

TUESDAY, 30 JULY 2002

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

PRIVILEGE**Families Department Funding; Forde Inquiry**

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.31 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. Last Friday in an article in the *Courier-Mail* on funding for the Families Department and the Forde inquiry, the opposition Families spokesman, Stuart Copeland, claimed I had lied to the parliament and misled child protection groups. The Opposition Leader, Mike Horan, then jumped on the bandwagon and in various regional newspapers said that my statement that the state budget met the fiscal commitments flowing from the Forde inquiry was a 'bald-faced lie'. In Saturday's *Courier-Mail* the state political editor, Matthew Franklin, claimed that when I delivered my budget speech journalists and child protection groups were fooled by the Forde claim. He went on to state that the truth always comes out eventually.

I am offended by all of these comments and can assure members of the House that I did not mislead parliament. Staff from my office spoke to the *Courier-Mail* on several occasions last week to address queries they had raised regarding the money provided to the Families Department as a result of the Forde inquiry. Despite these conversations and two media releases issued to clarify the information, it appears the *Courier-Mail* did not understand the figures or simply chose to misinterpret them for its readers. For the benefit of members and readers of the *Courier-Mail* I will explain the figures again.

In 1999 Leneen Forde delivered a report on a commission of inquiry into abuse of children in Queensland institutions. This 380 page report was very comprehensive and examined a range of issues, including the history of the child welfare system, orphanages and other residential institutions, the modern child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. It also evaluated existing legislation and departmental practice and made a number of recommendations. One such recommendation related to funding, and it is this particular recommendation that has once again been the focus of media attention.

In the years that have passed since the inquiry report was handed down this recommendation is perhaps the one element most interpreted by the media and different individuals and groups in the community and welfare sector. Word for word the recommendation on page 118 of the inquiry report stated—

That the Queensland government increase the budget of the department by \$103 million to permit it to meet the national average per capita welfare spending for children, and agree to maintain the increase in line with the national average. The additional resources should focus on the prevention of child abuse through supporting 'at risk' families, respite care, parenting programs and other early intervention and preventative programs for high risk families.

It did not state that the money should be directed exclusively at the child protection system nor did it specify what constituted child protection. If anything, the recommendation avoided a narrow definition of 'child protection' in favour of a broad preventive approach to help children at risk. In fact, Forde arrived at the figure of \$103 million by looking at a Commonwealth Grants Commission comparison of family and child welfare per capita expenditure across the states and territories. The Commonwealth Grants Commission defined the family and child welfare category as consisting of expenditure on—

- substitute care (short-term and permanent);
- information, advice and referral, particularly in adoption;
- development and monitoring of family/household management skills;
- protective investigation, protective supervision, statutory guardianship management, protective accommodation;
- services delivered by residential institutions such as centres, villages, shelters, hostels, orphanages, youth refuges, juvenile hostels, campus homes and family group homes;
- marriage and child/juvenile counselling;
- assessment and evaluation of offenders by non-judicial bodies;

- child care services and services for children which are developmental in nature, long-day care centres, family day care, occasional care/other centres and outside school hours care;
- subsidies for child-care assistance;
- outlays on places of secure detention for juveniles, child offenders and children on remand for alleged offences;
- youth training centres; and
- youth and family welfare services which are protective (children), developmental (youth) and supportive (families) in nature.

In line with the recommendation these are the types of initiatives we have targeted in meeting our fiscal commitments from the inquiry. Programs such as first years prevention projects for children identified early in their school life at being at risk of poor educational and social outcomes, family support centres in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, youth workers in high schools, the expansion of community conferencing, and increased payments for foster carers all play a critical role in child protection. In targeting programs such as these and those areas specifically highlighted by Forde we have not only met our fiscal commitments, we have exceeded them.

In 1998-99, the year immediately prior to when Forde reported, the actual budget expenditure less concessions for the Department of Families was \$248 million. In 1999-2000 it rose by \$48 million, or 19.4 per cent. In 2000-01 it rose by \$27 million—that is cumulative growth of \$757 million, or 30.2 per cent. In 2001-02 it rose by \$21 million—that is cumulative growth of \$96 million, or 38.7 per cent. This year it will rise by \$51.17 million, taking the annual forecast budget for the Department of Families to \$395 million. That is a base increase in per annum spending of \$147 million, or 59.4 per cent higher than 1998-99. It is 43 per cent higher than the amount recommended by Forde.

The figure of \$82 million quoted by the *Courier-Mail* is simply wrong. It has arrived at the figure by simply adding the \$40 million announced in the 1999-2000 budget and the additional \$42 million announced in this year's budget. It fails to take into account departmental funding for other Forde related initiatives implemented over this period. In addition, it does not include the growth funding built into the forward estimates for the Department of Families. Before the opposition accuses me of lying, or the *Courier-Mail* accuses me of rhetorical gymnastics, I suggest they do their homework and check the facts. The figures are there in black and white, and it cannot be disputed that we have clearly met our fiscal commitments stemming from the Forde inquiry. My advice to the Families opposition spokesman is that in future, when the *Courier-Mail* requires someone to say that someone is lying, he resists the opportunity.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Government House
Queensland

21 June 2002

The Honourable R.K. Hollis, MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on 20 June 2002:

"A Bill for an Act to regulate particular claims for and awards of damages based on a liability for personal injuries, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend Acts administered by the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines"

The Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

(sdg) Peter Arnison

Governor

Government House
Queensland
24 June 2002

The Honourable R.K. Hollis, MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bill, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, was assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on 21 June 2002:

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000".

The Bill is hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Peter Arnison

Governor

PETITIONS

Local Government Rating System

Mr Cummins from 152 petitioners requesting the House to (a) review the overall process used to determine statutory valuations and the link to the current local government rating system and (b) maintain the existing rating levels until the current State Government review is completed.

Dunal Walkway: Warana, Bokarina and Wurtulla

Mr Cummins from 91 petitioners requesting the House to call on the Caloundra City Council to defer any further investigations into a dunal walkway through Warana, Bokarina and Wurtulla until certain concerns are publicly answered and addressed.

PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

28 June 2002—

Audit Report No. 4, 2001-02, Auditor-General's Report to Parliament—Results of Audits Performed for 2000-01 as at 30 April 2002

8 July 2002—

Board of Trustees of the Ipswich Girls' Grammar School—Annual Report 2001

Late tabling statement by the Minister for Education (Ms Bligh) regarding the Board of Trustees of the Ipswich Girls' Grammar School—Annual Report 2001

9 July 2002—

Report by the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, The Honourable Robert Schwarten, MP on a visit to the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Germany 20 May to 5 June 2002

10 July 2002—

Letter, dated 5 July 2002, from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to the Clerk of the Parliament referring to correspondence from the Commonwealth's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Letter, dated 18 June 2002, from Ms Julie Bishop, Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties of the Commonwealth Parliament to the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) inviting comment by the Queensland Government on various proposed international treaties and enclosing National Interest Analyses regarding the following proposed international treaties:-

Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United

States of America for the enforcement of maintenance (support) obligations Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Cook Islands relating to air services, done at Apia on 18 September 2001

Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Chile relating to air services, done at Santiago on 7 September 2001

Agreement establishing the International Organisation of Vine and Wine, done at Paris on 3 April 2001

Amendment, adopted at Geneva on 21 December 2001, to the convention on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects of 10 October 1980

Australian declarations under Articles 287(1) and 298(1) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, lodged at New York on 22 March 2002 International convention for the suppression of the financing of terrorism, done at New York on 9 December 1999

Australian declaration under paragraph 2 of Article 36 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice 1945, lodged at New York on 22 March 2002

Letter, dated 25 June 2002, from Ms Julie Bishop, Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties of the Commonwealth Parliament to the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) inviting comment by the Queensland Government on various proposed international treaties and enclosing National Interest Analyses regarding the following proposed international treaties:-

Agreement to promote compliance with international conservation and management measures by fishing vessels on the high seas, done at Rome on 24 November 1993 Timor Sea treaty between the Government of Australia and the Government of East Timor, done at Dili on 20 May 2002

Exchange of notes constituting an agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Democratic Republic of East Timor concerning arrangements for exploration and exploitation of petroleum in an area of the Timor Sea between Australia and East Timor, done at Dili on 20 May 2002

11 July 2002—

Corrigendum to State Budget Paper 2002-03, Budget Paper No. 4 – Capital Statement

Report to Parliament on Official Visit to United States and Canada by Hon Paul Lucas MP, Minister for Innovation and Information Economy, 4-17 June 2002

18 July 2002—

Interim response from the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads (Mr Bredhauer) to Report No. 34 of the Travelsafe Committee entitled Report on the symposium on work-related road trauma and fleet risk management in Australia

Response from the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province (Mr McGrady) to Report No. 36 of the Travelsafe Committee entitled Rural Road Safety in Queensland

23 July 2002—

Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee Report No. 52 – Report on a matter of privilege – Matter referred to the committee on 9 April 2002

26 July 2002—

Estimates Committee A – Report No. 1, 2002

Estimates Committee A – Report No. 2, 2002

Estimates Committee A – Additional Information Volume 2002

29 July 2002—

Estimates Committee B – Report 2002

Estimates Committee B – Additional Information Volume 2002

Estimates Committee C – Report 2002

Estimates Committee C – Additional Information Volume 2002

Estimates Committee D – Report 2002

Estimates Committee D – Additional Information Volume 2002

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by The Clerk—

Statutory Instruments Act 1992—

Statutory Instruments Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 146

Electricity Act 1994—

Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2002, No. 147

Fuel Subsidy Act 1997, Pay-roll Tax Act 1971, Taxation Administration Act 2001—

Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 148

Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002—

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 149

Ambulance Service Act 1991—

Ambulance Service Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2002, No. 150

Building Act 1975, Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990—

Building Fire Safety Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 151

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982—

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2002, No. 152

Major Sports Facilities Act 2002—

Major Sports Facilities Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 153

Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002—

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 154

Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002—

Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Regulation 2002, No. 155

Food Act 1981, Health Act 1937, Health Services Act 1991, Radiation Safety Act 1999—

Health Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2002, No. 156

Criminal Law Amendment Act 2002—

Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 157

- Penalties and Sentences (Non-contact Orders) Amendment Act 2001—
Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 158
- State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—
State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Regulation (No. 6) 2002, No. 159
- Environmental Protection Act 1994—
Environmental Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 160
- Forestry Act 1959—
Forestry Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2002, No. 161
- State Buildings Protective Security Act 1983—
State Buildings Protective Security Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 162
- Subcontractors' Charges Amendment Act 2002—
Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 163
- Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991—
Queensland Building Services Authority Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 164
- Adoption of Children Amendment Act 2002—
Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 165
- Adoption of Children Act 1964—
Adoption of Children Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 166
- Associations Incorporation Act 1981, Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955, Business Names Act 1962, Collections Act 1966, Cooperatives Act 1997, Funeral Benefit Business Act 1982, Land Sales Act 1984, Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931, Motor Vehicles Securities Act 1986, Partnership (Limited Liability) Act 1988, Pawnbrokers Act 1984, Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000, Queensland Building Tribunal Act 2000, Racing and Betting Act 1980, Retirement Villages Act 1999, Second-hand Dealers and Collectors Act 1984, Security Providers Act 1993, Trade Measurement Administration Act 1990, Travel Agents Act 1988—
Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 167
- Acquisition of Land Act 1967, Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997, Building Units and Group Titles Act 1980, Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999, Explosives Act 1999, Foreign Ownership of Land Register Act 1988, Fossicking Act 1994, Gas Act 1965, Land Court Act 2000, Land Act 1994, Land Title Act 1994, Mineral Resources Act 1989, Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999, Petroleum Act 1923, Rural Lands Protection Act 1985, Surveyors Act 1977, Valuation of Land Act 1944, Valuers Registration Act 1992, Vegetation Management Act 1999—
Natural Resources and Mines Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 168
- Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949—
Standard Sewerage Amendment Law (No. 1) 2002, No. 169
- Water Act 2000—
Water (Transitional) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 170
- Building and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2002—
Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 171
- Building Act 1975, Integrated Planning Act 1997—
Building and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 172
- City of Brisbane Act 1924—
City of Brisbane Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 173
- Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949—
Sewerage and Water Supply Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 174
- Industrial Relations Act 1999—
Industrial Relations (Tribunals) Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2002, No. 175
- Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—
Workplace Health and Safety (Miscellaneous) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 176
- Plant Protection Act 1989—
Plant Protection (White Blister of Brassica) Notice 2002, No. 177
- Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990—
Superannuation (State Public Sector) Amendment of Deed Regulation (No. 2) 2002, No. 178
- Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994—
Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2002, No. 179
- Electricity Act 1994—
Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2002, No. 180 and Explanatory Notes and Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 180
- Plant Protection Act 1989—
Plant Protection Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 181
- Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—
Workplace Health and Safety Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2002, No. 182

Health Legislation Amendment Act 2001—

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 183

Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001—

Medical Practitioners Registration Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 184

Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Vehicle Registration) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 185

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—

State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Regulation (No. 7) 2002, No. 186

Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Act 2002—

Proclamation commencing remaining provision, No. 187

Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990—

Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 188

Gene Technology Act 2001—

Gene Technology Regulation 2002, No. 189

MINISTERIAL RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

The following responses to petitions, received during the recess, were tabled by The Clerk—

Response from the Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy (Mrs Edmond) to a petition presented by Mr Wells from 315 petitioners, regarding irradiation of food and the proposals to construct irradiation facilities using radiation sources in Queensland—

17 July 2002

Mr R. Doyle
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE Q 4000

Dear Mr Doyle

Thank you for your letter and petition dated 24 June 2002, forwarded to me by the Queensland Legislative Assembly, regarding irradiation of food and the proposals to construct irradiation facilities using radiation sources in Queensland.

I have noted the concerns of the petitioners and wish to reassure them that the legislated food and radiation safety requirements in Queensland, will ensure the health and safety of persons and the environment.

I wish to confirm that my previous advice to you on this matter remains unchanged. Further, Queensland Health has recently prepared fact sheets to inform public on the legislated processes including technical information on radiation safety and food irradiation. I have enclosed the fact sheets for your information.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention and trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Wendy Edmond MP
Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy

Response from the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities (Mr Palaszcuk) to petitions presented by Miss E Roberts from 2,116 petitioners and Mr McNamara from 3,140 petitioners, regarding the establishment of a recreational only fishing area in the southern part of Hervey Bay, the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet—

25 June 2002

Mr Robert Doyle
The Clerk of the Parliament
Legislative Assembly Offices
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Doyle

I refer to petitions received by the Queensland Parliament on 10 April and 9 May 2002, from Mr Jim Staats of Sunfish Queensland Inc. Fraser Coast Branch, concerning the establishment of a recreational only fishing area in the southern part of Hervey Bay, the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet.

I have enclosed a copy of the response to the principal petitioner, Mr Jim Staats for your information.

Should you require any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Henry Palaszcuk MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Administrative Arrangements

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House that, in accordance with the Constitution of Queensland 2001, His Excellency the Governor, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council, approved the Administrative Arrangements Order (No. 2) 2002 on 11 July 2002. I lay upon the table of the House a copy of the relevant *Queensland Government Gazette* of 12 July 2002.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

**Consolidated Meat Group; Central Queensland Training and Employment Strategy;
Rockhampton Smart City Project; Rockhampton Research House**

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.42 a.m.), by leave: The decision to close Consolidated Meat Group's Lakes Creek abattoir is a disaster for about 700 workers and their families and for many small businesses in Rockhampton. Indeed, more people than that have been retrenched because numbers were higher prior to the current restart.

I arranged a meeting this morning of relevant ministers to ensure that as a government we are doing everything we can to deal with the effects of the closure and to help the people of Rockhampton who are affected. Treasurer Terry Mackenroth, Employment Minister Matt Foley, State Development Minister Tom Barton, local member and Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing Robert Schwarten and I had a meeting this morning. We have ensured that everything possible is being done. In addition to this, the Minister for Employment and the Minister for Public Works and member for Rockhampton will fly to Rockhampton immediately after question time to take part in talks and to make any urgent executive decisions which are needed.

Today officers from the Office of Regional Development, the Food and Meat Task Force, which is the Department of State Development, and the Department of Employment and Training will be meeting representatives from Consolidated Meat Group, the union, the chamber of commerce, Rockhampton Enterprise and the mayor of Rockhampton.

The Department of Employment has worker assistance programs to help people search for new jobs and to provide retraining opportunities. The Department of State Development can provide help and advice for local businesses affected by the closure. Officers from the Department of State Development will also be holding talks with the new consortium of Consolidated Meat Group and Teys Brothers about a future for the meatworks.

In essence, the ministers will not only be visiting Rockhampton today. The programs of the state government, through the Departments of Employment and State Development, will be made available. In addition, the Minister for State Development will work with the local member to do anything we possibly can to guarantee a future for these works. We know that is very difficult in the current circumstances—this is a privately owned meatworks and abattoir—but as a government we will leave no stone unturned to assist.

Our commitment to Rockhampton is well known. Indeed, last Monday night in Rockhampton the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth, Matt Foley, the Minister for State Development, Tom Barton, and the local member, Robert Schwarten, launched a comprehensive strategy to ensure adequate skilled labour for central Queensland's emerging multi-billion dollar projects. The strategy is an excellent example of government working with industry, unions and community agencies to maximise local and regional responses to training and employment opportunities.

This is a \$5.5 million Queensland government training and employment strategy for central Queensland. It was unveiled in Rockhampton at a state government business reception attended by more than 225 people, including the member for Rockhampton and Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing. The strategy will create more than 2,700 new training opportunities in central Queensland to meet the skills demands of a number of multibillion-dollar industrial construction projects.

The strategy will support almost \$10 billion worth of projects planned for the region, including the Aldoga aluminium smelter, the Comalco smelter and the Australian Magnesium Corporation development. The major projects will create enormous economic growth in the central Queensland region which will result in new job opportunities for local people. Job growth is dependent upon ensuring that Queenslanders have the right skills. People are more employable

if they have up-to-date and flexible skills and a capacity to re-skill for new and emerging industries. TAFE Queensland has already signed memorandum of understanding with both the Aldoga aluminium smelter project and the Comalco Smelter Development Pty Ltd to provide training to their work forces from the construction phase through to operation.

The \$3 billion Aldoga smelter is expected to create 3,500 jobs at the peak of construction, with another 3,500 jobs to be created in related fields. It will employ about 900 people during the operational phase, with flow-on employment of more than 4,200 in central Queensland. A training partnership has also been signed between Comalco Smelter Development Pty Ltd, Bechtel Australia Pty Ltd and TAFE Queensland for the Comalco expansion. The first stage of the \$1.54 billion Comalco expansion will create up to 1,850 jobs during construction, with another 400 jobs when production begins. The current growth in jobs associated with the \$1.3 billion Australian Magnesium Corporation project at Stanwell is a further significant economic milestone for the region. While in Rockhampton, I also announced that I would turn the first sod at the AMC project on 29 August.

Things are happening. These projects are coming about because of direct intervention by my government and my key ministers. This is about delivering the Smart State and delivering jobs for this state. All of these projects will create enormous demand for skilled workers, and many of these jobs will go to local people.

The strategy's key elements are to encourage industry based training initiatives, provide just-in-time training to suit work force demands of the major industrial projects, maximise training contributions from industry and business focused on entry-level training, implement and accelerate a skill development prevocational program, increase the skills of existing workers, increase traineeship opportunities in existing and future skill shortage areas, target training for employees of labour organisations and provide targeted increased skills for individuals with existing competencies.

Training activity has already commenced at the Comalco project, which I inspected while in Gladstone, with delivery taking place both on and off the site. Graduates of these programs have already found employment on the Comalco project. Training to support the Australian Magnesium Corporation has also commenced at Mount Morgan and Rockhampton through partnership arrangements between the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE, the Department of Employment and Training, the Mount Morgan Employment Task Force, Ergon Energy and local Jobs Network agencies. The department has also entered into funding arrangements with the Rockhampton based Fitzroy Industry Resource Skills Training as a major commitment to industry partnerships in this region.

I put on record my appreciation for the efforts of the Minister for Employment and Training, Matt Foley. I table a document produced by him and his department titled *Queensland Government Training and Employment Strategy for Central Queensland*. I want to make sure that every member gets a copy of this, because this is about skills, training and opportunity. I hope members will take time to read it. In addition, I table a document produced by Tom Barton and his department called *Gladstone and Calliope: Australia's newest economic powerhouse*, which again talks about how the government will deal with the overheating and the demands from Gladstone because of the new jobs and opportunities. I also thank Tom Barton for the contribution he has made in relation to the central Queensland region. I know that the local member and the minister, Robert Schwarten, joins with me in thanking both ministers for their contributions.

In terms of other issues involving Rockhampton—I want to also report that during my visit I was accompanied, as I said, by both the ministers; in fact, Tom Barton accompanied me from Gladstone to Bundaberg as well—there are a number of other exciting things happening. Rockhampton is living up to its Smart State role in that it is also a smart city. It is living up to its smart city reputation by recycling historic state government buildings as part of the Central Queensland University campus. The Smart City project has injected new life into the Rockhampton CBD while providing first-class learning and teaching facilities. It is also strengthening the bond between the university and the wider community. The Smart City project is a prime example of our Smart State strategy at work. It was one of the first recommendations to cabinet by the local member, Robert Schwarten.

I also want to draw to the attention of the House the state government's new Research House in Rockhampton. It will be showcased to up to one billion people in China through a television program that has been shot in Queensland. On Tuesday, 23 July I visited the Research

House with my colleague the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to take part in filming for Central China Television—CCTV.

Because of time, I seek to incorporate the remainder of both of those ministerial statements in *Hansard* for the information of members.

Leave granted.

The Rockhampton Research House was developed by the Department of Public Works, the Department of Housing and a range of private sector partners and sponsors as part of the Government's Smart Housing initiative.

Brisbane-based Gulliver Media is producing a 15-minute program for CCTV on the Research House and a 'smart' greenhouse also developed by the Department of Public Works.

The program is expected to air in China in around four weeks time and be seen on 12 CCTV channels, reaching a potential audience of one billion people.

This is a golden opportunity to showcase our Smart State by highlighting our Smart Housing initiative.

The \$200,000 four-bedroom Research House will be the subject of a two-year research project—providing a test-bed for "smarter", more energy-efficient housing design and construction methods.

The Department of Housing is now identifying a family to tenant the house and take part in the ongoing research project.

Central Queensland University will be monitoring the house over two years to measure its energy efficiency and the impact of design features and various building technologies.

Safety and security are key components of Smart Housing. Simple design features—such as adequate sight lines and external lighting, as well as 'designing out' hiding places for intruders—will make the house and its occupants safer.

Some of the other environmental principles used in the development have included:

- minimising construction waste
- maximising renewable energy
- maximising water conservation, and
- maximising natural ventilation.

Rockhampton is living up to its Smart City reputation by recycling historic State Government buildings as part of the Central Queensland University campus.

The Smart City project has injected new life into the Rockhampton CBD while providing first-class learning and teaching facilities.

It is also strengthening the bond between the university and the wider community.

The Smart City project is a prime example of our Smart State strategy at work.

Results of the Smart City project are plain—the preservation of four historic buildings is now playing a key role in educating future Smart State professionals.

The package of four historic buildings now being used by CQU as part of the Smart City project include former Magistrates, District and Supreme Court buildings and a former TAFE building.

I visited the former District Court building—now home to the CQU School of Journalism and staff from the Central Queensland Conservatory of Music with my colleague the Minister for Works and Housing during my recent visit to Rockhampton on July 23.

The Minister brought the Smart City proposal to Cabinet in August 1998.

It was the very first submission Robert brought to Cabinet and among the first to be considered by the Government.

Under the Smart City project the four buildings valued at more than \$20 million were leased by CQU at "peppercorn" rates.

The State Government undertook a \$1 million refurbishment of the four buildings before they were handed over to CQU in 1999.

Tradespeople and up to 10 apprentices from the Government's works and maintenance organisation, QBuild, worked on the restoration and refurbishment.

These four Smart City buildings are priceless, but if facilities of similar standard had been built from scratch, the University would have been faced with bills for around \$20 million.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Hear and Say Centre

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: Later today I will have the pleasure of visiting the Hear and Say Centre for Deaf Children to launch a new video teleconferencing facility that will help children with hearing impairments learn to listen and speak. These auditory verbal therapists, working in the studio, will be able to give lessons live on camera to children and parents throughout the state. It is another Smart State

initiative and a smart way to overcome one of the problems of isolation that affects many Queenslanders.

Hear and Say helps children who use cochlear implants and other hearing aids to help them hear. The organisation aims to help these young people enter the mainstream education system as quickly as possible and has achieved a 92 per cent success rate in this area, which is a tremendous result.

Hear and Say began in Brisbane 10 years ago with six children. It now has 118 children and a waiting list with branches in Dalby and Cairns and plans to open more offices on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast. The new video conferencing service will supplement visits by therapists and audiologists and support the centre's education programs for parents, teachers and health workers.

As of today, Hear and Say will provide online therapy for 17 children in outlying areas of north, central and south-east Queensland. In Queensland, there are more than 270 children under the age of six who have been fitted with hearing aids. Sixty per cent of them live outside the state's south-east corner. This new video conferencing facility was bought with grants from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund and the Paul Newman Fund.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Salinity

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: On 10 July, the Minister for Natural Resources, Stephen Robertson, and I released a salinity hazard map for Queensland's section of the Murray-Darling Basin. The map covers some 26 million hectares and shows the factors indicating the potential for salinity over the next 30 to 50 years. The science of this map is sound. Indeed, it is world class. It was produced by scientists from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee and the Commonwealth. Its methodology was endorsed by the CSIRO, the National Land and Water Audit, and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia.

When we released the map to stakeholders and then to the media, we also pointed to a map showing existing known salinity sites in the region. We were up front about the current situation. But it is not the current situation that is most alarming; it is what we will have tomorrow. If unchecked, the areas on the hazard map marked red, orange and yellow have the potential to become real areas of salinity and future generations will not thank us.

I draw to the attention of the House the salinity hazard map. This highlights the problems that confront this state. Let me make it clear: we are going to face up to this salinity issue and deal with it head-on. We are not going to run away. As I indicated when I released the map, here is the current salinity problem. We highlighted exactly the problem and we have highlighted where we are going. Let me say that is where we are going and we are going to do something about it.

Prime Minister John Howard seems to take this issue very seriously and has demonstrated a personal interest in the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality.

Mr Hobbs: Tell us about the real map.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego!

Mr BEATTIE: For the information of all members, I am tabling detailed background information on the salinity map so that we can all be well informed. I urge all members to read it.

As I said, Prime Minister John Howard seems to take this issue very seriously and has demonstrated a personal interest in the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality. Last Thursday, the federal government representatives visited Stephen Robertson's office and left another map—an airborne geophysical survey. Until last week, scientists in our Department of Natural Resources had not seen this map, even though it is part of a \$2.8 million project we jointly funded with the Commonwealth.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Warrego will cease interjecting.

Mr Seeney: You knew about it.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Until last week, scientists in our Department of Natural Resources had not seen this map, even though it is part of a \$2.8 million project that we have jointly funded with the Commonwealth. It is not even scheduled for completion until early next year.

I am advised by the Department of Natural Resources that they were informed by Commonwealth officials that a piece of equipment, an altimeter in the aircraft carrying out the project, broke down over the southern fifth of the area—coincidentally the area covering part of Cubbie Station.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego, that is my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: As I indicated, I am advised by the Department of Natural Resources that they were informed by the Commonwealth officials that a piece of equipment, an altimeter in the aircraft carrying out the project, broke down over the southern fifth of the area—coincidentally the area covering part of Cubbie Station. When it is finished, this map will be a component of a salinity hazard map. It will never be a salinity hazard map. It will always be different in concept, scale and purpose. Judging the 26 million hectare salinity hazard map on the basis of a one million hectare airborne geophysics map is like handing out medals for a 26 mile marathon one mile into the race.

On Friday the government will host a salinity summit here at Parliament House. It is about finding solutions—about different groups working together to thrash out potential answers to this insidious problem in a non-partisan way.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: We are interested in finding solutions. The science as it stands is solid science. If we keep waiting forever for the last word on science it will be too late. If your best mate has been told by a heart specialist that he has chronic heart disease and needs an urgent triple bypass, would you tell him to wait five years because the technique might improve? Of course you wouldn't! We will tackle this issue head-on.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr BEATTIE: I will not tolerate political game playing on this issue. We have had enough backstabbing. I want to leave the next generation a living landscape, not a wasteland. Let me make one thing very, very, very, very clear: I believe the science out of the Department of Natural Resources. My government—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego! I have warned you. I now warn you under standing order 123A. You are now warned.

Mr BEATTIE: My government will act on the science from the Department of Natural Resources. This map will be the basis of government programs. I say to the stakeholders who will be coming on Friday—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: I say to those stakeholders who will be coming on Friday: this is what we will be acting on. We will be planning accordingly and we will be taking action.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego. You will now leave the chamber. I have warned you. You will now leave the chamber under standing order 123A(3).

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will name the member under standing order 124 if he does not leave the chamber.

Whereupon the honourable member for Warrego withdrew from the chamber.

Mr BEATTIE: Let me conclude by saying this: salinity will affect a future generation of farmers. Salinity is a significant problem for this state. My government will take it head-on and we will not have it undermined by petty politics where people put their—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Callide. I have already given you my final warning. I now warn you under standing order 123A. You are now warned.

Mr BEATTIE: I want to make it very clear—and it does not matter how much the National Party tries to howl me down—that I will make sure that we take salinity head-on. We will look to a future for this state. We have a vision for Queensland and we will deliver it.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Salinity Maps

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (10.00 a.m.), by leave: It is important that I place on record for honourable members what Queensland government scientists on the joint steering committee for the Lower Balonne Airborne Geophysics project say about the conclusions drawn from salinity maps produced by federal Agriculture Minister, Warren Truss. Natural Resources and Mines scientists say, in part—

We have a number of concerns about the Bureau of Resource Sciences analysis arising from the preliminary nature of calibration data and the lack of consultation in discussing and analysing the data. Queensland agency scientists have not had the opportunity to discuss these findings in the joint steering group for the project comprising NR&M, BRS and Geoscience Australia scientists. It was agreed in the project steering group that any analysis of the AGP, or airborne geophysics data before calibration and completion of the processing of the data would be premature and we consider that this still applies. As yet, we have not received the final calibrated data from Geosciences Australia and BRS and we understand that further processing of the data by the contractor is continuing. Specifically, there were problems with the southern fifth of the area (which includes the electromagnetics that cover the northern section of Cubbie Station) and processing is continuing.

As the Premier pointed out, this map was produced by Warren Truss's office and the Leader of the Opposition was briefed on it prior to myself. Clearly, the southern fifth of the map is completely blue. As the Premier pointed out, that is the section where the equipment broke down. Despite that, the Leader of the Opposition has been running around the place showing people that Cubbie Station is in the exact area where the equipment broke down. In terms of scientific quackery, we have not seen this level of quackery since Joh Bjelke-Petersen bought Milan Brych's cancer cure. One cannot conclude that Cubbie Station is salinity free from this map, despite what the Leader of the Opposition has said over the weekend.

It is not appropriate or helpful to compare this preliminary analysis of salt stores derived from the airborne geophysics and the Murray-Darling hazard map. They vary in concept, scale and purpose. They also represent grossly different areas. Even the same mapped entity will produce a different spread from red to blue if one is a ranking across the whole basin and the other just ranks over values found in a small study area. The hazard mapping is a broad ranking across the whole Queensland Murray-Darling basin of the degree of vulnerability to salinity, using our best available estimates of the three components of salinity—recharge, salt stores and discharge potential. The map does not attempt to quantify the various aspects of salinity such as quantities of salt, rate of ground water rise or the leakiness of land management systems. Rather, it ranks all landscapes from a low to high inherent hazard.

The hazard mapping is designed for prioritising areas which require more detailed work. That work will establish the degree of risk of salinity occurring under current and projected land uses and will provide land management options required to manage that risk. With the full set of calibration data, the mapped interpretation of the airborne geophysics data will indicate the location of salt stores in the flown areas of the Lower Balonne; it need not match a hazard map.

Further analysis could estimate the likelihood of mobilisation under various management regimes. The availability of valid interpretation of the airborne geophysics data, coupled with land use and ground water models, would allow us to assess the risk of salinity and management options in detail in this area. Had it been available, it would have refined the hazard mapping for this part of the world. It would still, however, be only one layer—one layer—in the hazard mapping.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Enterprise Bargaining

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: Under the system of enterprise bargaining, the government is currently faced with a combined wages claim from public sector unions of \$2.83 billion. These claims cover nurses, health workers, ambulance officers, police, building and maintenance workers and employees of Main Roads. They include wage claims of between six and nine per cent per annum when wage rises nationally are in the order of 3.1 per cent per annum, as well as substantial increases in agency resources such as staffing levels.

As honourable members of this House would be aware, negotiations have been ongoing between the government and the Queensland Nurses Union for some time. After extensive mediation and formal conciliation talks before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, regrettably, agreement was unable to be reached and the commission has now terminated the bargaining period and referred the matters for arbitration. This industrial dispute with our nurses has been unfortunate. However, disputes of this nature are a by-product, in particular, of the federal system of bargaining, with its limited powers for the federal commission to put an end to damaging or protracted industrial disputation. This, along with all other forms of enterprise bargaining, has encouraged and contributed to a combat culture within the public sector, with unions mounting high-profile campaigns every two to three years.

I am, however, pleased to indicate that negotiations with other public sector unions in Queensland are progressing in a more positive frame. Last week, the government and health workers unions voluntarily participated in mediation talks before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. As a result, unions are this week consulting further with their members. While we are at a sensitive stage in the negotiations, the government remains confident that we are close to a settlement. Just yesterday, the government also approved a number of new offers covering wages and conditions for other groups of public sector workers. We are also hopeful these will be received positively by unions and their members.

I can also report that the government has recently announced a review into the future of bargaining in the Queensland public sector. The honourable Bob Hawke has been appointed as the independent reviewer. Mr Hawke has a long standing in industrial relations and government and his ability to achieve consensus was a strong factor in his selection. The review, to be completed by 30 September 2002, will examine a number of models, including the current bargaining system; an annual economic wages adjustment, with access to the Queensland Industrial Relations commission for work value or special case applications; an awards-arbitration model; public service arbitrators; and any other models that may also be identified throughout the review.

I have held a number of meetings with public sector unions in relation to this review. After an initial rebuff, I am pleased to indicate that unions are responding more positively to this review. Unions have pointed towards a number of issues, such as the potential for a dual private-public sector system, which they wish to place on record and to which the government is sensitive. I am confident that we will be able to work through our issues and establish a system that is more conducive to government, to public sector unions, to workers and to the Queensland community at large.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Surplus Public Housing, Boystown

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10.08 a.m.), by leave: I want to inform the House of a major innovation to the state government's program to dispose of surplus public housing dwellings. As Minister for Housing, I have initiated an agreement with the community based training group Boystown Linkup which will see the group buy 10 surplus Department of Housing dwellings in the Logan City area. Boystown Linkup will then undertake the refurbishment of the houses and arrange their sale on the private market. This deal builds on several other refurbishment and sales programs operating through the Department of Housing and will generate further employment and training opportunities along the way.

The deal with Boystown is in addition to the department's own \$90.3 million-plus annual upgrade program, its sales-to-tenants scheme, refurbishment and sale programs conducted through urban renewal schemes operating in areas undergoing community renewal, and the partnership with the private sector which ensures the large-scale refurbishment and sale of older public housing at Inala. As with other programs to dispose of surplus dwellings, the new agreement will generate funds to be ploughed back into new constructions or upgrades of other public housing. It is yet another option that will deliver good quality, affordable housing to private buyers in the Logan area while creating jobs and training opportunities for disadvantaged young people.

In June I met representatives of Boystown who expressed an interest in building on the work they already did for the Department of Housing in the Logan area. Since 1999 the Logan-based group has been engaged on contracts worth more than \$2 million as part of the government's renewal efforts. In that time they have undertaken construction of new fencing and garden sheds as part of the upgrade of more than 500 public housing dwellings in Woodridge, Kingston and Eagleby. Also over that period, more than 80 people have been employed by Boystown and more than 30 of those have since moved on to other jobs.

Boystown has been keen to extend its involvement by purchasing dwellings at market prices, refurbishing them and then selling them to owner-occupiers on the private market. The group will buy the 10 surplus Department of Housing dwellings over a 12-month period at market rates. The likely dwellings are now being identified. Boystown has undertaken to employ and train disadvantaged young people to work on the refurbishment projects and then to sell the houses to owner-occupiers. Training will be TAFE-accredited and each project will be supervised by qualified tradespeople. I want to take this opportunity to thank the local members in that area—the members for Waterford, Woodridge, Springwood, Albert and Logan—for their support of this significant initiative.

Following on from the Premier's comments regarding yesterday's announcement to close the Rockhampton CMG meatworks, let me express my complete disappointment at that decision. This move has effectively thrown 700 workers on the scrap heap, adding to the 600 jobs already cast aside by this company during the last seven months. What we have witnessed here, in my view, has been a dupe on the work force and a dupe on the people of Rockhampton. It is clear now that when this company locked out its work force in January this year it was looking around for another option. Yesterday we found out what that option was. The cruel hoax played on this work force since January has seen their return to work for low wages while constantly being in dispute in order to try to get a better deal than the \$13.80 per hour being paid to experienced personnel.

This afternoon the Minister for Employment and Training and I will travel to Rockhampton to meet with various stakeholders to try to put a package together to assist this now unemployed work force. I also call on CMG to honour entitlements to its workers at the enterprise bargaining rate, not the award rate. I have stood shoulder to shoulder with the meatworkers and helped morally and financially where I could. I utterly reject the Leader of the Opposition's notion that this government could have resolved this problem. For him to suggest this shows his ignorance of industrial relations matters and life in the real commercial world.

The fact is that this government has done everything it possibly could. I have lived in Rockhampton all my life, as have three previous generations of my family. My mother was a meatworker during the Second World War. Words simply cannot explain how I feel when I see my mates, blokes I went to school with, who have worked there for 30 or 40 years, being treated in this way.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National Curriculum Standards

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (10.12 a.m.): by leave: Queensland is one of the fastest growing states in Australia, attracting a high proportion of families and individuals from interstate every year. Evidence of this migration is clear in our schools. In the past three years, state schools alone have enrolled more than 33,000 students from interstate. While this population flow into Queensland is a boon for our economy, the differences in curriculum and starting ages between states and territories creates significant distress for families who are trying to settle their children into a new school in a new state. Parents

deserve some reassurance that their child can effectively pick up their schooling where they left off when they move between states.

More than a decade ago states, territories and the Commonwealth made some important strides towards developing a national curriculum framework to alleviate these problems. In 1991 the Commonwealth's Ministerial Education Council resolved to develop national statements and profiles which outlined what students should know at certain stages of their schooling in eight broad areas. However, when state and territory ministers were asked to adopt the national framework in 1993, conservative states scuttled the move, leaving it up to each jurisdiction to decide whether they would implement it. A subsequent report in 1995 on the take-up of the national statements and profiles found that almost all states and territories, including Queensland, were using them as a base for curriculum development. However, the issue has slipped off the national agenda after that time. In 2002 it is time that we took a new look and put the issue of a national curriculum framework back on the table for discussion.

We have a real and historic opportunity, with Labor governments in all states and territories, to move forward on this issue and to put the needs of this country's children ahead of politics. It is not only a sensible move but also a smart move in the face of the national testing regime at years 3, 5 and 7 which all jurisdictions have signed up to. There is agreement between states and territories on what should be tested but not on what should be taught. It is clear that we have put the cart before the horse. It is for these reasons that I sought support from my colleagues at the recent ministerial council meeting in New Zealand on 18 July to put the issue of greater consistency of curriculum across jurisdictions back on the national education agenda. I am pleased to report that I received unanimous backing from state, territory and Commonwealth ministers. A task force will report back to the ministerial council in 2003 on where states and territories share common ground on curriculum, where they differ and what efforts would need to be made to improve consistency.

