the state and is a significant attraction for tourists visiting from within the state, interstate and overseas. I have had a number of visits to my office from recreational horse riders concerned about the change in attitude of the government over time.

During the RFA debate Minister Welford, at a large rally, assured riders that there would be no reduction in areas available for horse riding. At that time local riders, while outlining their concerns, stated to me that this assurance had been made and they felt their concerns had been listened to. Only last week I had further representations because the minister's statements had proved to be untrue. They advised that the area has now been drastically reduced by the closing up of conservation areas and state forests.

We were all given a horseshoe this morning, and I would like to present the background to that article. The first letter that Premier Beattie would have received was a notional letter written by the horses in the recreational horse riding arena. It says—

Please get your partner to send a set of horse shoes or a shoe to the Premier Mr. Beattie on the 30th July 2001 to remind him we need continuing access to our forestries for exercise and recreation.

To keep them honest reading your letters that accompany the shoes, if clubs or individuals could send a cheque to their favourite charity e.g. cancer, riding for the disabled or an endangered species for Mr. Beattie to forward on might help.

The covering letter accompanying that letter to Mr Beattie said—

We are sending these shoes to you to help you celebrate the horses birthday on the 1st August, as we hope it may bring some Good Luck in keeping access to the forests open for the continuing use of horse riders.

At present locked gates are going up everywhere prior to management plans being started or finalised. Those where management plans are well under way do not look promising for the 'no net loss' promised by Mr. Welford for recreational use. If this is the 'norm' on all the forestry being transferred over to Qld. Parks & Wildlife we will have no need of shoes by our next birthday as we will have nowhere to ride unless we resort to the roads.

It seems that the 'footprints' were cast in concrete years back and the 'management plans' are just a facade to appear to have 'public consultation'.

We hope these bring us luck for you to see the way for our continuing access in, around and through the bush for exercise and recreation.

Included with the shoes will be cheques for charities. I hope you will forward them on.

In my own electorate there is a proposal to relocate part of the Bicentennial National Trail from along the top of Kroombit Tops to the eastern side, past Mackay's farm and up to Cedarvale and on the western side along the old wagon track. It is stated that the top is not suitable for horses yet will remain open to four-wheel drives and walkers.

The group has asked that the National Parks and Wildlife Service walk the proposed new tracks, not drive these alternatives, to see how inappropriate they are. It is also stated that the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife claims that the use of horses will bring diseases into an area of two endangered species of frogs, yet horses and these species of frogs have coexisted for many years. Brumbies have run over the area for over 100 years while the frogs were found in the 1980s.



Incidental travellers through national park areas also perform an important visual oversight of these areas. Certainly, there are insufficient rangers and national parks staff to adequately monitor or manage these vast tracts of our beautiful and diverse country.

These groups and this motion is not asking to compromise any ecological group. They have coexisted with the frogs and, indeed, other flora and fauna on the range for many, many years. They ask that the clear statements made by the minister in relation to the RFA be honoured and that the spirit of the Bicentennial National Trail also be adhered to, allowing responsible trail riders access through the parks.

**Mrs LAVARCH** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (6.21 p.m.): I move the following amendment to the motion moved by the member for Maryborough—

Delete all words after 'honour' and insert the following—

'the spirit of the Bicentennial National Trail and the promise made by the previous Environment Minister in relation to the SEQFA that as a result of government policy, there would be no net loss of access to the protected area estate by recreational users.'

The starting point here is to understand that the lands under the South-East Queensland Forest Agreement have high conservation value and warrant a high level of protection. In recognition of this, appropriate protected area tenures will be determined by the government after discussion with traditional owners, stakeholders and special interest groups, including those with recreational and commercial interests.

It should be remembered that consultation was the key to the SEQFA and consultation remains the key to its implementation. Discussions will be aimed at accommodating those interests as far as possible, both short and long term, while protecting the nature conservation and cultural heritage values of the land and recognising the practical needs of managing the forests and parks. They need to be managed properly and community involvement in their future management is a critical part of the process, which has been commenced already.

Consultation is now more focused at the local level and relates to specific forests. That is why subregional forums were established in early 2000. These are for the south and west area from the Gold Coast to main range, the north coast, the Wide Bay-Burnett area and the Gladstone area. These subregional forums have been meeting regularly and currently have around 200 members showing regular interest. The subregional forum members provide valuable information about the recreational use of forests directly to the tenure allocation planners as well as highlighting which recreation groups should be involved in tenure allocation for individual or groups of forest reserves. We appreciate the valuable contributions and success of these groups and will ensure that they continue. In addition, we are investigating the possibility of expanding this successful model statewide.

The South-East Queensland Forest Agreement includes the immediate protection of approximately 425,000 hectares of land from further logging. The remaining areas of south-east Queensland state forests and timber reserves will be logged once more in accordance with environmental guidelines. Then they, too, will be added to the conservation reserve system, providing further opportunities for appropriate and sustainable recreation and nature conservation in consultation with the community.

The Nature Conservation Act provides a number of protected area tenures, which can accommodate a range of outdoor recreational uses. For example, recreational horse riding, which is not allowed in national parks, may be permitted in conservation parks. This range of tenures allows us to retain recreational access to south-east Queensland's forests while maintaining the integrity of the protected area system. The planning process will determine the appropriate and sustainable uses of each forest while ensuring the long-term protection of natural and cultural values.

At a local level, community consultation groups are being established to represent the views of forest user groups and other interested persons and organisations. In fact, currently there are nine groups up and running but there are 24 designated planning areas for the SEQFA. In developing good working relationships and partnerships with all levels of the community, we are building community ownership and involvement in protecting their environment. The process is giving real life to the community's involvement in practical, productive and local conservation outcomes and is building a capacity for community enhancement and involvement in building social capital.

This process draws from the intent of the master plan for Queensland's parks systems discussion paper, which recognises that good relationships are the cornerstone of cooperative

management and that such relationships require trust, time and consistency from all parties. We have proved by the process so far that the community will be involved and will have a real say in future sustainable use. This extensive participation ensures that the full range of views and information is present. The groups accept that if existing activities are shown to be unsustainable, changes are necessary. There is also agreement that not all uses are compatible with each other and that solutions must be found. This type of community involvement builds trust, resolves conflict and is to be recommended.

Time expired.

**Ms MALE** (Glass House—ALP) (6.26 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment to the motion moved by the honourable member for Kurwongbah. The South-East Queensland Forest Agreement has provided a wonderful opportunity to ensure that some of the most outstanding natural lands are protected and appreciated now and into the future. I am very informed about the tenure allocation process as the first community consultation group to be established, the Dularcha-Mooloolah working group, is based in my electorate and I have followed the program of the SEQFA implementation process closely.

