

THURSDAY, 8 AUGUST 2002

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

PRIVILEGE

Newspaper Articles, Mr M. Yanner

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (9.30 a.m.): I rise to refute claims attributed to Mr Murradoo Yanner in various publications today in which it is claimed that I intervened to have police conduct raids at various properties in the gulf region on Tuesday. During the raid, seven people were charged with a range of offences, one of which involved Mr Yanner. In various Queensland newspapers today, Mr Yanner has claimed that the charges were politically motivated and that they stem from a stoush with me.

I categorically reject these baseless claims. I confirm to the House today that I was not even made aware of the matter until after the raids had taken place. The unfounded allegation that I somehow engaged in unethical behaviour by interfering in this operational matter is not only insulting and slanderous but also totally ludicrous. It is also an insult to the police involved.

I will not entertain Mr Yanner's conspiracy theories. He will have his day in court to have this matter heard. In the meantime, I will also be seeking legal advice in relation to the comments that have been attributed to Mr Yanner today.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from His Excellency the Governor a letter in respect to assent to certain bills, the contents of which will be incorporated in the records of parliament.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
QUEENSLAND

6 August 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 6 August 2002:

"A Bill for an Act to provide for the establishment of the Maritime Safety Agency of Queensland, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for departments for the financial years starting 1 July 2002 and 1 July 2003"

"A Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for the Legislative Assembly and parliamentary service for the financial years starting 1 July 2002 and 1 July 2003"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Land Tax Act 1915".

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

(sgd) Peter Arnison
Governor

PETITION

Reparation Offer to Indigenous Workers

Mr Wellington from 2899 petitioners, requesting the House to increase the reparation package for wage deprivation to Indigenous people to an amount that would more appropriately reflect the enormity of the injustice suffered for so many years and request that this be resolved through out of court settlements and not through protracted legal battles.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
National Missing Persons Week

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: I draw the attention of members to the fact that this is National Missing Persons Week. For police, the definition of a missing person is anyone who is reported missing to police, whose whereabouts are unknown and where there are fears for the safety or concerns for the welfare of that person. For parents, partners or other relatives, it means a dreadful feeling of loss and uncertainty, a sense of dread and mourning and hope, emptiness, worry, and sleepless nights. Many of us have children and I cannot contemplate how dreadful it would be if one of my children went missing.

One person is reported missing to police in Australia every 18 minutes, 30,000 are reported missing to police in Australia each year and 99.5 per cent are eventually located. That still leaves about 150 missing each year. That is a lot of misery. About one-third go missing more than once. About two-thirds—or 20,000—are under the age of 18. Abductions by strangers are very rare. Most people are located safe and well.

Many people go missing in response to personal tragedy or what they perceive as insurmountable problems. There are a multitude of issues which trigger a missing person incident, including mental illness, economic and social problems. The key message this week is to encourage them to make contact, to let someone know, to find a way to say that they are okay. If someone who has disappeared from home reads this statement in *Hansard* or on the web, or if it is reported, I ask them to find a way of letting a loved one know that they are safe.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Multicultural Women's Advisory Committee

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: In line with our commitment to take multiculturalism and diversity seriously in the Smart State, I am pleased to announce my intention to establish a Multicultural Women's Advisory Committee. The committee will be the first of its kind in Queensland. One of its key objectives will be to provide advice for improving the leadership, economic security, safety, health and wellbeing of women and girls from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Members of the Multicultural Women's Advisory Committee have been chosen from the community for their significant expertise in issues relating to gender and multiculturalism. I want to thank my parliamentary secretary, Darryl Briskey, for his assistance in these matters. I have invited Ms Hurriyet Babacan, senior lecturer, Faculty of Arts, Sunshine Coast University; Ms Jeannie Mok, foundation principal of the Asian Pacific Institute and the managing director of the Multicultural Community Centre; Ms Sandra Soto, manager of the Ethnic Community Care Links in Townsville; and Ms Jyoti Ramsay, coordinator of the refugee program with the Red Cross in Brisbane, to become members of the committee. It will report directly to me and will be chaired by my parliamentary secretary, Darryl Briskey, and Lindy Nelson-Carr, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Health, the Hon. Wendy Edmond. Secretariat support for the committee will be provided by Multicultural Affairs Queensland and the Office for Women.