It is timely that we re-examine this issue in the light of our government's education and training reforms, in particular our commitment to trialling a full-time preparatory year before year 1 and to considering lifting the entry age to school. If our trial is successful and the government decides to make the preparatory year universally available and to raise the entry year of schooling, it will bring Queensland's school starting age and years of schooling more into line with other states. This represents an excellent opportunity to develop a more coordinated approach on issues of national significance and to put the best interests of this country's young people first.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Youth Employment Initiatives

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts) (10.17 a.m.), by leave: There are no easy solutions to the pressing problems that face young Queenslanders as they negotiate the difficult transition from school to further learning or work. But I am pleased to inform the House that Queensland has played a significant role in putting in place a national strategy to address this critically important issue. It takes the form of a declaration drawn up by a subcommittee of the national Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs which I had the privilege of chairing. Australia's state and federal ministers for education, training, employment, youth and community services have now signed the declaration and formally adopted it at the recent MCEETYA meeting. Titled *Stepping forward: improving pathways for all young people* the declaration was signed by 26 of Australia's state, territory and federal ministers, including my colleagues the Hon. Anna Bligh, Minister for Education, and the Hon. Judy Spence, Minister for Families. I table the declaration. I table also a CD-Rom entitled *Stepping forward: sharing what works* which sets out actions taken by Commonwealth, state and territory governments in this area, information which will also be posted on the MCEETYA web site.

Currently in Queensland, people aged 15 to 25 years make up 15 per cent of our population. That is a significant proportion of the total population. As many as 10,000 young people a year do not complete year 12 and are not working or undertaking further education and training. Many others have completed year 12 but are also not working or undertaking further education and training. Those young people who are not learning or earning are at risk of being disconnected from society. This is a serious problem that extends beyond education and training; it affects the very core of every Queensland community. The Queensland government is serious about developing and fostering opportunities to help young people stay in education and training and realise their potential. The declaration complements the proposed education and training reforms

and initiatives the government has outlined in the green paper *Queensland the Smart State: education and training reforms for the future*.

The proposed reforms focus on the transitions from initial education to further education, training or work. The Department of Employment and Training and Education Queensland have worked together to conceive the reforms. The information gathered during the public consultation process, which ends tomorrow, along with written submissions from a broad range of stakeholders will now be considered as the government develops future directions in education and training. The recently signed ministerial declaration also complements the Queensland government's Youth Participation Strategy and the Youth Charter which outline our commitment to engaging with young people. Following the signing of the ministerial declaration, we arranged a series of functions across the state at which local communities were invited to work with us to develop strategies at the local level to achieve better outcomes for young people. While this is only the first step, it is an important step. The ministerial declaration is a genuine commitment to making a difference and to helping young people to realise their potential.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Nursing Home Rebuilding Program

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy) (10.20 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Labor government is delivering a major election commitment to Queensland seniors to improve our state government nursing homes. During the estimates hearings, I announced plans for the expenditure of more than \$120 million over the next four years. Queensland Health and the Department of Public Works have developed a special design for our aged care facilities as the basis for all the new and refurbished facilities. Queenslanders can expect the same high standard of accommodation in these facilities wherever they may be, and it will be more cost effective. The new facilities aim to give residents as much independence and quality of life as possible. They have been designed in consultation with aged care clinicians and peer reviewed by architectural firms with expertise in aged care.

The Commonwealth government changing its accreditation standards since our announcement on 7 February 2001 did not make our task any easier. However, the final scope of works is extensive. It will include the construction of four new 32-bed nursing care units costing \$19.1 million on the Redland Hospital campus. Dalby's 80-bed Karingal Nursing Home will be rebuilt on vacant land beside the hospital at a cost of \$10.55 million. \$11.8 million has been allocated for the construction of a new 96-bed nursing home in the grounds of the Maryborough Hospital.

Redcliffe's Cooina Nursing Home will be replaced with a \$7.1 million 60-bed aged care unit incorporating a 20-bed Psychogeriatric and Dementia Unit. Roma's 40-bed Westhaven Nursing Home will be rebuilt in the grounds of the hospital at a cost of \$6.1 million. \$13 million has been allocated to Eventide Sandgate for two new 40-bed units to replace 80 beds now housed in older buildings and there will be significant work to existing services. Townsville will see the construction of a new \$11.8 million 70-bed nursing home at the northern end of the Kirwan campus. The Oaks Nursing Home in Warwick will be rebuilt on the north-western section of the Warwick Hospital at a cost of \$5.45 million. \$5.3 million has been allocated to upgrade Wondai Hospital to replace the Weinholt Nursing Home building and allow for an increase in the number of aged care beds from 32 to 46. Yeppoon's Gertrude E. Moore facility will be replaced by a new \$10 million 72-bed nursing home co-located with the planned new hospital.

Other nursing homes will undergo upgrades, including: \$50,000 to Charleville's Waroona Nursing Home for upgrades, including new nurse call and security systems; \$400,000 for Charters Towers Eventide Nursing Home to provide more single room accommodation with shared ensembles; \$100,000 for North Rockhampton Nursing Care Unit for extensions to the Cec Pritchard building; \$50,000 to upgrade security and replace soft furnishings at the Dr A. E. McDonald Nursing Home in Oakey; \$500,000 for Ashworth House in Zillmere to install airconditioning; and \$100,000 to upgrade airconditioning at Hervey Bay's Bayhaven Nursing Home.

The Beattie government's aged care rebuilding program builds on our significant record of investment in the state's health infrastructure—the \$2.8 billion 10-Year Statewide Health Building Program, scheduled to conclude this year.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Economic Growth, Gladstone-Calliope

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for State Development) (10.23 a.m.), by leave: The Gladstone and Calliope area in Central Queensland is shaping up to be Australia's newest economic powerhouse. With almost \$10 billion worth of major projects now earmarked for the region over the next few years—if all the proposed major projects proceed—they will create an estimated 9,000 direct and indirect jobs at the peak construction phase and countless business opportunities in the region.

Just last week, the Premier and I were in Gladstone meeting on a range of issues regarding the ongoing development of this growing industrial hub. We also released the document *Gladstone and Calliope: Australia's newest economic powerhouse*, tabled by the Premier this morning, which outlines where we are with the government's strategy for the region. There is heartening news from Gladstone growth management initiative studies prepared by my Department of State Development; that is, about 3,000 of these jobs—a third of the estimated employment growth—are expected to be taken up by local Gladstone and Calliope residents.

A whole-of-government response strategy will now be prepared to meet the demands of growth as individual projects commit to development. The \$1.54 billion Comalco alumina refinery project alone will employ 1,500 people at the peak of its construction phase and create 425 permanent jobs when operations begin. Currently, the Gladstone-Calliope region has a population of just over 43,000 people. Should all projects mooted proceed, the region's population increase is estimated to peak at an additional 15,500 before stabilising at an additional 8,900 people beyond 2010. Established companies—Boyne Smelters, SPP's Stuart oil shale plant and Queensland Alumina—are implementing their own major plans for expansion, adding to the momentous growth.

My department recognises that to accommodate the magnitude of growth ahead for Gladstone and Calliope we also need to take into consideration the business and community needs and the training required for us to capture the opportunities that the proposed developments will bring.

The Beattie government is committed to continuing to work with the Gladstone and Calliope communities to maintain the liveability of the area as it meets the challenges of growth. In addition to the GGMI, the Gladstone airshed model has been funded by the Queensland government to provide accurate and timely analysis of air quality in the region.

My Department of State Development has also prepared the Gladstone Region Business Strategy and is working with the Department of Housing to prepare the Gladstone Housing Action Plan. This is yet another example of the whole-of-government approach applied in Queensland to the benefit of business, regional communities and the state's overall economic growth.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Doric Chariot, Grounding on Piper Reef

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (10.25 a.m.), by leave: At 4 a.m. yesterday a 225-metre bulk carrier ran aground on a sand bank off Piper Reef, 600 kilometres, or 330 nautical miles, north of Cairns. The Greek owned *Doric Chariot* was en route from Hay Point to India. Aerial surveillance has confirmed that the vessel is lying in a stable condition. There is no report of any spillage and no pollution is evident. Appropriate oil spill response equipment and resources are currently being mobilised. A tidal surveyor and emergency response personnel are on their way to the incident site and are due to arrive late this afternoon. An attempt to refloat the ship on the high tide at midnight last night was unsuccessful. The tides are unlikely to be suitable for a further attempt until later this week or possibly the weekend. I am advised that a salvage operator is en route to the site to undertake an assessment of the vessel and to speak to the owners about the appointment of a salvor, who will prepare a salvage plan.

Queensland Transport will have a telephone hook-up with the vessel's owners in London at 4.30 this afternoon to confirm these arrangements. Environmental and indigenous groups are being advised of the incident and the steps being taken for the removal of the vessel. Weather conditions are stable and are predicted to remain that way for the next few days.

An investigation team has been assembled and arrangements are being made for them to travel to the site. A full investigation will be undertaken involving other agencies, such as Australian Maritime Safety Authority and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as appropriate.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F

Report

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.27 a.m.): In the absence of the Chair of Estimates Committee F, the member for Hervey Bay, Mr McNamara, I lay upon the table the report of Estimates Committee F and a volume of additional information.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Report

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): I table the report of Estimates Committee E relating to the estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill, together with additional information provided to the committee.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G

Report

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): I table the report of Estimates Committee G relating to the estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill, together with additional information provided to the committee.

OVERSEAS VISIT

Report

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.28 a.m.): I table a report on my trip to the USA and UK from 25 May to 10 June 2002.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.29 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

That Fisheries Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2002 Subordinate Legislation No. 110 of 2002 tabled in the parliament on 18 June 2002 be disallowed.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.29 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest* No. 6 of 2002 and I move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

Mr WELLINGTON: This *Alert Digest* is the first in the new format which the chairman, Warren Pitt, foreshadowed when tabling the committee's report No. 22 on 20 June last. It now contains material relating to the committee's scrutiny of subordinate legislation as well as to bills.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Public Sector, Voluntary Early Retirements

Mr HORAN (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Premier to the parlous state of Queensland's finances under his government with successive massive budget operating deficits. I refer him also to the news overnight that the government will offer a further 1,000 voluntary early retirements as a dubious budget management technique to pay for routine public sector pay rises. I ask: will the Premier table a copy of the letter that he sent to caucus so that the rest of Queensland can see the dirty deal he has done in the Labor Party? Doesn't the removal of the now 2,000 public

servants mean skeleton staff levels, longer queues and more waiting for customers and less support for hardworking police, health workers and teachers?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. I think the contents of the letter are so important not just to Queensland but to all members that I seek leave to incorporate its contents in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

July 29, 2002.

Private and confidential

Dear Caucus Member,

Enterprise bargaining claims

As you know, the State Government is currently facing wage claims totalling \$2.83 billion for seven groups of public sector employees under the current enterprise bargaining system.

As a Labor Government we face the dilemma of needing to ensure our employees receive the best pay and conditions possible while at the same time meeting our obligations to our employers and shareholders, the Queensland electorate.

We need to remind everyone that right from the start this Labor Government has shown that it has the interests of working people at heart.

Each of us should remind constituents of some of our achievements, such as:

One of the first major actions we took after being elected in 1998 was to repeal the harsh industrial relations laws introduced by the Coalition Government and to introduce fair legislation.

For our own 170,000 employees, the State Government has updated its work and family package to include access to paid pre-natal, adoption and paternity leave as well as access to long service leave after seven years for parental leave purposes.

We gave greater powers to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to respond to workforce changes. The Commission now has the power to make and review a minimum wage for all Queensland employees on an annual basis—for the first time providing protection for all our lowest paid and most vulnerable workers.

The Commission is also required to ensure that all awards and agreements contain equal remuneration for men and women workers. This was one of 20 recommendations of the Pay Equity Inquiry, all of which we have implemented, placing Queensland legislation at the forefront of pay equity reform.

And, importantly, we have initiated improvements to workplace health and safety in various industries.

However, as a responsible government we cannot possibly meet the demands for \$2.83 billion.

We are faced with short-term and long-term problems in dealing with enterprise bargaining demands.

It is important for you to emphasise to constituents that Bob Hawke has been appointed to provide recommendations dealing with the long-term solution and not the current disputes which are having such a detrimental effect on members of the public.

Bob's job is to find a better way in the future to give our workers a fair and reasonable pay rise while maintaining Queenslanders' high standard of living and confidence in government services.

The message is that after 10 years of enterprise bargaining and workplace reforms, we have come close to exhausting the majority of productivity gains and reforms within the public service. Better productivity and services should be expected on a day-to-day basis, not just every three years, tied to improved wages.

Our major problem is trying to find a solution to the current disputes.

When I was in Barcaldine I held discussions with Grace Grace and Bill Ludwig in an attempt to find some common ground.

As a result, we are prepared to try to resolve these disputes by putting a little more money on the table.

I can inform you on a strictly confidential basis that we have now made an offer of a 3.5% increase in pay or \$23 a week, whichever is the greater.

The problem, of course, is finding that money.

As you know, there is no extra money in the Budget because we budgeted for what we considered to be a fair, reasonable and responsible settlement.

The introduction of the GST gives us further problems in that we do not have any growth money this year and the whole of the GST deal with the Commonwealth Government focused on abolishing a range of state taxes in exchange for income from the GST. In fact, the states signed an inter-governmental agreement not only to abolish certain taxes but also not to re-introduce them or similar ones.

Another option is to scrap the eight cents a litre fuel tax rebate that we currently hand to motorists at the fuel pump to keep our petrol cheaper than in other states but the electorate was very anxious to protect this system when we suggested changes two years ago.

We have also promised not to increase taxes. After John Howard's announcement in 1996 that only some election commitments were 'core' promises, a survey showed that only seven per cent of Australians trusted politicians to keep their promises.

We set out to change that and kept all our 1998 election promises and we are now keeping all our 2001 election promises. So we cannot increase taxes to solve this problem.

It means the only way to fund any extra increases in pay for public sector employees involved in the current disputes is to reduce the size of our payroll by reducing the size of the public service.

When we called for expressions of interest from public servants who are interested in the possibility of taking a voluntary early retirement, there were several factors we had to consider, including:

The Queensland public service is the only state public service to have increased in size over the last 10 years while those in other states have declined in size;

We will not decrease the number of police, teachers and nurses;

VERs provide an opportunity to reinvigorate the public service.

Originally, as I explained in the Estimates process, there was no set target in mind.

However, if we are to put a little more money on the negotiating table in an attempt to settle the current disputes, we need to fix on a target which could be as high as 2,000.

We will obviously need to make some urgent calculations about exactly how many public servants will have to go in order to find the money needed to satisfy the unions' pay demands.

About 3,000 public servants have expressed an interest in taking a VER and so it would seem we will have no difficulty in reaching a target of around 2,000, although we will still not be decreasing the number of police, teachers and nurses.

In fact, we are committed to increasing the number of police by 300 every year and the number of teachers by 800 in the four years to 2004, over and above the growth needed for our expanding population.

We will need to act as quickly as possible once an agreement with the unions is formulated so I am asking Ministers to start examining the workforce in their departments to assess which VERs should be granted.

Ministers will emphasise that early retirement will not be approved in situations where services would be negatively affected, especially in regional areas or where shared service delivery occurs.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd)

Peter Beattie, MP
Premier and Minister for Trade.

Mr BEATTIE: What I say privately I am happy to defend publicly, and the reason for that is very simple. We are about getting a fair dinkum outcome for our work force, but we are not going to send the state broke. We have good financial management, and we are going to continue it.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The member has asked his question; I will answer it. When members read the letter now that it has been incorporated in *Hansard* for all the world to see—and I thank the member opposite for the dorothy—they will notice that there are a number of things in there that are very important. The letter states—

When I was in Barcaldine I held discussions with Grace Grace and Bill Ludwig in an attempt to find some common ground.

We did that under the Tree of Knowledge. I could not think of a more appropriate place to do it. The letter continues—

As a result, we are prepared to try to resolve these disputes by putting a little more money on the table.

I can inform you on a strictly confidential basis that we have now made an offer of a 3.5%—

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: To be accountable we run into these issues. We have to tell everyone. When we are caught in these issues all we do is tell the truth, and it is the best way to go. The letter continues—

I can inform you on a strictly confidential basis that we have now made an offer of a 3.5% increase in pay or \$23 a week, whichever is the greater.

The problem, of course, is finding that money.

As you know, there is no extra money in the Budget because we budgeted for what we considered to be a fair, reasonable and responsible settlement.

The introduction of the GST gives us further problems in that we do not have any growth money this year and the whole of the GST deal with the Commonwealth Government focused on abolishing a range of state taxes in exchange for income from the GST. In fact, the states signed an inter-governmental agreement not only to abolish certain taxes but also not to re-introduce them or similar ones.

In the letter I go on to talk about other options and where we are going, but importantly I said—

When we called for expressions of interest from public servants who are interested in the possibility of taking a voluntary early retirement—

and I emphasise the word 'voluntary'—

there were several factors we had to consider, including:

The Queensland public service is the only state public service to have increased in size over the last 10 years while those in other states have declined in size;

We will not decrease the number of police, teachers and nurses;

VERs provide an opportunity to reinvigorate the public service.

I also pointed out that there would be no loss to the regions and that there would be no loss to services. The letter continues—

About 3,000 public servants have expressed an interest in taking a VER and so it would seem we will have no difficulty in reaching a target of around 2,000, although we will still not be decreasing the number of police, teachers and nurses.

We have given commitments there. It continues—

In fact, we are committed to increasing the number of police by 300 every year and the number of teachers by 800 in the four years to 2004, over and above the growth needed for our expanding population.

I stress that these are voluntary. It is manageable. It will work.

Families Department, Delay in Medical Treatment of Children

Mr HORAN: As the Minister for Families is attending a funeral today, I direct this question to the Premier. I refer to concerns raised by the Kalwun Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agency in relation to a three hour and 20 minute delay in the Department of Families issuing an authorisation to the Hervey Bay Hospital for the medical treatment of children exposed to the meningococcal virus and the deceitful claims of the minister in the media that the delays were only one hour and a half. I table a letter from the coordinator of the Kalwun Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agency verifying the time delays for authorisations being a minimum of three hours and 20 minutes. I ask: will the Premier instruct his minister to table all departmental advice and documentation verifying the claims made by the minister in the media that the delay in the Department of Families authorising this medical treatment was no more than an hour and a half?

Mr BEATTIE: I have just been conferring with the Minister for Health, who has advised me that—and I will come back to the specifics of the question, but I think it is important that we inform the House since it has been raised—the children involved did not have symptoms. As members would appreciate, they needed to be treated cautiously. Although they did not have symptoms, they were nevertheless tested. The cautious approach was taken. They were treated with antibiotics. They did not have symptoms, but they were treated appropriately. It was a cautious approach. They had simply been exposed; they did not have the disease. Let us be clear: they had no symptoms but they had been exposed and therefore the appropriate course is to take a cautionary approach. Under those circumstances, according to the advice we have been given by Health, there was no urgency. That is what we have been advised.

However, let me take the member's point. I did receive a brief from the minister. The member is quite right; the minister is attending a funeral and cannot be here, and I appreciate his courtesy in acknowledging that. The departmental brief that came to me indicated that the department had moved as quickly as it possibly could to respond in the circumstances. The Leader of the Opposition has been the Minister for Health, so he would know that no minister of any political persuasion—either in my team or in his—would in any way condone a delay when dealing with children or the health of children. The Minister for Families would not condone that any more than I would or he would, because at the end of the day we can have political differences but we all have a sense of decency in this House. If the member opposite was a minister—and he has been one in the past—he would respond as quickly as he could. He would not tolerate and I would not tolerate and Judy Spence would not tolerate any unnecessary delays when we are talking about the health of children.

Mr Schwarten: She's a mother herself.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, she is a mother herself. Let us go back to where we were. On the advice that Health has given us, there were no symptoms. There was simply an exposure, so there was a risk. Therefore, there was not the sense of urgency that there would be if there were symptoms. Nevertheless, we are talking about children, and we do not run away from that responsibility. On the advice we have received, the department responded as quickly and as appropriately as possible. The minister is clearly going to keep an eye on that, and so am I.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy for her to write to the member about this. I will ask the minister to write to the member and give him an update, if there is one. We are not trying to hide this. There is no cover-up, nor would we cover it up. We need to make sure that there are appropriate responses. Our advice is that everything that needed to be done was done. I am happy to ask the minister to write to the member with the details. If there is something I have left out that the member is entitled to be provided with, I will make sure that he gets it in a letter. What is in the

letter is a matter for the minister. However, we are happy to provide the member with the latest information that the department has, because in our view the interests of children are paramount and we will not compromise on children's safety.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Whitsunday, I welcome to the public gallery students, parents and teachers from the Patricks Road State School in the electorate of Ferny Grove.

Ethanol

Ms JARRATT: I ask the Premier: could he advise what steps the Queensland government has taken to develop the state's fledgling ethanol industry?

Mr BEATTIE: I can, and I thank the minister for Whitsunday—she just got promoted. There you go. You never know your luck in a big city. We have so much talent on the backbench. There are so many future ministers. Where do we start?

A government member: She is the Minister for Whitsunday!

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed, she is the Minister for Whitsunday. I take that seriously. With the sugar industry looking for new opportunities, I can inform the House that the Queensland ethanol industry interdepartmental committee is reviewing the potential for expanding the state's ethanol industry and is due to report back in two to three months.

My government has long recognised that there is potential in this industry. In September last year—10 months ago—I established that committee with the support of my ministers. We are already showing a lead by having more than 80 vehicles in the government fleet in an ethanol blend trial. I want to thank the Minister for Environment, who was very much a part of that—

A government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: And Q-Fleet.

A government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: And the Minister for Public Works. I meant to acknowledge both of them, but when I looked around I kept thinking of that green turtle that I saw in the paper.

Mr Schwarten: Where is he now?

Mr BEATTIE: The green turtle? We have to find him.

Mr Wells: Fraser Island.

Mr BEATTIE: Treasure Island or Fraser Island?

Mr Wells: Fraser Island.

Mr BEATTIE: Fraser Island, okay.

Over 12 months ago the Environment Minister, Dean Wells, hosted a major function at Parliament House where the key players in the ethanol industry joined with us in progressing its future. Petro Fuel and Lubricants Pty Ltd announced a month ago that it plans to establish Australia's largest ethanol plant in the Dalby area. The Petro Fuel proposal has been the subject of a 12-month study by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which has pronounced the project viable. That is great news. That project was facilitated by the Environmental Protection Agency and has been supported by the Department of State Development—thank you, Tom—and the Dalby Town Council.

Production and use of ethanol in Queensland has enormous potential. Its development complements our Smart State ethos. We are working well with all stakeholders in the ethanol industry—from growers through to suppliers—to ensure positive environmental and rural outcomes. Any future demand for an ethanol product will however depend on its competitiveness at the bowser, and that is yet to be determined. That is the crucial issue. I am pleased that the opposition leader recently recognised the need to explore the potential that the ethanol industry offers Queensland canegrowers, and I thank him for his comments in relation to that. We share the same view. The sugar industry is facing a major price problem because of world prices and what is happening in Brazil.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, and there is drought. In Brazil they are clearing large areas of land—jungle. It is very rich soil. The c.c.s. level is up. There are all sorts of problems competitively

in price. That is why the government has offered \$20 million in low interest loans, and we are prepared to offer more if needed. But what we need to do—and I said this in Bundaberg with the Minister for Local Government and Planning, the member for Bundaberg—in this industry is to diversify. It is a real test. We have to diversify or, in essence, we die. That is why ethanol is important. That is why things like plastics, chocolate and soft drinks are important. We need to make sure that this great industry has a big future.

Lakes Creek Meatworks, Rockhampton

Mr JOHNSON: I refer the Premier to the \$65 million in capital grants given by his government to various enterprises, including Virgin, Berri, Time Warner and others, and I ask: is it not true that the numbers of jobs allegedly created by these grants are less than those that have now been lost in Rockhampton with the closure of the CMG works? And in view of the Premier's ministerial statement this morning, why has his government sat back and done nothing but throw insults at the management of CMG instead of stepping in to save the jobs of workers in the labour heartland of Rockhampton?

Mr BEATTIE: If I understood the basis of the question then no, that is not true. Look at the number of jobs that are being created in Virgin. If I recall correctly, it promised 750 jobs and has about 1,600. Look at what is happening with AMC and Comalco alone. We are talking about a multiplier effect. I have spelt that out. We have multiplier effects in central Queensland. There are about 7,000 construction and long-term jobs. Comalco alone has 400 ongoing jobs. AMC is the same. Through AMC, Comalco and Virgin Blue, and Australian Airlines going into Cairns, we have created thousands of jobs. In Cairns alone there are 350 jobs. There are 350,000 tourists coming here. It is anticipated that the roll-on effect from Australian Airlines is going to be in the vicinity of 15,000 jobs, if I recall correctly.

So what we are talking about here is a quiet revolution in Queensland. We are building a smart economy with smart jobs; and that includes IT, biotechnology, telecommunications or anything else in Paul Lucas's department. This is about changing the whole of Queensland. We have delivered in a very dramatic and effective way. We have call centres such as Suncorp Metway's in Toowoomba.

More to the point, if we had not attracted those jobs, where would they have gone? If we had not bitten the bullet and fought hard for AMC in central Queensland that technology would have gone to North America. I make no apology for my government putting state money into ensuring that we have Australian technology value adding Australian minerals to create Australian jobs to export to the world. I make no apology for that. At every opportunity we are going to do it.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, they do oppose those things and make it difficult along the road.

Let me deal with the meat industry. When we came to office the meat industry was going offshore and interstate. We established a meat task force in State Development that turned that around. We have saved the meat industry in this state. We had to move quickly because it was being sold off and it was going. I could never understand why a National Party government allowed the meat industry to head out the back door interstate and overseas. That is what was going on. Let me deal with Rockhampton.

An honourable member: That's not true.

Mr BEATTIE: It is true.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Rot! There were reports that existed in the member's time, but let me deal with Rockhampton. We have provided assistance. Assistance programs in Tom Barton's department were offered prior to yesterday's decision about—

Mr Barton: \$1.15 million.

Mr BEATTIE: \$1.15 million was offered to assist the plant. We had a meeting this morning. We do not like this any more than members opposite do. They are private sector people. We are trying to guarantee the plant a future. We are sending two of our senior ministers up there today. Tom Barton's people are involved, as well. If we can save the plant for Rockhampton we will. We will do everything we can. We saved one plant in the Burnett. We have been working behind the scenes helping them in the past, and we will continue to do it here. That was a good question.

Drought

Mr POOLE: I refer the Premier to the growing problem that drought is posing for rural Queensland, and I ask: what assistance does the Queensland government provide for farmers hit by drought?

Mr BEATTIE: The Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for Natural Resources have both briefed cabinet—and me informally—on the ramifications of the drought, particularly the Minister for Primary Industries. Every member of this House should be concerned about where we are with drought. Drought declarations are now in place in 76 Queensland shires, and more are expected with a less than 30 per cent chance of normal rain across most of the state during our winter. I have no doubt that the Minister for Primary Industries, who has driven around a large part of the bush in the last few days, will have more to say about that in the next couple of weeks.

Drought declarations, whether they involve whole shires or individual properties within shires, are effective in 76 shires of Queensland. That is more than 60 per cent of Queensland local government areas. There are 36 drought declared shires and about 500 individual drought declared properties in another 40 shires. Producers within drought declared shires or on those properties can access assistance from the state government in the form of freight subsidies on the movement of water and feed for livestock as well as for livestock returning from agistment or stock purchased for restocking. The Minister for Transport runs those programs.

Queensland is the only state that continues to provide this extent of subsidies. The drought declarations are made by the Primary Industries Minister, Henry Palaszczuk, on the advice of the local drought committees in the respective shires and the Department of Primary Industries. The Queensland government provides funding for the farm business support for producers in areas determined by the federal government to be of exceptional circumstances. In addition, the Queensland government offers interest rate subsidies to non-farm businesses in those areas as well as concessional loans for restocking and cropping post drought. Both of those programs are provided through the Queensland government's Rural Adjustment Authority. I urge producers to access the DPI's extensive and regularly updated information on climate, farming and grazing strategies and support services, which can be obtained from the web site www.dpi.qld.gov.au. Information is also available from the DPI call centre on 13 25 23.

The current conditions and the bleak forecast also highlight the need for the federal government to shelve its plans to reduce its funding share of the current scheme. It provides welfare and farm business support for those farming families in severe drought. The federal government has planned to almost halve its existing contribution to farm business support under this scheme. Mr Anderson should act now to ensure that the federal government funding commitment under the agreed formula is retained. The states and territories which financially support the present scheme and, in Queensland's case, provide state based drought assistance are committed to genuine reform to the federal government's administration of assistance in the form of quicker assessments and a buffer zone for affected producers.

Only recently cabinet visited Barcaldine and Longreach. While we were there, Stephen Robertson launched a series of stock route maps which were designed to encourage producers to use the stock routes. The government spent \$3 million to \$4 million building up water facilities, and those new maps, which are the first in 40 years, will encourage producers to use them and they will have water when they do.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Gympie, I welcome to the public gallery teachers, parents and students from North Bundaberg High School in the electorate of Bundaberg. I also welcome Justin Strong, the son of the member for Burnett, who is a student at the school.

Member for Gympie, Access to Public Servants

Miss ELISA ROBERTS: My question is directed to the Premier. I have been advised by senior public servants within my electorate that should they wish to invite me to visit their premises or discuss issues of concern with me they are unable to do so without the relevant minister's permission and approval. One Public Service organisation approached me to visit them to discuss various issues of importance and to make me aware of the services they provide. These people, as a result of this action, faced a severe dressing down and were told not to contact me again in the future. Will the Premier outline the purpose of such a government policy and will he ensure that never again will members of the public, regardless of their employment situation, be subject to such harassment for exercising their democratic right to meet with their elected member?

Mr BEATTIE: I do not know the particular circumstances to which the member refers. As I understand it there has been a long-established practice, going back to the time of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen—it was a practice in the Borbidge years; it has been a practice for a long time—that, if a member wants to pursue issues, that member has the courtesy of approaching the minister's office. Then the member gets appropriate assistance. That is not a drama. We need to ensure that public servants do not become political footballs in an agenda which destroys their impartiality. This is about protecting public servants. This is about protecting their neutrality. This is about treating public servants and government employees with courtesy.

Miss Elisa Roberts interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I am about to answer the member's question. It is very important that we do not politicise the Public Service. It is very important that we follow normal courtesies which have been exercised by those on both sides of politics. This is not new. This is not rocket science. All the member has to do is simply communicate her appropriate request to ministers and the appropriate action will then be taken.

Do I have good news for the member! The whole cabinet is coming to see the member in Gympie. Not only is the whole cabinet coming to see her; every director-general of every department is coming to see her. I am disappointed that the member makes fun of that, because the Gympie community, the mayor and others have been requesting that we come. We have listened to the community and we will be there. I thank the mayor for inviting us and for his cooperation.

The member will not have one public servant; she will have the best public servants in every department. She will have the lot. As a bit of a garnish she will also have us. She cannot ask for more than that. The member for Southern Downs had the lot. She should not do to me what he tried to do. He tried to drown me in grapes when I was out in Stanthorpe. I hope she has a little more courtesy than he had.

Mr Mackenroth: Gympie is noted for gold. Maybe she will give you some gold.

Mr BEATTIE: Lawrence gave me grapes. Gympie is noted for gold. We will look for an improvement on what Lawrence had.

A government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: No, I will not have Vaughan attacked. Vaughan was a gentleman, as he always is. I thank him for his courtesy when we were in Longreach and Barcardine. The community cabinet meeting went very well and I genuinely thank the local member for his courtesy and goodwill while we were there. We can argue about politics, but he is a gentleman.

We are on our way to Gympie. We look forward to the local member being there. More to the point, we want her to be part of it. I do not want the member to misunderstand. She is invited to Sunday's community cabinet meeting and she will be invited to the function to be held at midday on Monday. We would like her to be there. I do not want there to be any misunderstandings about whether she is invited. She is invited. I put it on the public record. I will be absolutely shattered if she is not there. We want her to be there.

Salinity Maps

Mr MULHERIN: My question is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines. I refer to the salinity maps created by federal National Party Minister Warren Truss using untested preliminary data from the joint Queensland-Commonwealth salinity mapping program in the Murray-Darling basin. Is the minister concerned that Minister Truss has breached the protocols agreed to by the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality by deliberately leaking these maps to an outside organisation before handing them to the Queensland government?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. Yes, I am concerned about the actions of Minister Truss's office in terms of leaking the map to which I referred in my earlier ministerial statement. I fail to understand why Minister Truss's office would do such a thing. The first time we saw these maps was at 11 a.m. on Thursday when Mr Truss's senior adviser, Mr David Whitrow, arrived at my office to deliver them. I was very surprised that he would do so, because there is no reason whatsoever for the maps to even exist at this early stage of the project.

Surprise turned to suspicion when it was discovered that the Opposition Leader had already been fully briefed prior to Mr Whitrow visiting my office. Alarm bells started to ring when senior

officials from Agforce and QFF confirmed to my office that Mr Whitrow had earlier that morning already provided them with a full briefing on the maps. This is a clear breach of the protocol agreed to between the Commonwealth and the state government under the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. It has angered other stakeholder groups who know what the Nationals are up to. I have expressed my view and disappointment to Minister Truss about the activities of his office.

The map to which I am referring is the one I held up this morning, which is the airborne geophysics map. The Leader of the Opposition said on Sunday to the ABC—

These new maps, funded jointly by Queensland and Australian governments, will show that there is limited and almost negligible salinity in the areas around Cubbie Station in particular.

I have here the map. The member for Barron River can probably see how it is delineated. The member for Burdekin can probably see how it is delineated. The only person who seems to fail to understand the difference in this map is the Leader of the Opposition. The map shows clearly that when the mappers flew over the area of Cubbie Station the equipment broke down.

This was the king hit of the Leader of the Opposition, who has been travelling the length and breadth of this state declaring our science invalid. But the first time he gets a bit of information he fails to answer the fundamental question; that is, why does this part look different from that part? But, no. This was the king hit by the Leader of the Opposition. As a result, he has failed miserably.

Jondaryan Woolshed

Mr HOPPER: I refer the Premier to the possible closure of one of the Darling Downs' great tourism icons, the Jondaryan Woolshed. Why will he not join with the federal government and be part of a dollar-for-dollar rescue package? Why will he or a representative from his office not attend a do or die meeting with the administrator, Mr Phil Aggs, in Brisbane this afternoon? Why is he letting one of Queensland's and the Darling Downs' great tourism and education facilities close down forever in the Year of the Outback for the sake of \$250,000?

Mr BEATTIE: As the member knows, we have already invested money in the facility. Indeed, cabinet had a meeting there. The government has provided significant recent support to the woolshed association by funding a business plan setting out a financial blueprint for a viable tourism operation for the woolshed's future, seeking to establish an affordable insurance scheme for organisations such as the Jondaryan Woolshed Association and providing advisory support services. Indeed, as the member knows, the relevant minister, Matt Foley, met with him and the voluntary liquidator to make sure that everything we could do was being done. There have been other meetings, as I understand it.

I have just talked to the minister about that. He cannot do more than meet with the member and the administrator. As the member knows, \$2 million had been provided through the Queensland Heritage Trails Network capital works project, including approximately \$1.1 million for conservation and adaptation works on the historic woolshed. \$636,000 had also been provided for an interpretation scheme, web site, educational program and marketing brochures. That is Commonwealth money. \$500,000 has been provided in separate state funding to assist with operational costs, planning and development work since 1996.

The Jondaryan Woolshed Association has failed to implement a range of efficiency measures and now the options are a matter for the administrator. This is a project that we support. As the woolshed is protected under the Queensland Heritage Act 1992, any use of the woolshed in the future must comply with the provisions of that legislation. This publicly funded asset will continue to be protected in its current state.

We would like to see it continue. We would like to see it have a viable future. But the member needs to appreciate what we need to appreciate—and do—and that is that if we are putting state government funds into a project, it has to have a viable future. Otherwise at the end of the day, another member will be attacking us for putting money into a project that was lost. We have to have a sensible approach to the use of money.

We are committed to this happening. As I mentioned before, the minister has met with the member and the voluntary administrator. If a viable plan can come forward from the administrator, obviously, we would look at all of those things. Indeed, I am happy to table a letter from the Minister for Employment to the administrator setting out a range of matters that I think will be of some assistance to the member. I invite the member to continue to liaise with the minister.

Let us be clear: we are committed to it, we have put funds forward, but we have to ensure that the project has a future. Otherwise, if we did not do that, we would run into difficulties both here and with the Auditor-General. I know that the member would not want us to get into trouble with the Auditor-General.

IT&T Industry

Mr STRONG: I direct a question to the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy. I am aware that small to medium size ICT companies often need a lot of assistance and guidance to move from a local industry focus to selling their products and services interstate and on the global market. Can the minister advise what government funding and help is available to Queensland ICT companies to promote their products and services globally?

Mr LUCAS: The short answer is a lot but the longer answer is more interesting. I thank the member for Burnett for his question. Of course, very near his electorate is situated a great Bundaberg company called Toolbox Software, which specialises in information technology products for the building industry—and that is the home building industry where builders need to estimate, build, order, et cetera. That is a great example of a smart company that has received IT&T growth financing assistance from my department.

But that company is only one of many. In fact, tomorrow I will open expanded new premises for another Queensland IT company called Shortcuts Software, which in its first year of support under the Financing ICT Growth Program has won \$30 million in contracts with the world's second biggest hairdressing salon network. Its innovative software allows salons to schedule appointments, compile rosters and financial reports and send client reminders—

Mr Nuttall: Will it help me get my red hair back?

Mr LUCAS: The software is extremely innovative, but unfortunately it will not assist the Minister for Industrial Relations, the Attorney-General or many others to recover what they are being challenged with at the moment! It cannot give members a shampoo and a blow-wave, but it certainly can organise one very efficiently and make sure that they get one promptly.

That is because the Smart State is not just about people in lab coats at universities—although we are very proud of people in lab coats at universities doing great science—it is also about traditional industries. It is about the second largest hairdressing chain in the world choosing a Queensland company, which we have been able to support and of which we are very, very proud. This is real stuff in the Smart State. That company has a three-year contract with Fantastic Sams, which has 1,350 salons across the United States. I would have thought that that country would be about the most demanding hairdressing market in the world.

The Financing ICT Growth Program has helped 56 businesses, raised \$18.6 million in investment capital and \$1.8 million in government grants. It is one of many programs run by my department's IIB—that is the Information Industries Bureau—to help SMEs achieve commercial success and exports. We are committed to helping SMEs, and Queensland ICT SMEs are growing at 12.3 per cent compared to a 10 per cent growth rate nationally. Unlike Austrade, what we do for our clients is free. We provide free advisory service, research, workshops and seminars. We have programs such as assisting with export shows, an ICT product services guide and an ICT export portal. We have our UK based tradesperson, Michael Hargreaves—again for free—assisting great Queensland ICT companies to penetrate that very difficult market in Europe. We also have partners in technology briefings.

One of the things that the ICT industry says to us is that it is not always easy to understand what government departments are doing in terms of their future ICT spending. This is about organising seminars to enable us to talk to industry so that they know what the government is doing and they can align their offerings. We are determined to support our SMEs in Queensland. We have quality in our small and medium enterprises in ICT as well as our large ones.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Tablelands, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from Our Lady of the Rosary Primary School in Kenmore in the electorate of Moggill.

WorkCover Premiums, Building Industry

Ms LEE LONG: My question is directed to the Minister for Industrial Relations. It has been brought to my notice that WorkCover Queensland has been auditing many of those involved in the building industry over the past 12 months and that it is deeming many subcontractors to be

employees. Consequently, WorkCover is charging contractors excessive premiums plus excessive provisional tax. Into the bargain, it is also charging them an extra one year's premium retrospectively at the higher rate. Having endeavoured to obtain clear, written guidelines from the minister's department that differentiate subcontractors from employees, I was told: 'There are no clear, written guidelines.' How can the minister justify charging contractors these excessive premiums that are determined only at the discretion of the auditors while those in the building industry are left feeling vulnerable?

Mr NUTTALL: I thank the honourable member for the question. The issue of WorkCover premiums for contractors is a vexed question and I acknowledge the concerns that have been raised by the honourable member. However, Queensland has the lowest WorkCover premiums of any state in Australia. We are particularly proud of that. We have given a guarantee to hold premiums at their current rate for the next financial year to give employers some security.

In terms of contractors and subcontractors—people have an obligation, if they are employing people, to take out WorkCover premiums. If the member knows of any particular incidents in which she believes that people are being overcharged or charged inappropriately, I invite her to write to me personally. If she is getting that information from my department, I am more than happy to check that out for her. I am also more than happy to address the issue of people in her electorate who believe that they are being treated unfairly by WorkCover.

Having said that, we must ensure that workers are covered by insurance. Obviously, the way to be covered by insurance is through WorkCover premiums. We are not about to see employees in this state left in a situation in which they may have an accident at work and not be covered by their employer. All employers have an obligation to make sure that their employees are covered by WorkCover and by appropriate insurance cover. As I said, if the member knows of any particular incidents, I am more than happy to have a look at those for her.

Water Tanks

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: I ask the Minister for Environment: what is the government doing to encourage the uptake of water tanks in south-east Queensland?