This working group has a joint role in not only assessing tenure options for the Mooloolah forest reserve but also assessing the values, uses and issues of the adjoining Dularcha National Park and other nearby lands. In this process, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has taken a strategic approach to planning for an area and is focusing on not only forest reserves but also protected areas and other public lands in the area. The group includes representatives from the traditional Aboriginal owners; the Caloundra City Council; the Sunshine Coast Environment Council; the Mooloolah Valley Riding Centre; the Landsborough Area Community Association; the Wildlife Preservation Society, Caloundra Branch; the Endurance Riding Club; the Caboolture Four Wheel Drive Club; the Queensland Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs; the Landsborough Historical Society; the Landsborough Historical Museum; the Queensland Beekeepers Association; and the Australian Trail Horse Riders Association.

This extensive participation ensures that the full range of views and information is presented. The group has met five times and has worked through the options to ensure that the natural and cultural values of the area are protected for future generations while allowing this generation to enjoy the area. The way the people involved in this group have worked together and the consensus reached has been an outstanding example of people willing to stay focused on the task at hand, to listen and share information, to learn and to compromise towards a rational and productive outcome.

The task has been difficult as there are many pressures on this land, including its small size, because the combined area is just over 500 hectares; the increasing fragmentation of the area due to infrastructure—it contains the north coast rail track, a fibre optic line and powerlines and there is a proposed gas pipeline and sewerage line; there is in excess of 22 kilometres of track network; and the location of the area between two growing local communities makes it an important access area for local horse riders and walkers.

While the area is small, it has some wonderful values that must be protected, including endangered rainforest vegetation and, of concern, wet sclerophyll communities. Within the area there are two known sites of rare and threatened fauna—the elf skink and the powerful owl—and seven species of rare and threatened flora. In addition, this area is rich in cultural heritage values. There have been some wonderful discoveries of indigenous culture, including scatters, scar trees and axe-grinding grooves. It is believed that the ridges of Mooloolah are Aboriginal pathways historically used to visit the Bunya festivals.

The consensus reached by the group recognises the importance of minimising disturbance to the natural and cultural values of the area, while recognising the realities of use and the importance of the area to the local community, including the local horse riding communities. The outcomes are consistent and complimentary with the local government planning regimes for the area. One such example is that the recommendations include the development of cultural heritage interpretation material and signage for the Dularcha train tunnel that will be the focal point for tourists and locals in the area. This is quite in keeping with the Landsborough district local area plan.

A great achievement by this group, including four-wheel drive and horse riding representatives, is that it has agreed to control access to the central and western areas, working in partnership with Queensland parks. In summary, this group has achieved agreement to refocus use away from the high conservation areas into areas that are actually more relevant to most

users. Most important, the process and outcomes show that partnerships between community and government do work and can work brilliantly. It also shows that members of the community are willing to volunteer their time and their expertise to ensure good outcomes for the whole community. In fact, this whole agreement is the result of goodwill and people working in partnership.

I believe that this type of community involvement is the way forward for sustainable land management. It builds understanding between different sectors of the community and creates support for the efforts of land management agencies. In the future, residents of south-east Queensland will look back and thank us for the extraordinary legacy in terms of the conservation estate, and they will be part of a community that understands and contributes to the management of those parks.

Far from locking people out of forests, the government is working closely with communities to deliver practical and tangible benefits in each area that the communities themselves are happy with.

Time expired.

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (6.31 p.m.): By putting forward this motion, we are asking the government to honour the spirit of the Bicentennial National Trail. R. M. Williams was first heard to talk about a horse trail running from one end of the country to the other. Using his ownership of *Hoofs and Horns* magazine, he wrote an editorial pleading for someone to ride the length of the country to establish an initial route. Dan Seymour took up the plea and departed Ferntree Gully near Melbourne in February 1972, arriving in Cooktown in August 1973. Clubs associated with the Australian Trail Horse Riders Association provided encouragement during this arduous and sometimes dangerous journey.

In the early 1980s, responsibility for the trail was taken over by a three-man committee comprising R. M. Williams, Brian Taylor and Mike Allen. In 1984 they obtained a small grant from the Commonwealth government employment program, which allowed Taylor to devote his energy entirely to the trail for a short period. In September 1985, they obtained a grant from the Australian Bicentennial Authority, and Taylor and Allen began working full time on the trail early in 1986.

Their work included the actual physical clearing of sections of trail, promotion of and fundraising for the trail, coordination of activities by other groups that provided assistance, preparation and continuous updating of the guide books, and battling their way through bureaucratic red tape. This latter seems to have been one of the most frustrating aspects for them and one that still requires constant vigilance as new threats to the trail appear.

The Bicentennial National Trail is now grappling with the challenges being thrown at it by the regional forest agreements, the expansion of wilderness areas and the erosive effect of time on access agreements through private lands. The regional forest agreements are producing the biggest reclassification of public land that we have seen in the last 10 to 20 years. The assessments that have preceded those agreements have also identified new areas with wilderness values.

All up, the Bicentennial National Trail is alive and well. It continues to satisfy the needs and aspirations of many Australian and international trekkers. It has much potential, but the long-term future of a trail that covers three states and the ACT can only be assured by positive commitments from all the involved states.

A senior national park ranger has informed a meeting of the Boyne Valley Forest Working Group that they intend to deviate the horse riders from the national trail, off the tablelands and through dry, featureless forest to the east and west. The reason for this deviation is because of the pathogens on the horses hooves that contaminate the water in the streams as the horses cross. According to the ranger, this will have a deadly impact on two species of endangered frogs and will contaminate the water for human consumption in the Callide and Awoonga dams some 50 to 60 kilometres further downstream.

A number of wild brumbies have inhabited the tablelands for 100 years or more. If the pathogens were going to kill the endangered frogs, they would have become extinct a long time ago. Indeed, the frogs were only discovered in the late 1980s. National parks officers intend to shoot out the brumbies and scrubbers as soon as possible.

In contrast, they intend to increase the number of four-wheel drive day trippers to the area but do not intend to provide any toilet facilities for them. Mr Welford said, 'We should be aiming at no lesser public access.' The guiding principle, as stated in the protected area policy, is that—

Protected areas are managed primarily for the conservation of natural and cultural resources and non-native animals are not generally compatible with the management principles defined in the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

A recent summary of a report asked: how do such allegations stand up in the light of scientific research? The truth is that they do not stand up very well at all. The two most commonly quoted evils of horses in nature are the spreading of weeds and irreparable breakdown to soil and vegetation. Both of those do not have any sound scientific basis. This would not be welcome news to those who would like to see horses removed from national parks. Tonight we are endeavouring to expose the myths for exactly what they are.