Diversity is a fact of everyday life in Queensland and we enjoy a rich mix of cultures, religions and languages. Multiculturalism is one of the great strengths of this state and nation. Members may recall that the first election commitment that we delivered on in this term was the introduction of amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act. These amendments made it illegal to make public statements inciting hatred, contempt or ridicule of a person or group based on race or religion. Discrimination based on gender is also damaging to our society and will not be tolerated. We all recognise that Queensland has been built on the achievements of both men and women. We envisage a Queensland where women and girls, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, have the skills and opportunities to contribute to economic, social, and cultural and community life. I look forward to receiving advice from the Multicultural Women's Advisory Committee on how we can build on our strengths—the strengths of multiculturalism.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
2014 Soccer World Cup

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: Queensland will be part of any bid to host the 2014 soccer World Cup in Australia. I have made this clear publicly. Our world-class facilities—the Suncorp Metway Stadium and the

Gabba—are ideal magnets that will be integral to Australia's bid for the 2014 World Cup matches. That is one of the reasons—that is, the hosting of major events—that we are rebuilding the Suncorp Metway Stadium at Lang Park. Add these two stadiums to our friendly, safe environment and the world's best weather and it means that we are right up there when it comes to hosting big international events.

The successful hosting of the Sydney Olympics, CHOGM at Coolom and the Goodwill Games in 2001 attest to this, as will next year's Rugby World Cup. It is also worth remembering that in 2000 Brisbane successfully hosted a number of Olympic soccer matches at the Gabba. We have the expertise and the experience. That has been developed from as far back as the Commonwealth Games in the early 1980s.

There is, however, a sad reality that must be resolved. I saw Nick Greiner make reference to this the other day. Not only did Australia fail to qualify for the recent World Cup finals but last month we also failed to qualify for the lucrative Confederations Cup, in which we finished third last year ahead of Brazil. Soccer is more than a sport. As members would understand, it is a multimillion dollar industry and Australia is missing out badly. In the words of former New South Wales Liberal Premier, now the new soccer hierarchy leader, Nick Greiner, the code in Australia is dysfunctional. He is right, but that can be addressed and we have plenty of time to address it for the soccer World Cup.

The Prime Minister has bought into this as well. Like all of us, he wants Soccer Australia to be a success. We all know that there must be a major reform of soccer in this country. That is why I have also called on the federal government to help tackle the need to reorganise Australian soccer. This is not just for the code's sake and for those who follow it. There are jobs on the line—potentially thousands and thousands of them. A large number of young Australians are playing soccer in increasing numbers. I know my kids did. It is an international and very popular sport. Reforms are needed. If not for the sake of the sport and its followers then for the sake of jobs, the federal government must undertake initiatives which will see soccer properly administered and developed in Australia.

I recently recommended the formation of a National Events Corporation to bring major international events to Australia, which Tourism Minister Joe Hockey has acknowledged. We already have a successful Queensland Events Corporation in my portfolio, and events help with tourism. They work together. Soccer's World Cup is a huge international event. The greatest event that Australia could stage after the success of the 2000 Olympics and the forthcoming 2003 Rugby World Cup would obviously be the soccer World Cup. We need a national strategy that delivers a world-class team and, ultimately, the event itself. This strategy should be the first priority of the new National Events Corporation.

We excel at sport and what we do in rugby, rugby league, swimming, netball and all other sports we must also do in soccer.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: In 2014. The Deputy Premier and I will do it together. It is nothing short of a national shame that soccer players in this country, particularly our young players, have been disadvantaged by inept management and lack of development of the world's leading football code. I look forward to working with the Prime Minister, John Howard, the New South Wales Premier, Bob Carr, and the Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks, and their inter-governmental working party to bring this bid forward and also a bid for the Confederations Cup in 2007. Yesterday I had discussions with Bob Carr about this and we have agreed to work very closely together. We should forget the politics and forget the parochialism and all work together to get the jobs for Australia. We want our fair share and we know that we will get it because of our world quality stadiums.

While discussing sport and mentioning Suncorp Metway Stadium—the best football ground in the world—and New South Wales, I thank all those involved in this year's State of Origin series. Of course, next year it will be played at the new Suncorp Metway Stadium.

Mr Mackenroth: Two games.

Mr BEATTIE: I take the Minister for Sport's interjection. Two games, and all members should be there. After a little tiff and some gentle parochialism, the New South Wales Premier and I agreed to fly each other's flag on our respective bridges.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Deputy Premier is right. All the critics will be there—every one. Because it such a world-class stadium, none of them will want to miss out.

In the interests of continuing good neighbourly relations, we reached a sensible compromise and both state flags flew on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Goodwill Bridge. On 28 June, I unfurled both flags on Brisbane's Goodwill Bridge, the first flags to fly on the bridge. On the same day, both state flags also flew from the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Bob and I have also agreed that by the time next year's Origin series comes around, with two games to be played at Queensland's revamped Suncorp Metway Stadium, we will have better defined the terms for our annual wager. Thanks to Wayne, Gordon, Alfie and all the team and supporters for a truly memorable series. They did us proud.