Mr WELLS: Working in collaboration with my department and with the advice of my department, the Brisbane City Council has undertaken two new trials of the use of water tanks. One is going to be an inner-city trial and that will involve 30 households. The other one is going to be on the outskirts of the city and that will involve 15 households. The Brisbane City Council is putting \$400,000 behind this project and my department will be assisting with up to \$100,000.

The whole idea is to see how well we can make water tanks work. It has always been the case that water tanks have been around, but in the past local government has had some concerns about the purity of the water from the water tanks. Reticulated water, being treated water, is more likely to be guaranteed. However, with modern technology it will be possible to do it a great deal better. If it is done a great deal better, one could save a considerable amount of money. The placement of water tanks saves maintenance of public infrastructure. It also saves, in some circumstances, the necessity of building some of the infrastructure. The need to build dams can be deferred or eliminated in some circumstances. An additional benefit—not a major one, but still significant—is the elimination of the amount of stormwater damage and stormwater run-off into creeks and rivers and, consequently, the preservation of environmental benefits which would otherwise be lost.

My department estimates that this type of targeted program across the state, over a period of time, could save up to \$20 million. However, much of that will need to be recycled into employment. To ensure the purity of the water in water tanks—and, frankly, not everybody will do the inspections themselves—we will need inspectors. If we are to ensure adequate maintenance, we will have to employ people to undertake that maintenance. Water tanks are a labour intensive way of preserving water and, therefore, they have the capacity to deliver jobs.

The pilot program being undertaken by the Brisbane City Council has the potential to show the way for us to save a considerable amount of money, which could then be ploughed back into jobs. I congratulate the Brisbane City Council on this visionary proposal. By embracing this, the Lord Mayor has taken the clear view that much can be achieved to the great benefit of everybody in terms of the preservation of our environment and harvesting a great deal more water in this driest of all continents.

Vessel Monitoring System

Mr ROWELL: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to the question I asked him last year about the effectiveness of the vessel monitoring system as a safety device for Queensland fishermen. The minister responded on 18 October 2001 by stating, 'My understanding is that many of those glitches have been corrected.'

A couple of weeks ago a prawn trawler sank off Dunk Island, claiming the lives of two on board. The previous skipper, who had sold the trawler 12 days prior to the tragic accident, was still receiving emails from the QFS informing him that his VMS was not signalling. How many more fatal incidents will occur before the minister acts on the old issue of the inadequacies of the vessel monitoring system?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. All honourable members would agree that the loss of the *Eastern Leader* and two of its crew was a tragedy. However, the question is about the operation of the vessel monitoring system. The VMS was introduced in 1998, initially under the Borbidge government, and was continued under this government. It was introduced as a fisheries management and enforcement tool. Commercial fishing operators are required to use VMS in the trawl, spanner crab, beche-de-mer and Gulf of Carpentaria net fisheries as a fisheries management tool. Whilst the Borbidge government—and, of course, the member for Hinchinbrook was the relevant minister at the time—

Mr Rowell: It is also a safety issue.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will hear the answer.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Hang on. I am agreeing with the member. Whilst the Borbidge government and this government have correctly identified the additional capacity of VMS in maritime safety, VMS is not compulsory safety equipment. EPIRBs are a compulsory safety device. VMS is a fisheries compliance tool which has a distress messaging capacity that can be activated by the fishing operator.

In June 2000, the then Queensland Fisheries Management Authority wrote to commercial fishers in relation to the features of the VMS, including the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System. The QFMA and the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organisation undertook tests and provided additional advice for fishers to use the distress alert capability. To be more specific, I am advised that no distress alert via the VMS was received from the *Eastern Leader*. However, I understand that the VMS assisted the search and rescue operation by accurately identifying the last position of the vessel before it sank. In terms of VMS across the fleet, I understand that up to 40 units go off-line each week and that these cases are followed up for compliance purposes. I think that statement should satisfy the honourable member's concerns.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Stafford, could I welcome a second group of students and teachers from the Patricks Road State School in the electorate of Ferny Grove.

Public Housing

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: I direct my question to the Minister for Housing. As a member who continually requests the construction of more public housing units, particularly for seniors, in his electorate, I refer the minister to the article entitled 'PM's Housing Finance Shake-Up' on the front page of yesterday's *Australian Financial Review*. I ask: can the minister outline the effects of the Howard government's plan to 'abandon the construction of public housing in exchange for new forms of housing and income support measures'?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I congratulate the *Australian Financial Review* on being the only newspaper in Australia to actually come to grips with the plight facing Australians in the area of public housing. This is the first such article despite the two years I have been standing up in this place pointing out what is around the corner for Queenslanders who are at risk of homelessness. I congratulate them for airing it and for pointing out the fact that over the next couple of years it will be an issue confronting each and every member of this parliament.

The reality is that this is not news. This punch has been telegraphed from Canberra for a number of years. The reality behind this is that the federal government wants to get out of capital funding of housing. They are talking about the billion dollars they can save themselves in that regard, and they are talking about going to this rent assistance model. Their latest madcap scheme is to suggest that we pay states on the basis of the number of people we house in public

housing. In Queensland, for example, we have about 55,000 or 56,000 people in public housing. We would be funded on that per capita arrangement. New South Wales has roughly 125,000 people in public housing, so their funding would be double the amount we would get. It does not take any account whatsoever of the fact, for example, that in the Torres Strait \$176 million will be spent on Aboriginal housing as part of a five-year program and that that is difficult and costly to deliver. It does not take into account, for example, that we have people who come across the border from New South Wales to live on the Gold Coast and put their name on a waiting list. It does not take into account any of the geographic features of Western Queensland. I was in the honourable member for Gregory's electorate the other day opening \$1.66 million worth of seniors housing to provide well-placed accommodation for seniors. It does not take that into consideration either.

We have done everything we can to try to wring the rag out in Queensland, from the Brisbane Housing Company—a not-for-profit organisation which taps into rent assistance—to buying houses out at Amberley and shifting them out to rural Queensland. In fact, we have just signed off on \$400,000, and two of those houses went on their way yesterday to Aramac in the member for Charters Towers electorate. The reality, yet again, is that this will not be enough. I wonder how many people will be living on the streets before the federal government comes to understand that it is the result of cuts in capital funding. There is no point in providing rent assistance if there is no house to rent. I do not know how stupid they are down in Canberra, but I think they are pretty stupid. I would take bets on how stupid they are. I think they are pretty high on the stupid scale. Who does the federal government think will pay for this in the final analysis? The whole of society pays for the problem of homelessness and it is about time those in Canberra understood that.

Personal Responsibility Legislation

Dr WATSON: I refer the Premier to the recent announcement by the Premier of New South Wales that he intends in September to introduce a personal responsibility bill which will re-establish personal responsibility for a person's actions and eliminate opportunities such as suing if that person is inebriated or affected by drugs at the time of the action. I ask: does the Premier propose to introduce similar legislation into the Queensland parliament and, if so, when?

Mr BEATTIE: As the member knows, an expert panel has been established as part of the federal Treasurer's and the state Treasurers' consideration of insurance issues. That is one of the issues they are looking at. Indeed, in August, Terry Mackenroth, the Treasurer, will be attending—

Mr Mackenroth: It has been extended to the end of September.

Mr BEATTIE: The federal government has moved it to September; I did not know that. The panel of experts is considering that very issue. When it reports to the meeting of Treasurers, we will obviously consider that issue and it will be considered as part of any legislative change. However, we have had one comprehensive legislative change, which came into effect on 18 June. Yesterday cabinet passed—and it was endorsed by caucus—an additional piece of legislation which the Attorney-General will be introducing to parliament today. That brings into play some retrospectivity in relation to the measures introduced and dated from 18 June. That will be the second piece of legislation, and it came out of a series of discussions held between the government and the AMAQ.

The third area of reform, which we have indicated we wish to try and introduce by the end of this year, will embrace not just the Treasurers' meeting but the advice from the panel of experts. The bottom line with all these issues—and I gather from the member's question that he shares our view about it—is that clearly there must be some acceptance of responsibility on the individual but that there also must be a balance. Of course, it is important that if somebody is involved in some behaviour that is I guess negligent, they must accept some contribution for that negligence. Indeed, at the Attorney-General's and my news conference yesterday, the Attorney-General made reference to a particular case. To the best of my recollection, it goes something like this: an inebriated patron left a club and was offered advice by staff of the club to the effect of, 'Do you want a cab?' I think the person was offered access to a bus. Both of those offers by the club were declined. Unfortunately, the woman was then hit by a car. Quite rightly, the court found that the club had no case to answer. The club had in fact taken appropriate action by encouraging the woman to use a cab or a bus. Under these circumstances, yes, the person has to accept some personal responsibility; I agree with that. By the comments he made yesterday in highlighting this case, the Attorney does, too. We will wait to see what the panel of experts says, and hopefully

legislation will be passed by parliament by the end of this year. I urge all members to support the Attorney's bill when it is introduced today and to support the subsequent legislation later this year.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Toowoomba North, I welcome to the public gallery a second group of students from Our Lady of the Rosary Kenmore Primary School in the electorate of Moggill.

Cattle Feedlots, Workplace Health and Safety

Mr SHINE: I refer the Minister for Industrial Relations to a recent workplace health and safety audit of the feedlot industry. How is this audit helping to improve safety for workers in rural Queensland?

Mr NUTTALL: It is no secret that this government has stepped up its enforcement of workplace health and safety laws in a number of industries. We have done that in order to better protect workers across a wide range of industries in this state. Earlier this year the cattle feedlot industry in south-west Queensland became the target of an industry audit due to a history of high injury rates in the industry. We inspected 17 feedlot operations with more than 3,000 head of cattle. They were audited over a three-month period.

It does disappoint me to say that in that short period inspectors issued 194 improvement notices and one prohibition notice. The vast majority of notices related to equipment with inappropriate or no guards on moving parts, ranging from vehicles to feeding mills and silo facilities. Some notices related to the failure of employers to formally establish the competency of workers to operate vehicles, bobcats or tractors. Other notices were issued for improper storing and handling of dangerous substances. Some of the concerns expressed by my department's inspectors related to hazards that are all too common in other industries, such as working at heights and working in confined spaces. The audit findings indicate a definite need for improvement in the workplace health and safety standards of this industry.

I am pleased to say, however, that the industry has responded quickly to address the concerns raised about training, the development of improved workplace health and safety procedures and about work practices. It is important from our perspective as a government that workplace health and safety laws in this state are adhered to. These blitzes on certain industries will continue throughout the state to ensure that workers in this state work in a safe environment.

Mr C. J. Gabriel

Mr SEENEY: Premier, I acknowledge that this question would normally have been directed to the Police Minister, but he is overseas. I refer to the retirement after 29 years in the Police Service of former officer in charge of the Gold Coast CIB, Detective Inspector Bob Bennett, and to his reported comments in the media in the last couple of days that in his opinion Claude Gabriel was a sane killer who should be spending a long time in a regular prison. As the Premier may well be aware, Mr Bennett was the investigating police officer in charge of the case involving Claude John Gabriel and the brutal killing of a teenager and had been warned by interstate police that Gabriel would 'pretend he was mad'.

Does the Premier consider it appropriate that the Mental Health Tribunal did not contact Mr Bennett or any of his team of police officers, nor did it ask for any of the huge amount of material the police had collected in investigating the case, before it decided that Claude Gabriel would not face trial for this brutal murder? Will the Premier ensure that police are consulted before the Mental Health Tribunal hears Gabriel's case again in September?

Mr BEATTIE: This issue of Claude Gabriel has been a very painful one for the family concerned. We have had a tragedy in terms of a loss of life. In many senses it has highlighted some problems that existed in the system. I want to deal with this issue at some length. The government has been working on those problems over a long period. These problems were being worked on before the Claude Gabriel circumstances occurred when he escaped. As members know, the Minister for Health has introduced a number of reforms to mental health legislation that have been passed by this parliament. They came into play earlier this year. With those changes, the Mental Health Tribunal now has more consultative measures in place that did not exist before. The tribunal can take submissions from a wide range of people, including victims, victims' families and, presumably, police. Prior to those reforms, that was not available. If I have the dates right—and I am going on memory—when Claude Gabriel escaped those measures were not in place. Those measures were subsequently brought into place, because there was a period when the legislation had been passed but when implementation was occurring.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: No, I am talking about consultation. The legislation did not come into effect in terms of consultation until this year. Claude Gabriel committed the offences, if I recall correctly, in 1998. As I understand, the consultation with victims, police or anyone else under the old system was restricted, whereas under the new system it is not. Does the tribunal have the opportunity to consult police? The answer is yes. Does the tribunal have the opportunity to hear from victims? The answer is yes. For the first time, victims now are empowered to have a say. That is very important. This family has gone through enormous angst. We have seen the poor mum on television. Everyone's heart would have to go out to her for what happened to her daughter. For the first time, under these changes to the legislation she has an opportunity to have a say. If there are changes in relation to the circumstances of Claude Gabriel, she has a right to be heard and can put her case. The Gabriel family has made it clear that they want him transferred to Victoria. The victim's mother has an opportunity to have a say.

The Gabriel family has been less than helpful in all of this. Frankly, in terms of the circumstances to which the member referred and the early events that occurred on the Gold Coast, there are many people who have strong views about how they occurred and the role that should have been played by people close to him. I do not want to reopen that, but there is now an opportunity for the tribunal to consult the police. If the tribunal believes that is appropriate, it should do so.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Salinity; Cubbie Station

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): Queenslanders vividly remember the Goss government's decisions to pull up the Winton railway line and compulsorily acquire hundreds of homes in Brisbane's southern suburbs for its so-called koala road. Those two events were a watershed in Queensland politics. They marked a turning point for Queensland voters, who realised what a callous and out of touch Labor administration the Goss government was.

Six years later, it is groundhog day. Just over four weeks ago, the first details of the Beattie Labor government's secret plan to close down Cubbie Station were reported. The previously top secret plan was developed over many months as a political fix for the Premier's four-year neglect of the Natural Resources portfolio. It involved the compulsory acquisition of Cubbie Station through a special act of parliament and the retirement of its water entitlement. That water was to be diverted from the Culgoa River to the Narran Lakes via a man-made canal across four flood plains and another two rivers. A moratorium on the issuing of vegetation clearing permits was planned and vegetation clearing regulations in the rest of the catchment were to be tightened. The total net cost of this so-called Murray-Darling Basin sustainability initiative strategy paper was estimated to be in the range of \$140 million to \$160 million.

Typically, though, the Beattie government wanted everyone else to pay for its dirty work. It wanted the Commonwealth to pay 70 per cent of the cost and the New South Wales government to pay 15 per cent. The Premier planned to pay for his 15 per cent share by charging every irrigator in the Condamine-Balonne an additional Cubbie tax on their water entitlements. The plan was as audacious as it was heartless. Throughout the many months of its development, no-one in the government even thought to consult with the people in those dozens of communities that would be affected by this plan. No-one consulted the owners of Cubbie Station or the 180 sharefarmers and their families who work it. No-one consulted Queensland Cotton about the impact on its cotton gin. No-one consulted the hundreds of workers, businesspeople, community leaders and residents whose communities would be destroyed by this plan. All these Queenslanders who are generating wealth for this state, providing jobs and supporting prosperous and vibrant rural communities were left completely in the dark. While they were investing and borrowing money, making homes and building a future for our children, this mean and sneaky Beattie government was cooking up an ill-conceived plan behind closed doors in George Street that would leave them with nothing but heartache, devastation and debt. This plan was the ultimate act of betrayal by a Beattie government that, when all the glossy PR and all the slick media spin is shovelled away, always puts its grubby brand of Labor politics before decent hardworking people.

As if that deceit was not bad enough, it was about to get even worse. Within a couple of days, the Beattie PR media machine roared into life and Queenslanders were confronted with TV footage of salt pans, alarming red maps and pages of taxpayer-funded newspaper advertisements. On the very day that the community of Dirranbandi was rallying to save its future, the Premier set out on a frenzied campaign of deceit and dishonesty to create a diversion. He was already under pressure from his government's appalling handling of the nurses dispute and the scathing attacks of the union movement. He was already under pressure for continuing to protect his resident frontbench disaster zones—the Ministers for Health, Families and Racing. He was now under pressure after getting caught out by the National Party plotting and scheming to destroy rural communities in south-west Queensland. He desperately needed a diversion and he created one by releasing a salinity hazard map, which he knew full well indicated only a potential risk based on computer modelling, in a blaze of sensationalist and scaremongering publicity.

The map had not been ground-truthed and it had not been canvassed with any stakeholders, yet he released it with all his ridiculous forecasts that salinity was going to eat away the railway lines and even the roads. At the same time, he claimed that he had to close down Cubbie Station to fix it. He also claimed he had to close down Cubbie and take back its water entitlement to meet the National Competition Council's demands that water flows in the river be increased by 30 per cent. The problem was that in his haste to concoct his dishonest diversion, he did not let the facts get in the way of a good story.

In the estimates hearings the Natural Resources Minister admitted that the NCC had made no determination regarding any increase in flow rates and had not set a figure of 30 per cent. We also took the opportunity to check up on the Premier's other claim, published in the *Queensland Country Life* on 18 July, that 'We all must keep in mind that my government has to respond to Canberra's demands, otherwise we stand to lose \$130 million in national competition money'. Surprise, surprise! The NCC advised that the total payment Queensland may receive this year is \$139.6 million and that no specific amount has been linked to water reform.

The following week, the Premier finally came clean in the *Courier-Mail* and admitted that, no, \$130 million was not at risk. The backflips did not stop there. The Premier went on to claim, on ABC Radio on 24 July, that closing down Cubbie Station would not cure the salinity problem. He had been caught out once again. But the final nail in the Premier's coffin of deceit came over the weekend, when the real story emerged with his reluctant release of a new salinity map for the Dirranbandi and St George districts.

The new map is based on state-of-the-art aerial geophysical technology and is extensively ground-truthed. It has been compiled by the Bureau of Resource Science in conjunction with DNR, jointly funded by the state and federal governments. The new map shows the real story. It shows that the risk of salinity in the Dirranbandi and St George district is negligible and manageable. This new technology is groundbreaking. For the first time, this type of salinity mapping will allow informed decision making to prevent any future risk of salinity problems developing. The thing is that the Premier knew about this work all along. While he was running around scaring Queenslanders with his red map and while he was overreacting at his very worst for the *60 Minutes* film crew, he knew he was being dishonest.

The real reason the Premier has been pushing his bandwagon of deceit comes down to politics and poor priorities. Despite the Queensland Nationals' repeated warnings, the Beattie government has consistently failed to put the money needed into water reforms. Mr Robertson, and Mr Welford before him, have been promising to introduce a water resource plan for the Condamine-Balonne for the last four years. When a draft was finally produced last year, it was shot down in the Land Court and quickly withdrawn after DNR's own witnesses admitted that the government had cooked the books. DNR's Dr Choy admitted the department had not used all the data on flow rates in the lower Balonne in forming its opinion that the river was in poor condition. He admitted that only the worst data had been used and that if all available data had been used the river could have been assessed as in fair to good condition.

Now the government is panicking. It is no closer to producing a credible water resource plan and its preference for putting money into footbridges, football stadiums and millionaire businessmen's pockets rather than water reform is about to come back and bite it. If another flawed plan is released, it will be challenged again. If the Condamine-Balonne plan falls over, every other plan around the state is also at risk. Quite simply, Mr Beattie's secret plan to close down Cubbie was all about covering his political backside.

Water reform is essential. We have to provide water users with the security to invest that has been lacking, and we have to ensure that our water resources are managed responsibly. But any water reform has to involve the water users and communities who will have to live with the consequences. The current debate has been hijacked by a Premier who is intent not on implementing improvements to the way we manage our water resources but on short-term political gain. Using salinity and Cubbie as a diversion is irresponsible, deceitful and will do nothing to address salinity or water reform. It does not need to be like this. There is a way to resolve the Condamine-Balonne issue and there is a way to prevent salinity problems.

Three things are required: a commitment by government to protect property rights, a commitment by government to properly fund the water resource plan process and salinity research and a commitment by government and land-holders to work together cooperatively. It is now time to take the politics out of the salinity debate. The Queensland Nationals believe that the way forward can only be achieved through a genuine bipartisan approach.

Accordingly, yesterday our shadow cabinet decided to seek parliament's support to set up an all-party select committee on salinity. The committee should have equal numbers of government and opposition MPs and the chairman should not have the power of a casting vote. In that way, no party can dominate and there will be real consensus about the most thoughtful and responsible way to prevent salinity. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to take the salinity debate forward and rebuild the confidence of rural communities whose trust has been shattered by the Premier's political stunts over the last month. We have an opportunity here and now to provide an example to the rest of the nation about how to deal with environmental issues such as salinity and to do so on an honest and accurate basis. To put this all-party select committee together, to give it the teeth to fully examine the science that is available, to call all the experts and stakeholders in, to sort the facts from the fiction and develop a responsible plan to tackle salinity will obviously require the government's support.

I call on all members to put politics aside and support the Queensland Nationals' proposal to establish this select committee to work with the community to develop real and honest solutions to prevent a salinity problem in this state.

Women in the Smart State

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): On International Women's Day this year the Premier announced that he had requested me to address the issue of women in the Smart State to ensure that Queensland women were both contributing to and benefiting from the knowledge based industries being promoted as an essential element of our Smart State strategy. While women are relatively well represented in the biosciences and new fields like biotechnology, research carried out in Australia, the US and the UK documents a gender imbalance in education, training and employment in the field of information and communication technology starting in secondary school, and it is actually increasing.

In Queensland the Senior Board of Secondary School Studies reported that in the year 2000 girls represented 25 per cent of year 11 and 27 per cent of year 12 enrolments in the highest level IT board subject of Information Processing and Technology. The participation of girls in this subject has decreased from 40 per cent in 1991 and is still falling. This year there were only two girls amongst the 30 students to receive the Education Queensland Building Youth Technology Excellence Awards.

The data provided by TAFE Queensland reveals a similarly disturbing trend. In 2001 women represented 31 per cent of IT course enrolments. However, there has been a rapid decrease in female enrolments since 1999 when women represented 41 per cent of IT students. Furthermore, most women in 2001 were concentrated in lower level courses with only six per cent participating in the IT diploma level course. A similar trend is evident at university level. In 1998 women made up about 55 per cent of all higher education enrolments yet constituted only 19 per cent of IT&T commencements. Computer science and information systems are the only science and engineering subject areas in which women's participation is actually increasing. Recent studies in Australia put the female participation rate in the ICT industry at about 20 per cent, which is consistent with the participation rates of girls and women in education and training. Current estimates provided by the Department of Innovation and Information Economy put the figure at about 31 per cent. However, accurate figures about female participation in the ICT industry are difficult to obtain because of the varying methods used to categorise jobs.

The most significant factors responsible for the current lack of gender equity in the ICT industry include sex role stereotyping in science and technology; lack of access to and experience with computers; the image of the ICT industry as 'nerdy' and socially isolating; lack of female role models; lack of accurate and up-to-date IT career information; and IT course curriculum content and teaching methods. The challenge remains then for the Queensland government to build on the success of existing initiatives such as the Department of Innovation and Information Economy's ICT Skills Training and Role Models program, its IT&T careers kit, the women-only diploma course in IT and multimedia delivered by QANTM at Southbank TAFE and continuing support for the work of the ICT industry organisation Women in Information Technology with its programs for women and girls.

Over the last few months I have been working closely with a number of ministers to explore additional ways to address and remove some of the barriers that women and girls experience to achieve a more concerted whole-of-government strategy with respect to gender and ICT. I have also met some wonderful and inspirational women such as Dale Spender and Sonya Bernhart, who are great role models. Members of WIT are doing great work to assist women enter and succeed in the ICT industry. I have joined members of WIT at a number of functions, including the government sponsored WIT regional tour last week which included industry breakfasts, school visits and mentoring workshops.

Getting the government's policy settings right has been my first goal, and I am pleased with the outcome of my discussions to date. For example, all teachers will be required to ensure equitable access participation and outcomes for students as outlined in the new Information Communication Technologies for Learning strategy for schools. In addition, the government's overarching Information and Communication Strategy Action Plan for 2002 to 2004 will identify the need to continue to address the gender imbalance in ICT. The TAFE sector has risen to the challenge and has initiated a project entitled Girls with 'IT'—Smart Girls for the Smart State to identify new training initiatives to increase female participation in IT courses. Southbank TAFE also intends to offer new women-only courses such as Diploma in Electronic Commerce, Diploma in Information Technology, Advanced Diploma in Engineering (Computer Systems) and the CISCO networking courses. Businesswomen in regional Queensland will benefit from a series of 12 regional events and workshops to be offered by the Department of State Development. Workshops will provide the opportunity for businesswomen to become more tech savvy and learn how to enhance the effectiveness of their business by taking full advantage of information technology.

One of the consistent themes that has emerged in my discussions with women is the need to identify champions to raise the profile of successful women in science and technology and to provide role models for young women. I am actively exploring means of achieving this goal. I thank the Premier and ministers for their support to date and look forward to reporting further on progress with respect to women contributing their talents, skills and abilities to create the Smart State.

Babinda State Hotel

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.44 a.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the celebration of a significant anniversary—the establishment of the Babinda State Hotel in 1917. The Queensland government constructed the Babinda State Hotel in the town of Babinda. At the time it was the only hotel constructed and operated by the Queensland government under the Labor government's State Enterprises Scheme.

The town of Babinda was first established in 1912. Between 1914 and 1915 the population of Babinda rose rapidly due to the construction of the Babinda Central Sugarmill. The town was surveyed for future development in 1915 and private owners bought allotments and began to build homes and businesses. Gradually government facilities were established to serve the local community, including a post office, courthouse, police station and school. From 1915 the Labor government led by T.J. Ryan and encouraged by wartime restrictions, food shortages and consequent high prices established a series of state-run businesses to compete with private sector businesses.

The idea of state enterprises was not new. During the 19th century governments had operated railways and post offices as monopolies, but the general public accepted these as legitimate areas of government. The new state enterprises were distinctly different and designed to directly compete with private enterprise in order to provide the basic necessities at reasonable

prices. The first foray into state enterprises was the establishment of the state butcher shops in 1915. This was followed by the establishment of state pastoral stations, fish supply shops, sawmills, produce agencies, cold stores and mines. Despite the good intentions of the government, the state enterprises lost money except for this one success story—the State Hotel of Babinda.

The construction of the State Hotel at Babinda was linked to the repercussions of the Sugar Works Act 1911. Under this act, the sale of intoxicating liquor was prohibited in sugar growing areas and the two existing hotel licences in the town were revoked and the owners compensated. This left the town with a definite lack of accommodation in the area and it was mooted that the lack of quality accommodation in the town would discourage the better class of labour from seeking employment in the sugar refinery. To address this problem, the state government built the first and only state owned and run hotel in Queensland. As it was run by government, the hotel was also permitted to sell alcohol. Initially the hotel was operated by the Home Department with a manager appointed and paid by the department. Following the passing of the State Enterprises Act 1918, the management of the hotel was transferred to State Enterprises which was administered by the State Trade Office, a part of the Department of Labour and Industry.

Unlike nearly all other state enterprises, the State Hotel actually made money. In 1929 its turnover in the bar was more than 300 pounds a week and that of the house was almost 200 pounds a week. However, with the onset of the economic depression from 1929 and the massive losses other state enterprises were experiencing, the newly elected Country Party government in Queensland was intent on selling off all state enterprises. Sale of the hotel was announced in parliament in September 1929 with the reading of a special bill, the Babinda State Hotel Sale Act 1929. To entice buyers the government offered a monopoly on hotel trade in the town at least until 1935. It was also a condition of the sale that the purchaser make an application to the Licensing Court for the deletion of the word 'state' from the name of the hotel. Babinda residents opposed the decision to sell the hotel and urged the government to grant additional liquor licences in the area.

Despite that opposition, the sale of the hotel went ahead as planned. The property was put to auction in March 1930. Only four bids were received for the hotel, the highest bid coming from Mr J.A. O'Hagan of Brisbane. John O'Hagan, licensed victualler and former licensee of Lennons Hotel and the Hotel Daniel, continued his negotiations with the government and eventually bought the hotel for 50,000 pounds payable in instalments without interest. Upon the sale the hotel was renamed the Babinda Hotel. O'Hagan continued the grand tradition of the hotel up until the Second World War when business declined and he sold the hotel in 1941. Since that period the hotel has had a succession of owners but has continued to operate as a hotel with accommodation facilities. The hotel has undergone few alterations over the years with the exception of the removal of the second-class accommodation wing and other outbuildings in 1970. It still remains the only hotel in the town of Babinda and dominates the commercial centre of Babinda.

The current owners, the Anning family, are very proud of the history of the hotel. They are worthy custodians of what has become an historic icon in the far north. I recently had the pleasure of officiating at celebrations to mark the 85th anniversary of the opening of the hotel. On that occasion I had the pleasure of reciting verse penned by local poet and well-respected former Mulgrave shire councillor Shirley Harwood. In her unique style, Shirley captures the essence of the hotel's history and character. I am pleased to report that the Babinda Hotel has now been added to the state's Heritage Register.

Tick Eradication

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.50 a.m.): I rise to address the House on the important issue of tick reinfestation and the millions of dollars the beef and dairy industries are losing over the government's refusal to protect those producers in the tick-free and protected areas. My electorate contains a large area classified as tick free or protected because many producers were encouraged and led to believe that once tick free they had the backing of government to have their status enforced. Not so! The ongoing drought and declining prices and the necessity to move stock from infested areas to saleyards, abattoirs or for agistment are costing producers millions of dollars. The reinfestation of tick-free and protected areas is a further cost producers cannot afford, nor should they have to. No doubt the government would like to see the industry

self-regulated and user pays funding of tick inspectors and inspections for stock movement. But where is the law to enforce the protection of the tick-free and protected areas?

The DPI stated last year that no further plans for area eradication to extend the tick-free area will be sanctioned until the current eradication areas are consolidated. Consolidation, to my mind, means having all properties within the eradication area cleared of ticks to the sustainable double-fenced boundary set down at the commencement of the scheme. Until this is achieved those producers who have spent their time and money over at least two seasons to eradicate the ticks are at continual risk of having their properties reinfested. In one instance alone, three years after being declared free of ticks, one property owner is still first removed from a large property whose owners have still not participated in an approved eradication program after the previous owner reneged on a commitment to do so. This places them in a position where they have to continually treat cattle on one subdivision of their property as there are flood fences between the two properties, which sometimes allows the stock to mix. This is an ongoing cost which they cannot afford. Having spent some \$12 to \$15 per head on 1,000 head to eradicate the ticks, they and many others now have the added cost of maintaining herds free of ticks due to the DPI's unwillingness to adopt a policy to make it compulsory for stock owners in the protected and tick-free areas to clean their properties of those ticks.

In many years of experience producers are thoroughly convinced that outbreaks of ticks in clean areas can be attributed to tick infested trucks picking up cattle from the clean properties and the illegal movement of stock, with the former being the main offender. Witnesses have seen soil contaminated with fallen ticks being kicked by stock through the gaps between the boards in a stock crate, and a property some 40 kilometres within the tick-free area became infected from a truck that came from a coastal area to pick up a bull. In this case major losses from tick fever, which followed, were narrowly averted due to the owner noticing the ticks a few days before the fever struck.

My deep concern now is that the charges to producers being applied by the DPI and the increases planned for the future for the clearance of stock, which I believe are excessive, will lead to illegal movements of stock. I am concerned that movements of stock across the tick line will become non-viable and that producers who own property on both sides of the tick line will be seriously disadvantaged economically. Graziers, having experienced the benefit of operating a property which is free of cattle tick, naturally are biased towards large-scale tick eradication and advancement of the tick-free area. However, the initiative to eradicate must come from the producers of the area concerned and must have the strong backing and support of government to be worth proceeding with.

Recently I attended a meeting of the local tick eradication group composed of producers who have strived to be tick free. They were encouraged to pursue this course as the loss of revenue and production to beef and dairy cattle was and continues to be shown as substantial. The continual struggle to keep tick free caused one frustrated and irate producer to throw up his arms and say, 'Why the hell do I bother when the protected area cannot be enforced because the legislation has no teeth? Why doesn't the minister give us some enforceable laws to protect our properties contained within this protected area?' Even people outside the protected area believe that those in the protected area should be protected.

It should be clear to government that the maintenance of the tick line has had enormous benefits to south-east Queensland in the past. I feel that the number of infected properties in the tick-free and protected areas is an extremely small percentage of cattle properties in those areas, which could have been a lot less if appropriate measures were taken by the DPI to have their owners act responsibly and eradicate the ticks. To make sudden and sweeping changes to the control of the tick line could lead to a complete breakdown of the tick-free status of the tick-free area and cause untold economic losses. This problem will go on forever while governments refuse to show some backbone and bring in commonsense legislation and make rules and enforce all properties in tick-free and protected areas to go on a compulsory tick eradication program. They should clean up this state of the cattle tick and so ensure a strong and thriving cattle industry able to sell worldwide without the hassles of chemical and residue problems.

Registration of Medical Practitioners

Mr LIVINGSTONE (Ipswich West—ALP) (11.55 a.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the ridiculous situation in which a doctor, Noel Philip Harding, a New Zealander, was offered employment in Australia beginning in 1995 as a non-training registrar in anaesthetics at

the Ipswich Hospital. On arrival he became a legally and fully registered medical practitioner in the state of Queensland. He applied for and was granted provider numbers (general practitioner) in 1995 and 1996. That is to say, he was recognised as a medical practitioner for Medicare bulk-billing purposes. However, as time went on and he came to love Australia, he decided to become an Australian citizen. A ridiculous situation then came about. When he became an Australian citizen, even though he had been good enough to work here as a Kiwi, he suddenly could not get a provider number because of federal government rules. One of the local doctors in Ipswich, Dr Allan Byrnes, a very respected doctor in the area, has written to me saying—

Phil Harding was offered and accepted a position as a GP—

general practitioner—

in my practice in 2000. The final step was to get a provider number which I thought was a formality. However, as Phil's letter (attached) indicates he is unable to obtain a provider number. Despite all my appeals to—

the federal Minister for Health—

... I was unable to have this decision changed. Don, as you are well aware I have not had a holiday since 1999—in fact I have had two working days off in 2 1/2 years as well as working late in my own practice as well as after hours at night and weekends.

I have been unable to get assistance despite desperate attempts to do so. At the same time I have served my profession as a teacher of young doctors in the College of General Practitioners training program. I have served the community as a member of the parole board for 12 years. I have performed other honorary duties in the community.

Yet I am told by—

the Health Insurance Commission and the federal Minister for Health—

... that I am not serving in an area of need. The HIC—

Health Insurance Commission—

expects me to

Work 12 hours per day.

Be on call 24 hours per day.

Not see too many patients.

Remain alert at all times so that I don't harm my patients.

Pay exorbitant amounts for indemnity insurance if I can get it.

The simple process of granting Dr Harding a provider number would

Reduce my nights on call to every second night.

Reduce my Saturdays working.

Allow me to reduce my daily hours worked.

Allow me a reasonable holiday.

Make me a better doctor.

I table that letter from Dr Allan Byrnes for the benefit of the House. He also attached a letter from Dr Harding, and I seek leave to have that letter incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

To Whom it May Concern:

I was offered employment in Australia beginning in 1995, as a non-training registrar in anaesthetics at Ipswich Hospital. On arrival I became a legally and fully registered medical practitioner in the State of Queensland. I applied for and was granted provider numbers (general practitioner) in 1995 and 1996. That is to say I was recognized as a Medical Practitioner for Medicare billing purposes, but I had not completed recognized general practice training. Being a New Zealand citizen/medical graduate, these provider numbers were granted via exemption under Section 3J of the Federal Health Services Act 1973.

I was granted Australian citizenship in 1998. As a result of recent Federal legislative changes, my change of citizenship negated my exemption under Section 3J of the Health Services Act 1973. As I had not completed recognized general practice training I was no longer considered to be a Medical Practitioner for Medicare purposes.

I am now subjected to Section 19AA of the Health Insurance Act (1973) (the Act) without the restrictions of the ten year moratorium. In order to regain provider status (that is to be able to bill Medicare) I must become a specialist, or a fellow or trainee of the RACGP. Provider number access is also given to those who are not fellows/trainees of the RACGP but who are prepared to work in areas of need (the bush).

Yours faithfully

(Sgd)

Noel Philip Harding

Mr LIVINGSTONE: Across the Ipswich West Moreton region the GP population ratio is one doctor to every 1,803 people. In Ipswich the ratio is one to 1,687 people, and in the rural shires it is one to 2,459. In Ipswich city itself 36 per cent of doctors said they were taking new patients, 30 per cent were refusing to take new patients, and 33 per cent were taking patients if they were related to an existing patient. All of the rural practices are taking new patients but with some

restrictions. That brings to our attention that, because they are overworked, 63 per cent of doctors are unable to see people who just walk in off the street if they happen to move into the area.

The Ipswich West Moreton Division of General Practice has details showing that, based on Medicare billing numbers, 105.4 full-time equivalent doctors are doing the workload equivalent to 137.5 average full-time doctors, which is ridiculous. Of the doctors surveyed, 25 per cent indicated that in five years time they were likely to be doing something other than general practice. Age is also a factor. More than half of the doctors surveyed are over 45 years of age. This is worrying when one considers the fact that many of them may leave their practices in five to 10 years because of factors such as age, early retirement and other pressures facing doctors.

Ipswich general practitioners also report difficulty attracting locums to the area to work. Locums find working in practices that do not bulk-bill, therefore offering higher pay, as being more attractive. This inability to attract locums to the area is increasing the pressure on local doctors, forcing them to work extra hours. It also places pressure on emergency areas of the hospital. Obviously, this situation cannot continue the way it is. We need to make sure that the outer urban areas of our bigger cities are not ignored. Our outer urban areas already are home to some of the most disadvantaged people in our society. We need to make sure that these people do not suffer any more because of the lack of doctors. It is absolutely ridiculous that a doctor who is good enough to work here as a medical practitioner coming from New Zealand suddenly cannot practise when he becomes an Australian citizen. This person is fully qualified. I am not suggesting that someone who is not qualified should work—

Time expired.

Forde Inquiry

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (12.00 p.m.): The lowest act in the world is to cheat on children, and the Beattie government has been doing it since 1999. The Treasurer came into the House today, huffed and puffed about how much the Beattie government cares and continued his shameful creative accounting exercise on funding levels recommended by the Forde inquiry in 1999 for the care and protection of Queensland children.

One of the most important recommendations of the Forde inquiry was the need to put an additional \$103 million each year into the Families Department budget, just to reach average national funding levels in 1998. This Treasurer, who cares so much, also claimed in his budget speech—his most important speech of the year, the one time in the year he has to tell the truth and get it right—that the Beattie government had now met its fiscal commitments flowing from the Forde inquiry. That is simply not the reality.

In his budget speech the Treasurer claimed that the Beattie government would boost spending by \$148 million over four years, in addition to a previously announced \$40 million annual increase. The fact about this year's budget is that the \$148 million increase is over four years and amounts to no more than a \$32 million annual increase for the first two years and then \$42 million a year for the next two years.

The Beattie government's funding level on Forde initiatives means that the budget is still a far cry from the \$103 million recommended by Forde in 1999, and that was four years ago. The Minister for Families inadvertently admitted to this funding deception in her answer to one of my questions on notice during the estimates committee hearings. The minister's response to my question regarding what additional funding has been provided for each budget since 1999-2000 to meet the Forde inquiry recommendations produced a \$22 million shortfall from the \$103 million recommendation for annual recurrent funding, even with the increase from this year's budget. The opposition expects this kind of creative accounting from the Beattie government in relation to projects such as Lang Park and footbridges, but not when it comes to the welfare of Queensland children.

Far from this year's budget being a budget of heart, Mr Mackenroth's fiscal sleight of hand shows just how callous the Beattie government really is. Last year the Forde Implementation Monitoring Committee, a committee put in place by this government to evaluate how well the government was going in delivering on the Forde initiatives, reported that the national average had increased to \$113 million a year. This is significant because 'this means that in the two years since the report has been tabled Queensland has spent \$171 million less on child protection than was recommended by the Forde inquiry'. There it is in black and white from a committee put together by this government.

Even more concerning about the observations of this \$171 million shortfall is the footnote stating that 'this is a conservative estimate, based on the \$103 million base'. The reality, therefore, is that under the Beattie government Queensland continues to fall further and further behind. But it gets better—or rather it gets worse, much worse. In parliamentary estimates committee hearings the Minister for Families admitted that the Beattie government cannot sustain increased levels of funding for the care and protection of Queensland children. All the Minister for Families did during the estimates committee hearings was to confirm the obvious. The Treasurer's crowning achievement of the last two years—a \$1.3 billion operating deficit—means that Queensland does not have enough money for kids, nurses, teachers or police.