Whilst it is important to acknowledge that horse riding does have an environmental impact, it is also vitally important to emphasise that horse riding may not have any greater impact than bushwalking but has a distinctly lower impact than trail bikes and four-wheel drives, which are allowed. Any member who would like a copy of this particular report only has to ask and we will willingly tell them where to get it.

When it comes to government decisions, the pendulum swings either too far one way or the other. It would seem that the thought process that ensured the locking up of our state forests might have to be changed. It is interesting to note that Dr Lavery, a leading environmental scientist and economist, has come forward to discredit the locking up of large tracts of land in national parks, describing the practice as 'well meaning, but it's mismanagement by neglect.'

Time expired.

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (6.36 p.m.): I speak in support of the amended motion and I do so from a perspective that covers the whole spectrum of the debate. I grew up riding horses and would love to ride parts of the national trail. At the same time, I consider myself to be an environmentalist and I do a lot of bushwalking and mountain biking. I spend a lot of time in the bush that we are talking about.

The South-East Queensland Forest Agreement has provided unparalleled opportunities for greater integration and involvement of the community in conservation, recreational planning and management. This approach to work with communities is a key principle in this government's parks master plan.

The master plan will guide the development of parks over the next 20 years and lift the standard of park management to better meet community expectations and needs. This is the first comprehensive stocktake of current management and planning for the future in the 25-year history of the parks service. The South-East Queensland Forest Agreement working groups are another way that this government is bringing together all aspects of the community.

The master plan outlines this government's plan to work with local communities, recreational users, traditional owners, neighbours and commercial operators. The working groups demonstrate the consultation process that is being implemented successfully on the ground. This process is a practical way of linking people with parks.

In the last 25 years, managing the parks system has become more challenging, complicated and expensive. There are now greater demands and pressures on the Queensland parks system than there were a generation ago. The community has higher expectations for effective, efficient and open management.

The South-East Queensland Forest Agreement working groups integrate parks with communities. As the population grows, these areas will become more and more valued and appreciated. They need to be properly managed. Part of the government's strategy to do this is the amalgamation of the Department of Natural Resources' forest management with QPWS. This has brought together a team of people with the skills to more effectively manage a range of protected areas, their different uses and the values they contain. Through a coordinated approach to conservation planning and management, we are improving the protection of our valued environmental areas. In developing good working relationships and partnerships with all levels of government, we are building community ownership and involvement in protecting the environment. The agreement gives real life to the communities' involvement in practical, productive and local conservation outcomes.

The scare campaign that recreational users will be locked out is just that. It is petty politics that has not worked and has no basis in fact. We have proved by the process so far that the

community is being involved and will continue to have a say in the future sustainable use of these areas. This applies to conservation and recreational users alike, and will deliver a world-class system of forest reserves.

If we were to walk away from this process, we would be turning our backs on the very communities we are here to represent. It is time members opposite made the philosophical shift. We are custodians, not owners, of the country. We have a duty to protect it and share it amongst uses. It is irresponsible to think, as some here do, that if protecting our environment is detrimental to personal or commercial interest there is an option to just take our bat and go home. This government's commitment to the adoption of a parks master plan will ensure that national parks continue to provide Queenslanders with a wide range of benefits.

Ipswich people are regular users of the protected area estate in south-east Queensland. Areas like Glenrock and Main Range provide valuable recreational opportunities for us. As I said, I do a lot of walking and running up there. As a community, we are grateful that these places are maintained as a sanctuary for us.

Queensland protected areas generate major environmental, economic and social benefits. They host more than 12.5 million visitors and contribute more than \$1.2 billion each year. Surely the blend of good economics and good conservation is to be promoted and expanded. If members opposite were serious about the welfare of regional and rural Queensland, they would be an active part of this agreement, because it delivers a future of certainty, economic benefits and jobs to the communities they seek to represent.

The QPWS will continue to work with those regional and rural communities. The working groups will continue to enable a wide range of community groups interested in Queensland parks to provide their feedback on the future management of forest areas. This will result in clearly stated principles for park management and identify what needs to be done to make it work. In the future, south-east Queensland people will appreciate our environmental legacy and they will be part of a community that understands and contributes to the management of those parks.

Time expired.

**Mr HOPPER** (Darling Downs—Ind) (6.41 p.m.): Tonight I rise to speak in total support of this motion. No doubt the debacle of horse riding in national parks and forests has come about because of the continual squawking of the so-called conservationists. To be quite honest, these people all live in wooden or brick houses, and to be what they preach they would have to live in the nude, eat nothing, stand on a rock all day and move aside when an ant walked their way. Don't get me wrong, I am extremely environmentally friendly. We must always protect our wonderful environment. But it is not as though riding horses in our parks is going to do much damage. We have to be extremely careful and make sure our national parks and forests do not get locked up completely. They will just become a breeding ground for our precious cat lovers' cat cousins, feral pigs and dingoes, not to mention the massive fire danger that that would create.

If a park is locked up with nothing done, it will burn and devastate the whole park. As for horse riding, being a horseman myself, as the member for Bulimba constantly reminds the House, on quite a number of occasions we have organised trail rides with church groups and pony clubs, with which my children are extremely active. We have often ridden through our forests as it is country that you do not have to get permission from farmers to cross.

Last week I had the pleasure of sharing a couple of hours and many cups of tea with R. M. Williams. The man is a true Australian and I am pleased to pay tribute to him in the House. His vision was to start this great horse ride across Australia through the national horse trail. This trail comes to within a few kilometres of my property.

In conclusion, I ask members to consider what the member for Maryborough said earlier and the facts he put forward. The right to ride horses through our national parks is part of our heritage and should be treated as such. For the sake of any horse-minded people and their descendants, I urge the government to consider the motion put forward tonight by an Independent colleague the member for Maryborough.

In November I will be riding my horse through my electorate to raise money for a charity called Bush Connections. Legislation that stops horse riding in parks will only put an end to gestures such as this.

**Mrs CROFT** (Broadwater—ALP) (6.44 p.m.): I rise to support the amended motion. One of the major issues concerning the recreational use of our forests is access by horse riders. Horse riding is a major recreational use of south-east Queensland forests. It is not the intent of this

government to lock horses out of forests as a matter of policy. It is essential, however, that as a responsible government we ensure that horse riding, as with other activities, does not diminish or threaten the values of our public lands.