While we are talking about major events—because my government has not only been turning Queensland into a Smart State, it has made it the big event state—I inform members that Gardening Australia Live will be held in Brisbane at the RNA grounds from 11 to 13 April next year. Almost one in five Queensland households tunes in to *Gardening Australia* on Friday nights. It is a great program and I urge members to watch it.

I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my statement into *Hansard* to save time.

Leave granted.

Gardening Australia Live will offer the chance for Queensland horticultural and other related businesses to showcase their products to a massive audience.

I understand Queensland was chosen to host next year's show because of the breadth and depth of our horticulture, including our unique plant species.

Queensland boasts four per cent of the world's biodiversity.

Queensland has more tree species in one hectare of the Daintree rainforest than in all of North America.

Overall, we have more than 10,000 species of native plants in Queensland and about 60 per cent of these are endemic—or unique—to our State.

The State's native plants are showing great potential for use in the ornamental garden.

A good example of this is the yellow everlasting daisy adopted by Queensland as the floral emblem for its Centenary of Federation celebrations last year.

Marketed under the name Federation Gold, this native plant had not previously been used as an ornamental but is now available from nurseries throughout the State.

Many more native plant species are likely to make the move from the wild into the home garden in coming years.

The Queensland Herbarium, which guided the registration and release of Federation Gold, is currently engaged in surveying and mapping our State's flora.

As a result, between 20 and 30 new species of native plants are being discovered each year.

We have other Queensland floral successes.

Queensland boasts Australia's longest-running floral festival—the annual Chronicle Heritage Home Garden Awards in Toowoomba has been attracting tens and tens of thousands of visitors for 53 years.

I was privileged to open it in 1999.

Also on the Darling Downs there is Warwick—our Rose and Rodeo City.

The magnificent Cooktown Orchid from the well-watered areas of Cape York has been our official floral emblem since 1955.

I'm also pleased to say that last year one of the Queensland Government's Export Awards went to a Sunshine Coast business which exports native flowers and foliage to businesses around the world.

This business, called Cedar Hill Flowers and Foliage, turns over \$6 million a year and is Australia's largest exporter of sustainably-harvested native foliage and flowers.

That's what I call smart floral business in the Smart floral State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Higher Education Consultation Forums

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.43 a.m.), by leave: Earlier this year the Commonwealth government launched a national review of Australia's higher education system. Over the past few months, federal Education Minister, Dr Brendan Nelson, has released a series of discussion papers which put forward a range of proposals on funding, governance and assessment. The state government recognises the benefits which flow from a thriving and diverse higher education sector, which is why we were quick to lodge our submission to the review. The demand for higher education places in this state is expected to skyrocket in line with our rising population. It is important for honourable members and the federal government to understand the nature of the rise in our population. By 2010, the number of Queenslanders aged between 15 and 64 is expected to grow by 440,000. By comparison, Victoria will experience

growth in this age cohort of 255,800, just over half of Queensland's growth. However, it is much more startling when one looks at the youth cohort. Our youth population in the 15- to 24-year age group is forecast to grow by 66,000. This represents half the national growth of this age cohort. Victoria's projected growth in this cohort, by comparison, is just 11,300. This state will experience six times the growth experienced in Victoria.

The Commonwealth cannot afford to ignore these facts when funding future provision for higher education in Queensland. However, funding is only one aspect of the state government's response to the Commonwealth review. Our submission targets a range of innovative proposals to improve access and equity to higher education. Queensland has indicated its willingness to work with the Commonwealth on a number of positive reforms, such as a review of the tax incentives for investment in education and a proposal to pilot multisectoral institutions which allow students to access school, vocational education and higher education at the one site. However, we strongly oppose any move to shift the costs of higher education to individuals and their families through further deregulation of fees. We understand that such a shift will have a much greater impact in parts of regional Queensland. We also oppose proposals by the Commonwealth to create two world-class universities at the expense of our regional campuses and universities.

Given the importance of the review and the unique needs and circumstances of our universities, Queensland is holding two forums to stimulate public debate on these issues. The first of these forums was held two weeks ago at James Cook University in Townsville and attended by local members Lindy Nelson-Carr and Anita Phillips. The second forum will be held in Brisbane on Tuesday, 27 August. Both forums are being held in association with the Brisbane Institute, an independent think tank, which again highlights the significant policy issues being canvassed by the review.

The forum at James Cook University focused in particular on the needs of regional universities, which provide about 40 per cent of higher education delivery in Queensland. The state government recognises that regional universities are integral to the economic prosperity of the areas in which they operate. For example, in north Queensland, James Cook University employs over 1,000 staff and it is estimated that it contributes over \$280 million annually to the economy of north Queensland. For every job at JCU, 1.1 jobs are created in the community. Increasingly, regional universities are becoming an important source of export revenue for the state through research and other international activities. I assure honourable members that the local business and community representatives who attended this forum were very clear in their understanding of the importance of James Cook University to the economic prosperity of that region. It is essential that these institutions retain a strong research capacity and are able to offer a full and suitable range of courses.