So where does that leave Queensland children? Well, the Forde Implementation Monitoring Committee has some comments about exactly where the Beattie government's lack of commitment has left Queensland children. It states—

The Department's ability to provide adequately and appropriately funded services is limited and in consequence it is at risk of repeating the cycle identified in the Forde Inquiry: overstretched Departmental staff relying on overstretched and underresourced care services, which limits the demands that the Department can place on services for the quality and delivery of appropriate outcomes.

When it comes to the care and protection of Queensland children, the Beattie government has just got it wrong. As the opposition has been saying for some time, some things are non-negotiable, and the children are at the top of the list. The report card for the Minister for Families and her department reads like a public administration disaster zone.

Time expired.

Suicide Prevention

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (12.04 p.m.): Last year the number of fatalities on Queensland roads was 324—a shocking figure. Yet when it is compared to 1970s figures it is immediately seen that the rate has dropped significantly. Sadly, the same cannot be said for the number of deaths by suicide each year. In fact, suicide numbers and rates, especially for young and middle-aged men, have increased in recent decades. The number of deaths by intentional harm in Queensland for the year 2000 was 541. This statistic is not just horrifying but also quite frightening, especially knowing that suicide is preventable.

One research study found a lack of awareness of the signs leading to teenage suicide. The study found that knowledge of how to work with teenagers with suicidal tendencies was not strong, especially amongst potentially influential professionals such as doctors and teachers. This is why I was pleased to recently launch a new suicide prevention initiative in Pine Rivers.

The Pine Rivers suicide/self-harm risk assessment and referral pathway flow chart is aimed at assisting those who come into contact with young people at risk, such as youth workers, doctors, health workers, educators, community organisations and government agencies. This project has been funded under the Queensland government's Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy initiative. The flow chart is the result of two years of hard work by the Pine Rivers interagency Youth at Risk Working Group, which comprises Adele Dingle, the network support worker with the Queensland government Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy; Kim McLean, manager of the Pine Rivers Community Health Centre; Senior Constable Adam Willimott of the Bray Park police beat; Richard Haddon of Pine Rivers State High School; Saretta Sirriert from JPET; Sharon Eaton and Lynn Cameron from the Youth and Families Association; Kym Edwards and Corinna Dekkers from the Department of Families' Pine Rivers regional office; Pat Saunders from Young People at Risk's mental health unit; Danielle Wilson from the Child and Youth Mental Health Service; Katy Shepherd from the Adult Mental Health Service; and Chris Mundy, the school chaplain based at Albany Creek High School. I congratulate and thank each of these dedicated people for their work in developing this very worthwhile project.

The flow chart offers information to service providers in three steps; namely, determination of the level of risk, referral to emergency and mental health services, and referral to appropriate support services. It offers information on the determination of risk levels—high, moderate and less risk—wisely pointing out to the user that 'less risk' does not mean no risk. The flow chart is concise but detailed enough to give a sobering insight into the identification of potential for self-harm, hopefully before it is carried out. Determining the risk and offering support from appropriate services can and will save lives. I seek leave to table the flow chart.

Leave granted.

Mrs LAVARCH: I encourage all members to take a look at the flow chart and to promote a similar project in their own electorates.

Australia has one of the highest rates of youth suicide in the world, and the rate of youth suicide in Queensland is higher than the national average. I know that honourable members are as concerned as I am about these horrifying statistics. The highest suicide mortality rates for males occur in the 15 to 24, 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 age brackets. These rates have increased in the past 25 years. Female suicide rates remain stable at around six deaths per 100,000 of population, with the 35 to 44 age group experiencing the highest number of suicides.

For the same period, the rate of suicide for the indigenous population was twice the rate of the whole of Queensland and was greatest for young indigenous males, with a rate of four times that of all young people in Queensland—that is, 139.2 suicides per 100,000 people as against 34.7 suicides per 100,000 people for the young general male population. As tragic and horrifying as these figures are, the fact that there were 12 suicides in the under 15 age group makes it incomprehensible that so many young people do not see life as worth living.

It is also important to bear in mind that research shows that for every suicide there are over 30 attempts. That is, in Australia over 210 people each day attempt suicide, with women attempting suicide at a far greater rate than men. Early intervention with resources such as the referral pathways flow chart is vital in saving these lives. I have no doubt the value of this project in Pine Rivers will be immeasurable. It will not only save lives but also prevent the trauma, heartbreak and grief suffered by families.

Time expired.

Mr I. Isaacs; False Allegations of Child Abuse

Mr FLYNN (Lockyer—ONP) (12.10 p.m.): Were this question time, I would be asking: what steps can be taken—and will they be taken—in connection with the latest revelation of false child abuse claims against school principal Ian Isaacs? I note and appreciate the Premier's position of support for Mr Isaacs at this stage. Is this government serious about making examples of those involved in false complaints in order that the accused as well as the victim receives real justice and that we may remove the smoke surrounding the fire so that we can assume a reasoned and effective strategy to combat and find the real offenders?

It was disturbing to read in the *Courier-Mail* on 27 July that one young supporter—I believe a school student—of Isaacs opined that perhaps the email started off as a joke. Joke or not, this is yet another example of the ample evidence that, for any number of motives—but particularly money in the case of adults—there are numerous dubious complaints. In view of the nature of the offence, we must remain vigilant and properly investigate complaints made in the proper form. But for Mr Isaacs to be vilified and subjected to public scrutiny in the manner in which he was demonstrates some of the blind hysteria with which we approach this problem.

Recently, I was told that the whole purpose of the law, and its only purpose, is to protect children. Of course it is about protecting children. But it is also about justice, and justice includes alleged offenders. We seem to be sending a message that if mud is thrown, then it must stick. The opinion in the *Courier-Mail* also on 27 July confirms my view. It states—

But allegations should be credible before investigations are instigated.

I have had it said to me that if we punish people for making false complaints, we will deter those who are making genuine complaints. Such concerns are a furphy. We all know full well the difference between vexatious complaints and those that fail through lack of evidence. If society and government are serious about dealing with child abuse, whether it is recent or whether it occurred many years ago, then we must sort the wheat from the chaff at the outset and remember that justice must be even-handed.

One of the problems with adopting my stance has been the one-eyed view that if we question the process we must in some way be supporting the offenders. I find such a suggestion quite offensive. This view restricts objective debate and it is counterproductive for proper investigative bodies.

A recent remark was attributed to the Education Minister, who I note is present in the chamber. She is reported to have said—

It's not very helpful to talk about false abuse claims in the current climate.

I ask the minister: is she absolutely serious about that comment? Taking the minister's comments literally, that might well restrict natural justice. I am informed that the minister went further to say— Teachers have a right to be protected against vexatious complaints but claims must be fully investigated.

There is absolutely no argument with that. We would all agree. The point is that with sex abuse it appears that no accused, least of all a teacher, is protected against false complaints. A whole range of problems arise from this issue, not least the concerns surrounding the very much damaged repressed memory theory. At the end of the day, if in our rush to do the right thing not just by our youth but also by those who are now adults we have brushed justice to one side, we must bring calm, balance and objective viewpoints back to the debate.

Boeing Enterprises; Stay-Green Sorghum; University of Southern Queensland

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (12.13 p.m.): I would like to speak about three topics of importance to Toowoomba and the downs: the Boeing Enterprises USQ connection, stay-green sorghum, and USQ's Hong Kong campus. Each of the Darling Downs' leading traditional and non-traditional industries will reap huge benefits from two major partnerships that have been forged recently by the Beattie government. Recently in Seattle, the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy, Paul Lucas, met with the commercial arm of Boeing Enterprises. The aviation giant has expressed a keen interest in working with Queensland and in particular Toowoomba's USQ to further fibre composite development. Darling Downs' farmers are also set to benefit from a recently signed agreement between the Queensland government and three United States universities that are pioneering the development of stay-green drought resistant sorghum. I will outline briefly to the House both of these partnerships and the benefits that the Darling Downs and other areas of Queensland will reap as a consequence of this government's initiative.

Minister Lucas's meeting with Boeing holds huge potential for the Darling Downs' latest and most exciting non-traditional industry. Boeing Enterprises uses fibre composite in the wingtips of its latest aircraft. It is wanting to expand its market. It heard about the work that USQ and Wagners and others are doing with fibre composites, namely their fibre composite bridge, and it is keen to learn more. In common with USQ and Wagners, Boeing has considerable experience with fibre composites, and I am sure that the three parties would learn a great deal from each other from the collaboration of research and ideas.

It is aware of the Beattie government's \$10 million investment into the fibre composite centre of excellence at USQ and it is interested in different applications of fibre composite in civil construction. Therefore, clearly, even before our centre of excellence has been built, Toowoomba is being recognised as a leader in the field of fibre composite technology.

Mr Lucas: It is nice to see a positive member on the Darling Downs.

Mr SHINE: I take that interjection. Not only is our region's reputation growing but so, too, is the potential of this industry. That means that in the long term we are creating more job opportunities in this region and investing more in our local economy.

One of the Darling Downs' more traditional industries, sorghum growing, should also be preparing to reap the benefits of a research partnership between the Beattie government and US universities to develop drought-resistant sorghum. A \$2 million research program will investigate ways of making sorghum drought resistant through determining and testing gene function. It is a partnership between the Beattie government's DPI Agency for Food and Fibre Sciences at Warwick's Hermitage Research Station and the Texas Tech University, the Texas A&M University and the University of Missouri.

This research has huge potential for our region and could alleviate a great deal of economic and emotional heartache that has developed over the last drought-stricken decade. The estimated annual economic benefit of stay-green sorghum would be about \$34 million in the Queensland and New South Wales grain belts. The technology could also lead to a yield increase of 10 per cent and enable more agricultural land to be sown.

This is a really wonderful example of the Smart State philosophy. We are not going to let drought drive our farmers off their farms. Rather, we are adapting to the environment looking for new, innovative solutions to solve the problem of drought in our region. The potential for this revolutionary research to extend beyond sorghum and into other cultural industries such as rice, wheat and corn is very promising. The DPI will contribute \$1 million to the program with the Grains Research and Development Corporation contributing \$300,000 and external partners providing \$700,000. I congratulate the government on both of these partnerships. They hold the potential

to create hundreds of jobs, give regional Queensland the boost that it desperately needs, and will contribute significantly to the spreading of the Smart State philosophy.

Smart State education is reaching further than ever before, thanks to the ingenuity of educational institutions and the strong commitment of this government. Our most recent example of this happened early last month when the Premier officially opened a new entry point for Toowoomba's University of Southern Queensland in Hong Kong. The new entry point will be a joint information centre that will operate with locally based Times College. The significance of this information centre is simple. It will allow the university to offer its university preparation program to more than 2,000 Times College students, who will then be able to apply to enrol with the university. That means that students will have the opportunity to study all of their USQ degree in Hong Kong, part of their degree in Hong Kong and part in Australia, or all of their degree in Australia. This wonderful partnership means more export dollars for Australia and more jobs for Queenslanders as a result of this push to export our education services.

The influx of international students into Queensland is overwhelming. About 17,000 foreign students come to study in Queensland every year. The entry point that USQ has established in Hong Kong will go a long way to increasing this figure—a goal that I know both USQ and the government share as part of the Smart State strategy. Some of the other projects that USQ is undertaking in Hong Kong to retain its firm hold over the region's students wanting to study in Queensland include a sister school relationship with a local high school.

Time expired.

Sugar Industry

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (12.18 p.m.): Today as we sit in parliament, the sugar industry, one of Queensland's biggest agricultural industries, is struggling to survive. I would like to make the House aware of some of the issues. In a fundamental sense the industry is struggling because it is trying to compete on a world market that is corrupted very substantially by the overproduction of sugar and also by speculators playing with the market by trading in the futures market.

Currently, the market is around US5.5c per pound, which is the lowest that it has been since 1985 when it went down to US2.5c per pound. All of the sugar that is grown in Queensland is sold on the basis of the world market price. That includes domestic sales. Currently in Queensland, 15 per cent of our sugar is sold on the domestic market either to soft drink manufacturers, through retail sales in the shops, or through some confectionary areas. The other 85 per cent of sugar produced in Queensland is exported overseas to markets throughout the world.

Obviously, the problem that we have is that all of our sugar is priced according to the world market price. Currently, we are receiving US5.5c or thereabouts for all the sugar that is produced in Queensland irrespective of whether it goes on the market shelves or it is exported. In any sense, that is quite unfair. Typically, we are trading against very efficient producers such as Brazil. As the Premier said this morning, huge areas of virgin scrub land are currently being cleared in Brazil and it is able to produce sugar at a very low cost. Unfortunately, the currency situation is not helping at all. Brazil's currency has devalued substantially against the US dollar while ours, as most members would know, is rising steadily. I commend the *Courier-Mail* for the article yesterday which dealt with the plight of the industry in a very sensitive manner.

Currently, Brazil is the lowest cost producer. Fortunately, Australia is about the third most efficient producer. That is not too bad when one considers the fact that the average farm worker in Brazil is paid about \$US1,000 per year. Currently, a good harvester operator or haul-out operator in Queensland can pretty much earn that in Australian dollars in a week. Even in that very simplistic test, we are travelling a pretty hard road. Obviously it is very hard to compete under those circumstances.

I also refer to the answer the Premier gave this morning in terms of our trying to trade efficiently with Brazil. Interestingly, about one-third of Brazil's production goes into home consumption. Currently, it produces approximately 40 million tons of sugar, while Queensland produces about five million tons. Brazil's industry is about 10 times bigger than ours, which is reflected in the fact that it has a very large population base. As I said, 10 million tons of its sugar goes into home consumption, where there is some way in which it can subsidise its export, and about another third is used to produce ethanol. Obviously there is room to move in terms of subsidising exports through that. The Brazilian market is really only exposed to about a third of its

total production which goes on the world market. As I said earlier, 100 per cent of Australia's market is reliant on the world market price.

The Queensland sugar industry is bleeding to death through drought, disease and low price. There is not a lot we can do about dry weather, which the industry has suffered over a long period of time. We are working very hard to get through the downturn from the disease which affected one of our most popular varieties. However, there is probably one thing that can be done about the price—diversify away from the world market. The industry would need some support from both the state and federal governments to make that happen. About a third of our crop needs to be divorced away from the world market price. In other words, about a third of our market needs to be priced in other products or in some other way so that we have a base for our industry.

Time expired.

Education and Training, Sunshine Coast

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (12.23 p.m.): On Thursday, 11 July this year I attended the Sunshine Coast Schools Industry Links Scheme. In the next 10 to 15 years, the Sunshine Coast region will increase in population to approximately 480,000 people, or close to half a million people. We must realise that education is an industry and that it means jobs. Given the implications of this growth in population, we as a community must assess what we need to do to ensure that we grow in the ways that we want to grow and to which we aspire, to enrich our community to become not only a Smart State but, indeed, a smart community.

Much was discussed at that gathering, including how we can develop an inclusive learning economy for the Sunshine Coast, the new exports and resources that will add value so that the Sunshine Coast region prospers, and what relationships and partnerships need to be fostered in order to achieve a dynamic learning community, a Smart State and, indeed, an educational node, which does exist on the Sunshine Coast within my electorate of Kawana.

I commend both the Minister for Education and the Treasurer—who are present in the House—for the foresight they have shown in creating a clean and green industry on the Sunshine Coast—education! Sponsors for the Building Learning Communities on the Sunshine Coast include the local Maroochy council, the University of the Sunshine Coast—situated in my electorate—the Queensland government through Education Queensland and the Department of State Development, and the Kawana Waters State High School.

I am proud to represent the Kawana Waters State High School. For some time now I have been very interested in the international program in our state high schools, of which Kawana Waters State High School is an active participant. International students generate a vital income for our community. However, they are extremely beneficial for a number of other reasons, including the fact that mixing with overseas students breaks down a lot of barriers not only in the community of students but in the general community in which we live—our society in general.

When I was five years old I was lucky to begin my education in Penang, Malaysia, as my father was transferred overseas. To live in another country and attend school there is not only beneficial but very eye-opening. The principal of Kawana Waters State High School, Jo House, her staff and the students should be applauded for welcoming overseas students from the Shandong Province in China, as well as from other countries around the world, including South America.

While singing the praises of Kawana Waters State High School, I will also mention the constitutional convention held on 1 March. The Kawana Waters State High School coordinated a one-day Queensland schools constitutional convention for the north coast zone, including all schools, both public and private, from Clontarf in the south to Bundaberg in the north. A series of zone conventions occurred across Queensland to facilitate the selection of 20 delegates, who attended the national schools constitutional convention in Canberra. One of the keynote speakers was the Minister for Education, and I commend her for her attendance, which was very much appreciated. Other keynote speakers included Dr Brian Hoeppe, a lecturer in professional studies at QUT, and Professor Pat Weller from Griffith University.

I will table the program for the convention that outlines the number of students in attendance. I will also table a speech from the Mountain Creek State High School representative, Trenton Ebner, who is also the outgoing school captain. The Mountain Creek State High School changes its school captain halfway through the year so that the seniors can concentrate on their study for the remaining six months. I will also table the Kawana Waters State High School district

showcase winners, including the very proud district winners of the showcase 2002 awards for excellence. The school also boasts some great sporting achievers, including Chris Flannery, a former student and now a well-recognised State of Origin player for the future.

The forum on education and training reforms was recently held at the Mountain Creek State High School at Lady Musgrave Drive, Mountain Creek on Thursday, 18 July. Matters discussed included the paper on proposals to make senior school fit better with further education, training and work, including the option of raising the school leaving age to 16 or 17 years of age; trials in 50 schools of a full-time preparatory year for children before they enter grade 1, with 30 starting in 2003 and 20 starting in 2004; and, a greater long-term investment in information and communication technologies, including 3,000 computers, faster replacement of old computers and more teachers.

All sessions were well attended, and there was some great input from the students at sessions which I attended. I also commend and appreciate the parliamentary secretary, Neil Roberts, for attending on the day. As we all realise, our future in education is a vital one. We are approaching the largest reforms that we have seen in 40 years. Change is not necessarily better simply for change's sake, but when we change we must change for the better.

Time expired.

SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.31 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Governors' Pensions Act 1977, Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957, Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1970 and Public Officers Superannuation Benefits Recovery Act 1988.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.31 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill makes a number of amendments to pension legislation. The bill amends the Governors' Pensions Act 1977 and the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957 to name the respective minister as the person who manages the scheme for the purposes of the Commonwealth government's superannuation surcharge legislation. In respect of the Judges Act, this bill removes the requirement that a pension cease upon remarriage of a widow, to be consistent with the treatment of widows' pensions under the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1970. The Parliamentary Act was amended in November 2000 to recognise defacto relationships. Following this amendment, it is possible for a deceased member to leave both a legal spouse and defacto spouse surviving. The bill amends the Parliamentary Act to ensure that only the amount of one widows' benefit is payable in the event of the death of a member or a former member. The bill provides that any apportionment of the benefit payable is determined by the trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund. In addition, the bill amends the Parliamentary Act to allow members to commute part of a pension benefit entitlement to a lump sum to meet any personal surcharge assessments imposed under the Commonwealth government's superannuation surcharge legislation. The bill also makes minor technical amendments to the Parliamentary Act. Additionally, the bill amends the Public Officers Superannuation Benefits Recovery Act 1988 to correct a reference to a now repealed act. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Malone, adjourned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from Virginia State School in the electorate of Nudgee.

GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.34 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Casino Control Act 1982, Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, Gaming Machine Act 1991, Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, Keno Act 1996, Lotteries Act 1997 and Wagering Act 1998, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.35 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill I present to the House today contains miscellaneous amendments to the seven principal gaming acts. The amendments are designed to achieve greater consistency in the administration of all gaming acts and to clarify and strengthen some of the existing provisions with those acts. One area in which the bill enhances consistency is in relation to the decision-making processes connected with the licensing of individuals. Currently, the licensing of individuals associated with machine gaming is made by the Queensland Gaming Commission, while the licensing of casino related employees is made by the minister, although, in a practical sense, all decisions to grant such licences have been made by the executive director of the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation under delegation. In line with the other gaming acts and the position stated in the government's policy direction for gambling in Queensland, the bill amends both the Casino Control Act and the Gaming Machine Act to provide for the chief executive to make all individual licensing decisions. In a first for the Casino Control Act, appeals from such decisions will be able to be made and will be heard by the Queensland Gaming Commission.

The policy direction for gambling in Queensland also provided that all gambling legislation should give the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation the power to issue infringement notices where licensees breach licence conditions. This power has progressively been incorporated into the gaming acts and is now being extended to the Casino Control Act. In addition, the bill amends provisions in the gaming acts to ensure consistency in the level of penalty imposed for similar offences. The objective underlying all gaming acts specifies the need to ensure the probity of those involved in the conduct of gambling. This bill supports that element of the objective by amending the gaming acts to provide for enhanced probity powers for the investigation of business and executive associates of licence holders.

I will now outline the amendments which are unique to each act. Part 2 of the bill amends the Casino Control Act. Of note is the amendment to section 92 to allow a casino operator to exclude a person from the casino where the welfare of another person is affected by the first person's presence in the casino. As an example, this will give a casino operator the power to exclude a patron from the casino if that person leaves a child in a car in the casino's vicinity, such as the casino carpark or outside the casino. This gives effect to the government's commitment to ensure that, on balance, gambling is conducted in a responsible manner and that player protection is extended to all parties who are affected by gambling. The bill also strengthens the Casino Control Act and makes it consistent with the other gaming acts by bringing into the parent act existing provisions in the regulation dealing with the requirements for advertising by casinos.

The bill also includes a new section in the Casino Control Act to deal with unclaimed Keno winnings dating back to when Keno was conducted under the Casino Control Act rather than as a statewide game under the Keno Act. Players who have winnings prior to 23 June 1997—the start of statewide Keno—will have one more year to claim their winnings. Such players will then have had over six years to claim their prize, compared with the five years which is now contained in the Keno Act. Part 3 of the bill incorporates minor amendments to the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act to further enhance consistency with other gaming acts. Part 4 of the bill amends the Gaming Machine Act. One of the significant amendments is to modernise the language of the current provisions relating to appeals made to the minister under the act. In this regard, the amendment clarifies the three types of decisions I may make on appeals.

First, I may confirm the original decision of the decision maker, which means the appeal is finished. In doing this, I may agree with the decision maker's reasons for the decision, or I may agree with the decision for different reasons and/or only some of those reasons. Second, I may set aside the decision and substitute another decision with respect to the matter under appeal. Again, my decision will finish the appeal. However, if the appeal was with respect to a decision of the Queensland Gaming Commission to refuse to grant a gaming machine licence, and I have granted the licence, then the commission will need to decide the number of gaming machines and the hours of gaming for the site, plus any licence conditions it deems necessary.

These are separate and distinct decisions that are unrelated to the original appeal and, under the act, are required to be made by the commission. If an applicant is aggrieved by the commission's decision in these matters, the applicant's right to appeal any of those decisions is unaffected by the original appeal. Third, I can set aside the decision and return the matter to the commission for further consideration together with any relevant information. In this third case, the commission must consider the application afresh and the decision of the commission on its further consideration is final and not subject to a further appeal to me. This will prevent the potential for a never-ending cycle of decisions and appeals.

I also wish to make it clear that during my consideration of appeals I will continue to make use of section 30(1)(c) of the act to obtain further information from anyone, be they the commission, the chief executive, the appellant or another person, if I consider it necessary in order to make an informed and balanced decision. Finally, the amendments will also extend the time in which an applicant may lodge an appeal from the current 14 days to 28 days.

The Gaming Machine Act will also be amended to place additional controls on gaming machine manufacturers and restricted component manufacturers, which are known as major and secondary dealers respectively. Consistent with existing requirements for licensed monitoring operators, these dealers will be required to operate in accordance with approved internal control systems. The bill requires that such internal control documentation must be submitted to the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation for approval within six months of the commencement of the act.

The bill also inserts a provision reflecting some of the current conditions placed on gaming machine licences. In this regard, a licensee must install the number of gaming machines approved by the commission within 12 months of being granted a licence for the first time. If the licensee fails to do so, the approved number of machines will automatically be reduced to the number of machines actually installed at the end of the 12 months. Similarly, licensees who are granted an increase in approved machine numbers will have six months from the date of approval to install the additional machines or their approval will drop to the number actually installed at the end of the six months. The commission will be able to grant extensions to the installation period in exceptional circumstances and upon application by the licensee.

Parts 5 and 6 make minor amendments to the Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act and the Keno Act respectively to enhance consistency and clarity. Part 7 amends the definition of 'small business' in the Lotteries Act to recognise that a number of casket agents, especially newsagents, employ staff on a part-time or casual basis and may therefore have more than 50 employees—the current defined limit—yet are still a small business. The amendment allows that a business may still be small if it has more than 50 employees provided that the total number of hours worked by the employees in a week are not more than 2,000.

Part 8 amends the Wagering Act to remove the requirement for oncourse wagering permit holders to pay wagering tax where the total amount invested for the month is less than a prescribed amount, which is intended to be \$2,000. These permit holders are very small regional clubs where the TAB has indicated that it is not interested in an agency arrangement because of the inability of the race club events to generate sufficient betting interest to make the provision of TAB facilities commercially viable. It usually takes very small bets from people who do not want to bet with bookmakers. Because oncourse wagering permit holders conduct very few meetings each year, the administration costs in collecting the tax far exceeds the tax collected. A typical example of this is where a club recently held a race meeting on which the total investment for the meeting was \$75, of which \$63 was returned to the winning punters. The remaining \$12 was taxed at 20 per cent, giving a grand total of \$2.40 tax.

Similarly, under the amendments these small clubs will not generally be subject to the current control systems procedure. However, a control system will be required from any permit holder who conducts oncourse wagering with an annual investment over a prescribed amount, which is

expected to be \$8,000. These amendments will, in some small way, contribute to the efforts being made to ensure the survival of these remote race clubs, as their race meetings are an essential part of the fabric of social interaction for country people. The removal of the requirements to pay wagering tax and implement control systems together with the associated paperwork is a positive for these mainly voluntary club officials and will have no adverse effect on the integrity of wagering operations in this state. Part 9 provides for a series of minor technical amendments.

This bill improves the consistency and clarity of gambling regulation in Queensland. In so doing it maintains the high standards of probity, integrity and community benefit that Queenslanders have come to expect from the conduct of gaming in this state. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Horan, adjourned.

PERSONAL INJURIES PROCEEDINGS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.46 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.47 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002 was passed by this parliament on 20 June this year. This important piece of legislation was the government's initial response to address the very real difficulties the community is facing as a result of the insurance crisis. This bill builds upon the proactive measures taken by the government through the passage of the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act.

The bill should result in a more immediate impact on the number and size of legal claims, and therefore on the affordability of public liability and medical indemnity insurance schemes. The key elements of the bill are that—

- firstly, the provisions of the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002 will apply to all claims for personal injury whenever the injury incurred, other than where a writ has been lodged or a written offer of settlement made;
- secondly, acts done with intent to cause personal injury and sexual assaults or other sexual misconduct will be excluded from the operation of the substantive provisions of the act.

The main feature of the bill is that the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act will now apply retrospectively regardless of when an injury occurred. Regardless of when a person sustained an injury, the pre-court processes will have to be complied with and the other provisions of the act that limit certain heads of damages and impose costs restrictions will also apply. This retrospectivity does not apply, however, where prior to 30 June a person had already commenced legal proceedings or where either party to a potential claim had made a written offer for settlement. In other words, this bill will, firstly, protect injured claimants where costs and outlays were incurred before 18 June 2002 or where written offers of settlement were made before 1 July 2002; secondly, provide more immediate relief to the cost structure of insurance schemes, particularly medical indemnity insurance; and, thirdly, ensure all injured people who have not already initiated legal steps to exercise their rights of claim are treated equally so that their claims are promptly processed under the new arrangements in the act.

The bill excludes from the operation of the act unlawful intentional acts done with intent to cause personal injury as well as sexual assaults and other sexual misconduct. The act was amended in committee to enable punitive or exemplary damages to be awarded in such cases.

Consistent with that amendment, the bill now extends the exemption relating to injuries as a result of intentional unlawful acts, sexual assault or sexual misconduct to all provisions of the act limiting damages and costs. This will bring greater consistency with the approach to these issues in recent law reforms made by the New South Wales parliament. Consistency in this regard is desirable both as a matter of principle and in practical terms to avoid forum shopping. A number of other technical amendments have been made to tidy up the language of the act and to ensure consistency within its provisions.

This bill implements a commitment the government made to Queensland doctors in an attempt to avert a walk-out by medical practitioners on 1 July this year. It is disappointing that the Queensland branch of the Australian Medical Association still felt it necessary to advocate that doctors neglect their patients from 1 July. However, I am pleased to say that the vast majority of Queensland doctors refused to follow the AMAQ's lead. The government has taken significant steps to alleviate the pressure on insurance premiums, and this bill will ensure that there will be a more immediate effect. As I have previously indicated to the House, the government is considering a third stage of reforms to follow the report from the panel appointed by the Commonwealth government. The reforms include matters such as:

- review of the law of reasonable foreseeability;
- review of the duty of care and the standard of care;
- options to exclude extreme and unrealistic claims by plaintiffs;
- options for the recognition of waivers for dangerous activities; and
- options for variation of the limitation period in relation to children.

All of these measures should reduce the costs to the insurance industry and lead to a reduction in insurance premiums. It is therefore disappointing that the insurance industry has not yet indicated a willingness to pass on these savings to consumers. It is therefore now incumbent on the federal government to protect the interests of insurance consumers and the general community. Regulatory oversight of insurance companies must ensure the cost savings generated by these reforms are passed on to consumers through reduced premiums. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Horan, adjourned.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (12.53 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend legislation about primary industries.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (12.54 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 proposes amendments to a number of primary industries portfolio acts and a related act. As honourable members would be aware, this type of miscellaneous amendment bill has been used on a number of occasions as a vehicle to facilitate amendments of a non-controversial nature. That is also the case on this occasion. Generally speaking, the proposed amendments are intended to facilitate the effective operation of the acts in question. Further, certain amendments are required to the Fisheries Act 1994 to give effect to a national competition policy review of that act. I will briefly outline each of the various amendments. The opportunity is being taken to make a few minor amendments to the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. These will provide for clarity in interpretation and ensure the effective operation of the act. It is also proposed to make consequential amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 with regard to animal welfare to provide for enforcement of the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. The amendment will enable more

effective seizure of animals whose welfare is at risk by police acting as inspectors under the animal care and protection legislation.

The amendment to the Chicken Meat Industry Committee Act 1973 clarifies the funding arrangements between chicken meat processors and chicken meat producers. This act was amended last year to implement a new funding mechanism for the Chicken Meat Industry Committee based on an annual contract registration fee. The committee provides a forum for negotiations between chicken meat processors and the producers. For the benefit of the students in the gallery, it will be finger licking good. In practice, processors and producers have shared the cost of this fee. The current amendment reflects this practice in legislation to remove any doubts about the fact that the annual contract registration fee will be apportioned on a fifty-fifty basis between processors and producers. The amendment has been made at the request of the Chicken Meat Industry Committee and has the support of the processors and also producer representatives.

The primary purpose of the amendments to the Fisheries Act 1994 is to ensure compliance of the legislation with national competition policy principles. As part of its responsibilities for complying with NCP principles, the Department of Primary Industries commissioned an independent review of the provisions of the act in the year 2000. That review identified that the objectives of the act should be clearly outlined and that its primary purpose must be the achievement of ecologically sustainable development in the management of Queensland's fisheries resources. For many years the objective of ecologically sustainable development has been pursued in the management of fisheries resources, although these principles have not been specifically included in the Fisheries Act 1994. The amendment now incorporates these very important principles in that act. The amendment will ensure that Queensland fisheries will be managed in a manner consistent with the overriding principles of ecologically sustainable development.

NCP principles also provide that fisheries legislative provisions should not impose barriers to competition unless there are valid resource management reasons for them. In keeping with its ongoing responsibilities in this regard, the department has identified a further issue relating to the temporary transfer of fishing authorities under such circumstances as lease arrangements. It is proposed to amend the act to provide a discretionary power for the chief executive to approve a transfer of an authority temporarily subject to any relevant conditions that may exist under a regulation or management plan. This will enable persons conducting, or wishing to conduct, a commercial fishing operation to do so without the necessity to purchase the relevant licence up front, which can be a major restriction for many people on entry to commercial fisheries. The proposed amendment to the act will help overcome such difficulty. In addition, a number of minor technical amendments have been identified as necessary for the improved administration of the act.

There are also several amendments to the Food Production (Safety) Act 2000, the most significant of which are transitional arrangements which have been designed to facilitate a seamless transition from the existing food safety arrangements under the Dairy Industry Act 1993 and the Meat Industry Act 1993 to the proposed new food safety schemes to be implemented by Safe Food Production Queensland under regulations which will be made later this year under the act. Because of the time, I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Act, as it now stands, does not allow existing food safety accreditation or licence holders to have their existing annual food safety licences or accreditations "rolled over" into the proposed Food Safety Schemes without having to apply for, and pay for, "re-accreditation".

Accordingly, the Bill amends the Act to enable existing meat and dairy food safety accreditation or licence holders, to have their existing annual accreditations or licences recognised under the proposed Food Safety Schemes for the balance of their term without being required to apply for re-accreditation, thereby avoiding unnecessary re-accreditation costs.

Also, further amendments to the Act will extend the expiry date for the Dairy Industry Act 1993 and Meat Industry Act 1993 so that these Acts will not be terminated until the new dairy and meat Food Safety Schemes under the Food Safety Act Regulations are implemented. This is expected to occur by 1 January 2003.

Further amendments to the Meat Industry Act 1993 and the Dairy Industry Act 1993 are proposed to address a number of matters relating to the winding-up of the Queensland Abattoir Corporation and the Queensland Dairy Authority respectively.

In the case of the Queensland Abattoir Corporation, which is expected to be wound-up within the next 6 months, the existing winding up provisions in the Meat Industry Act 1993 are to be amended so that the State of Queensland

assumes responsibilities for any liabilities outstanding at the time of winding up. These amendments mirror current provisions of the Act which provide that, at winding up, any net assets or "debts" of the Corporation transfer to the State.

In the case of the Queensland Dairy Authority, it will be wound-up once its food safety functions are fully transferred over to Safe Food Production Queensland. To deal with any outstanding liabilities that might still exist following the dissolution of the Queensland Dairy Authority, it is necessary to amend the Dairy Industry Act 1993 to distinguish between liabilities that relate to food safety matters and those that do not relate to food safety matters. This is because potential outstanding liabilities of the Authority arising from food safety matters can reasonably be transferred to Safe Food Production Queensland, as the intended successor body for dairy food safety matters, whereas other liabilities, if indeed there are any, will transfer to the State.

These amendments to the Meat Industry Act 1993 and the Dairy Industry Act 1993 also preserve the rights of potential and current parties to any outstanding legal actions by or against the Corporation or the Authority after these bodies are wound-up by allowing such actions to be continued by or against either the State of Queensland or, in the case of any dairy food safety matters, by or against Safe Food Production Queensland.

The key amendment to the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act 1991 is to provide for a State review of export marketing arrangements for the Queensland wheat crop to follow on from any future review of the national "single desk" export arrangements for wheat.

Currently, Queensland participates in the national export arrangements for wheat under Commonwealth legislation, namely the Wheat Marketing Act 1989. However, there is industry concern about the uncertainty surrounding the future of the national "single desk" arrangements for wheat.

The Commonwealth recently had their Act reviewed under NCP, and have foreshadowed another review in 2004-05, which is expected to focus on how the single desk powers are being exercised by the national wheat exporter, AWB International Limited.

The amendment I am proposing to the Grain Act inserts a new review clause which would be activated after the Commonwealth government has completed their next review of the national arrangements.

The review provision will allow the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities to initiate a public review of options for the future export marketing arrangements for Queensland wheat. The review will have to include a public benefit test of all identified options and a report would be laid before Parliament. This will allow public debate on the Queensland's future export arrangements for this important primary commodity.

The review will be of particular significance if the Commonwealth Government was to repeal or suspend the national single desk arrangements for wheat.

Finally, the Schedule to the Bill proposes a number of minor and consequential amendments to a number of Acts including the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936, the Primary Industries Bodies Reform Act 1999 and the Stock Act 1915, however these are not of major operational significance.

Mr Speaker, while this Bill, may appear to be somewhat complicated, I would argue that it is quite straightforward. All of the amendments are necessary to facilitate the effective working of the Acts in question and the legislative schemes thereunder.

In accordance with my established policy on handling Primary Industry legislation, I have asked that the relevant legal and policy officers of the Department be available to brief Members on both sides of the House on this Bill and to fully answer any issues that are raised.

I look forward to informed debate on the Bill, which in my view, deserves the full support of all Honourable Members.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Horan, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

LAND TAX AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 19 June (see p. 1892).

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.30 p.m.): The Land Tax Amendment Bill 2002 seeks to amend the Land Tax Act 1915. The changes in this particular bill were announced in the Treasurer's 2002-03 budget speech. All members would remember that particular budget for the way in which it showed the operating deficit we suffered in the financial year just ended, backing up the losses that were made in the previous financial year. We had a loss of around \$858 million for the 2000-01 financial year. For the 2001-02 financial year the loss was in the order of \$456 million. We will wait and see whether that figure increases when the final accounts come into play. Of course, that budget brought with it massive cutbacks in capital works. In three budgets we have seen a major reduction in capital works spending and, on top of that, a major underspend each financial year with regard to capital works—underspending in the order of about \$280 million to \$350 million each year.

So this was a black budget—not a typical budget—for Queensland. We are used to budgets that are in surplus. We now have another operating deficit following the operating deficit from the previous year.

Ms Molloy interjected.

Mr HORAN: Some members opposite think that they can just keep running operating deficits until they run out of money or send the state broke. There is no greater example of the state going broke than today's announcement of another 1,000 public servants who are going to be pushed out on top of the 1,000 who are being pushed out already.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order!

Mr HORAN: I am talking about the budget.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! We are discussing the Land Tax Amendment Bill. This is a very specific amendment.

Mr HORAN: It is very specific; that is right.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will speak to the amendment, not the budget.

Mr HORAN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. This is part of the budgetary process. I just mentioned that it was part of the 2002-03 budget. This is the result of that budget and a particular commitment that was made in it. It applies retrospectively—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! On another basis, rather than relevance, the budget is a business matter now before the House. That debate has not been concluded. Therefore, the member cannot talk about the budget.

Mr HORAN: This Land Tax Amendment Bill does four major things. It removes the 15 per cent general rebate for taxpayers that are companies, trustees and absentees. It increases the exemption threshold for taxpayers that are companies, trustees and absentees. That has a consequential adjustment of the exemption threshold, because those people are losing the 15 per cent general rebate. It adjusts section 9A, reducing the rebate for taxpayers that are companies, trustees and absentees. It also extends the section 9A rebate to taxpayers who are absentees.

This is a typical Labor government backflip. In the 1998-99 election the then opposition leader, Mr Beattie, promised to institute land tax exemptions that had already been promised by the coalition. When it came to power, the Labor government delayed any changes to land tax until the following financial year, 1999-2000. Labor then instituted a general 15 per cent rebate on land tax liability for all taxpayers which was to continue into the following financial years. That was a commitment made by the coalition government in its last budget and one which the then opposition leader, Mr Beattie, promised to continue. So that put in place the general 15 per cent rebate on land tax liability.

These amendments before us in the House will break that promise. These amendments will abolish the 15 per cent rebate for a section of those taxpayers; that is, companies, trustees and absentees. At the end of the day this will mean greater expense for the owners of property. This will be passed on to those people who are leasing that property and, of course, it will be passed on to those people who are consumers or customers of the people leasing the property. So in the case of retail properties in particular, this will mean higher rents for small businesses. Therefore, those costs will be passed on to the consumer or the customer. So it is not correct to say that the only people who will feel the pain from this particular backflip and broken promise will be those companies, trustees or absentee owners of property; it will be all those people who are affected down the line—small business operators in particular and their customers.