As an experienced horse rider myself, I enjoy the pleasure of trail riding. However, I recognise the need to protect significant forest areas, as do other responsible horse riders. And that is why horse riding interests, including members of local clubs through to national bodies, are participating in the SEQFA tenure allocation and planning processes—through workshops, subregional forums and in one-to-one discussions.

We recognise that horse riding is socially significant to the south-east Queensland community, and I understand that we are working with the horse riding clubs and associations to determine where horse riding can be sustainably accommodated. In some cases, this may involve no change at all from the current situation. Other cases might involve the relocation of horse riding to locations which are safer, more readily managed or where impacts can be managed in the long term. In other cases, whole new purpose-specific areas might have to be developed. All such decisions will be taken in consultation with community interests and stakeholders including, of course, horse riders.

Access for horse riders has been a major issue addressed by the working groups. In addition to riding on private lands, horse riding is currently occurring on some public areas, in state forests and forest reserves. Subregional recreational forums have advised that horse riding occurs on 85 of approximately 135 forest reserves. Of the 85 only 17 were not listed as of importance for riding in the future. Such a response highlights the importance of the SEQFA lands to horse riding.

Options for retaining horse riding on forest reserves once they have converted to protected area tenure include the use of conservation parks and gazetted roads. In such cases, the gazetted road or conservation park should be positioned to avoid environmental impact and fragmentation of the protected area. In some cases, give and take will be necessary.

Before an area can be dedicated for recreational horse riding, the area will be assessed to ensure that it is suitable and that potential impacts can be managed and the use can be sustained. Each forest reserve is being individually assessed to identify its conservation and cultural values, uses and associated uses, including threatening processes and management strategies.

Proposed tenure options for the SEQFA lands are being identified in partnership with community-based working groups, including local communities, recreationalists, conservationists, local government and indigenous peoples—a partnership that is working successfully, as confirmed by the member for Glass House.

As part of the SEQFA tenure allocation consultation processes, the QPWS has been holding discussions with the Bicentennial National Trail, the Endurance Riders Association and other local, regional and peak horse riding groups. Horse riding interests have had an opportunity to be part of nine working groups so far convened and have been active participants in those groups for which they have identified horse riding interests.

To date, tenure recommendations are close to finalisation for four areas, in respect of three of which horse riders have indicated they have no current interest. Mooloolah/Dularcha, the fourth, has developed solutions using the extensive input of horse riders and wider community interests.

In addition to the SEQFA processes, there is a widespread but ill-informed view amongst some horse riders that current parks lock out any horse riding. The QPWS has specifically developed a policy for managing horse riding. Plunkett Conservation Park, Beaudesert Shire; Sheep Station Creek Conservation Park, inland from Redcliffe; and the Glenrock property and Spicer's Gap in the Main Range group of parks are areas where horse riding currently occurs.

Time expired.

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.49 p.m.): I join in this debate because I think it is a very important debate, particularly for recreational users in south-eastern Queensland. Going by the number of people in this House who ride horses, we could form a horse riding club instead of a bowls club and have an annual ride instead of a bowls carnival. In the past 11 years I have had the pleasure of going on a three-day ride through a lot of this country with six of my friends from Toowoomba.

It is just absolutely wonderful that people can enjoy recreation in these areas and go into some of these really wild areas around the Great Dividing Range and along the Queensland-New

South Wales border. The important thrust of tonight's debate is about having some commonsense here and making sure that all these people, be they beekeepers, people who collect particular flowers, people who enjoy fossicking or four-wheel driving, motorbike trail riders and so on, can still have the recreational opportunities but partake in them in a sensible and balanced way. We are talking about quite different uses when we look at people who walk and hike and people who ride horses compared with four-wheel drives or trail riders on motorbikes and so on.

The point that has been coming through tonight is that people have been able to ride horses through national parks, particularly in the area of the bicentennial trail, which is one of the magnificent trails in Australia. It goes from the top of Cape York Peninsula down to Melbourne. It was forged by a number of people who went through and mapped and planned it. It actually passes the front gate of the member for Callide. It travels through areas of civilisation and through the mountains. I have ridden parts of it where there is lantana up to your neck. On that note, I think that it would be a good project for Corrective Services to keep the path nice and clear for those who want to use it. It is a wonderful trail and in parts it goes through national parks. It is one of the great trails of Australia. It is something that future generations will forever treasure and it is something that more and more people should be able to access. People should know exactly where it is and it should be able to be kept exactly as it was when it was forged by those people back in the 1980s.

The important part about this debate is no net loss of recreation, which was the promise from the RFA. As the RFA process proceeds and as it goes through changes of tenure in that process, we have to make sure that there is not any net loss. There has been a lot of talk tonight about consultation. I can tell members that a lot of recreation groups are very concerned that they are going to lose this access by stealth. These recreation groups are looking out for not only their groups here today but also in the future—so that young people can go away camping with their families or partake in four-wheel driving on designated tracks or in dedicated areas, particularly in some of these forest areas where they would not cause any damage. Obviously we do not want motorbike trail riders tearing around the suburbs. If they can be a member of a club or association and can go to a place where particular pathways and tracks exist so they do not damage the environment, it gives these young people the opportunity to let off a bit of steam and to go out and see the environment exactly as it is and to appreciate the environment for what it is.

**Mr Seeney:** Wild pigs.

**Mr HORAN:** Of course wild pigs are more trouble than ever.

As previous speakers have mentioned, we did have some correspondence from Mr George Main regarding the Kroombit Tops and about the shifting of the bicentennial trail there. Other speakers have pointed out that brumbies have been running there for about 100 years and have had no impact on the area, let alone the dam that is supplied by catchment for that area or the dam about 60 kilometres away. It is time for a bit of commonsense. I commend the motion because it is trying to force the government to make sure that not only is there this commitment to the environment but also there is some sensible, balanced commitment that will allow for people to continue these recreational activities and not have a system of closure by stealth. The government should certainly leave the bicentennial trail alone.

When we talk about heritage, we see that people leave the facades of old buildings up when they build new buildings because we cannot change something that is historical and part of our history. That trail was designed and implemented by R. M. Williams himself and it should be left exactly as it is. I am happy to support the motion. It is a very worthwhile motion.

**Hon. D. M. WELLS** (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (6.54 p.m.): In moving this motion, the honourable member for Maryborough invoked the spirit of the pioneers. As he spoke, I thought that the spirits of Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson were beside him. In my wild, erratic fancy I saw visions of sun-drenched plains. I saw the light on the hill. I saw the blood on the wattle. However, when it is all boiled down, it was just a pretence. How unreasonable is it to think that the authentic voice of the pioneers should appear in this chamber in the person of the good doctor from Maryborough?

There was movement at the station for the word had got around that the doc from Maryborough got away—and did he ever get away! He got away on a big, big fantasy. Let me tell honourable members what the big, big fantasy was. The big, big fantasy was that trails were going to be taken away and there was going to be less territory for people to ride their horses or to have other recreational uses in the expanded national estate. It is not so. This government is

committed to no net loss of recreational opportunity, but that does not mean that there will be no change. The world does not operate like that. Change is part of the essence of things. That is why certain areas will change and become national parks and other areas will change and become conservation areas.

For example, recently I went to the opening of Glenrock, which is a protected area, protected for the purposes of allowing people to drive their four-wheel drives through, to ride their horses—I believe that in the end there are going to be approximately 70 kilometres of horse trails around that area—and to use it for all sorts of other adventures and other recreational pursuits. No net loss is what the government is committed to, but it does not mean that everything will stay the same. It will not. That is why we are having a consultative process.

**Mr Seeney:** What's the small print?

**Mr WELLS:** The small print is the consultative process which is going on everywhere. One of the results of the consultative process—

**Mr Seeney:** What is your policy?

**Mr WELLS:** Our policy is to consult and to listen to the people of Queensland, as we have done recently in the Mooloolah-Dularcha area. There are still processes to go through in respect of that area and I am not going to pre-empt them in any way. However, I would think it is highly likely that there will be more, not less, opportunity for horse riding in that general region. No net loss does not mean no change. That is why we are proceeding empirically step by step. That is why we are consulting with respect to each particular instance.

The honourable member for Maryborough asked what is the difference between a national park and a national park that was subject to a grazing lease. The difference is that the national park that was subject to a grazing lease is degraded. Consequently, there is no necessity to have the same regard to the preservation of the original species. Take the pioneering spirit that the honourable member for Maryborough invoked to its logical conclusion. What if we did allow all of our national parks to be degraded? Then there would be nothing left to represent that which the pioneers originally encountered. That which is the soul of Australia—the bush—would be gone if we did not protect the national parks. But at the same time as protecting the national parks, at the same time as protecting the authentic part of Australia, if we also make equal or more provision for recreational opportunities, then we satisfy all the needs of people.

I would like to make it very clear that we remain committed to what my predecessor said. But let me be very, very clear indeed that the process will be scientific and consultative. We will look at each individual ecosystem; we will see where it is fragile, where it is rare; we will see where it needs to be preserved and then we will preserve that which needs to be preserved and open up for recreational opportunity that which we can without any loss.

This government loves horses as much as the honourable members who have spoken love horses. There are many horse riders here. We heard from the honourable member for Broadwater, who is an avid horse rider. There will be no net loss. That does not mean that there will be no change, but it will be change for the better.

Time expired.

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

**AYES, 57—**Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Choi, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, J. Cunningham, English, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hayward, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Phillips, Pitt, Poole, Reeves, Reynolds, N. Roberts, Robertson, Rodgers, Rose, Schwarten, C. Scott, D. Scott, Shine, Smith, Stone, Strong, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Purcell

**NOES, 19—**Copeland, E. Cunningham, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, Pratt, Quinn, Rowell, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Watson. Tellers: Lester, Springborg

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. A. M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (7.06 p.m.): I move—  
That the House do now adjourn.



### **Drivers Licence Testing**

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (7.06 p.m.): Tonight I want to address the issue of drivers licence testing in Goondiwindi in my electorate. Recently I was approached by a mother who had some concern about the difficulty that her child was having with regard to timely access to drivers licence testing. I suppose for some of us in this House it is very difficult to understand this issue. When I got my drivers licence I was tested by the local police officer. This situation continues in many areas around Queensland. Local police officers test people who reside in the police district for C-class licences. In major centres the Department of Transport takes over responsibility for that. It has qualified drivers licence testers who undertake this role. It is important to ensure that there is consistency and quality in that testing, and that is something that I would very much support.

In the case of Goondiwindi, a person requiring a drivers licence test can be tested once a fortnight. A C-class drivers licence tester will visit the area. For heavy vehicle licences, it is once a month. Queensland Transport does a good job because there are no waiting times for people wanting to be tested for drivers licences. However, I have a concern that people are not finding it quite so easy to attend driving tests, particularly young people who, in many instances, do not succeed with their first drivers licence test and may be required to come back on two or three occasions. It is also an issue for them because they have to be tested at times when they can fit it in around higher education and, in some cases, jobs. It is very important for young people to ensure that they turn up to their jobs. If there is a need to leave the workplace for any reason such as a drivers licence test, it can be very difficult to get the time off. Students who are at an age where they are eligible to get a drivers licence can have particular difficulty.

I call on the government to look at making additional resources available to Goondiwindi to address this issue and maybe even look at doubling the amount of visits undertaken to that community by C-class drivers licence testers. Where there is smoke there is fire. This issue has not been raised with me for no good reason. This is obviously a matter of concern. It is up to the government to ensure that not just the young people in Goondiwindi and surrounding districts but everyone in that area requiring a drivers licence test is able to undergo that test in a timely manner and when it suits them so as not to give rise to negative circumstances, particularly in relation to their jobs. I hope the government looks at this in a true bipartisan spirit.

Time expired.

### **Charters Towers Blue Nursing Service**

**Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT** (Charters Towers—ALP) (7.09 p.m.): Today I want to tell the parliament about the Charters Towers Blue Nursing Service. This success story of community involvement began in 1973 as an outreach of the Uniting Church in premises loaned by Dr McGucken and Dr Wright. In 1985 the Blue Nursing Service moved into the relocated Richmond Hill Methodist Church in Hackett Terrace. This building, built in 1899, still serves as the administration centre for the service. When the Blue Nurses began in 1973, the founding chairperson was the Reverend Noel Kentish and the director of nursing was Mrs Joyce Stallard, both of whom gave much of themselves to their positions. The present chairperson is Deaconess Rosemary Lane and the director of nursing is Miss Beth Hytch. Beth has served in this role with distinction since 1985. The respite centre, which is also run by the Blue Nurses, has been in position for 10 years and is lucky to have as its coordinator Mrs Maree Jensen.