The Labor government has come under fire for the recent changes because of an absolute lack of consultation with industry stakeholders over the proposed changes. The land tax system is complex in that a number of rebates, exemptions and deductions are available. Rebates are generally split into two types. There is the general rebate, which I have mentioned—the 15 per cent general rebate which was part of the previous coalition government's attempt to bring about a gradual reduction and phasing down of land tax. As well as the general rebate there is a phasing-in rebate that applies when individuals, companies, trustees or trusts get to the point where they have to pay land tax. Then there is a system of deductions. For example, all individuals get a \$200,000 deduction on top of their normal exemptions. Then there is a system of exemptions. For example, owners of primary industry land are not subject to land tax. So there

is a system of exemptions, a system of deductions and then a system of rebates that applies. It is a fairly complex arrangement that exists primarily to ensure that land tax does not affect individuals to the same extent and that the deductions provide for those people who are operating in primary production and other areas. As I said, on top of that is the system of rebates. When it comes to the actual threshold, the system differs for individuals as compared to companies and trusts. For example, whereas there is a \$100,000 exemption for individuals, anything above that becomes fully taxable. But with companies, once they get over the \$100,000 everything above that \$100,000 and everything below that \$100,000 is taxable. That is another one of the complexities of the system of land tax.

The Property Council of Australia has done its own analysis of the changes and has come to a number of conclusions. It believes from its calculations that for properties valued between \$280,000 and \$10 million there will be an average increase of 18 per cent in land tax liability on those properties because of the removal of this particular rebate. It believes that land tax revenue will significantly increase as a percentage of total state taxation revenue. Queensland's land tax then will be more than in New South Wales. Therefore, we are starting to become less competitive. Coupled with the fact that Queenslanders' net individual asset value has decreased, we are starting to see a picture of increasing taxation, reduced competitiveness and a government delivering massive debt to the state.

I will read some comments from the *Queensland Business Review* of 19 July. An article entitled 'The great tax swindle' states—

It's the tax rise you have when you're not having a tax rise.

In order to deliver on his commitment not to introduce any new taxes or increases in existing taxes in the recent State Budget, Treasurer Terry Mackenroth—a man practised at playing the party-room numbers game—was forced to employ some 'smoke and mirrors' to keep his promise. The magic trick, one governments and price-regulated corporations are increasingly pulling, was to simply change the method of calculation—that is, move the goal posts. It's ingenious really. Not surprisingly, business owners end up the brunt of the prank—shouldering a bigger share of the tax burden.

Hardest hit are property owners, which are estimated to be out of pocket to the tune of anywhere from \$30 million to \$48 million in 2002/03 as a result of the removal of the 15% land-tax rebate. 'What you have got here (with the removal of the land-tax rebate) is the tax rise you have when you're not having a tax rise,' Commerce Queensland chief executive Andrew Craig said. 'There is a little bit of smoke and mirrors in that (promise to not introduce new taxes or increases in existing taxes).'

The abolition of the rebate 'is in effect, in real terms, an increase in land tax of 15%', Robert Walker, executive director of the Property Council of Australia's Queensland chapter, claimed.

'At the end of the day, we are extremely disappointed,' he said.

'The increase in land tax, when added to the increase in land valuations, will lead to an increase in tax collections of \$48 million. That is a significant windfall—and while the Minister may be able to dismiss that and say the industry can absorb it, it can't.

This goes back to what I said. The extra cost and burden on the property industry will be passed down to those people who are renting. Those who are renting, in order to maintain a modest surplus, will have to pass that on to their customers. So it will be the customers who will pay this increased land tax. The article continues—

'They see the property industry as an easy target, but at the end of the day it isn't. Overnight it will wipe an estimated \$700 million from capital values (of property) in Queensland, much of which is owned by (the state government-owned) Queensland Investment Corporation.

'Ultimately, it will impact on every body that owns property—it has a flow-on effect.'

The industry is especially peeved because it was not consulted.

'Back in 1999 then-Treasurer Hamill said he would increase the rebate to 15% in line with the previous Coalition government's promise to abolish land tax over 10 years from 1996.

'That was three years ago. All of a sudden, overnight it seems, (the government) has done a complete back flip. I had had a meeting with Mackenroth (before the Budget) about stamp duty and he said there would be no changes impacting on the property industry; but with the blink of an eye all that changed, without any consultation (with the industry),' said Walker, adding the rise in the threshold from \$100,000 to \$150,000 was a 'token gesture that will have little or no impact'.

On top of the rise in property tax, business is also critical of the government's failure to address the growing burden of other state imposts—including payroll tax and stamp duty.

We know from the changes to payroll tax how the very minor decrease of 0.05 per cent was accompanied by a widening of the net, in particular the cranking up of the fringe benefits tax from the net value to the gross value, which has provided another windfall to the government in increased payroll tax. The article continues—

Australian Industry Group state director David Whiting said the broadening of the payroll tax base in Queensland was 'regrettable'.

Despite a 0.25 percent cut in payroll tax cut from 2002/03, the inclusion of termination payments and grossed-up fringe benefits in payrolls will be the key contributor to a forecast \$75 million jump in revenues from July 1.

'It is the Ai Group's position that the elimination of payroll tax should be a key business tax policy objective for all state and territory governments,' he said.

More particularly, stamp duty remains a hot issue for business—incensed by Mackenroth's claim that 'stamp duty is not the reason for the current crisis in public liability insurance'.

We all know the stamp duty windfall that has been coming to the government as a result of increased premiums and increased land sales and value of land. It goes on—

While supporting the use of the \$400 million stamp duty windfall for infrastructure projects, Craig said business had hoped that government would at least remove the GST component levied on top of stamp duty on public liability insurance premiums.

Levying a 10 percent stamp duty on top of the GST-inclusive price of significantly higher premiums being paid by the vast majority of businesses is estimated to deliver the government an additional \$16.5 million in collections in 2002/03, following on from a \$32.9 million increase this financial year.

'It would just have given a bit of a boost to business that the government understands the pressure on business,' he said.

All of this comes on top of the 15 per cent reduction in the rebate and the wiping out of the rebate that would have applied to companies, trustees and absentee owners.

A National Party-led government would continue with the task of progressively phasing out and reducing land tax in this state. As I have said before, it is a hidden tax. It is passed on through rents and through prices of property. The current administration of land tax is extremely complex. There are numerous exemptions and variable rates—more than in any other state. In the current climate of rapidly increasing land valuations, some landowners' liability will be increasing significantly. Now that the rebate for companies, trustees and absentees is being abolished, there will be further increases.

This government consistently states that there will be no new taxes or increases in taxes above inflation. Land tax revenue is forecast to increase by some 18 per cent to 21 per cent in the coming financial year on the basis of these changes. At the same time we see that payroll tax revenue is forecast to increase by 6.2 per cent in the coming financial year. The Treasurer has said that the increase is not attributable to the recent changes in the payroll tax base. We believe that is not correct. Two years ago we saw the payroll tax base widened through changes to superannuation arrangements that had to be included in the widened payroll tax net. Recently we saw the inclusion of the capital gains grossing up procedures, which will once again increase the amount of payroll tax that has to be paid.

Gaming machine tax revenue is forecast to increase by 9.2 per cent and revenue from insurance taxes is forecast to increase by 6.9 per cent. Still we see a government that is so broke that the only way it can afford a 0.5 per cent increase in an offer to the public servants is to push out another 2,000 public servants. What about those people? Importantly, who is going to do the jobs they did? Since Labor has been in power—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I have been very tolerant with you discussing the land tax amendments before the House. The budget is a matter currently before the House. Therefore, you are not allowed to discuss it. For the sake of relevance and because there is a bill before the House, I ask you not to discuss the budget any further.

Mr HORAN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. That comment flowed on from my comments about the rises in taxes. I am talking about land tax, payroll tax, gaming tax and insurance taxes. Since Labor has been in power there has been an average 5.1 per cent increase in revenue from taxes, fees and fines, compared with an average increase in inflation of 2.35 per cent. The forecast increase in land tax revenue of between 18 per cent and 21 per cent is absolutely massive. We can see the deceit of the broken promise that has occurred here.

The other aspect to look at is the general consensus that is developing in Queensland that we are losing our competitiveness as a low-tax state. When taxation increases of this amount occur—when one looks at the various figures for the other states and at our competitiveness in terms of land tax—we gradually lose the advantages we had in the past. That will see reduced interest in establishing businesses in this state.

When we look at the land tax contribution to budgets going back to 1997-98 and working through to 2002-03, as a percentage of total taxation revenue back in 1997-98 land tax was 6.5 per cent going up to seven per cent in 1998-99. As a result of the 15 per cent rebate that had been promised and forecast by the Borbidge government in the 1998 budget and eventually put into place by the Labor government one year later, in 1999-2000, when the Beattie government

fulfilled that election promise of the 15 per cent land tax rebate available to all taxpayers, that percentage of land tax as a percentage of total taxation revenue dropped down to almost 5.5 per cent. In 2000-01, it increased to around about 6.3 per cent—6.25 per cent. In 2001-02, it was around about 6.1 per cent. Now with the removal of this 15 per cent rebate for trustees and companies, that revenue is going to shoot up sharply to at least seven per cent or perhaps more as a percentage of the total taxation revenue.

Mr Johnson: It is the flow-on hurt.

Mr HORAN: My colleague the member for Gregory refers to the flow-on hurt. As I have mentioned a few times, small businesses are battling to make ends meet. They have to pay higher rents because of the increased land tax on their properties. They then have to pass that increase on to their customers.

Land tax, as a percentage of total revenue from taxes, fees and fines, shows the same picture. It was around about 4.3 per cent in 1997-98 going up to about 5.5 per cent in 1998-99. When the rebate was introduced, that dropped down to just over four per cent. It has gone up a touch to 4.5 per cent—sitting around that mark. But with the removal of the 15 per cent rebate for trustees and companies, it will go up to five per cent of total revenue from taxes, fees and fines.

Queensland land taxes are now more than those in New South Wales and less competitive. On various taxable values of properties, particularly when we compare Queensland's previous rates with Queensland's new rates, on all property in Queensland—whether it is worth \$200,000, \$500,000, \$1 million, \$1.5 million, \$2.5 million, \$3 million, \$10 million or \$50 million—in the financial year 2002-03, land tax as a percentage of taxable value of the property will be higher than it is in New South Wales.

We are starting to see the real effect of this broken promise. As I said, if we want to see how increased taxes hurt the bottom line of tenants and shareholders and, as an increased liability, devalue property, we have only to look at the change in outgoings from 1997 to 2001. For buildings ranging in size between 9,000 and 18,000 square metres, the total statutory charges are over 70 per cent and the non-statutory expenses are around about 10 per cent to 15 per cent of those outgoings.

I will now give some examples of the loss of that rebate in practice. If we look at a taxable value of \$280,000—say three properties with unimproved capital land values of \$120,000, \$80,000 and \$80,000—their previous land tax payments would have been \$2,427. Under the 2002-03 budget, it will be \$2,855—an extra cost of \$428, or a difference of 18 per cent. For two properties with land values of \$500,000 and \$1.5 million—a total of \$2 million—previously \$30,600 in land tax payments would have been paid. Under the 2002-03 budget and these amendments, the payments are \$36,000—an extra cost of \$5,400, or 18 per cent. Of course, all of that extra cost has to be passed on or recouped somehow in order to maintain a return to shareholders or to recoup those losses.

This matter is of concern to Queensland. When it comes to the unemployment figures in mainland Australia, Queensland comes last. It is important that businesses have the opportunity to be able to employ people. That opportunity is reduced when businesses have more and more outgoings and less and less to spend on employing people. It makes it difficult for businesses to increase their sales or their surplus and employ people if they have higher and higher outgoings as a result of the imposition of a higher level of taxation that hits them indirectly.

I have said already that property owners will be hit by around about \$30 million to \$48 million in 2002-03. The government is shooting itself in the foot, because it is imposing an extra tax on an industry that has been growing. This increase will certainly moderate that growth and devalue the property market in Queensland.

I have mentioned already the widening of the payroll tax base. But I think that the important thing to note is that our per capita taxation is now higher than it is in Tasmania and the Northern Territory. For the first time, Queensland is close to level pegging with South Australia. This is an anti-business government and its taxation policy, in particular this particular policy, is a shining example of that.

The opposition asked the government to scrap stamp duty on insurance premiums to alleviate the insurance premium cost crisis. That was done for not-for-profit organisations, and we give the government credit for that. It was a suggestion of the National Party. It would also be of great assistance if the same measure could be looked at to assist small business, which is also reeling under the impost of massive increases in public liability insurance, which means a very

substantial increase in the amount of stamp duty collected by the government on that higher amount of product.

What we are seeing here today is a great tax swindle. We are seeing a government that has been prepared to make a promise and deliver the promise—although it was about one year late—and now turn around and blatantly break that promise. We are seeing a government that is staring down the barrel of another breach in its fiscal charter, which states that the government will ensure that state taxes and charges remain competitive to those of other states and territories. We are in danger of losing that branch of the charter. We have already broken the charter—and I will not mention the budget—in one aspect. We are losing our competitiveness through the widening of the payroll tax net. Now, the elimination of the 15 per cent rebate on the land tax that applied for companies and trusts is an underhanded and deceitful taxation policy. To do this after a promise had been made that it would be part of a system of ensuring that there was a reduction in land tax is a backflip on another election promise. It is a revenue grab from a desperate government that is searching for any possible way to cover up its spending on some of its projects such as the bridge, which has been mentioned again. It demonstrates that the government is an anti-business government.

The National Party has a policy to gradually phase out land tax because it is an anti-business tax, it is anti-jobs and it is anti-small business. We have seen a government that has received a huge windfall from the property boom and an increase in insurance premiums. We would have thought that that windfall would have been enough. The government made a windfall of some \$400 million on stamp duty on land sales. We would have thought that that would have been a big enough taxation increase to satisfy them. But no, they have to go and break this particular promise.

There are some other changes in this particular bill. Basically, they are changes which follow on from the elimination of the 15 per cent general rebate for companies, trustees and absentees. There is an increase in the exemption threshold for taxpayers that are companies, trustees and absentees. There is also an adjustment to section 9A, reducing the rebate for taxpayers. It follows on from that increased threshold by providing a phase-in section to provide for some form of equity.

Despite the increase in the exemption threshold, the adjustment in the reducing rebate and the other changes extending the section 9A rebate to taxpayers who are absentees, and despite the fact that some people will not be paying land tax or will pay a lesser amount of land tax, it is clouded over by the smoke and mirrors trick that all those companies, trustees and absentees that are above the threshold will be charged a massive increase in land tax of 15 per cent and, overall throughout the year, will see an 18 per cent to 20 per cent increase due to this hike of 15 per cent for prescribed organisations and due to the fact of increasing valuations on land. It is a cheap and nasty trick, which is anti-small business and anti-small business customers. At the end of the day, they are the ones who will pay this hidden taxation. Members opposite might say that it is only hitting the companies or it is only hitting the trusts, but it filters down directly to the customers, the people who can least afford it. They will see a little bit more added on and a little bit more will come out of their pockets because they are the ones who ultimately will pay this increase in tax.

In the committee stage, we will move an amendment to this bill designed to bring about real improvements in land tax arrangements in this state. If our amendment is passed, it will provide opportunities to reduce the cost for people renting premises, particularly retailers; to maintain competitive pricing to customers; and to provide small business the opportunities to compete and make a reasonable and modest living out of the long hard hours that they work.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (3.02 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Land Tax Amendment Bill 2002. It makes a number of amendments to the Land Tax Act 1915 necessary to implement initiatives, following a state budget which saw record spending in my electorate of Kawana. Acknowledging what has been mentioned earlier, I take on board that we ought not mention the state budget, which saw record funding to the electorate of Kawana, which is fast becoming the educational heart and educational node of the Sunshine Coast. In that state budget, which I will not mention, we saw record funding for the Mountain Creek TAFE—which I am very happy with—for education and training; Chancellor State High School, with a \$3 million commitment; Chancellor State Primary School, with funding for more school rooms; and Kawana Waters State High School, with \$200,000-plus for improvements to the Sportsman's Parade. Buderim Mountain School was also very grateful—

Mr HORAN: I rise on a point of order. The member should not be talking about the budget and schools, and all the rest of it. If the rule is good enough for one, it is good enough for everybody.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! Actually, I gave you reasonable leeway.

Mr CUMMINS: I take on board those comments. I will continue on with the Land Tax Amendment Bill. As we know, land tax is an important revenue source, contributing \$231 million in 2001-02 of total states own-source revenue. The Land Tax Act 1915 provides for the assessment of land tax at progressive rates on the aggregate of the unimproved value of freehold land owned as at midnight on 30 June in each year. Individuals, other than trustees and absentees, receive a reduction of \$200,000. Land owners may also be eligible to receive a concession where the land is used as a principal place of residence—a very good thing, obviously—or is used for the business of agriculture, pasturage or dairy farming. It is quite amazing that the former Country Party is opposing these positive initiatives.

The act provides an exemption threshold of \$100,000 for taxpayers who are companies, trustees and absentees. If the land owned by these taxpayers is below the exemption threshold, the land is exempt from land tax. Again, that is a very positive initiative. The act also provides two types of rebates of assessed land tax; a general rebate of 15 per cent of the tax assessed, which currently applies to all taxpayers; and a phasing-in rebate which applies to companies and trustees to alleviate the impact of the value of their land holdings being just over the exemption threshold of \$100,000. The bill amends the Land Tax Act 1915 to increase the exemption threshold for companies, trustees and absentees from \$100,000 to \$150,000—yet we hear it is a bad move. I cannot agree with members opposite. It is a positive move to increase the threshold from \$100,000 to \$150,000.

As a result of this change, approximately 7,816 taxpayers will no longer pay land tax, yet again we hear the National Party wanting to oppose such a positive step. This bill amends the Land Tax Act 1915 to alter the way in which the phasing-in rebate is calculated and also extends the phasing-in rebate for the first time to taxpayers who are absentees. This adjustment to the phasing-in rebate will mean that 4,152 taxpayers will pay less tax. Again, the National Party opposition is opposing this, while there are 4,152 taxpayers paying less tax, which I would say is a positive step.

Mr HORAN: I rise on a point of order. The minister keeps saying that we are opposing—

Mr CUMMINS: No, I am not a minister yet.

Mr HORAN: But we are not opposing that. I want to make this clear: we oppose the removal of the 15 per cent rebate to companies, trustees and absentee owners—nothing else. We oppose the removal of the 15 per cent rebate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr CUMMINS: The adjustment to the phasing-in rebate will mean that 4,152 taxpayers will pay less tax—and that is a positive, as I said. The amendments in this bill will take effect for the 2002-03 financial year and for later years. I will not touch on the budget, which I believe is a very positive budget, with record spending in my electorate. Realising that the Beattie Labor government has delivered goods for the Sunshine Coast, I commend this bill to the House.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (3.08 p.m.): I rise to speak very briefly on the Land Tax Amendment Bill 2002. In the mid-nineties it was a Liberal treasurer in a coalition government who decided to phase out land tax over a 10 year period. We did that for some very principled as well as practical reasons. In a practical sense, we recognise what the Treasurer said in his second reading speech with respect to this bill. It is an important part of the budget. It provides a significant amount of revenue in any particular year. Therefore, to eliminate it in one go was simply financially imprudent. Therefore, the coalition proposed to eliminate land tax over a 10 year period and made a start to do that in its first budget. The first thing we did was to increase the thresholds with respect to land tax and, secondly, we introduced a rebate or, if you like, an effective rate reduction process to take place over the remaining nine years.

The principles underlying our commitment to phasing out land tax were fairly straightforward. First, land tax is a tax which is not only complex, as already alluded to by the member for Toowoomba South, but also falls on a very narrow range of entities within the state. If we want to judge a taxation system on whether or not it is fair or unfair, we look at the relative complexity of the tax, because a complex tax is one which is not easily understood by the members of the public. A complex tax is not one which is applied on a consistent basis. A complex tax is one

which simply ends up falling unfairly on the taxpayers themselves. Of course, everything being equal in a taxation system, we want a relatively simple tax. Land tax fails when it comes to that criterion.

The second reasonable criterion is that we would like a tax to be broadly based. The broader the tax the fairer it is, because it affects in some way most people in the population. Income tax is a very good example of that. Income tax falls right across the population; but to take account of the issues raised by my friend the member for Bulimba, one allows some exemptions for people on lower incomes. There is a way in a social or equitable sense to address those concerns. Basically, in theory, this tax applies right across the population. Land tax fails that criterion. Land tax is applied only to a very narrow range of entities at any time. Only a very small number of people, only a small number of land acquisitions, are actually taxed.

The vast majority of land in this state, whether it be productive or unproductive, is in fact exempted from land tax. This fails on the issue of whether or not it is a fair tax as applied across a great range of individuals. This tax tends to fall on particular industries, such as property development, or those industries which happen to have large land requirements as part of their productive process and which are not primary industries. Those organisations that have a large land component get taxed. That is unfair in a broader sense, because firms generally have different kinds of requirements in their productive process. Some have large land requirements, others large capital requirements and others large employment requirements. Even then, it does not affect all industries with large land requirements in exactly the same way. Primary industries are generally exempt, which, compared with a certain amount of factory industries, might be considered less fair. Land tax falls unevenly and on a narrow section of the population and/or industries of this state. As such, as a matter of principle, it was a good tax to be eliminated.

As I said earlier, that was the basis in principle of our suggestion when we were in government to eliminate land tax. As a matter of practicality, we decided to eliminate it over a 10-year period, because we recognised the financial implications in terms of the budgetary settings. The Labor Party went to the 1998 election saying that, essentially, it would continue with that process. When it came to the first budget, the Labor Party actually altered the rate. Rather than continue with the proposals we had for reducing the rate, the Labor Party amended that process and almost froze it at the 15 per cent rebate from there on in. Unfortunately, this bill continues those problems, because it continues the application of land tax to a small group of people. This bill expands it by eliminating the exemption that applies to companies, trustees and absentee landowners. The problem is that the elimination of this exemption then falls on a very small group of people. The property developers are obviously upset about it. I read in one of their recent newsletters that not only do they believe they are being affected adversely by the elimination of the 15 per cent rebate but that to a large extent the increase in stamp duty in the last financial year was attributed to the significant transactions in that industry. They estimated that some \$400 million of stamp duty was applicable to those kinds of transactions. The people in the industry feel that, first, they are being slugged with taxation when a stamp duty transaction takes place and that they are slugged year in and year out because of their property holdings.

As other members have suggested, this government now has a track record of fancy manipulation of the rules applying to taxation. We have seen it both in the first and second Beattie governments. Payroll tax was a classic example where the government manipulated the rules governing such implementation. First, the government widened the base because of the introduction of superannuation into the base and, secondly and more recently, widened the base by grossing up the fringe benefit tax included in that calculation. This bill is another example. Sure, we do not have a new tax in a technical sense, because land tax was there, but effectively by manipulating the rules there will be an increase in taxation. Even if we did not have the estimates put forward by industry of a \$30 million, \$40 million or \$50 million increase or a 15 per cent, 18 per cent or 20 per cent increase, given the track record of the government one would have to be suspicious. One would have to believe that the net effect of this bill will be an increase in taxation. There is simply nothing that this government has done to lead us to believe that the net effect of a change in the rules associated with taxation will be a fall in taxation for the people of Queensland. Yes, there certainly may be a reduction for individual land-holders. Certainly, the threshold has been increased by \$50,000. For that group, presumably there will be some drop. But there will also be a substantial increase in another section of the community, namely, in companies, trusts and absentee landowners. One would be naive beyond reason to think that the net effect of those changes will not be an increase in taxation.

This bill is a taxation bill. It is a bill about increasing the amount of revenue the government gets through the application of land tax, and nothing can hide that. When one compares interstate figures to that of Queensland, that is why we are no longer the lowest taxed state in the country. Queensland has lost that particular accolade and that competitive advantage. Over the years, one of the things that has been important to Queensland has been our status as the lowest tax state, which gives us a competitive advantage in attracting industry and, therefore, generating jobs. Secondly, not only are we no longer the lowest tax state; we are in the middle of the pack. That shows up in a lot of other indices across the country. When we compare Queensland with the rest of Australia, undoubtedly over the past four years our comparative position has slipped against other states in the Commonwealth in a whole series of different indices.

The Liberal Party does not believe that this is a change that will benefit all Queenslanders. We think it perpetuates the problems of principle we see with land tax, and we have no doubt whatsoever that the net effect of this change will be an increase in the tax that falls on Queenslanders. The incidence of land tax is very difficult to work out, but there is no doubt that some land tax gets passed on through rents to those who can least afford it. There is also no doubt that some of that falls on productive enterprises in this state, which then suffer a competitive disadvantage compared with other enterprises that do not get slugged with land tax. This is a poor bill and we will be supporting the member for Toowoomba South.

Ms STRUTHERS (Alger—ALP) (3.21 p.m.): 'Tax' is a dirty word to many people. Not many people like paying tax; there is no great joy in it for them. However, all fair-minded people know that tax revenue provides us with the world-class health, education and public service system we have in this state. Tax revenue enables government to build roads, schools and hospitals. It is essential that our tax system be both fair and adequate.

I commend the amendments to the Land Tax Act being introduced through this bill, as they are fair and they will improve the adequacy of our state revenue base. They are fair because several thousand individuals will pay less tax, while companies, trustees and absentee landowners—many of those with a greater capacity to pay—will forgo their eligibility to a land tax rebate.

With the introduction of the GST, states have relinquished a substantial amount of state taxes in the promise of a return from the federal government's GST revenue. Now that we have had an experience of the GST, we know that the GST Howard government style hits those on low and fixed incomes the hardest and it is not fair. It is important that we find additional ways of raising revenue and that we receive adequate levels of funding from the Commonwealth government in order to meet the demands in this state.

I find it totally contradictory for opposition members to crow about the need for more hospitals and services—and we support them in that—but not say where the money will come from. There is no intellectual honesty in their argument on these issues, because they do not provide solutions for finding the money. Today we have not heard anything about that from either the Opposition Leader or Dr Watson, the member for Moggill. We need to have intellectual honesty in this debate, not crowing about a lack of service provision without providing any solutions. The revenue base for the Queensland state government and federal government needs to increase to meet growing demands, but we must ensure that those people on low and fixed incomes are not the ones bearing the tax burden.

Mr Reynolds: Rather than the landowners.

Ms STRUTHERS: That is exactly right. We need to find ways such that those with the greatest capacity to pay actually do contribute. Many of them are finding ways to evade tax. In my electorate people often ask me, 'Can't you introduce something to ensure that corporations and millionaires pay their share of tax?' My response is that largely they are federal government responsibilities, but I support the general proposition that it is the people with the greatest capacity to pay who ought to be paying. Certainly, at the state level the amendments proposed in this Land Tax Amendment Bill are doing just that. They are fair amendments. They are aimed at trying to get more money out of the people who have a greatest capacity to pay while providing some relief for those with a lower capacity.

To ease the workloads in our hospitals, meet the demands nurses are making and maintain and build new schools we need to look at these sorts of revenue measures. I commend the Treasurer for introducing these amendments to the legislation. The land tax changes in this bill are an important step in raising more revenue. In my view—it may not be a popular view—we

need to find additional ways to raise revenue in order to meet the growing demands in this state. As I said, I commend the Treasurer for taking this step and I will support him in taking any further steps in this regard.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (3.25 p.m.): I am pleased to take this opportunity to speak in the debate on the Land Tax Amendment Bill. This afternoon I have listened with interest to some of the contributions to this debate from the Left Wing of the Labor Party. Government members cannot hide the fact that inherent within their philosophy is a notion that anybody who owns land is fair game when it comes to taxation because anyone who owns land has to be a millionaire, as described by the previous member who spoke.

Ms STRUTHERS: I rise to a point of order. I was referring to comments of my constituents who were asking questions about millionaires who own property. I did not refer to the people to whom these amendments relate.

Mr SEENEY: They squirm and wriggle when their words are repeated back to them, but they cannot escape the fact that the approach they have adopted to the legislation this afternoon highlights, if it ever needed any highlighting, to the people of Queensland the philosophical approach taken by the Left Wing of the Labor Party to landowners.

Mr Reynolds: Look at the smug look on your face—speaking on behalf of your mates.

Mr SEENEY: The member for Townsville is a classic example. The view that the Labor Party takes to these issues is illustrated every time legislation such as this is debated in the House. This afternoon I will take the opportunity to discuss a range of land related issues that are the subject of current debate and which impact on the collection of land tax in this state. The management of the land resource in Queensland is an important issue. It is the land resource on which land tax is levied. Land tax is levied on land valuations. Those valuations are determined by the prices paid in the open market for land.

A wide range of factors affect the amount paid for land on the open market and, therefore, a wide range of factors affect valuations and consequently the land tax that is able to be collected by the government. Foremost among those factors are the policies that the government adopts in relation to land and natural resource management. In this government that is the primary responsibility of the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines and his department—a department which has been chronically underfunded for three years. That in itself is another illustration of the type of philosophy that I was speaking about at the beginning of my contribution. Although there are members in this government who are prepared to take every step to extract land tax from land-holding communities, at the same time they take every opportunity in each budget each year to restrict the amount of money they commit to the maintenance of the land resource of Queensland. The development of sustainable land practices impacts on land values. Without sustainability, land values will decline over time as the productivity of the land declines. Likewise, urban land values will decline in those communities that rely on resource based industries to provide their economic base. Achieving sustainability is important to protecting the economic base of the state in all its respects.

The Landcare movement was formed about 11 years ago. Along with the integrated catchment management groups, this community based movement has made vast changes to attitudes towards land management across Queensland. Many thousands of individuals have made their own contributions towards a movement that was and will remain about achieving sustainability in natural resource management. A big part of that progress was made in developing trust between land-holders and government and entrenching a whole-of-community approach towards the issue of land management—an issue that should be important to everyone, not just from a land tax point of view.

It is a matter of great regret to me that much of that effort has been undone in recent times by what can only be described as the entry of cheap and despicable politics into land management issues in Queensland. We saw it with the introduction of the Vegetation Management Act when, as a prelude to the new laws, then Minister Welford embarked on a deliberate political strategy to demonise land-holders as destroyers of the environment in the urban media to quash any opposition to his proposals. We are seeing the same philosophy repeated here this afternoon when members from the same Socialist Left faction that gave us Mr Welford stand up and try to debate increases in Queensland land tax. In the last three weeks we have seen the same type of cheap politics played with respect to the salinity issue in south-west Queensland. The Premier has deliberately and knowingly set out to inflame the issue with emotive statements and sensational claims that are clearly designed simply to get a headline in

the urban media—that is, they are simply designed to get a headline in a forum that is only interested in the emotiveness of land management issues rather than the quite often complicated details of land management issues.

There is no doubt that the Premier was prepared to use the issue of salinity and land management and natural resource management in some silly political game to create a panic situation for his own political ends. In this case it was to divert attention away from the industrial strife affecting the state's nurses and police and the rest of the government's failings. That is the extent of the concern that this government has about land management issues—that is, it was prepared to use it as some sort of a silly political diversion. For those of us who live in regional Queensland, the issues of land management and natural resource management are far too important for cheap political games and sensational headlines in urban newspapers. Sustainable land and water management are the very basis of our communities, and that is why there has been such a concerted effort over the last 11 years to ensure sustainability of the industries that make up that economic base by a range of community organisations such as Landcare and integrated catchment management groups.

Everyone in rural Queensland should be appalled by the stupid political nonsense we have seen as part of the salinity debate. It is disappointing that that nonsense has been aided and abetted by the urban media. I single out for mention the *60 Minutes* report aired on Sunday night. What an absolute load of emotive jingoistic rubbish that report was. If that is to be the level of debate about our future management of natural resources, then we are in deep trouble indeed. It is to no-one's advantage to have such a serious subject treated in such a shallow and flippant manner. It is to no-one's advantage to have the Premier of Queensland overacting in such an absurd production playing the state's biggest media tart in an absolutely—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Poole): Order! I remind the member for Callide to stick to the land tax debate.

Mr SEENEY: The fact remains that if the government is prepared to so dishonestly handle such an important issue with respect to land management in one part of the state for the sake of political expediency, then every land-holder in every community is at risk of the same dishonest treatment when the next political situation arises. Land management issues are too important for this type of silly politics, and this was politics at its very worst. The Queensland National Party opposition has called for the establishment of an all-party parliamentary select committee to take politics out of the salinity debate to guarantee—

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr SEENEY: The Treasurer laughs about it, because that is how serious the issue is. If the government was at all serious and at all fair dinkum and meant just a fraction of the rhetoric we have heard in the last two or three weeks it would be supporting the move, because it is an important issue. It is an issue that extends beyond the life of a single parliament. It is an issue that has time horizons far beyond the involvement of any of us in this parliament. It is an issue that needs to be addressed with a long-term view—not a view towards tomorrow's headline or next week's issue or another diversionary tactic. That is how it has been used. That is the level to which land management—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member once again to stick to the debate—land tax. I am following his contribution closely.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, unless land management issues in this state are handled appropriately there will be no resource base on which to levy land tax. The land valuations will be such that the land tax revenue that the Treasurer so anticipates and gloats about receiving will shrivel up and die. Unless the land management and resource management issues are resolved properly, then whatever land tax regime is put in place becomes inconsequential.

As I was saying, we have called for a parliamentary select committee to take the politics out of land management. That is an indication of how important land management is to us. Salinity is too important an issue to see the sort of political stunts the Premier has been performing in the last few weeks. Our shadow cabinet has decided that the only way to move this debate forward and start rebuilding the confidence of the people of Queensland is through a bipartisan approach from this parliament. That bipartisan approach should receive the support of every member of this parliament. It is time to restore some honesty to the debate. It is time to put an end to the stupid sensational headlines if for no other reason than this is impacting negatively on so many people's lives. The Premier has been caught out playing silly political games with land management and silly political games with people's lives. It is time he got serious and adopted a responsible

approach to a serious issue. I believe that this government has lost all credibility in the salinity debate and has put the progress of sustainable natural resource management back 10 years by playing politics.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I once again remind the member to stick to the debate. It is not about land management; it is about land tax.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I can understand that some members of this parliament who have a poor understanding of this subject would have difficulty seeing the link between—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no relevance in the member's speech to the debate. I will sit him down if he mentions land management and not land tax. Continue.

Mr SEENEY: As I was saying, land tax is levied on a land valuation system that is struck based on the market value of land. It is indisputable that government policies impact on those land valuations. It cannot be disputed that government policies impact on market values of land and therefore the unimproved valuation, which is the basis for land tax. There has been a serious impact on the market value of land in recent times by a series of government decisions which I had sought to discuss. You have had instruction or direction or whatever to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Callide, I do not need instruction. If you mention land management and not land tax I will sit you down and call the next speaker. Do you understand that?

Mr SEENEY: How those unimproved land values are arrived at has always been the subject of some angst and debate in rural Queensland. Those unimproved values are used not only for land tax purposes but also for the striking of council rates, for example. In recent years there has been a series of revaluations which are very difficult to understand in terms of the effect they have on those unimproved valuations. With each revaluation there has appeared to be a considerable increase in the unimproved values until now; although I would suggest that, given some of the government decisions that have been made, that is unlikely to continue. But as long as those percentage increases in the unimproved valuations of land are constant, they have very little effect in the main on council rates calculations. Councils normally decide the total income that they require and strike a rate in the dollar, then they adjust that rate with the land valuations. In the case of land tax that does not happen. What we get with land tax is a de facto bracket creep whereby more and more, because of those valuations, land-holders find themselves being put into a category where they are not subject to the exemption. The exemptions have been outlined by a number of members. The amount of \$221,665 applies to 'natural persons'—that is the term used. It is at that level that owners may be liable for land tax on the unimproved value of their property. But with each revaluation of a shire's land base we see more and more people finding themselves subject to land tax. That in itself is a concern.

This bill changes the land tax base. The land resource of this state should be more than just a source of revenue for this government. It should be more than just an issue for political headlines, as I said before—quite legitimately, I suggest—and it should be considered to be a much greater priority for this government. It is disturbing to me that we see in this parliament this afternoon a piece of legislation which, in the words of the member for Moggill, is a poor piece of legislation. It does not properly address the issue of the changes that are needed to the land tax regime. As the member for Toowoomba South said, it is the National Party's longstanding policy to phase out land tax over a period, and I look forward to that being implemented. But I urge the House to support the amendments foreshadowed by the member for Toowoomba South. I will certainly take pleasure in doing that.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (3.42 p.m.): I rise to speak briefly in support of the Land Tax Amendment Bill introduced to the House by the Treasurer. Unlike the previous speaker, I will speak primarily about this bill. As the Treasurer has outlined, land tax is paid on the unimproved value of land. Individuals receive significant deductions, and there are concessions for properties used as a principal place of residence, that is, the house one lives in, or if the property is used for agriculture. This bill affects land tax only for companies, trustees and absentees, not for individual land-holders. It affects them by increasing the value of land they can have without paying land tax from \$100,000 to \$150,000. It changes the way the tax is phased in above \$150,000 and removes the 15 per cent general rebate for companies, trustees and absentees.

I want to speak about this because I strongly support the principles underlying the bill. The effect of this change is that some companies with relatively low value properties will pay less tax while companies and overseas investors with big property investments will pay more. There is a view in the community that the little people pay tax while the big companies, and particularly the

multinationals, get off. This tax change is inherently progressive. It taxes those who can afford to pay. State governments have to raise revenue—or at least we recognise that state governments have to raise revenue. We have not quite gone down the unexplained utopian path of the opposition where there is no tax but all the services in the world. State governments have very few sources of revenue raising. Tax changes are never popular. Everyone wants services but no-one likes paying tax. This is a good tax change because it focuses on those who can afford to pay. As such, I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.44 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Land Tax Amendment Bill, I have a couple of issues in relation to which I seek clarification from the Treasurer. The reaction of the Property Council in this state has already been referred to. Whilst risking being called an apologist for the Property Council, I want to clarify something. The explanatory notes state that consultation on the amendments was not appropriate as the measures are a budget initiative. In an article in the *Courier-Mail* the Property Council is quoted as saying that it had met with the Treasurer six weeks prior to the release of the state budget and it was told at that time that there were 'no surprises' for the property sector in the documents. However, the budget removed the 15 per cent rebate that applied to companies and trusts with aggregate land-holdings of more than \$15,000, effectively increasing their land tax liability. I just wonder whether the minister can clarify whether in fact that conversation with the Property Council was consultation to advise it that there were no surprises. Therefore, I wonder why no mention was made to the Property Council.

Mr Mackenroth: I can just see myself sitting down with the Property Council or any group in Queensland and giving them a bit of an 'in' into what's going to be in the budget in a couple of months time when I don't tell anybody. Why would I do that? I didn't tell them that at all.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That there were no surprises?

Mr Mackenroth: No, I didn't say that.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I thank the Treasurer. That is the answer that I was looking for.

Mr Mackenroth: That's what they're saying, I know, but I'm not that silly that I'd tell anybody anything that's in the budget. Saying that there are no surprises means that there will be no changes. I wouldn't tell someone that.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is what it infers, that is for sure.

Mr Mackenroth: I know what they inferred, and I told them when I met with them that they were wrong. I'll meet with them again and I'll tell them again.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: In the *Alert Digest* that was circulated this morning the committee is seeking information from the Treasurer as to whether any taxpayers are likely to be disadvantaged by the changes. Retrospectivity was noted, and that was as much to do with the sitting program of this chamber. It relates to 30 days retrospectivity. However, in some of the speeches made today several government members have stated that the changes to the land tax are or will be income generating. So it is certainly intended to raise revenue. Again, the Property Council is claiming that an additional \$48 million will be taken from property owners. The committee is asking for information as to whether taxpayers are likely to be disadvantaged. I believe that those two comments that have already been made indicate that there will be disadvantages.

In his second reading speech the Treasurer went on at some length to encourage us as readers to remember that 7,816 taxpayers will no longer pay land tax. That is a positive. The bill also alters eligibility for the rebates. The Treasurer went on to say that this adjustment in the phasing-in rebate will mean that 4,152 taxpayers will pay less tax. So there are two groups of people: one who will pay no tax and one who will pay less tax. My question to the Treasurer is: how many people will pay more tax? He has indicated those who will pay none. That was able to be quantified very specifically—7,816. Very specifically, 4,152 taxpayers will pay less tax. My question is: on the basis that there is some accuracy in the extra \$48 million from property owners, how many property owners will be negatively impacted in that they will be required to pay additional tax as a result of this legislation?

I believe that those two matters are significant in that there was no consultation. I acknowledge that the consultation was not in existence because, as the Treasurer said, it was a budget initiative. However, on the one hand we do claim to be a low taxing state. We do claim budget rotations to say that there are no new taxes. But in this instance there is an increase in an existing tax. I seek the Treasurer's advice as to the number of people who will be negatively impacted by an increase.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.50 p.m.): I rise to support the Land Tax Amendment Bill 2002. Primarily this bill has been brought about to implement the measures announced in the recent budget by the Treasurer. The 2002-03 state budget proposed that the Land Tax Act be amended for this financial year and years to come. As previous speakers have said, the bill seeks to remove the 15 per cent general rebate for taxpayers who are companies, trustees and absentees; that is, those people at the top of the tree who can probably afford to pay a little more. They do not get an exemption because they do not live here.

The bill will increase the exemption threshold for taxpayers who are companies, trustees and absentees from \$100,000 to \$150,000. This change means that 7,816 people do not pay any tax. I think that is a very positive part of the bill. The bill will adjust the section 9A reducing rebate for taxpayers who are companies and trustees to a maximum of 35 per cent where taxable value is \$150,000, reducing by 0.05 per cent for every \$1,000 of taxable value in excess of \$150,000, cutting out when the taxable value reaches \$215,000. As previous speakers have said, that reduces the tax for 4,152 taxpayers.

The bill will also extend the section 9A rebate to taxpayers who are absentees because of the discrepancy that presently exists whereby a company, trustee or absentee is eligible for the general rebate and also the reducing rebate. These amendments will ensure that taxpayers who are companies, trustees and absentees will no longer be eligible for the general rebate. The system becomes fairer and simpler.

These amendments will also address and alter the way in which the rebate is calculated. An exemption threshold for these taxes will also be provided. These are purely administrative and tax procedures and need to be achieved by legislative enactment. Hopefully the benefit will be felt by taxpayers who are companies, trustees and absentees. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.51 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Land Tax Amendment Bill 2002. I will address a couple of points made by previous speakers from the government side. It seems that the government is out to get anyone who is successful. The members for Algester, Ipswich and Kawana all spoke about that. Sometimes I wonder if government members realise who makes things happen. The removal of the 15 per cent general rebate is a blatant increase in land tax, which is a tax on those who choose to have a go.

Government members have said that 16,000 people will pay no tax at all and another 4,000-odd will pay less. These people are the doers, the ones who have a go. They are prepared to put their necks on the line, whether they borrow money or are successful in other ways. They are the ones who make it all happen. They create growth, which ultimately generates wealth and jobs, which this government continually crows about. Do members remember the Premier's promise in 1998 that unemployment would reach five per cent? I hope that is achieved, but policies such as this will certainly impede those who are having a go.

The recipients of these growth factors go on to generate growth in their private lives, whether they build new homes or something else. Thanks must go to the federal government and its responsible economic management that has given this nation the lowest interest rates in probably 30 years. These people enjoy somebody else's success. That is exactly what Labor administrators do not seem to understand. This is a tax by stealth which will result in an impost on business and will be an impediment to anybody contemplating going into business. The Premier has spoken often about Queensland being a low-tax state, but this is fast becoming his observation alone, not the general consensus of the population in the wider community.

Mr Reynolds: Not in my area, mate.

Mr JOHNSON: The minister has to get a hold of the situation. The minister is a person in a position of responsibility. Townsville is a classic example of successful people generating income for those less fortunate. It flows on. That is precisely where I am coming from.

Mr Reynolds: And they will continue to be very successful.

Mr JOHNSON: They will be successful, but not while this government continues to impede them. That is exactly what this government is doing. The Treasurer mentioned achievements and objectives. He said that the bill alters the eligibility of some taxpayers to rebates; however, the act will then be amended so that taxpayers who are companies, trustees and absentees will be no longer eligible for the general rebate. This is a typical socialist policy of jealousy: 'If you've got it, then we want it'. That is precisely what the government is saying: 'If somebody has got it, we want it or a fair share of it.' The government creates the rules of the game so that those players who want to be successful cannot win. All the government wants to do is cut down those who have

drive and determination to succeed. When people are successful they pass on the fruits of their labours to those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Mr Purcell: How do they do that?

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Bulimba knows how they do that. A classic example is former member for Toowoomba South Clive Berghofer. What a successful man he is. The member should look at what he has passed on to others less fortunate than himself. He has given \$5 million to cancer research. It is all very well for people such as the member for Bulimba to sit here and knock somebody who is having a go. That man has passed on countless tens of thousands of dollars to communities and other beneficiaries around Toowoomba. There are a thousand Clive Berghofers across this state—men and women who have been successful and who give their money to those less fortunate or create an environment in which somebody else can take advantage of their generosity.

Those opposite can crow all they like about what they may have or have not done, but it comes back to jealousy. This section of the legislation embraces non-productive values. I suggest that members opposite look more closely at who the real losers will be. I can assure them that many small business operators and private individuals will be caught in this net.

The land valuation issue is creating much heartache in greater Queensland. Today local authorities will have to confront the issue of their own valuations. That again will be passed on to the ratepayers. Again we see the impediments that have been created by this government through Natural Resources and through Treasury that are faced by the ordinary person in the street. Government members do not seem to take into account that the real losers in the long term will be the small players. I urge the government and the Treasurer today to show some leadership and understanding when the member for Toowoomba South moves his amendments to give this legislation some credibility.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (3.58 p.m.), in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate. The one thing that never ceases to amaze me in debates on government programs is that the opposition continually talks about wanting the government to do more, but when we talk about getting money to pay for them the opposition continually talks about us needing to take less. The simple equation is that to provide more services you need more money to pay for them. When one puts together the budget, one needs to look at how we are going to get the necessary funds to pay for the program we want to deliver.

Tomorrow and the next day we will hear much from the opposition about all the things that we should have done—all the other areas where we should have spent money. But without getting that money, we cannot spend it. The opposition talked about the fact that we were high taxing and that these changes are going to make us high taxing. I would just like to say that in relation to land tax, in this budget—2002-03—the estimated per capita land tax collection in Queensland will be \$75. In Victoria it is \$124, or \$49 more. That will show members that here in Queensland, even with the removal of the 15 per cent rebate, our land tax revenue is a lot less per capita than it is in a state such as Victoria. The same goes for New South Wales. So it is incorrect to try to paint a picture that we are becoming a high tax state in relation to those areas by removing the 15 per cent rebate.

The member for Gregory talked about Clive Berghofer. If Clive Berghofer owns his own land, this change does not affect him. It does not affect anybody who is a landowner in their own right. If Clive Berghofer has some sort of property trust or whatever to help him with federal taxation laws, certainly he will be affected. But if he is a land-holder in his own right, these changes do not affect him. The removal of the 15 per cent rebate does not affect private, individual land-holders at all.

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—

The CHAIRMAN: The Leader of the Opposition has agreed to move all his amendments to clause 4 en masse and we will debate them as a whole. There are three amendments to clause 4. Members can debate any of those amendments as they wish.

Mr HORAN (4.03 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

1. Clause 4—

At page 4, line 12, ‘, other than a prescribed taxpayer,’—
omit.

2. Clause 4—

At page 4, line 15, ‘prescribed’—
omit.

3. Clause 4—

At page 4, lines 21 to 25—
omit, insert—

‘(4) The rebate mentioned in subsection (2) applies in addition to the rebate mentioned in subsection (1).

‘(5) If a taxpayer is entitled to both rebates, the amount of each rebate must be calculated on the full amount of tax assessed to be payable by the taxpayer for the financial year, without any deduction for the amount of the other rebate.’

I am quite happy to debate these three amendments together because they all relate to clause 4. Some of them are basically consequential and I will outline our reasons for them.

First of all, these amendments fix a broken promise. They stop the Labor government from breaking its promise and reneging on what it said it would do by putting back or replacing the 15 per cent rebate that was promised in 1998, that was delivered a year later, that made a substantial difference to land tax collections and now, in a broken promise, has been taken away. I do not think anyone would expect us—and I would not expect anyone else—in this place to vote for a broken promise, to vote for something that is going to slug people with more tax, a tax that has to be paid. That tax will flow on. How can we stand in this place and debate the philosophies of this tax and say that it is companies and trusts paying it and think that that tax will not flow on to individual people? Someone has to pay that tax. It will be paid by a company or a trust, but that company or trust has to recoup the tax that it is paying or a substantial portion of it. The cost flows on to the people who are renting, buying or using that property. Someone has to pay.

Whether it is affecting the retail industry or whether it is affecting the tourism industry, at the end of the day it is the customer who pays. Any business has to add up its costs—its outgoings—and try to put on top of that a modest surplus so that it can cover its costs and, at the end of the day, have something to operate on. That is why people are in business—so they can make a profit or a surplus and have money to live on and, hopefully, be able to expand their lifestyle through the sheer hard work that they put in.

The government could not expect anyone in this parliament to vote for something that is essentially a straight-out broken promise. The government could not expect people to vote for something that will flow on. It might be able to hide behind the shield of the philosophical Left Wing of the Labor Party by saying that this change will hit only companies and trusts. But at the end of the day, that cost is going to be passed on. That is the iniquitous thing about land tax. It is the hidden nature of it. People do not know that they are paying for it, because it is a cost that is passed on. The average person ends up having to pay that tax and, mostly, it is the average small business operator who is going to be hit by this tax.

We fix that problem with these amendments and we fix that broken promise. We also bring back some of the competitive advantages that have existed in Queensland but which are gradually slipping away from this state. At times, these competitive advantages can be small, but they add up. One by one we are starting to see other states get close or overtake us in competitive advantage. That larder, that reserve of competitive advantage that was built up through the years of National Party government, is slowly but gradually being eroded. One day we will wake up and it will be gone. One day we will see the reverse trend of businesses moving to other areas where they can get a bigger advantage. Companies and trusts that are looking to invest look at all sorts of things such as land tax and their outgoings. Surely they are going to look at this increase as an added cost. It will be part of the decision that they make as to whether to invest in Queensland or elsewhere.

The rebate proposed in these amendments fixes that. It brings back a competitive advantage. More than that, because we are leaving alone those new provisions in the bill that relate to section 9A and thresholds, we will actually have a slightly greater advantage that will

make this state more attractive. That can only be good, because if people are encouraged to establish businesses and operations through property—which attracts overseas money through tourists coming to Queensland—and there is someone else out there in the marketplace who is trying to encourage more tourists, that provides jobs, particularly for our young people. They are the sorts of things that create optimism, that create enthusiasm for developers to consider projects. That creates the construction work, the ongoing flow of retail activity, the ongoing flow of accommodation and the ongoing flow of tourism. Everything becomes just that little bit more affordable, that little bit more attractive. That flows on to jobs for people, particularly young people.

At the same time, because of the way in which we have structured these amendments, those 7,816 people or companies still no longer pay tax and those 4,152 people or companies still pay less tax. Of course, it also reinstates the 15 per cent rebate. These amendments are an effort to get this state back to being a state that prides itself on having minimal tax, a state that understands that we need some growth, that we need some outside money coming in, be it from overseas investors, interstate investors, companies or trusts, so that we create work for our tradespeople and we create facilities and enterprises. That growth and that money coming in leads to more opportunities for jobs, more flexible jobs, more interesting jobs, and greater job opportunities in the retail, tourism and development industries and in the trades and professions.

That has to be understood. It is not just a matter of saying simplistically, 'They have plenty because they own these big properties. Let's hit them hard. They won't feel it too much. We will be a better place for it.' Sure, taxation has to be fair, and there are many and varied forms of taxation. But the real issue of land tax is that it is an insidious tax. It is an outgoing for many businesses that are renting, using or purchasing a property that has been made available through a development by a trust, a company or an overseas investor. Development is what has made our state grow. It has provided opportunities and it has made us the growth state. When word gets around that Queensland is the growth state and a low tax state, people come here and provide those opportunities.

We only have to look at the land valuation figures in the growth areas of the state to see that where there is growth and activity occurring, provided it is not boom-and-bust type activity, that is where there are opportunities for our young people to be able to find employment. I remember back in the 1980s going to New Zealand with a footy team. I looked around and saw no development happening. I saw people out of work and I thought about how fast Queensland was growing and that there was so much chance and opportunity for people because of the investment that was occurring in this state. In any economic plan, as well as our own money circulating, we have to have outside investment, we have to have outside money coming in, so that we have the growth and the opportunities that that provides.

This Committee must consider what happens with this tax. This is a new tax. The rebate is being taken away and this is a new tax. There will be a new net effect. There will be more taxation paid—and someone has to pay it. This amendment will give back to Queensland a real competitive opportunity. We will be able to say to the world that this is the place to invest; that this is a great state with a fair taxation system which treats all fairly and provides opportunities that will flow on to people who need work and to people who need to operate a small business successfully and who scratch their heads every time they see another outgoing, wondering how much more they can slug their customers in order to pay these continually escalating outgoings.

I urge members to consider this amendment because it provides Queensland with a positive opportunity. Let us not bury our heads in the sand; let us not take a narrow look at this. We need investment and development in our state. Without it, we will stagnate and go around in circles. I notice that the Treasurer has no particular comment on that. There are a couple of other things I will say in this second opportunity to speak. It is important for the Treasurer to tell us whether this has any effect upon the QIC. Does the QIC pay on its investments? The Treasurer is the chief shareholder in QIC.

Mr Mackenroth: I am not the chief shareholder; I am an equal shareholder.

Mr HORAN: Equal shareholder? Well, the Treasurer thinks of himself as the chief. Take those feathers off your head! In the past 12 months, the QIC has provided zero to negative returns. The mixed portfolio investments of the QIC cover property, cash and various equities, be they domestic or overseas. Perhaps at this stage it is only the property and cash investments of the QIC portfolio—a far smaller percentage of their managed portfolio than their equities—that are returning a positive return.

This is an organisation where we invest the superannuation moneys of the workers of this state, particularly the superannuation funds of public servants and government employees—be they police, teachers, nurses or other public servants. Superannuation investments are placed with the QIC. Those who have joined the accumulation fund would have seen a zero return on their superannuation last year. Here is another example of an organisation—and the Treasurer can tell me whether this is true or not—which is required to pay land tax on their—

Mr Mackenroth: It would either pay land tax or a tax equivalent.

Mr HORAN: As the Treasurer has said, it would pay land tax or a tax equivalent because it is a government owned corporation. One thinks of these organisations as big entities but, at the end of the day, the QIC is an entity comprised of people's money, the superannuation investments of workers who are hoping that on the day they retire they will have enough superannuation to generate a reasonable living in their retirement. Here is another example of what this rebate will do to an organisation.

Our amendment provides an incentive to invest in Queensland. That incentive means more jobs in construction and development, which flows on to the ongoing business activities that occur. Our amendment reduces the cost of business and ensures that customers are not putting their hands in their pockets to meet this particular payment. The Treasurer said that when we talk about the services that are needed, money is needed to pay for those services. That is right, but how much money is this government spending on some of the frills it puts onto its operations? Have a look at the 180 spin doctors in the Premier's department in the 'propaganda' unit, who continually produce glossy brochures and other publicity, and the spin that goes out daily from that unit. Have a look at the waste of money on the foot bridge and many other projects around the place. People look at how much money this government wastes and they wonder why that money could not be spent on services.

There is something just as important as services: the dignity of work, the dignity of a job. Queensland has the worst unemployment figures in mainland Australia. If government members do not pass the National Party's amendment, they will make it just that little bit harder for people to get jobs. There will be that little bit less investment than there would have been or could have been; there will be a little bit less construction, a little bit less tourism, and a little bit less investment from people outside the state. Fewer people will buy operational enterprises because they will be paying more land tax. They will look elsewhere, as the other states start to creep up on us—as New South Wales has done. If members want to see this state progress, if they want to maintain our heritage as a low-tax state, then they will support the National Party's sensible amendment.

Question—That Mr Horan's amendments be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 17—Flynn, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, Pratt, Quinn, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Watson. Tellers: Springborg, Copeland

NOES, 58—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bell, Bligh, Bredhauer, Briskey, Choi, E. Clark, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, E. Cunningham, J. Cunningham, Edmond, English, Fenlon, Hayward, Hollis, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Phillips, Pitt, Poole, Reilly, Reynolds, Robertson, Rodgers, Rose, D. Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Strong, Struthers, C. Sullivan, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Purcell

Resolved in the **negative**.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 7, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

MARITIME SAFETY QUEENSLAND BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 8 May (see p. 1298).

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—PA) (4.26 p.m.): To say that the minister's introduction of the debate on this bill is timely is an understatement. Current circumstances have highlighted the importance of this legislation, because the primary reason for it is related to the administration of

marine pilots. At this very moment the *Doric Chariot* is on a sand bank near Piper's Reef in far-north Queensland. Within the last two weeks we also saw the ANL *Excellence* aground in Moreton Bay, and two years ago we saw significant damage to the Great Barrier Reef near Cairns after the *Bunga Teratai Satu* grounded. The opposition and many other Queenslanders are concerned that these incidents indicate that this is a serious issue which has the potential to cost lives and do massive ecological damage to the marine environment, not the least of which the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef. With the management practices which are in place at the moment and which have been in place under Queensland Transport for a long period of time, thankfully that has not happened. Please, God, let it never happen. Essentially, there are two classes of pilots who operate in Queensland: the coastal pilots and the port pilots. The coastal pilots are private companies, providing commercial services to vessels using Queensland waters. I understand that three major companies provide specialist piloting services in Queensland: Torres Pilots, Reef Pilots and Hydrographers Pilots. In 1993 the federal government deregulated the coastal pilots previously licensed by the Queensland Marine Board. In mid-1993 the Australian Maritime Safety Authority assumed the pilot licensing responsibility and deregulated this industry. These pilots are licensed by the Australian Marine Safety Authority and do not come under the control of the Queensland government. However, the Australian government has enacted legislation for compulsory pilotage in the inner route of the Great Barrier Reef between Cape York and Cairns and Hydrographers' Passage. Pilotage in other areas of the Great Barrier Reef, including the Great North East Channel, is recommended by the International Maritime Organisation.

Port pilots are pilots who specialise in the guiding of vessels into various Queensland ports. Port pilots are currently employed by the various port authorities and the Ports Corporation. The port authorities require that vessels entering their port be guided by a port pilot. However, the legislation before the House today proposes to centralise the control of port pilots to Queensland Transport. Maritime Safety Queensland, to be established by this legislation, is to be a separate entity attached to Queensland Transport. The director-general will be the chief executive officer of the authority, while the operation of the agency will be the responsibility of a general manager.

Given the recent spate of serious marine incidents, the opposition believes that it is time for an independent inquiry into the provision of pilotage services in Queensland. I am concerned at the aspersions that have been cast in relation to pilots involved in recent incidents. I emphasise that many circumstances, including mechanical and communication failures, might account for recent incidents. I have had some experience working with pilots and have found them to be a professional and competent group of people.

However, the opposition is interested in some of the operational fundamentals that underlie the present arrangements that apply to the pilots. It is fair to say that this is a very complex issue, as the minister will attest. When I was the minister, I decided to regionalise the pilots and to have them operate out of their home port authority. The minister obviously supported this concept initially, because he continued this arrangement and, with the support of the opposition, last year amended the legislation to try to address a number of shortcomings and to foster competition within the ports service. That amendment last year was to provide for contestability for pilot services within a port and to provide amendments that facilitated the training of new pilots. I believe this legislation was aimed at problems being encountered in Cairns in particular. I understand that this attempt to address these shortcomings failed and the result is the legislation we are addressing today.

We believe that the relationship between the coastal and port pilot services needs to be examined. There may be efficiencies in looking at the interface of the two services. Is it really necessary to have a pilot take a vessel out from a port and then hand over to a coastal pilot? Concern has also been expressed from within the industry that the drive for efficiency by both the corporate and public sectors may be reducing expenditure associated with training. There is also concern at the size of the pool of qualified pilots and that the squeezing of the wages and conditions of pilots will serve only to reduce the number and quality of staff available. The opposition is well aware of the problem that Queensland Transport encounters in finding qualified and professional pilots. The minister would agree that we always want the best in Queensland. I believe we have the best pilots and that they are doing an exemplary job.

There are also issues associated with the provision of pilotage services that go to appropriate competition as well as shifting responsibility. Given the concerns that exist in relation to indemnity insurance and the possible cost of an environmental disaster, the risk to the state in providing piloting services is worthy of examination. It is also worth noting that the issue of work and rest

patterns of Great Barrier Reef marine pilots has been an issue since at least 1998, when a study was undertaken into this aspect of pilotage by Dr Walker and Dr Hubinger from QUT.

This legislation also establishes an agency fund to receive pilotage fees, conservancy fees and other revenue. This fund is to be kept as part of the departmental accounts of Queensland Transport. The opposition is concerned that this bill is yet another example of this government raiding the finances of port authorities. We have already seen the port authorities penalised for good financial management by having millions of dollars taken from them by Treasury, with the ports forced to take out loans to be serviced from their revenue. This action by the Beattie government has a number of knock-on impacts. Firstly, this means that the previous potential for a port to expand its services and facilities has now been taken from it.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The minister might like to elaborate further. To obtain capital works funding they now have to go cap in hand to the Treasurer and bid for their funding. This means that funds earned in the regions are no longer able to be spent in the regions. It also means that the government can continue to disguise the perilous financial situation of the state budget. This is an Enron approach to budgeting by increasing the off-book debt and misrepresenting the true position of the state budget. This was also recently highlighted by the Minister for Transport at the proceedings of Estimates Committee F, when he was forced to admit that the Gateway Bridge, which cost \$140 million to build in 1986, is now carrying a debt of \$455 million. We know about the Sunshine Motorway debt. After 16 years of paying tolls on the Gateway Bridge, how much has been paid off?

Mr Bredhauer: You put the tolls down when you were in government.

Mr JOHNSON: What has the minister done about it since? In conjunction with the Brisbane City Council, we took a responsible approach and tried to divert heavy vehicles away from the CBD and back onto the major arterials. The minister knows that.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The debt is increasing. With this sort of financial management, the Queensland government will soon be owned by Queensland Motorways. Now the minister is proposing that the future of our ports will be in the hands of these same bandits. These decisions will now be made in George Street by the same people who in the current budget saw the roads budget cut by \$12 million, with 64 per cent of the total allocation—

Mr ENGLISH: I rise to a point of order. The budget is the subject of a bill currently before the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Liddy Clark): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr JOHNSON: In the best traditions of the Labor Party, road spending in the regions has been slashed. Some examples include the central west, down 40.5 per cent, and the Darling Downs, down by 40.8 per cent. The opposition is concerned that the transfer of pilots' revenue to George Street will result in a further reduction of job opportunities in the regions.

What the opposition requires is an assurance that the money collected in this fund from the regions will be spent in the regions. I seek an assurance from the minister in this regard. I would also like the minister to specifically answer in his summary what port authorities had budgeted for pilot revenue to balance their budget and what arrangements have been made with Treasury to compensate these authorities for funding being taken from their budgets this financial year.

It is painfully obvious what happens if the port authorities try to speak out about this impact upon their operations. We have only to see what happened to the previous chief executive officer of the Cairns Port Authority. When Mr Bob Manning revealed that a \$30 million loan had been forced upon the Cairns Port Authority, he was muzzled by the minister. Local media reports leave no doubt that the minister was behind Mr Manning's shock resignation in April.

Mr BREDHAUER: I rise to a point of order. The suggestion that I muzzled the chief executive of the Cairns Port Authority is untrue. I find it offensive. Anyone who knows Bob Manning would know that it is patently absurd to suggest that I could have done that. He resigned.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the minister asking for a withdrawal?

Mr BREDHAUER: Yes.

Mr JOHNSON: I withdraw whatever he finds offensive. In fact, the *Cairns Post* suggested that his resignation was the price the city's top citizen paid for standing up for Cairns against the bullyboy tactics of the state government's ministers.

As this legislation establishes the Marine Safety Authority, it is appropriate to address a number of other issues related to the maritime industry. I note that one of the important incentives in this legislation is the centralisation of the marine pollution response. Given the need to respond quickly to issues of this type, I believe this restructuring is appropriate. I am again disappointed to see that the marine legislation is being opened for amendment by this bill and that the minister is again refusing to provide for hull identification to help prevent the theft of recreational vessels in Queensland.

The establishment of the Maritime Safety Authority also raises some issues about other functions that may now be better addressed by that authority. I know that my colleagues may have something further to add in that respect, so I will leave it to them to expand on that aspect of the bill. It is clear then that this legislation represents yet another cash grab by the Beattie Labor government, and the opposition will oppose it on those grounds unless the minister can give an assurance about regional budgets. In closing, I acknowledge the courtesy the minister extended to me by providing a briefing by his officers on this legislation. I also express my appreciation to those officers for their assistance.

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (4.40 p.m.): I rise in support of the Maritime Safety Queensland Bill 2002. Once again Queensland is leading the way in terms of its ability to protect our pristine coastline against marine pollution and respond to pollution incidents. Establishing Maritime Safety Queensland further enhances the state's capacity to provide a coordinated, cohesive and committed response to marine pollution incidents by vesting statewide responsibility in a single agency. Clear and unambiguous command and control are crucial to the success of any emergency-type response, including marine pollution incidents. The establishment of the new agency will ensure the seamless command and control of response operations occurring anywhere in Queensland's coastal waters.

Queensland is already recognised both nationally and internationally as being at the forefront in marine pollution response capability. We must ensure that this position is maintained. I am aware that personnel from the Maritime Division of Queensland Transport have assisted with other states and national and international incidents. It is important that Maritime Safety Queensland continues to build on existing strong state, national and international networks to better protect the maritime environment. We have far too much to lose if we get it wrong. Queenslanders are extremely conscious of the amenity value of our waters and the extreme environmental, social and economic consequences that could occur from a major incident. The community expects a first-class marine pollution response capability, and Maritime Safety Queensland will provide one.

Prevention, however, is better than cure. The establishment of Maritime Safety Queensland will allow for an even greater focus on preventative strategies to marine incidents and resultant marine pollution. A risk-free environment can never be achieved, but minimisation and control of risk can. I understand that Maritime Safety Queensland will be working closely with the maritime industry to minimise risk and create a culture within the maritime industry whereby all accidents are preventable, and this approach is to be commended.

There are many facets to an effective marine incident prevention strategy. Some of these would be ensuring rigorous standards for the use and construction of vessels, appropriate licensing and testing arrangements for operators, widespread education and awareness campaigns, a quality pilotage service, and increased surveillance and monitoring of vessels. These are all functions of the new agency. I understand that human error is the prime cause of marine incidents and all avenues to combat this trend must be supported. I believe that Maritime Safety Queensland will be working in company with international and national maritime safety regulators such as the International Maritime Organisation and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority to foster the introduction of emerging technology to minimise the human elements in incidents. I fully support this initiative.

We in government along with the maritime industry must take all reasonable precautions to minimise the risks involved with shipping but at the same time strike a balance between protecting the marine environment and maintaining efficient ports and shipping lanes to support vital international trade. I expect that the creation of Maritime Safety Queensland will build even greater partnerships with the maritime industry—an industry that is crucial to the long-term

prosperity of Queensland. Collectively, government and industry are the guardians of our pristine coastal waters and we must steadfastly ensure that we continue to look at all available means to deliver the highest possible level of marine pollution prevention and response capability.

There is absolutely no room for complacency when it comes to protecting our waters against marine incidents and marine pollution. We need to continually reassess the risk, review contingency plans and strive for additional and improved measures of protection and response. I believe that the creation of Maritime Safety Queensland goes a long way in delivering these objectives. I am delighted to see that Queensland continues to demonstrate its outstanding commitment to protecting the marine environment. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (4.44 p.m.): A significant number of regulatory organisations have input into the shipping operations in the Great Barrier Reef. There is also a complicated application of international law, international maritime conventions and Commonwealth and state legislation. Nobody in this chamber would argue the need to protect not only the Great Barrier Reef but also all of the shipping channels and communities that adjoin the ocean up the eastern and western seaboard of Australia. The main agencies with an interest in regulating shipping in the reef are the Queensland Department of Transport, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. They are the main interests but not the only interests.

Over the last 15 years the Great Barrier Reef has been the scene of 40 shipping accidents and most of them have involved foreign vessels. I took the point of a previous speaker in this debate about endeavouring to avoid maritime accidents. Whilst acknowledging that I do not know the detail of some of the most recent incidents on the reef, one wonders how a fairly large vessel could not miss a quite conspicuous island and park itself upon either the coral surrounding the island or the island itself. It reminds me of that RACQ ad, 'Cruise liner? What cruise liner? I didn't see a cruise liner.'

Mr Bredhauer: It was 4 a.m., apart from anything else.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: It was 4 a.m. I acknowledge that by saying that I did not have all the information, but I do not believe that we will ever dispose of the human error element. In 23 of those incidents, however, there was no pilot on board. In defence of the pilots who work out of Gladstone, they do an incredibly good job often in adverse circumstances. They are called out at all times of the day or night and they respond, I believe, very effectively. I trust that the legislation that changes the structure of their organisation will not in any way undermine or diminish that effectiveness. Additionally, the port of Gladstone has had a coordinated and very effective marine pollution response capability. However, we are advised that this legislation will improve and better coordinate marine pollution controls.

There were some concerns raised in my electorate with regard to the change in structure. It has not been long since the last changes were implemented. Members of the pilots and vessel crews in the electorate of Gladstone are very concerned about these proposed changes as much from a lack of information as anything else. They were quite happy to remain under the auspices of the Gladstone Port Authority. Their submissions and their discussions have not been successful obviously because this legislation significantly changes the structure of the organisation to which they will be accountable. Some 19 people will be affected in my electorate.

At one stage there was discussion about pairing off the pilots and leaving the vessel crews with the port authority. That was the least desirable outcome as far as the pilots were concerned and as far as logic was concerned because of the intrinsic link between the pilots and the vessel crews. Access to efficient and appropriate vessels in a timely manner is essential to successful and effective pilot services. There is a great deal of merit in ensuring that, in relation to both of those facilities—that is, the pilot facility and the vessels that must transport them, whether it is marine vessels or helicopters—there be very close liaison between the two. I seek a response from the minister on the other concern expressed to me that in the changeover there have been assurances given regarding additional training, that training initiatives would improve and that the conditions of employment would remain the same. I believe that the minister already commented on that some time ago when I asked a question in this chamber. However, I would be interested in his continued assurance that their conditions of employment would not deteriorate in any way.

Another concern was expressed to me, and I hasten to say that it was not put to me by a pilot or a vessel crew at all; it occurred during some general discussions that I was having. By removing the pilots and the vessels from the Gladstone Port Authority and having them as a stand-alone service, particularly the launch service, I wonder whether this government has any

intention to, as a stand-alone business, put that sector of marine pilotage out for competitive tendering. The fact that it would become a commercial issue as opposed to a service issue—

Mr Bredhauer: The previous government pushed it that way. We brought them back. It is entirely the opposite. The motivation is entirely the opposite.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Excellent, because concerns were expressed to me that there was an intention over time—not straightaway—to put it out for competitive tendering.

Mr Bredhauer: That was the bloke in front of you.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: No, it was not, actually. It was just a comment that was made to me by a constituent of mine who is very interested in maritime issues. I believe that it is very important that we have an effective pilotage program. We have seen the damage that can be done to the reef and the potential damage from pollution because of the number of vessels that attempt to negotiate our complicated waterways without a pilot. We have also seen the essential nature of the launch crews and the need for them to be kept closely in liaison. I do believe that our maritime pollution response has been good in the past. I trust that that will not in any way be undermined with this change of structure.

In a previous *Alert Digest* the committee talked about the bill providing that compensation is not recoverable in relation to the transfer from a port authority to Maritime Safety Queensland of the rights and obligations of any person under contracts for services and employment contracts in relation to the performance of pilotage services. I seek the minister's reassurance that there is no-one in the employ of Queensland Transport who will be affected by these structural changes; that there is no-one who will be disadvantaged by the changes either as far as their terms of employment, the continuity and security of their employment or the conditions of their employment.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (4.52 p.m.): The purpose of the Maritime Safety Queensland Bill 2002 is to create a new statutory authority that will be called Maritime Safety Queensland. Maritime Safety Queensland will have four primary objectives; that is, to reduce duplication in the delivery of essential maritime services; to maximise safety and limit environmental risks; to provide a lasting solution to pilot service delivery and training of marine pilots across the state of Queensland; and to provide a coordinated whole-of-state marine response. So from the tip of Cape York to beautiful Moreton Bay in my electorate of Redlands we will have a coordinated marine pollution response rather than the present hotchpotch approach.

Maritime Safety Queensland will have to undertake a number of functions. Certainly under the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act it will have a number of responsibilities. It will be required to develop educational strategies in relation to the safe use of recreational boats; to make standards for designing, building and operating commercial ships; and of course to accredit the designers, builders and marine surveyors involved in building and certifying commercial ships within Queensland. There are a number of other functions that Maritime Safety Queensland will be required to undertake. These are: to set up and maintain navigational aids; to deal with marine incidents; and to monitor and manage the movement of ships in Queensland waters.

Given the Howard government's irresponsibility in relation to allowing ANL to sack Australian crews and replace them with foreign crews on ships that historically flew the Australian flag and are now, for mere convenience, badged under foreign countries, we have to understand the MUA's concern about the risks posed by foreign crews and foreign staff. This is a grave risk to the beautiful marine environment of Queensland, the Great Barrier Reef and other important marine assets such as the Moreton Bay Marine Park. So given Howard's reluctance to care about Queensland's marine environment, it is pleasing to see that the Beattie Labor government does not share his haphazard approach to the marine environment. We want a coordinated and single state government agency responsible to coordinate environmental incidents within our marine waters.

Under the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act, Maritime Safety Queensland will be required to develop strategies to prevent the deliberate, negligent or accidental discharge of ship sourced pollutants into coastal waters and will have to deal with any discharge of ship sourced pollutants into coastal waters; that is, it will be required to coordinate the response to any pollutant spill. Given the number of groundings we have seen recently, it is important that we not wait any longer in doing this as the Great Barrier Reef and other marine ecosystems are too fragile for us to sit on our hands any longer. I commend the minister for acting swiftly in this regard.

The member for Gladstone raised issues about national competition policy and how this bill stands up in relation to competition. It is worth noting that a public benefit test was undertaken, because the government will hold a monopoly for pilotage services. However, that public benefit test recommended that the monopoly was satisfactory because of the benefit to the Queensland public. Queensland Treasury was satisfied with the PBT process. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (4.57 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Maritime Safety Queensland Bill 2002, it is important that we get it right as far as marine safety, particularly in our eastern waters, is concerned. We have something unique along the coast of Queensland—that is, the Great Barrier Reef—and the number of ships that use those waters to take cargo to and from Australia is extremely important. The piloting of ships in the future will be more intense. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that we have in place a mechanism whereby we can train pilots and ensure that those pilots on those ships are doing the right thing. I am not absolutely certain that this legislation is taking us in the right direction, but the whole issue is not only about safety but also the damage that can be done to the reef. We have the *Doric Chariot* on Piper Reef, and we had the *Bunga Teratai Satu* which ran aground on Sudbury Reef some two years ago.

Mr Bredhauer: What was the name of that ship again?

Mr ROWELL: The *Bunga Teratai Satu*. Okay? Would the minister like me to spell it for him?

Mr Bredhauer: No.

Mr ROWELL: That is good. The clean-up costs of that episode were something like \$500,000—quite an expensive operation. As has been said, over the last 15 years there have been something like 40 shipping accidents in Great Barrier Reef waters. That is quite significant. If any of those ships had the unfortunate circumstance of releasing its cargo—whether it be oil or something of that nature, which would certainly be very adverse for reef life—that could be very detrimental.

Over time GBRMPA has pushed very hard for something to be done. It is presently instituting bioregions and green zones. Commercial fishermen and recreational fishermen all have to comply with those sorts of measures. It will be essential in the future that we adhere to a range of regulations. We do not want shipping making a mess on the reef or acting in contravention of what we who live along the reef have to contend with.

The shipping cargoes could leak. The ship I referred to earlier went on to the reef just south of Cairns at something like 20 knots an hour. A substantial hole could have been ripped in the ship. Some damage was done, but substantial leakage could have come from that ship or another one that hit the reef in a similar manner.

Our region is very dependent on tourism and agricultural activities. They are currently being targeted by groups such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature. If there is a prospect of the shipping industry doing some damage to the reef, it is acting contrary to the best intentions for the reef and what so many people have to comply with.

A state and regional coastal management plan is presently being implemented. There is also a marine parks plan in the Hinchinbrook area. We have to comply with these types of measures. Some of them have an adverse impact on the tourism industry and they are making it difficult for agricultural industries. If shipping is an industry that can do damage to the reef, we have to have the best pilots and the best maritime safety laws—not just for the safety of ships but also for the safety of the reef.

The tourism activities being carried out in the region are diverse. There is a substantial development going on at Port Hinchinbrook at present. Monitoring of water is absolutely essential to the work they are doing in cutting and dredging a channel out into the Hinchinbrook Channel itself. The water they are taking out from the dredging is probably much cleaner than the water outside in the channel at present, which is quite cloudy.

The minister might be shaking his head, but it is very important that I raise these issues. The whole issue of what we can do on the reef is being governed by both state and federal governments. If we are having difficulties promoting activities and industries, this will have an adverse impact on us. We have to contend with dugong transit lanes. The dugongs are being told not to go into these areas because boats use them.

Mr Bredhauer: The dugongs are being told not to go into those areas? That is not a very successful strategy.

Mr ROWELL: If there is a dugong transit lane where people can go but dugongs cannot, is the minister going to go out and tell the dugongs that they cannot go in that area? That is the point I am making. This is in the state management plan. The minister should look at it and be familiar with some of the legislation coming before this House. That is in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's marine plan for the Hinchinbrook Channel and it is representative of the sorts of things we have to comply with. It is very difficult to get tourism industries up and going.

We then have to deal with boat sizes. The issue is not with the safety of the boats; it is more to do with the aspirations of the people putting out these plans. There are marine safety laws that state that if a boat is so long and so wide and has such and such a displacement it can carry so many passengers. But the rule makers are not satisfied with that. They have to restrict them because there are some aberrations on the part of those putting in place the coastal management plan and the marine plan. We need more boat ramps. They are essential.

Mr Bredhauer: Ha, ha.

Mr ROWELL: The minister might laugh, but they are essential.

Mr Bredhauer: Why don't you talk about the bill?

Mr ROWELL: We are talking about safety in marine areas. We are talking about the consequences if we do not have safety, the pollution that can be caused and what other people have to do to ensure they do not pollute the Barrier Reef. I believe issues that relate directly to the reef and marine safety are relevant. In many areas along the coast there is limited access for the boating public. Very often boats have to be launched or brought back in under extremely rough conditions. Safety for the smaller boats is quite important.

The vessel monitoring system is also part of marine safety. Vessel monitoring systems were instituted during the time of the coalition government. It is extremely important that they are used as not only a management tool but also a safety mechanism for boats, particularly in the trawling industry. By using this system we can identify where these boats are at any time. That was the intent of the VMS. I oversaw the introduction of this particular device during the time the coalition was in government. I think it is extremely important. Unfortunately, the vessel monitoring system—it was used basically as a management tool and was to be used as a safety device to identify trawlers that got into trouble—has not been very effective.

This morning I asked a question of the Minister for Primary Industries about this issue. A trawler called the *Eastern Leader* went down out the back of Dunk Island and two lives were lost. It appears that the vessel monitoring system was not adequate. There was another incident with a vessel called the *Hirondelle* off Bundaberg some three years ago. If it were not for the fact that the person on board had a mobile phone and could contact his wife, they would not have known that he was in difficulty. So while we talk about bigger ships, the trawling industry raises another very important issue.

While the minister might say that this does not apply specifically to this legislation, I believe a review of what is happening with vessel safety is needed. The minister can talk about pilots or the way the relevant act is administered in terms of the bigger ships coming in and going out, but it is also very important that we are able to locate the likes of trawler vessels. The device they have could quite adequately be used to identify them if they are in distress. There is the ability to put a computer on board such that if two buttons are pushed a distress signal is automatically sent out to the Queensland Fisheries Service, which monitors these vessels. This will ensure that in the event of distress—if the boat is taking in water or they are in a bad storm and they are having some difficulty navigating and getting back to port—they can be identified quickly and help can go out to them.

This testing system is not working quite as well as it should, mainly because it appears it is not being monitored. Even the previous owner of the *Eastern Leader* said that for some time he was getting emails from the department dealing with the fishing service, and I doubt the vessel was being monitored at the time it went down. I believe a full investigation needs to be made into the safety of vessels at sea. There is an ability to do random testing of VMSs. I have put this before the minister, but it appears that only cursory notice is being taken of what needs to be done. We need to ensure that all vessels that go to sea have some safety mechanism. We need to ensure that vessels going through Great Barrier Reef waters do not strike reefs. In the last 15 years 40 vessels have run aground or run into reefs. We need to revise the system because it is not working successfully.