Funding for the service is via the state and federal governments for wages in several programs and projects and is approximately 65 per cent of what is required. The remainder is raised from bequests, donations, community benefit grants and other fundraising. All funds raised locally are expended locally. There are 31 hardworking, full-time people and 10 volunteers looking after us, as well as areas in the neighbouring Dalrymple shire. Once a week a Blue Nurse travels to the western communities of Balfes Creek, Homestead and Pentland. Services to Ravenswood are on a demand basis, because during the life of the gold mine in that centre Carpentaria Gold showed what a good corporate citizen it is by having its first-aid people extend care into the community.

This service is of the utmost importance to our western communities, some of whose peoples come to us for their retirement. If we add to this the fact that the average age of our population is increasing and will continue to do so as we face the period when the baby boomers reach retirement age, we can see that the services of the Blue Nursing Service will be further stretched.

As a Labor government, as citizens of a modern, democratic society and as people with social consciences, we endeavour to help agencies such as these reach and maintain the admirable goals they set themselves. A growing clientele brings new challenges to these dedicated people who serve our elderly and sick so well. Their challenges must be met and we must do everything in our power to help maintain the dignity and health of those whom agencies such as the Blue Nursing Service serve. I ask members in this House today to honour the people of the Blue Nursing Service in Charters Towers and across the state.

### **School Buses**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (7.12 p.m.): The Queensland government has officially cancelled its bus run to Mount Mee State Primary School, which serviced families living in the Oceanview-Mount Mee South area. It was cancelled because, according to the current buffer zones and kilometre system, the number of eligible students had dropped to four. In addition to the four eligible students relying on this bus service to attend school, there were a further nine non-eligible students catching the bus. Four of these nine live closer to the school than 3.2 kilometres and therefore are classed as ineligible. The other five live out of the Mount Mee school bus zone but their parents have chosen to send them to the school in order that they may benefit from the small school experience.

It is the current Education Department's policy to encourage families to send their children to the school of their choice. However, its policy on transport to schools is contradictory to this and therefore would seem to be outdated. If a family is eligible to catch one bus to a school, they should be able to choose to send their children to another school and remain eligible. This policy also discriminates against people living in country areas, who are forced to follow a kilometre system of eligibility rather than the fare-based system applied in suburban areas.

At present, all 13 students who travel on the Oceanview-Mount Mee South bus live closer to Mount Mee State Primary School than to the Dayboro school, based on the distance they travel from their driveways. I believe it is reasonable to be encouraging families to choose to travel to their closest school and be provided with a bus service they are eligible for. That would certainly be the case if this school were situated in the suburbs of Brisbane.

The Queensland government's policy on school bus runs, Nos 3.06.02 and 3.01, states that a bus service will be cancelled if the number of eligible students drops below six. To restart the bus the numbers must increase to 12, with an average of nine. This policy does not make sense and discriminates against small rural schools such as the one at Mount Mee, where it is highly unlikely in the current circumstances that numbers will get to 12 at any stage in the future.

The answer to the Queensland Transport FAQ 'How safe are my children on a school bus?' states that a bus is the safest form of transport to school and that being driven by parents is the least safe. Statistics show that bus travel is seven times safer. Based on these statistics, providing a bus service for travel to any school should be a priority.

Transport is a major issue for any parent of a school child but it is particularly so for the parents of students of Mount Mee school who have just had their bus run cancelled. There are no pedestrian footpaths or crossings at or near the school for the children to use. The number of trucks and cars travelling along the Mount Mee Road tourist drive makes it dangerous for pedestrians and local traffic alike. Since the cancellation of the bus run at the end of term, all the parents involved have made a group decision to divide the cost of the bus run between them in order to keep it going. They have all made a commitment to pay more than a fair amount of money for travel in term 2 until the Education and Transport Departments can offer something more acceptable.

### **Youth Unemployment**

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (7.15 p.m.): A couple of months ago I doorknocked a pleasant woman in Ipswich and we got to chatting. I asked her if there were any local issues she was interested in and she said, 'Yes. It's young people. Young people these days don't want to work.' I could not quite see it myself. I told her that I was 26, which I guess was pretty young, and that I was working pretty hard as her local member. She cut in. She really agreed. She said that her kids worked really hard, too, but it was these other kind of generic young people out there who did not want to work. The member for Stafford will probably agree; it is something I hear quite a bit. It always starts with 'young people these days'.

There is a high level of unemployment among young people in Ipswich, although precise figures for the city are not available. The closest we can get are figures for the north and west Brisbane statistical division, of which Ipswich is a part. In that region youth unemployment has dropped from 25.7 per cent in January this year to 14.5 per cent at the end of June, though youth unemployment is still well above average unemployment.

On top of unemployment, the sad thing for Ipswich is that we export our young people. Many young Ipswich people, and often the smart ones who have real opportunities, leave Ipswich to study or to get a good job. It is a tough environment for Ipswich young people—probably as tough as that which a lot of earlier generations encountered. But that does not make young people these days innately lazy, stupid or disrespectful. Despite the common perception that a lot of young people commit crime, only one per cent of all young people come into contact with the courts and of those I believe it is 70 per cent that never appear again.

I think Ipswich young people are doing some great things. At Teen Care, a local indigenous organisation, projects are being undertaken whereby young people are finding out about their culture and history. The Nunukul Watamaa dance group, a group that started with some kids learning traditional dances in the backyard at Teen Care, has been selected to perform at the Goodwill Games. Youth Serving Australia, an organisation started by Hilda Des Arts, Del Foreman and others and funded by the state government, currently has a project under way whereby 10 young people will receive a grant, each of \$1,000, to run a local community project. Grants are to be announced this weekend but projects could be things as diverse as organising a community event or putting together a youth magazine.

About eight young Ipswich people, some of them kids who had hung around on the streets of town for years, have just gotten jobs at the AMH meatworks through the Altenjai project. When I talked to one of these kids recently he said that he was awfully sore because it was hard work but that he enjoyed it and he was looking forward to the pay.

Ipswich schools are working together on a Centenary of Federation project. They have put together a web site called Western Thunderer. They cooperated to put together a newsletter in the *Queensland Times*. All of this work is likely to be built on shortly with the Bendigo Bank starting its lead-on program. I want to speak in support of Ipswich young people.

Time expired.

### **Volunteer Organisations, Insurance**

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (7.18 p.m.): As shadow minister for emergency services the role of volunteers comes under my jurisdiction. I am vitally concerned about the role of volunteer organisations in our community. The problem we are having with volunteer organisations is the high cost of litigation insurance. Certainly from the letters I have received over a period of time I can identify the situation quite clearly.

The Sarina Beach Progress Association, very close to my electorate office, has a typical membership of 30, is a sounding-board for the local residents in that community and raises funds annually, from small raffles and so on, with an annual budget of around \$3,000.