I am requesting that the minister not only address the issue of maritime safety in terms of the pilots and whatever is done in relation to the ports at which those pilots are based and their training but also look at the broader aspects of vessel safety and consider what might be happening to most of those vessels, if not all of those vessels, that go to sea that have equipment that can be tracked to ensure the safety of that vessel.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (5.10 p.m.): I rise to give my support to the Maritime Safety Queensland Bill. This bill establishes a maritime safety agency for Queensland to be known as Maritime Safety Queensland. MSQ will be assuming responsibility for a marine pollution response in all Queensland waters. This represents a change from the past where port authorities were responsible for marine pollution in ports and Queensland Transport was responsible in other areas of Queensland's coastal waters. The old system resulted in duplicated effort, inappropriate resourcing and, in some cases, a disproportionate marine pollution funding allocation compared to risk.

Establishing MSQ will do away with the duplication and will ensure that valuable resources are allocated where they are needed most. Being prepared and, more importantly, able to respond to a marine pollution incident requires specialised equipment and people on the ground who have the skills and training needed to respond. When we look at the situation like that, it is clear why the minister is so keen to ensure that the best possible marine pollution response is available, given that 12 of Queensland's 15 trading ports abut the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The bill before the House will help ensure that the best possible response capability is available by combining the trained staff and equipment of Queensland Transport with that of the port authorities. I am told that another big advantage of the proposal is that it removes the risk of liability currently hanging over the heads of port authority board members. Apparently, under the current arrangements, port authority board members could be held personally liable for a marine pollution incident occurring within port limits. Given that the cost of responding to a marine pollution accident can be in the millions of dollars, that has been a significant concern to port authority board members for some time. However, the new arrangements will not remove port authorities totally from responding to marine pollution incidents. On the contrary, port authorities are often best placed to undertake the initial response or to investigate reports of marine pollution. The changes relate more to responsibility than actual activity.

The bill proposes that Maritime Safety Queensland assume the overall responsibility for dealing with marine pollution incidents in Queensland's coastal waters regardless of where they occur. Maritime Safety Queensland will be responsible for purchasing and maintaining pollution equipment for deployment across the state; for training MSQ, port authority and other emergency response personnel; for undertaking risk assessments and determining the best allocation of pollution response resources; and for coordinating and leading the response in an event of a marine pollution incident.

Queensland has a mainland coastline that spans 7,400 kilometres with a further 2,400 kilometres of offshore island coastline. A large part of this coastline is environmentally sensitive with marine park status. Clearly, managing the risk of the ship-sourced pollution is no small task. In developing a single statewide agency with responsibility for this task, the minister is recognising the need for a coordinated and consistent approach.

Queensland is already looked upon world wide as a leader in managing marine pollution risks. I believe that the bill before the House represents a significant step towards achieving a world's best practice approach to managing the risk of ship-sourced marine pollution. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (5.13 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Maritime Safety Queensland Bill and, in doing so, I would like to touch on the primary objectives of the proposed legislation, which include the reduction of the duplication in the delivery of the essential maritime services that are provided to maximise safety or limit the environmental risks; to provide a lasting solution to pilot service delivery and the training of marine pilots in Queensland ports; and to provide a whole-of-state marine pollution response capability that incorporates the marine pollution response services that are currently provided by port authorities.

The Mooloolaba-Kawana harbour is the base for pilots for those ships coming into Moreton Bay and also the drop-off point as they are leaving. The Mooloolaba Spit is the home for the pilots. Currently, the whole spit area is undergoing the formulation of a management plan that is being undertaken by the Maroochy Shire Council. I know that the minister's departmental officers are also involved in relation to various issues.

I believe that the Mooloolaba pilot station is ideally located. Many years ago the pilots were accommodated on the Mooloolaba Spit. The state government surrendered these properties and that area is now public open space and is well appreciated by the community. Queensland Transport conducts vital work from offices on the Sunshine Coast. I would like to commend the minister and the staff, whom I have found to be always very approachable and very willing to help and assist both my office and me. These workers both live and work in our community, as do the pilots who, as I mentioned, are working out of the Mooloolaba-Kawana harbour. I believe that they are doing a great job.

I also want to touch on one incident that occurred many years ago. The *Anro Asia* ran aground off Caloundra—I am not sure whether it was in the 1970s or the 1980s, but I know that it was quite a few decades ago.

Mr Shine: You were a young fellow.

Mr CUMMINS: I take the member's interjection. I was quite a young fellow—probably with long hair and a surfboard. I vividly remember that the Air Force came in and removed various containers until the *Anro Asia* could be repaired and sent on its way. Accidents do happen and over the years we have seen an incredible improvement in safety. This bill will go even further towards that. For those who are interested in the *Anro Asia*, I put in a quick plug for the aptly named Golden Beach Power Boat Club, which has a good range of photos of that ship.

In finishing, the bill also makes a large number of consequential amendments to the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act, the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act and the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994. The nature of these amendments is to establish responsibility for the matters dealt with in these acts as belonging to either Queensland Transport or MSQ. The proposed legislation will create a government monopoly for the pilotage services. As such, it is necessary to subject the draft legislation to a public benefit test. When we did this, the public benefit test found that the safety and long-term sustainability benefits of re-establishing government control for pilotage services far outweighed any benefits that could be derived from the introduction of competition for this service.

Safe and sustainable shipping movement in Queensland waters—and indeed along the Sunshine Coast—is essential to support the economy right across Queensland. The creation of Maritime Safety Queensland will enhance regional marine service delivery as well as provide better safety and environmental outcomes for the marine industry and the broader community. I believe that the Sunshine Coast, and indeed the other areas of Queensland, will benefit from the statewide approach to marine pilotage and pollution response that MSQ will provide. I commend the minister and his department for the bill. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (5.18 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Maritime Safety Queensland Bill 2002. The waterways of Queensland contribute significantly to the lifestyle of the local community and to visitors to Queensland. Queenslanders have a great culture of living and relaxing by the water. The number of recreational vessels that are registered in Queensland is a testament to this. Currently, there are over 160,000 registered recreational vessels and it is estimated that there are a further 70,000 vessels powered by sail or small outboard engines that do not require registration. When we couple those figures with the 5,400 commercially registered vessels and the 6,500 trading ships that come into Queensland's ports each year, it is clear how large and important is the task of managing maritime safety in Queensland.

The bill proposes the creation of a maritime safety agency called Maritime Safety Queensland. MSQ will replace the current Maritime Division of Queensland Transport and will also be responsible for certain functions, such as pilotage and pollution response, which is currently being delivered by port authorities. Some four years ago government devolved responsibility for pilotage. At that time, it was hoped that by introducing competition, the shipping industry and the broader community would benefit from lower fees and a more efficient service. Unfortunately, that has not been the case.

Pilotage is and always will be, first and foremost, a safety service. A key function of any government is ensuring the safety of the community. Therefore, it is not only reasonable but sensible that governments take an active role in managing and ensuring the sustainability of these services.

Although it is not mentioned specifically in the bill, I understand that there has been another major organisational change in Queensland Transport associated with the creation of MSQ. That change is in the area of waterways planning and infrastructure development. Activities relating to

planning, developing and building boating infrastructure, such as jetties and boat ramps, are not functions of MSQ. These activities will be incorporated into Queensland Transport's Integrated Transport Planning Division. This change recognises the need for a more integrated approach to transport planning that extends beyond the bitumen. It recognises the increasing demand for waterways infrastructure and the continuing growth in water based public transport.

A prime example of the need for a more integrated approach to transport planning is in the Redland area, where the trend towards island living is growing steadily. Access to integrated water and land based public transport is vital to these communities. When it came to jetties and ferries, I understand that the Redland Shire Council and the local community have struggled in the past with knowing exactly who in the department was responsible for what.

Under the new organisational arrangements proposed by the minister, one central area will be responsible for coordinating all aspects of transport planning. These new arrangements will focus resources within Queensland Transport and will ensure that Maritime Safety Queensland can focus all its resources on improving maritime safety and building its maritime pollution response capability. I fully support the minister on this initiative. The creation of an agency attached to Queensland Transport, focused solely on maritime safety and maritime pollution response activities, highlights the importance of these activities to all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (5.21 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members who have made contributions to the debate on this bill. I will make a couple of comments on a few of the issues raised by members opposite. In particular, there is one primary distinction I wish to make. The shadow minister for transport, the member for Gregory, spoke at the outset of his speech about the difference between coastal pilots and port pilots. Unfortunately, during much of the rest of his speech he ignored the fact that there is a difference between coastal pilots and port pilots. He then confused the issues in relation to those two, as did a number of members opposite.

A number of people referred to the current incident with the *Doric Chariot* aground on Piper Reef up in Cape York Peninsula and referred to the pilotage issues there. It is important to realise that control of pilotage in coastal waters comes under the jurisdiction of the federal government. It is also the subject of International Maritime Organisation regulations. There is little the Queensland government can do in respect of the pilotage issues in coastal areas.

However, there are, of course, significant marine pollution, environmental and safety issues about which we are concerned and for which we do have responsibility. For this reason, Queensland Transport's Maritime Division and I have been working very hard on the appropriate response to the grounding of the vessel.

I would caution members against speculating on the cause of this incident or of other incidents currently under investigation. Because a pilot was on board when the vessel ran aground, people are assuming it was pilot error. That may not necessarily be the case. There could easily have been some mechanical problem with the vessel which made it difficult to steer, or some other issue which came into play. Only the investigation will determine the likely contributory causes to the grounding of the vessel. It is inappropriate for members to speculate about the causes until such time as the investigation has been completed.

A number of opposition members have called for an independent inquiry, basically on the basis of the groundings of the *Bunga Teratai Satu* and the *Doric Chariot*. If they are referring to pilotage in those circumstances, it is not an inquiry for which the Queensland government would have responsibility. As I have already said, pilotage in those areas is the responsibility of the Commonwealth government.

However, following the *Bunga Teratai Satu* incident, John Anderson, the federal Transport Minister, established an investigation into coastal pilotage issues and we responded to that investigation. For example, I convinced the federal government to include the Torres Strait as a significant environmental area in that investigation when it had previously been excluded by them. Also, Queensland Transport was able to argue successfully for the extension of compulsory pilotage to the Whitsundays area, another very important environmental area, especially dear to the heart of the member for Whitsunday. We are keen to have the capacity to improve pilotage in that area as well.

I will refer specifically to a couple of issues raised by the member for Gregory. He referred to the financing of port pilotage and how that would be accounted for. The legislation allows for separate accounts to be kept, which will be transparent to industry and to the port authorities, for

any moneys received for pilotage and conservancy fees. We have specifically done that because industry wants to know that we are not setting fees in a way that aims to profit from the levying of those fees. We have given a commitment that separate accounts will be maintained and audited by Maritime Services Queensland. They are open and transparent for the opposition to scrutinise from time to time when the annual report of Queensland Transport comes down.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr BREDHAUER: Yes, it will be completely transparent and completely separately accounted.

The member also suggested that we might actually be taking money off the port authorities. The system put in place by the opposition when it devolved pilotage to the port authorities was meant to be similar and they were not meant to run pilotage at a profit. In fact, if the shipping industry thought that the port authorities were running pilotage at a profit, I think they would be pretty unhappy. There should not be a loss of profit—as I think the member suggested—to the port authorities which might affect their finances from the government taking over responsibility for that.

The specific situation that arose in Cairns identified a fault in the arrangements put in place by the opposition. I am not being critical of either the member or the department because I do not think the circumstances that arose were actually foreseen. Essentially, this is what happened in Cairns: they had existing contract holders and the contract expired on 1 July. The Cairns Port Authority put that contract out to tender and it decided to accept another tender for that pilotage from Torres Pilots. As at 1 July, when Torres Pilots were due to take up that contract, they did not have a single pilot who was qualified to pilot vessels in the port of Cairns. Pilots for the Ports Corporation of Queensland, who were about to lose their jobs, were expected to train the incoming pilots who were taking their jobs. As I say, I think that was inadvertent and was not intended by the legislation, but it emerged only at that point in time. The member mentioned the amendments we have had previously in my time as minister. It really emerged only at that time when the contract changeover occurred.

The member went into bat for his great mate, the former CEO of the Cairns Port Authority. Dare I say that part of the problem which occurred in Cairns was because two people—the then CEO of the Cairns Port Authority and the then CEO of the Ports Corporation Queensland—were butting heads against each other instead of making decisions in the best interests of either or both of their organisations. I have made it clear throughout this process that for the shipping industry price is important, but it is one factor in terms of how we control pilotage. In my view, more important are the maritime safety and environmental protection issues. Price is a very important issue, but only in the context of taking into consideration those other two issues.

The member for Gladstone also talked about the conditions of employment of former pilots at Gladstone and of QT employees. I reiterate what I have said to the member for Gladstone previously. One reason why we intend to establish Maritime Services Queensland in this legislation as a separate entity within Queensland Transport is that the conditions of employment of the pilots in particular are different from the conditions of employment for other public sector employees generally. By having a separate entity we can continue to offer the conditions of employment they currently enjoy. There have been some issues in relation to the pilots in Gladstone as to whether they will remain employees of the Gladstone Port Authority or be employed by Queensland Transport. There may even be a suggestion of one person seeking voluntary redundancy. The Gladstone Port Authority has indicated that it could continue to employ two of those people, but we will pick up all those people who may not finish up with the Gladstone Port Authority and the boat crew as well. We will look after the boat crew if it comes to that. I thank all members on the government side for their support of the legislation.

The member for Gregory highlighted one further point concerning the new agency, Maritime Services Queensland, assuming control for marine pollution response. We will take over that responsibility from the port authorities on a fee-for-service basis. We will still have marine pollution response capability in every port on the ground so that we can respond quickly to any maritime incident, but we have said as an absolute guarantee that we will maintain at least the current standards of marine pollution capability in ports. If anything, we would be looking to improve the marine pollution response capability that we have in some of those ports. Essentially, that covers most of the issues raised by the opposition in respect of this issue. It has been a difficult issue in some respects. It has gone on a little longer than I would have liked or anticipated, but I did want to make sure that I got it right. I thank those officers of Queensland Transport who have been

involved in this, especially Kelli White for her effort in helping us pull this together. I thank all the people from Queensland Transport involved in this process. To the people from the port authorities, the pilots out there in the ports, the boat crew in Gladstone and to those other people who have lived with a period of uncertainty for about 12 months, I acknowledge that there has been some anxiety in relation to those issues. I thank them for their patience. I am confident that the new arrangements that we will put in place will suit the purposes that I have mentioned: first and foremost, to give the best prospect of improving maritime safety, to ensure we have environmental protection in our environmental waters but most importantly in our port waters which are environmentally sensitive, and to continue to deliver a cost-effective and efficient service to the shipping industry as the main user of port pilotage services. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr BREDHAUER (5.32 p.m.): I move amendment No. 1—

Clause 2—

At page 4, lines 6 and 7—

omit, insert—

'This Act commences on a day to be fixed by proclamation.'

Amendment, agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 16 and schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

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

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 9 April (see p. 685).

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (5.37 p.m.): The National Party opposition will be supporting the bill. This is an important piece of legislation for the security of primary industries in Queensland from potentially devastating exotic, terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases and pests. The recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease and BSE in Britain, Europe and Asia, in particular the impact on the beef industry in Britain, has highlighted the urgent need to be prepared to respond to any possible outbreak—something that we all hope will never happen. It is important that we recognise exactly what happened in Britain, because it was horrendous. The whole country was in turmoil. Many animals had to be destroyed. The time that it took to destroy those animals was extensive. The army had to get involved. I know people in Britain who experienced great difficulties, because they never quite knew whether the animals on their properties would be destroyed. The government did not come out of it particularly well. From reading recent British papers, it was quite evident that the government copped a fair bit of flak in terms of what happened with foot-and-mouth disease.

In the beef industry, which is the largest primary industry in Queensland, with 34 per cent of the state's gross value of primary industries commodities and worth more than \$3.2 billion—due mainly to a surge in prices in response to heavy export demand during the past year—the gross value of live cattle exports is expected to increase by almost 10 per cent. We export to many countries, including the Philippines and Indonesia, its close neighbour.

This is further evidence of the importance of the industry to Queensland and highlights the need for well prepared legislation to respond to an FMD outbreak. The key issue is how we will go about addressing an FMD outbreak. The pessimists would say that it is not a matter of if but

when. In order to respond to this, a number of acts administered by the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities are proposed to be amended, including the Agricultural Standards Act 1994, the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Fisheries Act 1994, the Plant Protection Act 1989 and the Stock Act 1915. The bill will also provide for the repeal of the meat food safety provisions of the Meat Industry Act 1993 to coincide with the promulgation of a new meat industry food safety scheme under the Food Production Safety Act 2000.

The proposed bill also seeks to amend deficiencies in the Plant Protection Act 1989 that would be a hindrance to the control and eradication strategies for the current fire ant incursion in the Brisbane and Ipswich areas. Fire ants and the management of this outbreak by the government is an issue within the legislation that I will address at a later stage.

Although the National Party opposition will be offering its support for the legislation, there are a couple of issues with respect to the state's responsibilities to report a pest or disease outbreak in state controlled land. I would like the minister to take note of this, because it is important. During the committee stage, I will be proposing amendments in relation to this issue.

If this legislation is to be truly stringent and require graziers and/or private land-holders to report to stock inspectors and the department within certain time frames, it is only reasonable that the government should be expected to meet the same standards of responsibility on state controlled land. The first part of the bill deals with the Agricultural Standards Act 1994. On review of this legislation, the critical need to provide a general power for an inspector to monitor compliance through the stockfeed manufacturing and supply chain as well as farms was identified. In the past we have had difficulties in this area with swill feeding. Monitoring for compliance requires the power to enter, search, inspect, examine, test, take samples for testing, question a person and require the production of documents and inspect and audit documents. All of these issues are very important. We cannot half do this; we have to go all the way. There has to be strengthened legislation, which we are supporting.

Clause 5 of the bill refers to the entry of an inspector into a place where people reside to ensure that these provisions of the act are carried out. The opposition supports the need for an inspector to be able to carry out these checks, so long as the inspector makes all reasonable attempts to make the occupier aware of this authorisation and carries this out in an orderly and responsible manner.

Part 3 of the bill proposes amendments to the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981. Clause 8, which intends to amend section 12 of this bill, is important and refers to the powers of inspectors to eradicate and prevent the spread of exotic diseases. As the explanatory notes outlined, the current provisions of this act provide the power for an inspector to order the destruction of infected animals by an owner. The power of an inspector to carry out this task is necessary to ensure that the affected animal is destroyed, as any failure to do so could compromise the control of a disease. It is easy for that to happen. Total eradication is very difficult to achieve. Unless we take a no-compromise approach, I do not believe we will be successful. Later I will speak about different experiences in north Queensland in this regard.

This amendment, which has the intention of preventing unacceptable delays for an owner in responding to a disease outbreak, is strongly supported by the opposition but should also include the government's responsibility for state controlled land. I want to make this point very clear. A lot of land, including national parks, forestry and other land, comes under the state's jurisdiction. Some of those areas have the potential to be problem areas, and I will speak about that further in a moment.

It is important to acknowledge that this is not a criticism of the landowner. However, we should take into consideration that the destruction of any animal requires a level of expertise. An animal simply cannot be shot and just left there. Pathogens and disease can survive, and we do not want other animals or plants to be contaminated. A combination of factors applies in this situation. In putting forward this legislation as a stronger preventive approach to exotic diseases, it is imperative that the additional people employed by the Department of Primary Industries to fill these roles are adequately skilled and equipped to perform the role of the inspector.

Clause 11 of the bill inserts the sections relevant to the appointment, conditions and limitations of an inspector. The crucial point to note is that the chief executive may appoint a person as an inspector only if the chief executive is satisfied that the person is qualified for appointment because the person has the necessary expertise, skills and experience. That is important, because often in a crisis situation there is an enormous demand for people. Currently, some 500 people are engaged in the fire ant eradication program. There were major programs for

the eradication of papaya fruit fly and black sigatoka. When an outbreak occurs, there is a sudden demand for people with expertise or who have the ability to be trained. This is extremely important.

I would appreciate it if the minister responded to that issue in his reply, because in this job there is very little room for error, for example, through a failure to act on a suspected exotic disease or pest outbreak. It is necessary for people undertaking the role of an inspector to be aware of the responsibilities bestowed on them and the penalties for failing to discharge their responsibilities. That is also important. They cannot abrogate their responsibilities. The failure to carry out this responsibility could cause an immediate loss of export markets for beef, sheep, meat and pigs. This would affect the meat and live animal trades and dairy product exports, resulting in a large fall in prices received for the livestock products that we produce in this state. The impact flowing from such an outbreak would be likely to affect other significant industries, as was clearly evidenced by the significant downturn in the tourist industry post the FMD outbreak in Britain. Britain had a major problem: people did not want to go there because of the concerns about eating meat. That caused a major downturn for tourism in that country, and the same thing could happen in Australia. Clearly, because of the multiplier effect, this would be extremely damaging across all industries in the state. If primary producers are experiencing difficulties sustaining their properties because of pest or disease incursions, those properties wind down and the service providers in the towns supporting those properties—the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker—

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr ROWELL: We could go on ad infinitum. The point I am making is that we are looking at eradication. In England during the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak many towns suffered very badly as a consequence of properties having to wind down completely and many of them are not in production at the present time. It takes time to build up a herd again and to find people to do the various jobs that were once undertaken on those properties before the outbreak.

Clause 13 of the bill, which proposes to amend section 22, refers to the destruction of animals. In the event that it is necessary to destroy animals to prevent the spread of disease, it is important that land not be grazed for a set period. That is considered to be appropriate and does not lend itself to a recurrence of the outbreak. In some instances there is a timelag from the actual destruction of the infected beasts until there is no question that the property is not capable of a reinfestation of that disease. The process conducted by the DPI in response to anthrax which affected herds in Collingwood near Wandoan early this year will need to be repeated in the event of an exotic disease outbreak. In relation to this incident, I am not quite sure what occurred as far as compensation is concerned. There is a need for compensation for people who are badly affected to allow them to start producing again. However, there should be a provision for compensation. I am not sure whether that is at a federal or state level, but I would be pleased if the minister would address that issue. We could find ourselves in a similar situation to the anthrax situation with foot-and-mouth disease or BSE. I seek further clarification of that issue from the minister when he sums up the debate.

Part 4 of the bill amends the Fisheries Act, and I refer to white spot in prawns. From what I understand, although there was a major scare in the Northern Territory and in Sydney Harbour I am not absolutely sure that it was identified as white spot. There was some concern about it, but after reading an article it appears that it may have been an aberration of that disease. It may have been something that, in the testing process, certainly looked as if it was white spot, but I think the final conclusion was that it was not. However, this country has a very significant prawn industry worth hundreds of millions of dollars. The aquaculture industry at the present time in this state is worth \$45 million or \$50 million or thereabouts. It would be an absolute disaster if white spot invaded the prawn industry. We may be able to isolate it, but because of its nature—that is, because it is water—it can spread very quickly and we might get to the point where we cannot control it. These amendments provide for the extension of the period for which an emergency disease or quarantine declaration can be made from two to three months. So that period has been extended for another month.

The minister remarked in his second reading speech that it is quite often difficult for the department to make a follow-up regulation within two months due to the time required to adequately identify the nature and spread of the pest as well as the time required to prepare and pass subordinate legislation, so a process has to be gone through. It is essential to remember that the quicker we can do something about it the better chance we have to control that pest or disease. The clause also amends the legislation to ensure that the emergency disease and

quarantine declarations are subordinate legislation. Because it is subordinate legislation this ensures that the notices are subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Of course, we are going through one of those at this present time with a particular issue.

The National Party opposition is supportive of these amendments. However, during committee I will be moving amendments to clauses referred to in this bill under the Plant Protection Act which will ensure that the minister has to repeal a notice or a declaration if it is confirmed that the pest has been eradicated. This legislation has moved from a 21 days ministerial notice to a regulation to three months, and I do not disagree with that. The amendment I will be moving is that in the event that the property is cleared of the pest beyond all shadow of a doubt—and I say 'beyond all shadow of a doubt', and that could occur within a matter of three to four weeks; it may have been thought that the pest was present but it was not—the declaration should be lifted off that property. I will move that amendment in the committee stage of the debate when we can talk about it. Putting a declaration in place against a suspected pest outbreak is important, but it would be unfair to restrict the use of the land if the evidence proves that the pest has been eradicated or there was no actual threat. This only highlights the need for the government of the day to react in the first instance in the quickest possible time with the appropriate course of action prior to a regulation being formed and passed into law.

I cannot stress this more fully other than by saying that in particular cases I have seen where there have been problems with the papaya fruit fly, black sigatoka and some of the other incursions we have seen throughout the north it was absolutely essential that we moved very quickly because it confines it to the areas where the infestations or incursions are found. If we can limit those areas and take measures to restrict the pests to those areas, then there is some chance of eradication. If time goes by, the disease or pest could spread fairly quickly if weather conditions are ideal. As a result, the prospect of eradication can become very costly in the first instance or not achievable in the second.

The proposed legislation amends the Plant Protection Act 1989 to include the control and eradication strategies for the fire ant incursion. In his second reading speech the minister noted that the act is deficient in providing entry powers in respect of pest infestations outside a pest quarantine area, and I can understand the point the minister is getting at. This amendment is designed to ensure a measured and rapid response to a pest outbreak. Where the chief executive invokes the power, an inspector would have express and transparent capacity to enter land and to take action as it is reasonable in the circumstances. If something becomes apparent outside a quarantine area, I think it is appropriate to move on it quickly and make a decision as to what is going to happen with it unhindered. There are no ifs, buts or maybes with this type of thing. We must move quickly and be very decisive about the action.

There was a situation during eradication of the papaya fruit fly where, unfortunately, a young child got hold of a bait containing methyl eugenol and Malathion. There was some concern about the child. As a consequence, it became very difficult to continue with the eradication program and it did set the program back. Commonsense prevailed eventually and we were able to continue with baiting. There was also a situation with an organic farm and its status could have been impaired by the fact that it had chemicals on its property. Fortunately, it was only a small property, but we had to bait all around the periphery of the property to ensure that we more than adequately covered any prospect of the pest spreading. The fortunate thing about those baits was that they would attract the fly from some five kilometres away. Those things make it very difficult in an eradication program, but they have to be addressed. Despite the fact that there are some difficulties if a person has an organic farm or we are encroaching on people's private land, we have to get on with the job. It is difficult at times to get around those issues.

The other accompanying amendment to clause 27 provides power to an inspector to issue a certificate regarding a plant or thing that the inspector could not expect to spread the pest. The explanatory notes suggest that experience in the field has shown that the ability to issue certificates may greatly assist the community confidence where an eradication measure has been taken in relation to a pest. Further, an inspector's certificate declaring the soil to be free from the pest would ensure minimal business interruption in these circumstances.

These two amendments are very important to minimise the possible spread of a pest and the opposition supports their introduction into the legislation. Providing that these inspectors are thorough, we have no problem with it. However, these legislative measures are 12 months too late. I am talking about what happened with the fire ant. Only in February this year did the minister introduce a regulation to control the movement of machinery, plant and other material

that could have been infested with fire ants, 12 months after fire ants were first detected in Brisbane. I believe that the largely unregulated movement of machinery, plant and other material could have been a major worry to people living in the surrounding areas and, understandably, those in the landscaping and nursery industries. It is quite possible that this lack of regulation could be responsible for the spread of the pest to the suburbs of Stretton, Kuraby and Wellington Point.

The minister will recall that in October 2001 I raised with him the need for the quarantine of fire ants in an affected area. But it was not until February 2002 that he introduced a regulation to quarantine the known fire ant areas. It is vital to the success of the eradication program that the fire ant outbreaks are contained and that any further spread of the fire ant that has occurred is detected and eradicated as soon as possible.

I was having a look at the escalating cost of the fire ant program. It has gone up considerably. It started off at \$123 million. Fortunately Queensland, the other states and the Commonwealth have come up with an additional \$17 million. So we are up for about \$140 million. I can understand this being done in a suburban area where there is a mass of people, things are happening and we are trying to stop people going from one point to the other and making sure that equipment is clean and so on. I have been through it. I know how difficult it is with some of the programs, such as the papaya fruit fly eradication program, but there is no solution other than to carry out the quarantine. It might cause some inconvenience, but at the end of the day the value of getting rid of the fire ants will be considerable to this state, and if there is inconvenience and people feel that they are being put out then that is just one of those things that they will have to learn to live with.

I believe that in the future we will see more of these types of pests coming into Australia. We trade with other nations and import goods. We are a trading nation and, unfortunately, with that comes pests from other countries. The whole point of what I have been saying pretty much is that when we do identify that we have a problem, we need to get onto it and go in boots and all and make sure that we impose quarantines. Even though that might be inconvenient for people and cause them some angst, there is no other solution; it just has to be done.

That was the situation with the papaya fruit fly. We had some problems in the initial stages. We had to put in place road inspections stations for produce for other states. Certainly for exports we had to have some very stringent programs for whether we dipped the crop or picked it at a certain time. A whole range of issues had to be administered in the initial stages. A lot of dipping was done in a product called dimethoate, which is certainly very nasty for the people who use it, but at least we continued to trade. As we progressed, people in the banana industry found that they could get away with picking their crop a bit greener, they came up with a certain size and effectively were able to trade in bananas without having to dip them in dimethoate. That applied to other crops as well. But it was never easy; there was a lot of angst.

I can assure members that those days with the papaya fruit fly were very difficult for the government at the time. But the point is that we succeeded. That is the important issue. Some of that angst that people probably felt at that time has been overcome now, knowing that the papaya fruit fly has been eradicated. I think the pessimists said it could never be done; the optimists said five years; and I think we did it in about two and a half to three years. Those are the achievements we can make, but we have to do the hard yards. Unfortunately there is no easy solution.

A similar situation prevailed with the black sigatoka program. Initially they tried to eradicate the areas that were identified. It did not work. It spread. It was a fungus. I think the eradication of black sigatoka will be a world first if they succeed, and it is quite apparent that they are well down the track with it. They are at a point now where the spraying programs and the deleafing programs have been particularly effective. The state has been involved in it. It is unfortunate that in mid-February—and I talked about this at the estimates committee—the state bowed out of it. I was a bit concerned about the reason for that. It was said that the state government withdrew support financially in mid-February 2002 on the grounds that it could be in the soil.

Black sigatoka is not a soil-borne disease. Yes, it might be on the leaves, but it is not a soil-borne disease. That was probably unwarranted. I do not think that was the absolute reason. I think it was more to do with the fact that there were some ferals around and they were very difficult to control. I think that program caused a fair bit of angst because of the likelihood of imports from the Philippines. The Philippines is an area that has black sigatoka, moko, bugtok, freckle and bract mosaic—to name a few. It has a whole range of pests. Once again, it is good to

see that Biosecurity has considered the position. The Philippines now has a right of reply, but it appears that the industry is well down the track of, firstly, eradicating black sigatoka and, secondly, stopping imports on the ground that it could be extremely dangerous to bring that type of product into Australia.

A further aspect of this part of the bill that I will pursue later at the committee stage relates to what would happen in the event of fire ants being found in a nursery or other business after a certificate has already been issued by an inspector. They might do the treatment and apply chlorpyrifos or drench them or whatever, but there is still the likelihood that fire ants could be found. If a person has a certificate and they take it away to Toowoomba or Rockhampton or somewhere like that, what happens in that particular situation?

The final part of the bill that I think is most important is that relating to the Plant Protection Act and the Stock Act. As I noted at the beginning of my remarks on this legislation, the National Party—

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr ROWELL: I am sure this is very educational for members opposite.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr ROWELL: The member has a choice. He does not have to stay if he does not want to. As I noted at the beginning of my remarks on the legislation, the National Party—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! The member for Hinchinbrook will not be intimidated by the member for Bulimba.

Mr ROWELL: I will try not to be. I will put on a brave front.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will protect the member.

Mr ROWELL: Your protection will be absolutely invaluable, I can assure you of that, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I noted at the beginning of my remarks on this legislation, the National Party opposition will be moving amendments at the committee stage regarding the need for the state to take responsibility for the reporting of pests and exotic diseases on state controlled land. These new laws place tough requirements on private land-holders to guard against any exotic pest or disease outbreak, and the opposition is in full support of this stance that has been taken by the minister. However, there are noticeable silences in relation to containing risks. I would like to mention what is happening in national parks. I recently went into the Lakefield area and looked at the cattle there. The national parks in areas around Laura station and Kalpow have somewhere between 3,500 and 4,000 cattle.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr ROWELL: It is not important to the member for South Brisbane. All she is worried about is what happens around here in Brisbane. I am worried about the rest of the state and people in primary industries who have to deal with the issues.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr ROWELL: It does not mean anything to a lot of people. It just does not gel with them. But people in some of these far-reaching places in Queensland, such as those the member for Gregory represents, find it extremely difficult to contend with some of the remarks made in this chamber.

Something like 700 to 1,000 head of stock are sold every second year off that area. There are 50,000 pigs. That estimate was made by the pest management group in the Cooktown area. Can the minister imagine what would happen if foot-and-mouth disease were introduced into an area such as that in the wet season? It would be absolutely disastrous. But you cannot shoot in a national park and you cannot use 1080. We are really restricted in our ability to contain the spread of any disease.

There has been a massive increase in numbers. A similar situation prevails in many of the other national parks and world heritage areas. Those areas are absolutely devastated by the actions of wild pigs, which dig and root up areas and make one enormous mess. That is not the only concern; it is also their potential to carry disease. The minister would probably be aware of the likelihood of Japanese encephalitis spreading through the pig community particularly in the northern sector.

There is a major problem on state controlled land—in national parks, forestry areas and so on—where these types of pests exist. Those pests could be the carriers of a disease. If a disease

did spread through these areas I can assure the House that what would happen in Britain would be a Sunday school picnic compared with what we would be confronted with. I raise that with the minister very clearly. It would destroy the industry. As the minister said in his second reading speech and in the green paper, this industry is worth about \$5.8 billion. All the jobs, jobs, jobs in the animal industries, particularly the cloven-foot animal industries, would be in absolute disarray. We would be annihilated. So it is important that these national parks and state controlled land areas are also made responsible for controlling the pests and diseases that may get into them.

The amendments I will introduce ensure that public servants such as park rangers and forestry officers will be obligated to monitor and report any notifiable disease or pest outbreak on a state controlled area that comes under their jurisdiction. It is absolutely essential. Early detection is the key to the success of any eradication campaign. Queensland must do all in its power to stop the outbreak of exotic pests and diseases that come under the Plant Protection Act and Stock Act. Otherwise we will have a situation not dissimilar to the recently passed Land Protection Act, where the government is all too willing to legislate against private landholders but remains at arm's length to ensuring that the state departments and their employees have an equal responsibility placed on them to deal with state controlled land, including national parks and crown land.

It would be extremely foolish for this government to invite the risk of an outbreak by letting itself and its employees off the hook. I will elaborate on these amendments during the committee stage. I think it is vitally important that the minister considers them to ensure that this legislation offers the strongest possible action to report and counter an outbreak of an exotic pest or disease in Queensland.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (6.15 p.m.): The bill before the House amends key provisions of several acts—the Agricultural Standards Act 1994, the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Fisheries Act 1994, the Plant Protection Act 1989 and the Stock Act. The focus of this bill is to give priority to enhancing Queensland's legislative capacity to prepare for and respond to potentially devastating exotic terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases and the exotic environmental pest the red imported fire ant—exotic pests and diseases which have the potential to shut down Queensland's major export industries. It is important for Queensland to have in place legislative powers that allow government agencies to move quickly and effectively with industry to reduce the economic impact on those export industries, such as beef and fish.

On this occasion I will not spend much time discussing what are important issues for government and for Queensland industries, in particular producers in my electorate. I will spend a couple of minutes discussing a couple of other issues important to me. As an elected representative of the Queensland parliament I represent a large rural constituency. Because I remain close to the people who work and live on the land and because I was raised on the land, I have a good understanding of what rural life is all about. I am the first to admit that I am certainly no expert in that area, but I have lived the way of the man on the land so I have a feel for the issues that impact on the families of rural producers.

Most members in this place would recognise that Queensland is a unique Australian state because it is not dominated by its capital city. Rural Queensland and the provincial cities which serve it are home to almost 50 per cent of the state's population. Rural Queensland and its regional cities are the engine room for the state's economy. This is where our booming export markets deliver jobs and wealth that we all share in. There is no argument that Queensland's prosperity has been built on its primary industry and resource sectors. Because of its importance, there is an obligation on the government and the rural sector to pursue well-defined policies aimed at promoting sustainable development of our state's resources over a longer term. To do that we must have in place the legislation that is necessary to drive those policies.

The importance of the Queensland livestock industry cannot be underestimated. The *Agricultural Commodities* publication of the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows the importance of the beef industry. It states—

At 30 June 2000 there were some 24.4 million meat cattle and calves in Australia which was 5% (1.1 million head) more than the previous year. There were significant increases reported in herd sizes in Queensland and Western Australia but these were offset by falls in New South Wales and Tasmania.

The number of establishments reporting meat cattle increased by 1% to 76,700 at 30 June 2000. This was mainly due to increased numbers of establishments with meat cattle in Queensland and New South Wales.

So beef cattle to Australia—and to Queensland—is very important. As a member representing a rural electorate with a very big beef cattle base—I think it is two million head in the central Queensland area—it is important that we recognise the contribution that the beef industry

makes not only to Queensland but also to Australia and the number of jobs that go with that industry.

I must say that I was rocked by the announcement yesterday that Consolidated Meat Group's Lakes Creek meatworks in Rockhampton would close, throwing about 700 people out of work. The announcement came after some seven months of negotiations, lockouts, strikes and picket lines. Unlike many people, I did not really believe that CMG would stoop so low as to shut down permanently the second largest meatworks in the country simply because senior management could not get its own way.

I cannot understand how the editorial in today's Rockhampton *Bulletin* could blame the union—the workers. I want to refer to the *Bulletin*, because I think it is important that it is included in *Hansard*. This editorial is written by the editor, John Schalch, who is a very reasonable man. Usually he writes a balanced editorial in his paper, but I think this time he has missed the mark. He states in his editorial—

...the union must now wear much of the blame for CMG's decision to close.

In an industry which has undergone massive upheaval internally to meet the demands of a changing global market, this same union has already led its members to closures of abattoirs in Townsville and Kilcoy, putting the egos of union's head office before its members' needs.

The editorial goes on to state—

The union's bloody-mindedness to try and force CMG to its knees has now cost its members their jobs and any workplace leverage on which to build better conditions for the future.

I find that very, very disheartening. I think it is a cop-out to blame the workers. The editorial has failed to get the balance right. It has failed to explain the reasons behind the claim by Hughes, the general manager, that the plant had accumulated significant losses since the company acquired it. The editor has failed to tell the reasons why there was such a large loss at the meatworks.

I have to tell this House that over the past month management has been ruthless in its dealings with the union. Its actions in locking the gates and shutting down the operation only confirm that closure was its real agenda. It confirms that senior management wanted to implement at any cost work procedure changes that were unreasonable and unsustainable. Anything less than changes to rates of pay and hours of work to the advantage of CMG would mean failure to the executive chairmen, Ray O'Dell and John Hughes. This left them with nowhere to go but to close down the plant. Workers, their families and the Rockhampton community now have to live with the consequences of an industrial relations hardline attitude of a ruthless, hardnosed personality like John Hughes and the incompetence of a chief executive who sent a pie factory broke in 1998.

The people of Rockhampton need to know that in two years Simplot's Four'N Twenty pie factory in Melbourne went from losing \$200,000 a day in sales because of a dispute over the conditions of an enterprise agreement—the same argument that we were having at Rockhampton—to a \$14 million operating profit under a new management team that respected its work force, a new management team that was prepared to work with the workers and put in place working conditions and pay rates that were acceptable to those people who were at that particular plant.

O'Dell and Hughes wanted employees to accept reduced rates of pay and to make up lost wages for ordinary hours by working extra time on shift, working overtime and working extra days per week, per fortnight and/or Saturdays. Despite their unreserved desire to work, employees could not go back under conditions that were less rewarding than those enjoyed under the previous agreement. Not only would this disadvantage the existing work force; it would also set new standards or a precedent for other meatworks. A lot of people do not understand that. This is not just about the Rockhampton CMG meatworks; it is about the meat industry in Queensland. Hughes and O'Dell set out to radically change a production environment that was noted for its efficiency and its skill level, for its teamwork and cooperation. The actions of CMG were not about increasing output; they were about not having working conditions determined by an agreement. They were about CMG having employees working under the company's conditions—conditions that were less than those that the workers had previously.

What has happened is a shameful act of betrayal of workers, families, the community and cattle producers. There has been a misrepresentation of the facts, threats, standover tactics and sabotage on the floor of the plant. The sabotage that I am talking about is when the boss of the plant walks into a kill chain and ups the pace from a speed where the work force can manage,

work alongside one another and do their job safely, to a pace where the workers are almost running on the spot to get the work done. It is impossible to get people to work any faster than they can. They put in the maximum effort.

Mr Shine: And dangerous.

Mr PEARCE: And dangerous. Not only are we devastated by the news of the closure; we are also angered and disgusted by the manner in which CMG has gone about destroying the lives of workers and their families. Hughes and O'Dell wanted flexibility, but it had to be at the disadvantage of the work force. Since the beginning of the year, Hughes and O'Dell have been responsible for the destruction of the goodwill between management and its working force. We have seen a relationship meltdown caused by the arrogance and incompetence of senior managers who lack commonsense and, most importantly, people management skills. Managers such as Hughes and O'Dell cannot comprehend—they do not understand—that workers want the right to a decent living wage, that workers want proper housing and all the necessities of life such as access to education and health care for their families.

Bosses will say that profits come first—and how often do we hear that? Of course workers will not accept less than what they had before. Of course they will organise and fight against it. Hughes and O'Dell can take credit for their attempts to set a new low level of wages and conditions for meatworkers—a level that no worker should be forced to accept. Nobody in this House understands the plight of those workers more than the member for Rockhampton, the honourable minister, because the meatworks is in his electorate. I know that with his tenacity, the minister will be working behind the scenes to see what he can do to get that place open at some time in the future. It is not going to be an easy task, but we know that Robert Schwarten will be in there doing it for us.

We should never forget that it is the anti-worker industrial relations laws of the Howard government that allow big business and the multinationals to impose their demands on the work force. While Hughes in his arrogance talks about new realities, the reality is that Rockhampton has lost over 700 jobs. What has happened in Rockhampton is a clear case of selfish mismanagement at senior level. We have witnessed a systematic lockout of workers and ineffective negotiation and consultation.

In Townsville, management, unions and the work force were able to put in place an agreement that delivered sustainable production levels, acceptable wages and conditions, and a stable economic base for the city. The difference between management in Townsville and management in Rockhampton is ability, commonsense and the will to get a satisfactory outcome. The hardline, softening-up approach of Hughes has failed, which means that he is a failure. His stance exhibits what can only be described as a culture of denial. This has enabled him to deny that it has been his behaviour, his poor management practices and his inability to manage people that has led to the closure of the Lakes Creek meatworks. This culture of denial is an aspect of management and is not the culture of the work force.

Men and women from Rockhampton and its districts no longer have a place to work because of the failings of a management team that just could not manage. This is a very unacceptable situation for the people of Rockhampton. I know a lot of meatworkers. They live in my electorate, just as many of them live in the electorate of Rockhampton and the electorate of Keppel.

Meatworkers are people, like most of us, who just want to go to work, do their job and make a living so that they can provide quality of life for their families. This act of closing down the Packer-owned meatworks is despicable and one that we should all reject. We have to do what we can, as a government, to help these workers out. It is disappointing that this has happened. I know that the minister will do whatever he can to work in with the government and I know that the member for Rockhampton will do whatever he can to work with government ministers to try and turn this situation around. It will not be easy, but at least those ministers are doing what they can to look after workers in Queensland.

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (6.30 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr Johnson: Where did you come from?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I have just come back from Rockhampton. I have travelled to Rockhampton this afternoon.

Mr Johnson: Give us the good news!

Mr SCHWARTEN: I am happy to answer the member for Gregory's question about the good news because I know that the honourable member is interested in the meat industry in Rockhampton. Unfortunately, there is no good news. The reality is that the rug has been pulled out from underneath some 700 odd people, which tops up the 500 or 600 people who have already left the meat industry and probably the district as a result of this.

We had an excellent meeting this afternoon. As members know, Rockhampton is a very tightly knit community. We do not always agree politically, we do not always agree industrially, but the people sitting around the table this afternoon from all walks of life and all political persuasions were there to try and help the workers through the turmoil of the current dispute. The reality is that this will not be easy. It is never easy to do these things. I thank the honourable member for Fitzroy for his support. He and I work as a team in this regard. We are always there for workers in central Queensland, and I thank the member for Fitzroy for his support in that regard. Jim has let me do the running of it, but he has been supporting it.

I note its relevance to the bill being debated tonight, the repeal of the Meat Industry Act 1993 and, in particular, to the Queensland Abattoir Corporation. One of the facts of life is that calls were made some time back to get rid of state involvement in the meat industry—and that passed over both governments—which made some sense at the time. However, when a private company behaves in the way that this company has, I wonder whether we should not still be favouring those old interventionist times. Even though I support the repeal of this act, some shabby, shabby bits and pieces have happened in the meat industry in Rockhampton, dating back many years. I wonder whether it should have been a state-run corporation back in the Vestys day, when they bled the industry dry and then sold it on to Smorgans, who then sold it on to Tancreds, who then got involved with Packer. Of course, the loser out of that was Tancred. I think Geoff Tancred left there with the shirt on his back and not much else. If we had not repealed all of that, I wonder whether or not somewhere along the line we would have been able to maintain a better industry in this state. I have had my differences with organisations such as the AMH, but in reality the way these workers have been used as gambling chips on a roulette table is nothing short of disgraceful.

In November last year, half the work force was stood down. They used all the excuses under the sun, such as the price of meat, and all the rest of it. What they were really saying—and the member for Gregory will understand this, as a cattle producer himself previously—was that they did not want to pay the beef producers the price they thought it was worth. It has been great to see Agforce being very supportive at various periods in time.

As time wore on, one could quite clearly see the agenda in this whole dispute; that is, what happened yesterday. Find another buyer for at least part of the plant and get out as quickly as their legs would carry them. Obviously, they reckoned they had made a bad investment. How did they do it? They closed the plant early because the cockies wanted too much money for their beef. That was the first step. The second step was to write to all of their employees stating that they would start in January, as always.

What happened as a result of that? January came and the workers were all told to turn up at the Pilbeam Theatre for their annual meeting. Guess what else they did? CMG notified the Brisbane media to be there. Why? Because they were going to tell the workers that they were not opening the plant. They were going to tell those people that they were out on the street. They would not sack them because that involved some entitlements because an EBA was still in place. So they went down the track of workers being locked out and then being blamed because the plant was not efficient.

In the meantime, how much money have they spent? \$50 million, I am told. Where did they spend it? At the bottom end of the meatworks—not at the top end, the kill floor, as their competitors did. In reality, what did we see as a result of that? More negotiations; more discussions before the commission; the cancelling of the EB; the reintroduction of the federal award; \$13.80 an hour for a boner standing on a cold concrete floor, working 10 hours a day. Did they expect productivity out of that? I would like to see members of this House try to do that. I would like to see any worker out there try to do that. I have great sympathy for every worker in this state, but I do not see anybody doing it as tough as they did. \$13.80 an hour for somebody who has a trade to work on a concrete floor, in below zero temperatures in many cases, hour in, hour out, day and night.

I noticed that Warren Truss blamed the unions today. Isn't that typical, blaming those poor souls? All they can do is provide their labour and their skills and they are still being blamed

because that meatworks did not spend their funds as the meatworks at AMH did. The member for Gregory will understand this analogy. It is like saying to a bloke: 'We will give you an axe and we will give the next bloke a chainsaw and see who can win.' Well, the blokes in Rocky had the axes. The federal government has come out today and really shown its true colours. It just shows what a Tory government will do if it gets the chance. Every unionist in Queensland ought to see that for what it is: no sympathy for the worker.

Mr Johnson: I disagree with that. I certainly do. I certainly do.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Let me say that the member for Gregory is a rarity. I accept his sincerity in this regard because I know that he is not like that.

Warren Truss's comments today were bashing the workers when, in fact, CMG did not say it was the fault of the workers. They said that for the last couple of generations that plant has not paid dividends—not because of the workers but because of capital investment in it. Vestys, the overseas poms that ran it, ran it into the ground. Smorgans picked it up and did not spend money on it, and so it went on—those halcyon days. When they closed it down last year, they blamed the cockies and said they wanted too much money for their meat. The poor old worker went out on the street.

The reality we must all face is that today there are 700 people in Rockhampton who do not have a job—not through any fault of their own but because matters were taken out of their hands. They used the right processes to argue and bargain and were continually battered back—and I reckon it was deliberate. I reckon it was deliberate, to just stave them off until they could get another partner and then close it down. As simple as that!

It gives me no joy to talk about this subject. I have a long history with the people who work there. I went to school with some of those people. My mother worked in the Lakes Creek meatworks during the war. Those people are the salt of the earth, and to hear them being belittled and degraded the way they have been is just outrageous. For the \$13.80 an hour they took home, they would have been better off on the dole, but they went there and they worked. They took protected industrial action, which is their industrial entitlement. Guess what they ended up with? They received severance pay today on an award rate 60 per cent or 70 per cent worse than if the company had the decency on 1 November to pay them out under the EBA. Members can draw their own conclusion about where this whole issue finishes and starts. It is a disgrace, but I am delighted with the people in Rockhampton who rallied behind these workers. I turn aside any of those comments that it is the workers' fault, because the evidence does not stack up in that regard. The mayor of Rockhampton, representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and the various organisations that represent industry in the area were there today, because they know that when we lose 700 families from the city we all hurt. We are determined to do something about it. I have said some derogatory things about the repeal of the act; nevertheless, it is a fact of life that it needs to be repealed. We need to live in a modern world. I support the bill.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (6.41 p.m.): I rise to speak on what I believe is probably one of the most contentious but responsible pieces of legislation this House will ever debate. I do not say that lightly, but the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 concerns all our futures. The Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing just spoke about the dilemma and plight of the 700 meatworkers at CMG's plant at Rockhampton. Let me say that it is not only those 700 meatworkers but all the other meatworkers and other workers in processing plants who derive their livings from primary industry who will be affected if we do not support this legislation. I hung on every word that my colleagues the members for Hinchinbrook and Fitzroy said this afternoon in relation to primary industries. We in this state are lucky that Dr Warren Hoey, a veterinarian, is director-general of the Department of Primary Industries. In his professional capacity, Dr Hoey fully understands what this legislation is all about.

The Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing just referred to the plight of those 700 people at Rockhampton. Well, my heart goes out to them, too. I believe that a lot more could have been done earlier. The discussion and deliberations in November last year should have been more formalised. It hurts me a lot to think about those 700 workers, their families and the flow-on effects that this situation will have right across the Rockhampton community. We saw it in the coalfields of central Queensland a couple of years ago. These types of disputes are not helpful. They are not healthy to communities and are not helpful to the ongoing viability of these communities.

This legislation refers to agriculture, exotic diseases and animals, fisheries, plant protection and the Stock Act. The real issue in this respect is one thing: commonsense. In relation to the

identification of exotic diseases, we can all say that, yes, we know how to identify such diseases, but I guarantee that only one per cent or two per cent of the members of this House could identify a lot of diseases in livestock or plant. I know that my colleague is very professional in regard to the horticultural industry and other such primary industries, but foot-and-mouth is something that we do not understand or appreciate the full impact of. The same could be said for mad cow disease and for many other diseases which for a number of years we have been trying to keep out of this country—diseases we will keep out of this country.

The one way that we can keep these diseases out is through not being ignorant of the facts. The real issue is that a lot of people out there are ignorant of exactly and precisely what this legislation means. When I say 'ignorant' I mean the ignorance of people both inside and outside the industry. There are people inside the industry today—and they will probably want to slam me for saying this—who will take shortcuts and do anything at all to get a quid to make absolutely certain that they survive and 'bugger the rest'. I do not say that lightly. We have to make absolutely certain that measures are in place to protect all players—from the producers to the providers. When I say the 'providers', I mean those people who buy that product, process it, create employment and then off-load that product, whether it be overseas, on the international market, on the domestic market or on the interstate market. I cannot stress enough how important it is that we put in place very stringent and tough measures to protect our primary industries. When I say our 'primary industries' I mean our livestock and food and fibre industries.

We in this country are lucky. When people say that we are the lucky country, we are the lucky country by that far that we just cannot comprehend it. A lot of people think that 'primary industries' is the bloke down the road who milks 100 or 200 cows, the bloke who shears 150, 300 or 400 bales of wool, the bloke who trucks off 500 or 600 bullocks a year, the bloke who harvests 200 or 250 acres of cane a year or the bloke who produces 'X' amount of fruit and vegetables a year. That is all very well, but people forget the hardship that those people endure. They forget the support bases and other providers for the primary industries sector that create a viable and very productive environment. The real issue is the identification factor. I do not say this lightly, but one of the most crucial and grave situations confronting the Department of Primary Industries today is having a sufficient number of professional people. I am talking about inspectors, whether they be veterinarians, horticulturalists, stock inspectors or whatever. It is absolutely paramount that we have in place professionals who can identify problems and who understand not only preventative measures but what the real problem is. I do not know what the minister's department has done about this. We have seen those glossy brochures that were handed around the parliament, but the minister's department would do well to put out a brochure that identifies precisely the ramifications that some of these diseases would have on livestock and plant industries in this state. When I say that—

Mr Palaszczuk: The livestock ones have been done.

Mr JOHNSON: I know that. I really believe that a number of people do not understand what could happen in terms of the plant, food and fibre and horticulture industries. I stood up and fought to stop the importation of Californian grapes into this country, because I was worried about what would happen if the glassy-winged sharp shooter moth were introduced. When we talk about methyl bromide and all these substances that can address such problems—and those substances are certainly not on the open market in this country—we again have had primary industries on a federal basis and AQIS saying that it is about making certain we do not jeopardise trade relations. If we have to jeopardise our exports because of losses in imports from our trading partners, I say so be it. We have to leave those imports overseas if they are going to jeopardise the future of our agricultural industries in this state, whether it be the pork industry, the beef industry or any other major livestock industry. We have problems with white fly in the cotton industry. All of these sorts of things are impediments and are against what we stand for.

As the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, the member for Rockhampton, said a moment ago, it is not just going to be those 700 members of the CMG work force who will be out of a job; it will be everybody across the length and breadth of the state. Transport operations will go by the wayside. Rail transport servicing regional and rural Queensland will go by the wayside, as will business centres in those areas. A whole host of businesses that the minister has not even dreamt of will be affected if we have an outbreak of these exotic diseases.

I cannot stress enough the importance of this legislation and the importance of identification. A few years ago, in Capella I saw a 'crop' of parthenium weed. In its infancy the leaf of the plant does not resemble that of the mature adult plant. Anyone driving along the highway would ask, 'What sort of a crop is this?' No doubt the minister has seen examples of this. It was a crop of

parthenium! It comes back to the ignorance factor. People are not able to identify these plant pests. If we lined up 100 graziers and asked them to identify a parthenium plant, I guarantee that we would not get 100 per cent identification. A lot of people do not have the capacity to identify plant pests. There are a lot of noxious plants that I cannot identify.

I cannot stress enough the point that when the minister releases his document it should be circulated the length and breadth of the state so that ordinary Joe and Mary Citizen understand what this is all about and its ramifications. If we do not uphold the principles of this legislation, we will shut down not only the whole of Queensland but Australia.

As my colleague the shadow minister, the member for Hinchinbrook, said earlier, last week I accompanied him on a trip to the southern end of Cape York and the electorate of Cook. We visited places such as Cooktown, Lakelands and Laura. We also went to Lakefield National Park. As the member for Hinchinbrook stated, in that national park we saw wild or feral cattle—cattle originally from adjoining properties. We saw the biggest and fattest feral pigs I have ever seen in my life. There were not just 10 or 20. The ones we saw numbered 50 or 60.

We have to look very closely at how we will eliminate that element. For example, it might be through a campaign of 1080 in national parks. We have to raise with the Department of Natural Resources how we will address this issue. The problem is grave. The minister knows as well as I do that in the Wet Tropics of north Queensland during the wet season the best spreaders of foot-and-mouth disease are pigs. We have seen what happened in the UK. The whole of our livestock export industry could be shut down overnight. We could forget about our thoroughbred racing industry; it would be shut down. The same could be said for our wool exports. Only the total eradication of our livestock would address the problem. The situation would be a bit different from that in the UK, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, which cover a smaller geographic area. However, their seasonal conditions do not support the simple eradication of foot-and-mouth or mad cow disease. However, I cannot emphasise how serious the situation would be if that happened in this state.

I call on not only the state government but also its federal and state government counterparts to make certain that every citizen across the length and breadth of this state and nation is aware of what the ramifications of an outbreak of these exotic diseases would be. A lot of the people who visit national parks would not be aware of the issue I am raising this evening. A lot of producers would not understand what I am talking about this evening. Whilst a lot of producers do care, there is a 'she'll be right' mentality out there. If this does happen to us, there will be a total shutdown of not only primary industries but also many other industries closely related to primary industries.

Over time we have seen an erosion of stock inspection services throughout the state. This is an impediment to what we are trying to achieve. The important point to remember is the importance of identification. I cannot stress this enough. This is particularly so in relation to our Wet Tropics regions and the export of live cattle through the north. The islands from Cape York to New Guinea present a problem in terms of quarantine services. I do not know whether its quarantine services are as efficient as ours. We know what happened with black sigatoka and papaya fruit fly. We know that pest came down from the north.

I congratulate the DPI officers involved in those eradication campaigns. They did a good job. Tonight I cannot overemphasise the importance of ensuring that we have proper stock inspection services. We need to have officers from the Department of Primary Industries located in every region. Those officers need to be trained professionals. We must also have programs and workshops for educating the wider community about the ramifications of an outbreak of these pests and diseases. Again, it comes back to the wider community—the people who derive their living from the land, including all of the people in the country towns and regional cities throughout the state whose incomes are linked to the land. In supporting this legislation, I urge every member, regardless of whether they hold an urban or a rural seat, to remember what the consequences would be were we not to uphold the principles underlying this legislation.

In conclusion, I congratulate primary industries officers around the state. They do a magnificent job. This evening I acknowledge the work of Dr Bob Cottam, who recently retired as the veterinary officer for the central west. He has been based in Longreach for over 20 years. There is probably nobody more knowledgeable in respect of diseases in the northern and southern hemispheres than Dr Bob Cottam. His knowledge of the livestock industry in both the northern and southern hemispheres is probably equal to none. The minister would agree that people of Bob Cottam's expertise and knowledge are important to our livestock industry in Queensland having a sound ability to counter outbreaks when they occur.

A couple of years ago, there was an anthrax outbreak just north of Rockhampton around Marlborough. Bob Cottam was one of the veterinary officers assigned to the task of trying to quarantine that outbreak and at the same time bring about an outcome that would be advantageous to the livestock industry in that region and also the state as a whole. I wanted to put that on the record tonight. I am sure that everybody who knows Dr Cottam will support me in what I am saying, because it is people like Bob Cottam who have made a difference over a long period because they are passionate about what they do. He is truly a professional when it comes to his veterinary expertise. The wealth of knowledge he has passed on to his counterparts in the industry is second to none. All I can say to Bob Cottam is this: I thank him for his contribution to the livestock industry and the elimination of diseases throughout this state by trying to put in place a preventative program. I wish Bob every success for his future and good health in his retirement. I hope it is a long and happy one.

Debate, on motion of Mr Mulherin, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (7.01 p.m.): I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Australian Tourism Exchange

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (7.01 p.m.): On Friday, 31 May I attended the Australian Tourism Exchange 2002 trade show. Literally billions of dollars of tourism contracts are written at each and every trade show. It was the second year the trade show has been held in Queensland. Quite frankly, I am glad I went along this year and am sorry I missed it the year before. Next year the trade show will be moving down south. Also present at the trade show were the federal Minister for Tourism, Joe Hockey; the federal Employment Minister, Mal Brough; our Tourism Minister, Merri Rose; other state tourism ministers; and of course a number of other federal and state colleagues.

A group of us were addressed by two outstanding people in the tourism industry—Ken Boundy, the Managing Director of the Australian Tourism Commission, and Alex De Waal, the director of marketing for Tourism Queensland. Both of them gave insightful and interesting addresses. During the addresses Ken and Alex really stressed the following. First of all, it is Australia which is the destination for people coming from overseas, not necessarily Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria or any other state. Overseas visitors may know about Sydney and the Great Barrier Reef, but they do not really relate to individual states. Therefore, it is important to actually sell Australia and then, once you sell Australia, differentiate between the states. It is also important to get coordination and cooperation between the state and federal bodies, particularly the Australian Tourism Commission, and both of them assured us that that is the objective over the next few years.

A few weeks ago I received from Ken Boundy certain information on what is expected to happen in tourism in Australia over the next decade. The information Ken sent me reinforced the necessity for cooperation and marketing in the decade ahead. The information included the following: in total, visitor nights are expected to record average annual growth over the forecast period—that is, to the period 2012—of about 4.5 per cent, which is actually slower than the growth in the number of visitors. In fact, the inbound visitor numbers should average about 7.3 per cent annual growth over the forecast period, more than doubling to reach about 10.4 million by 2012. The difference is simply this: there is an average annual decline in the average length of stay of about 2.5 per cent, with the average length of stay falling from about 25 nights in 2001 to under 19 nights in 2012. The challenge for Australia, for Queensland and the other states is to not only entice tourists from overseas but also get them to sample more of Australia each year.

Time expired.

Queensland Liberal Party

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (7.04 p.m.): If the ruling faction of the Queensland Liberal Party gets its way—and it always does—then this parliament will soon make political history. The Santoro-Carroll faction is determined to drive the member for Robina from the leadership of the

parliamentary Liberal Party. It is equally determined that he will not be replaced by the member for Caloundra or the member for Moggill, and I am told that they share that determination. If the member for Robina is to be driven from the leadership at the party conference in September and the members for Caloundra and Moggill are not acceptable, then who will lead the Liberal Party in this parliament? The answer if the ruling faction succeeds is no-one—at least no-one in this parliament. The parliamentary party will uniquely be led by someone who has never served in this House and probably never will.

Now, that rules out Mr Santoro. His ambitions lie elsewhere—anywhere but in a parliament where he must be democratically elected. This is why he is demanding Senator John Herron's seat in the Senate even though Senator Herron has just begun a new six-year term. The new leader of the parliamentary Liberal Party will be Councillor Michael Caltabiano, the President of the Liberal Party and the front man for the Carroll-Santoro faction. The fact that he has never served in this House—and hopefully never will—obviously does not matter to the branch stackers who run the Liberal Party today. Their born-again mentality obviously has no regard for the constitution of Queensland and the standing orders of the House let alone the will of the people of Queensland.

Apparently Mr Caltabiano has done a deal with the member for Ryan, Michael Johnson, to gain preselection for the seat of Moggill when Dr Watson retires. That requires Mr Caltabiano to guarantee that the current Liberal Party constitution, which not only allows branch stacking but actually encourages it, will not be changed in exchange for Mr Johnson's support. It is therefore little wonder that Mr Caltabiano has been so determined in his attacks on the member for Robina and his plan to end branch stacking and preselection rigging. Such a plan would actually make the Liberal Party democratic, and they could not have that, could they? The branch stacking which began in Ryan and secured Mr Johnson's party endorsement has moved very rapidly to the seat of Fadden where some 50 Vietnamese have suddenly joined the Springwood business branch in the Fadden electorate even though they got in on the cheap—joining as pensioners or students. The fact that not one of them lives in Fadden is of no relevance, and that is why the Liberal Party's existing constitution, which enabled Michael Johnson and other Liberal members to stack branches and guarantee their preselections, will not be changed.

The member for Robina may have right on his side, but unless he can muster the numbers the Liberal Party in this parliament will not have a parliamentary leader—certainly not one recognised by the standing orders. The Liberal Party will hold its state convention in September. It will be the party's last chance to gain at least a semblance of transparency and accountability in this state. It will fail this challenge for one simple reason: the ruling faction is in power thanks to branch stacking, especially ethnic branch stacking, and it needs continued branch stacking to retain its power base. The fact that its rules are so transparently undemocratic is clearly of no concern to the powerbrokers who are determined to drive the member for Robina from the leadership and into oblivion.

Bob Quinn can defend himself, and I am sure he will at every available opportunity. Whilst I do not often agree with Bob on many political issues, I have known Bob for over 40 years and he is an honest and conscientious person. Unfortunately, these qualities have no place in the Queensland branch of the Liberal Party and hence this attempt to drive Bob Quinn out of the party leadership and parliament. I hope they do not succeed, but I fear that because of the dirty deals I have set out they will.

Time expired.

Sugar Industry

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (7.08 p.m.): I rise to speak of the cane industry crisis and the repercussions which have resulted in an increased campaign by charity counselling services to help canegrowers cope with the ailing industry. The Canegrowers organisation has predicted that between 600 and 1,000 farmers, which equates to about 15 per cent of the industry, will cease production within the next year if the current situation does not improve. In addition to this, Lifeline has revealed that it has had an increase in calls to the tune of approximately 28 per cent mainly from farming communities around the north. A Lifeline spokesman has been quoted as saying that the potential consequences of the industry's current predicament for the families in the sugar growing areas include stress, depression, increased alcohol use, more domestic violence and suicide. It has been reported that counsellors are receiving an unprecedented number of calls from growers contemplating suicide, many of whom are considering killing themselves in such a

way as to make their death appear accidental. In dealing with feelings of uncertainty and hopelessness, it appears that many farmers see this as a way of giving their family a chance to clear their debts.

This is a very serious situation that is the responsibility of all government representatives to address posthaste. Farming is an avenue for many people to continue the traditions of their families, and at present children who would normally see their future in the farming sector are being encouraged to find alternative employment or move to the cities. It is important to note also that it is not only farming families and their children who are being affected; harvesters, mill workers and the towns that are built on sugar are also reeling from the crisis.

As many sugar growing towns are glaring in the face of possible and virtual extinction, the very real issue of Public Service closures is almost bound to follow. Sugar growing communities right across Queensland's east coast could very well see their corner stores closing, a reduction in businesses by which to source supplies, health services in decline, and the availability of basic everyday goods and services grinding to a halt. The picture that I have painted is indeed gloomy, but it is indicative of what is happening in every sugar town in Queensland. Farmers are going to the wall, and the resulting chain of possible suicides, the breakdown of families, the insolvent businesses and dying towns is imminent unless something is done to assist in the stabilisation and long-term viability of this industry.

Time expired.

Gold Coast Greek Festival

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (7.11 p.m.): On Sunday, 28 July, I had the pleasure of representing the Premier and officially opening the 2002 Gold Coast Greek Festival. I was joined by the member for Albert. This year was the fourth Gold Coast Greek Festival, and I would like to see it remain a tradition on our calendar. If one takes into account this year's attendance of over 30,000 visitors, I am sure there are a lot of people out there who agree with me.

Every major city has its festival, and the Gold Coast Greek Festival is unique. It combines the appeal of our wonderful climate and holiday atmosphere with the ethnic influence which makes our society so exceptional. Queensland's image is truly enhanced by the many nationalities and cultures represented in our population—especially the Greeks. Greeks are prominent in our society in every field—in law, medicine, politics, entertainment, business, sport and, of course, in the cafes and restaurants which give Queensland's food industry an international flavour.

This festival was born out of an idea by a small group of enthusiastic people in the Greek community who saw it as a way for the general community to learn more and to enjoy the many aspects of Greek culture. I certainly know that I am not alone in indulging in the delightful Greek cuisine. Thousands of honey puffs were consumed as well as half a tonne of squid. The traditional dancers entertained many people, and the mayor and I found some great stress relief during the plate smashing. The organising committee deserves praise. They spend nine months making sure that the event is the success that it is. So to Sandra Voukelatos, Helen Raptis, George Grosdanis, Toula Marendi and Rebecca Cominos goes a big thankyou for all their hard work. I also thank the hundreds of volunteers who came from Brisbane and the Gold Coast to help out on the day. I also send out a special thanks to John Marendi and Jim Raptis, who guided me through the event on the day.

I am proud to be part of a government that encourages different communities to maintain their ethnic identities and actively pursues a society where all persons, irrespective of their background, can participate in the social, cultural, educational, political and economic life of Queensland. I truly find the Gold Coast Greek Festival to be a fantastic example of what multiculturalism is all about. It is about all people—regardless of their origin, background or religion—having a commitment to the nation and its uniting values while maintaining their cultural traditions.

I am also proud that, to a large extent, Australia's policies of multiculturalism have been so successful in producing an open and harmonious society in a world where ethnic and cultural tensions can be so divisive. A lot of the credit for that harmoniousness is due to events such as the Greek Festival, and that is why it is such an important event for the Gold Coast—that and the fun, because after all the Greek Festival is a great day out with good food, good drink and good friendship. I invite all members of the House to join us on the Gold Coast next year for the Gold Coast Greek Festival.

Sunshine Coast Showjumping and Equestrian Club

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (7.14 p.m.): The Sunshine Coast Showjumping and Equestrian Club of Cooroy, which was established in 1994, is the only showjumping club on the Sunshine Coast. This equestrian club is probably most well known due to the fact that two of its riders, Billy Raymont and Tim Amitrano, were selected last year for the Olympic training squad for the 2004 Olympic Games. Not only does this club boast success stories such as the aforementioned, it trains and assists many young riders in their equestrian pursuits. Currently the club has 90 members, most of whom reside in the Cooroy area.

The Sunshine Coast Showjumping and Equestrian Club is proud to acknowledge the fact that all club purchases are made within Cooroy, thus vastly assisting the community, and the majority of the club's sponsors are businesses within the town. Unfortunately, though, the club is currently facing the difficulty of being without a regular local training area. As a result, club members have to travel to the Nambour showgrounds for their regular showjumping days. Whilst they are grateful for the use of this space, the allocated area, at only 50 metres by 30 metres, is akin to trying to play cricket on half a pitch and, therefore, is not very conducive to equestrian and showjumping activities.

The club would greatly appreciate the opportunity to carry out its practice sessions and regular meetings closer to Cooroy, as it has done since the club's inception and until the land it was using was sold. Nevertheless, the club has approached both the Noosa and Maroochydore councils in its endeavours to obtain an appropriate parcel of land for usage, preferably within close proximity to the schools and homes of those who participate. The club is keen to conduct these jump meetings under competition conditions which mimic those which the riders would encounter during competition.

After experiencing the pleasure of presenting one of the instructors with an award, I was able to meet some of the club's members. I was immediately struck by the group's dedication to the kids and their riding. The enthusiasm of the members and riders is contagious. I genuinely hope that the club is successful in its quest to locate an appropriate training area so that it may continue to provide safe, challenging and joyful experiences to its current and future generations of budding equestrians.

International Women's Conference, Townsville

Ms PHILLIPS (Thuringowa—ALP) (7.16 p.m.): On 3 July 2002 over 450 women from all over Australia and 24 countries gathered for the Townsville International Women's Conference, its topic being Poverty, violence and women's rights: setting a global agenda. While we should all have been feeling ecstatic over this marvellous achievement by local women, regrettably I was feeling ashamed that Australia, the host country, has a federal government that refused to grant entry visas to over 40 other women who had registered to attend and should have been there. These refusals were presumably under instructions from our paranoid terrorists-under-the-bed federal government. In waging its hysterical fear campaign designed to brainwash vulnerable Australian citizens, it has abused the rights of these highly respected women. We know how they were treated from the emails they sent apologising for not attending.

Dr Nighat Said Khan, an academic in Lahore, Pakistan, is in demand all over the world. It was a coup for the conference organisers to secure her as a keynote speaker. She had tried her best to get a visa, but was refused in no uncertain terms. She said—

I am furious at the manner in which we are being treated.

Dita Sari from Indonesia was to be another keynote speaker. She is a well-known activist for workers' rights who has travelled to Australia—and returned home to Indonesia—four times. She said that no amount of effort by her staff and herself personally had helped her succeed in dealing with the embassy. She said—

I came there time after time to be told to return another day.

She was not granted a visa nor given any explanation why.

Judith Katushabe from Uganda applied for a visa from the Australian High Commission in Nairobi. The excuse given to her was that she was only a secretary and, therefore, did not qualify to attend such a conference. She said—

Here in Uganda, you do not have to be someone important to attend such a conference, everyone has joined in the fight against violence, crimes and poverty ... We young ladies take the time, travel in rural areas, teach women ...

We are about public awareness. Please try to talk to your government. Here at the Embassy they think everyone is lying.

Eight members of the Friends of Ghana International Incorporated applied to the Australian High Commission in Lagos, Nigeria and were refused. They were told that too many Ghanaians were attending the conference. In fact, only one woman was granted a visa. They said—

We are very much disappointed and it has been a big disappointment to our wonderful sponsors.

Five women from the Business and Professional Women in Uzbekistan were told at the Australian Embassy in Moscow that there was no reason for them to participate in the conference. Women from the Global Development Program in Pakistan applied to DIMA in Islamabad but were met with ongoing problems with their processing. They said—

We tried our level-best in this regard but all in vain.

Fifteen others from Ghana were refused by the Australian High Commission in South Africa, and five women from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were refused visas. The hardworking conference organisers were extremely disappointed to see so many applicants treated with contempt by our federal government agencies.

Time expired.

Dental Services; Sexual Assault Services

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.19 p.m.): I rise to speak on several issues. First, I note the meltdown in the public health system which has been compounded in recent times with the indemnity crisis. We are seeing a range of health issues for which people are unable to receive timely treatment. This is causing a great deal of distress. This is something that has not been addressed by the state government to date. We are getting calls from people who have found that they are not getting access to surgery or are having their appointments cut.

I draw the attention of the House to an issue in my own electorate with regard to oral health. Wait times for people of low income, who in many cases have no other access to dental services, are blowing out. There are literally thousands on the waiting list for dental services on the Sunshine Coast. At Kawana people have to wait 3.5 years. At Noosa the wait is three years. At Nambour it is 26 months and at Caloundra it is two and a half years. In fact, in Caloundra alone I understand that there are around 3,000 people on the waitlist.

Let us look at the oral health situation with regard to children. It is interesting. The child oral health program has existed in Queensland for decades. The excuse the Health Minister keeps dragging out in regard to poor funding for the adult services cannot be stretched to cover the oral health of children. In fact, the state government has lowered its targets for the number of schoolchildren who will receive oral health visits. People are suffering as they wait in order to get these services, but it concerns me that children are not receiving preventative services and the targets have been lowered. This is unacceptable. The problem needs to be addressed. I call on the Health Minister to address the situation for literally thousands of people just on the Sunshine Coast.

I raise the issue of the sexual assault service on the Sunshine Coast. I have facilitated meetings with GPs, the police and the service itself. I support their call for a 24-hour service. The Sunshine Coast has a huge population base. There is no 24-hour service. There must be. Despite the best efforts of those involved to date, there is no funding to provide this. We have the terrible situation whereby if a woman is raped and she approaches police, it may take up to seven or eight hours before she has been through the process of having interviews and specimens taken. The lack of coordination with other ancillary services to provide support to that woman in that situation is really quite appalling. We really need to see that service funded on a 24-hour basis, not just offered within office hours. There needs to be better coordination to assist those people, particularly if they decide to go through the court process.

Time expired.

Northpine Christian College

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (7.23 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise in the parliament tonight as the member for Kallangur to draw attention to the Northpine Christian College, located at Dakabin in my electorate. Yesterday I had the honour of representing the Education Minister, Anna Bligh, at the official opening of a primary classroom block at that school. That block consists

of six primary classrooms, a computer laboratory and workroom, four learning support rooms, a withdrawal room, storerooms, covered area and covered link. The official opening also recognised the conversion and upgrade of two primary classrooms, a covered area, two music studios, storerooms and administration area. I take the opportunity tonight to congratulate the builders, Bannister and Co, and Bickerton Masters Architecture, on the very fine job that was done in the construction at the Northpine Christian College.

The college was established in March 1978. The school is approved as a non-state school authorised to offer preschool, primary and secondary education. It receives support from the state and Commonwealth governments for students in preschool and in years 1 to 12. The college added the secondary program in 1986 and added years 11 and 12 in 1996. Nearly 450 students are enrolled. I think importantly, 67 of those students have English as a second language.

It was a pleasure to be involved in this official opening. I particularly thank the principal, Mr Tony Kent, for his support and welcome to the school. I particularly acknowledge the school vice-captain, Adam Clarke, who showed great willingness to show me around and inform me about school issues. I hope that this young man does very well in his future. I am certain, from what I saw yesterday, that he will.

I took the opportunity at the opening ceremony to speak about the importance of the partnership between our state government and the Northpine Christian College, not just through the contribution of \$225,000 towards the cost, which is money well spent, but also through the Smart State education and training reforms package. This package of initiatives includes a major long-term investment in information and computer technologies, a trial of a full-time preparatory year prior to year 1 and a discussion paper on options to raise the school leaving age to 16 or 17. As part of the partnership the Association of Independent Schools in Queensland, with which the Northpine Christian College is affiliated, is being consulted on the reform package. They acknowledged that very strongly yesterday.

Northpine Christian College has an enviable reputation in providing students with individualised programs, importantly I think, in a caring Christian environment. I think it is very important that this school continues in its partnership with the state government.

Time expired.

Ms D. Beckett

Mr FLYNN (Lockyer—ONP) (7.26 p.m.): The word 'community' generally conjures up images of residences, cities, townships and rural dwellers living and experiencing local activities. Of course, we do know that the word has broader implications, but for the purposes of this brief address I will restrict my remarks. I guess it is easy to transpose those images, larger or smaller, to the many variations of communities. However, I am sure that we would all agree that, if it were not for community spirit of cooperation, government at whatever level would be unable to move the wheels of day-to-day activity without considerable financial cost to the community at large.

My concept of community activity and the spirit of cooperation was given a significant boost in the last few months with the death of a very dear, special person and, in fact, a passionate party worker whose special qualities in her private as well as public life led to some attending her in her later days who only knew her but briefly. Ms Dawn Beckett, late of Morningside, died recently of cancer, but her unfailing cheerfulness, her joie de vivre and her willingness to work no matter what drew people to her like a magnet.

Her community of friends and more broadly the community of fellow party members drew in to make her last days as happy as possible. I recall visiting her the day before she died. She was very concerned about not contributing to events around her. I told her there was sunshine outside, to close her eyes and to see the imprint of her happy life's experiences on the video of her mind. It was all there to replay at will. She did this, but it would not have been possible without community love and support provided by people who care.

We must nourish and encourage our communities to grow and prosper. In today's cynical times, positive community spirit and influence must survive the tendency to rely on government services as a fix-it because we are too busy to do these things ourselves. We must value people who contribute to life's rich tapestry, but we must learn and appreciate the experiences of those who have sometimes lived longer, been there and done that. Our young must not think that things will happen naturally. They will not. They must be made to happen and encouraged by government, which cannot afford to do so itself. To all positive communities and the specialist

groups within them, we salute you. We recognise the daily valuable contributions of the Dawn Becketts of this world who some of us have been privileged to know. Congratulations to you people. You did well and the world is a better place because you lived.

Australian Hand Cane Cutting Championships

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (7.29 p.m.): On Sunday, 21 July, the Australian hand cane cutting championships were held at Dalbeg in the Burdekin electorate. This year was the second time that the championships had been held in the Burdekin. I and others in the area will be fighting to keep these championships in the Burdekin as an annual event for the region.

Canecutters from all over attended the championships to compete against the best in Australia, if not the world. Once again, the Burdekin canecutters proved to be a cut above the rest with local Dalbeg farmer, Paul Donnelly, taking out the championship from his younger brother, Peter, from Mackay. Paul knocked down one and a half tonnes of cane in just 11 minutes and 58 seconds. Paul is the only person to have taken out the title four times.

I was also impressed by another competitor, Bruno Jung, who put in another solid performance at this year's titles. Bruno is 69 years old and I know that this event shows just what hand cane cutting in the early days was like. Another local combination competed in the cut, top and load event. Father and son team, Peter and Mark Woods, joined with Peter and Paul Donnelly to win the cane, cut and top event, thus showing everyone that Dalbeg farmers from the Burdekin have what it takes when it comes to cutting cane.

Yes, I also took to the cane paddocks with a cane knife in a celebratory challenge cane cut. Being the member for Burdekin, and not wanting me to have an advantage, I think the organisers neglected to inform me that the other entrants had decided not to cut all the allotted drills of cane. So I was surprised when I turned around to head back to the finish to see that they had already finished. After all, I thought that I was helping out by cutting the whole block. I have to say that it was a learning experience at cutting cane by hand. It gave me the knowledge of how hand canecutters put in their time in the cane paddocks. Another event on the day was a tug of war. This was won by a team of Dalbeg residents, who took the title from local and overseas competitors, thus making it two years in a row.

I encourage members of parliament and others to come to the Burdekin and watch or compete in the Australian hand cane cutting championships next year. I am sure that they will be held there once again.

The House adjourned at 7.31 p.m.