With the present litigation situation, legal advice suggests that if that body is not incorporated the members of the executive may be personally responsible if anything goes wrong. Obviously, that is a constraint on those organisations and certainly is a worry to those individuals who take on a responsibility within those organisations.

The Sarina Beach Progress Association spent up to three months liaising with eight insurance brokers to achieve one quote of \$637 to cover their litigation insurance. Most of the insurance companies were not interested in insuring voluntary organisations at all. Indeed, Suncorp Metway, which incorporates the crest of the Queensland government, was certainly not interested.

Unfortunately, litigation lunacy, as I call it, which is happening in America is slowly but surely overtaking Australian society. Governments are relying more and more on voluntary organisations to provide services and resources to our communities. Governments are encouraging local communities to resolve their own problems. Local people are best able to recognise problems within their communities. They are in a good position to muster local support and address problems as they come along. Of course, the crux of the problem is that these organisations then are saddled with the high cost of insurance, and getting membership to be prepared to raise extra funds for insurance premiums becomes a real problem. Increasingly, volunteers are unprepared

to belong to organisations that are not incorporated and, therefore, do not carry litigation insurance. It then becomes a problem to get extra volunteer recruitment.

My real concern is that within five years, unless we break through this impasse, there will be plenty of groups in our community that will fold up and disappear into the sunset. There are possibly some remedies to the situation, such as government intervention to provide some form of subsidy to incorporated organisations to meet their insurance commitments or, in the case of an accident or an event, the government picking up the tab.

Time expired.

### **Tiger 11 Soccer Team**

**Mr LEE** (Indooroopilly—ALP) (7.22 p.m.): I echo the previous member's respect for the Australian value of giving people a fair go. I wish to share a wonderful story of how my close-knit community in Brisbane's western suburbs has come together to help establish a soccer team for a group of young Afghani refugees. I briefly raised this issue in the House on another occasion and feel that it is certainly an appropriate time to provide an update to honourable members.

After arriving on our shores as refugees, many of these boys have been thrown into Australia's detention centres where, for months at a time, they have suffered treatment that I believe is unbefitting of life in Australia. Those who are lucky enough to be released are given temporary protection visas, and a number of them have been sent to our city with very little support and are totally unprepared for life on their own in Brisbane. They are all keen to learn our culture and our ways, but they receive absolutely no help from an uncaring federal government. A number of them feel lost and alone, but I have to say that initially their common bond has been the time that they have spent at the Milpera State High School in Chelmer learning English.

I was approached a number of months ago by a new member of our community, Camilla Cowley, who suggested that, as the state member, I could provide some assistance to a group of 15 to 25 year old Hazara ethnic group soccer-playing boys. It gives them an opportunity to learn sport and teamwork. Most importantly, it has given these boys an opportunity to enjoy life again.

So far, there has been an outpouring of community support, and I would like to thank the Western Suburbs Community and Sporting Club, Neil Urquhart and his team, who have provided a ground for the boys to play; the Ecumenical Social Justice Group, Val Whitehead and Karin Chai for collecting soccer boots; Video 2000 in Graceville and, of course, Milpera. The Tiger 11—the name they have taken on—will play in maroon colours for Queensland and out of respect for Wests. Coach Hassan and his assistant coach, Zelfequar Ali, I think will have the boys in great shape for a competition this September.

But I would like to make a request of the many people in Queensland whom I know read *Hansard*. We still need some more soccer boots for the boys. They do not get a lot of money from the federal government, and many of them are still growing and they cannot afford to keep buying new boots. I suggest that if there is anyone in our community who has some old or even new soccer boots, I would be very happy if they would send them to the Tiger 11 care of my office at 36 Station Road, Indooroopilly, 4068.

### **Mr T. George**

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (7.25 p.m.): I rise to remember the life of one young man in our community, Terry George, for whom I had the greatest of respect. His funeral was held today. Terry was probably most well known as the manager of the Gladstone Entertainment Centre. But that was not his only area of interest in our community. For many months he had been battling inoperable cancer, and he passed away at the very young age of 36 at the Gladstone Mater Hospital on Saturday.

Terry was a man of vast experience. He had been closely involved in developing the city's cultural atmosphere, his main forte being in entertainment. He started his career in radio as a sales executive at 4CC. Then he moved around the state and came back to Gladstone in 1994, when he was made, at the age of 28, the general manager. Later he was promoted to national sales manager for the Queensland radio network. Many at 4CC I know are missing him already.

In 1995 Terry took a leap of faith and joined the entertainment centre as the general manager, and his commitment over the next six years saw the city's cultural circuit expand as he introduced new elements for local performing artists. He introduced initiatives such as the

Eisteddfod Showcase, the Combined School Musical and the Live 'n Loud Battle of the Bands to encourage local talent. Terry loved jazz, and he started the annual Jazz Festival during the Harbour Arts Festival to experiment in audience development. He oversaw the refurbishment of the theatre and was a linchpin in this vision.

But more than that, I think people remember Terry as a great friend. He had a really weird sense of humour. He is remembered for his creativity, his wit and his ability to say so much without saying anything at all.

Terry raised \$15,000 impromptu one night at a Rotary dinner. He said, 'You are not cutting my hair.' He had beautiful long black hair. He said, 'You are not cutting it unless I get 15 grand.' So some of the major car dealers got together and raised \$15,000 that night and he had his hair cut for cancer. It was not one of the normal fundraisers. It was something that he valued very much, but he was prepared to lose it for children.

Terry had fishing stories to boggle the mind, guitar playing to rival the best and an unbound passion for jazz and the blues. He will be sorely missed as manager, mentor and friend to many in our community.

I pass on to his wife, Caroline, his daughter, Tierney, his mother, Rita, and his brothers and sisters our deepest and sincerest sympathy. Terry will be greatly missed in our community, as I said before, as a manager of the theatre, as a mentor to many and as a friend to everyone he met.

#### **Housing Department, Brisbane South Area Office**

**Mr PURCELL** (Bulimba—ALP) (7.28 p.m.): Last Wednesday I attended the official opening of the new Department of Housing area office for the Brisbane South region with my parliamentary colleagues, the Honourable Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, Robert Swarten, and the member for Mansfield, Phil Reeves. The Brisbane South area office, formerly at Stones Corner, has recently been relocated to Logan Road, Buranda. The new location is now more centrally located for providing services for the whole of the Brisbane South area and is situated right next to the Buranda railway station and is on the main bus route, ensuring good public transport for clients.

The Brisbane South area office manages more than 5,400 properties, including 669 households in my electorate of Bulimba. The Brisbane South region includes the inner and near-city suburbs south of the Brisbane River and extends to the suburbs of Rocklea, Sunnybank Hills, Runcorn, Carindale, Morningside and Cannon Hill.

As many of the Brisbane South area office clients access hospitals in the area, such as the Mater, the Princess Alexandra Hospital, the Greenslopes Private Hospital and QE II, the Brisbane South area office serves a wide range of clients. There is a high proportion of clients who have a mental illness. There is also a high demand for purpose-built dwellings for people with disabilities. This growing demand for specialist housing has been inflated as the Howard government continues to shift away from providing capital investment in housing to providing rental assistance for people to live in private rental accommodation. As we know, the private rental market rarely caters for tenants with special needs because of the additional costs involved in providing modified housing.

To address these new challenges and to ensure that the Department of Housing is meeting the needs of all tenants, the department is establishing working partnerships with private industry, the community sector and other government agencies to tackle the systemic issues that contribute to housing need. Tenant participation groups play a vital role in providing support for housing tenants and representing tenants in negotiation with the department at a local level to ensure better outcomes for clients. The tenants group that represents tenants on Brisbane's south side is Scatter. I would like to thank them for their hard work, particularly the President, Bev Shaffer, and other representatives who attended the opening last week, Jewel Murphy and Glenis Dart. I have a copy of that photograph that was taken of us together, and I can say that it came out pretty good.

The government is committed to efficient service delivery. Nearly 30 Department of Housing staff will work from the new premises. The new office provides excellent client reception facilities, including private interview rooms. It features a wheelchair ramp to facilitate disabled access and provides a better working environment for the dedicated staff of the Brisbane South area office. I have to say that I have had a lot to do with that office over many years. I have found that the

staff of that office have certainly looked after their clients as best they can. They are a dedicated group of people. Whenever they are given an opportunity, they will always help out.

### **Regional Drug Detoxification Facilities**

**Mr COPELAND** (Cunningham—NPA) (7.31 p.m.): I would like to draw attention to an impassioned account in Monday's Toowoomba *Chronicle* of a mother's battle with her two sons' addiction to heroin. In the article, the mother emotionally describes how neither she nor her husband were truly prepared for the battle that lay ahead in their attempt to detox and rehabilitate their sons in a regional city.

There are no residential detox facilities in Toowoomba and rehabilitation services are at full capacity. So the mother faced the reality of detoxing her children at home using the outpatient facility. Due to her lack of expertise in and understanding of such a process, it was, in her words, a totally unrealistic expectation. She lamented that at this most vulnerable of times, the all too vital support from available sources was simply not forthcoming.

Her example is by no means isolated and highlights the very significant problem of people dealing with drug addiction in regional areas. Adequate facilities are just not available in Toowoomba for residential detoxification and rehabilitation. While outpatients services are available, in reality residential facilities are far better able to remove the young person from their old, damaging environment and provide structure with trained staff to lead them properly to recovery. Organisations such as Drug Arm and Teen Challenge are doing a wonderful job in the community, but they are stretched to the limit with only restricted available funds. With increased funding, these groups could extend their vital programs.

The Minister for Health will say that the government is assisting Teen Challenge in its residential program towards a long-term goal of 32 beds and providing support for a handful of other groups to provide outpatient assistance. Sadly, this support is only a drop in the ocean and goes nowhere near addressing the drug crisis in Toowoomba. Currently, Teen Challenge can accommodate only a maximum of 12 to 14 males in their residential facility. For female addicts the situation is worse, with absolutely no facilities available for residential rehabilitation. I find these facts unbelievable for a city of 90,000 people.

It may surprise some people that each year in Toowoomba approximately 12 people die from drug-related causes while every week there are two to three drug overdoses in the city. Between 1988 and 1998 heroin use jumped by a massive 77 per cent in regional communities. If current trends continue, regional cities such as Toowoomba will be faced with the same epidemic situation that exists currently in Brisbane by 2008.

This trend is of great concern to families all over Queensland. Everyone in the community is affected by drug addiction, whether that is through being a victim of crime resulting from an addict maintaining their habit or through losing a loved one because of an overdose. It is in the community that action must be taken. If the Health Minister is serious about addressing the growing drug problem, I implore her to start listening to the demands of regional areas and dedicate sufficient funds towards creating adequate facilities, which is just one part of the multifaceted strategy that is needed to combat this problem right across Queensland.

### **Police Resources, Noosa**

**Ms MOLLOY** (Noosa—ALP) (7.34 p.m.): I would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the House to the Beattie government's response to law and order issues and the impact that it is having on my electorate of Noosa. Firstly, the people of Eumundi are looking forward to seeing their new police station. This new station, being built under the government's small stations program, will be a great improvement over their present rented facility and is certain to be in the long-term operational interests of the Police Service. On a broader note, the people of the Sunshine Coast should also be happy with the deployment of the additional 14 police officers who will make up the new Tactical Crime Police Squad to be stationed on the Sunshine Coast. This will be a real boost for responsive and effective policing in the region.

While these are welcome signs that the Beattie government is taking law and order issues seriously, we need to continue working with the community to further enhance the police presence in the area. The people of Coolumb continually express to me what they consider to be an inadequate police presence. I have heard what they are saying and will continue to make representations to the minister in an effort to upgrade services. I acknowledge that the minister

faces a huge challenge in trying to cater for Police Service needs across the state. To his credit, he has given and continues to give me time to talk through the police issues important to the people whom I represent.

The House should recall that on 17 May I presented a petition to Mr Speaker requesting a fully staffed 24-hour police facility for Coolum. Two of my constituents, Mrs Jocelyn Hahn and Mrs Lorraine Robertson, travelled from Coolum in the early hours of the morning to be at that presentation. Both people are senior residents of Coolum who are highly active within our community. As *Hansard* records, 87 signatures were presented that day. However, this figure does not represent accurately the strength of feeling that the Coolum community has on this issue. In establishing the petition, Mrs Hahn sought assistance from the Liberal federal member for Fairfax, Mr Alex Somlyay and, as a result of an apparent lack of attention to correct parliamentary procedure and detail, some 3,426 signatures of those collected had to be omitted. I now proffer those signatures to be tabled.

The Beattie government is making positive improvements to Police Service delivery and infrastructure across Queensland and in my electorate. I acknowledge, as does the minister, that people feel threatened. As the elected member, I have a responsibility to continue working in a positive way with the community and with the government to build on police numbers and build infrastructure. That is why I am pleased to say that Coolum is to receive two new constables. These fresh, enthusiastic constables are welcome in our community.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.37 p.m.