At the Townsville forum, representatives from a cross-section of the community raised a lot of concern about potential increases in fees and other cost imposts on university students and their families which would flow under proposals being considered by the Commonwealth as part of this review. The Townsville forum provided me with the opportunity to hear first-hand the issues and concerns affecting our regional universities. However, regional Queenslanders are unlikely to see federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson venturing their way to talk about higher education after he refused to support a motion at a recent meeting of state, territory and Commonwealth education ministers to hold forums on this paper in regional Australia.

I look forward to attending the Brisbane forum later this month, which will no doubt highlight the teaching and research excellence of our Brisbane based universities. The outcomes of both forums will help to inform the views of the state government in responding to further specific proposals stemming from the Commonwealth review. This is a very, very important issue to the economic prosperity of this state and I encourage all members and their communities to become involved in the debate.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Workshops Rail Museum, Ipswich

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: One hundred and thirty-seven years ago the first train to run in Queensland travelled from Ipswich to Grandchester. It was the start of a great journey which has delivered a rich heritage to the whole of the state and touched the lives of many

Queenslanders. In fact, there would be very few families in this state who do not have a relative or a forebear who has worked for the railways. My own great grandfather, Bat Foley, worked on the construction of the central line and recorded on his marriage certificate his address as the 344 and a half-mile camp near Barcaldine.

The romance of rail which embraces so much of our state's history is about to come alive at the world standard Workshops Rail Museum at Ipswich at the end of this month. It will tell a mighty story of the glory days of our railways, and the steam era in particular. As the newest campus of the Queensland Museum, the Workshops Rail Museum will embrace that mighty story with chapters like the Second World War, when the Ipswich workshops played a powerful role in the Australian war machine. All the colour and drama of Queensland's history are reflected and captured in the history of the Ipswich railway workshops. At its peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s, more than 3,000 people worked on the site, making it the largest employer in the state at that time and a social icon.

The opening of this \$20 million museum complex on 30 August will raise the curtain on an experience that has been keenly anticipated by Queenslanders from every part of the state. Visitors will have the opportunity to take an historic and interactive journey through an Australian railway workshop as it operated more than 100 years ago. I thank the member for Ipswich for her strong support of this project. Experiences for visitors will include: 5,000 square metres of rail exhibits from the past, present and future; behind the scenes guided walking tours of the workshops and the heritage-listed historic precinct; viewing of actual restoration work being undertaken on the Queensland heritage fleet by Queensland Rail; demonstrations of work to support the restoration program, including many skills which are now disappearing such as blacksmithing and manual timber milling; interactive components, including a diesel cab and tilt train simulations; a nippers railway filled with adventurous things for kids to do with kids-sized trains and stations; the biggest model railway to embrace the Queensland network, tracing a journey through the outback, coastal plains, tropical rainforests and metropolitan areas; and viewing the extensive Queensland Museum collection of railway heritage items.

Importantly, the Workshops Rail Museum has made a significant financial injection into the Ipswich economy. During construction, 98 jobs were created and there will be a further 40 ongoing jobs to support the museum's operation. One of the most significant events in the opening celebrations will be a workers' reunion in recognition of the significant contribution made by railway workers both past and present. The response has been overwhelming and it is estimated that some 3,000 people will attend this function on Saturday, 31 August. I acknowledge the strong support of the member for Ipswich West for this project as well.

This museum is one of 44 major projects of the \$110 million Queensland Heritage Trails Network designed to showcase the state's rich heritage through a network of exciting cultural heritage attractions. Funds of \$15 million have been provided by the government via the Queensland Heritage Trails Network, with an additional \$5 million contributed by Queensland Rail. The Workshops Rail Museum is a tribute to the many hundreds of dedicated trades and craftspeople whose contribution to the state's expanding transport infrastructure cannot be underestimated.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aviation and Aerospace Industry

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for State Development) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: Later today, I will be welcoming the newest aviation assets to the state. Singapore Flying College, a wholly owned subsidiary of global airline group Singapore Airlines, will today unveil two new Lear Jet 45 aircraft that will operate from its new training facility currently under construction at the Sunshine Coast airport in Maroochy Shire. I will be viewing the new aircraft at Brisbane airport after the aircraft's recent arrival from the US jet manufacturer.

Today's arrival of the Lear jets marks a significant week for the Beattie government's push into aviation. On Tuesday I accompanied the Premier to the opening of National Jets Systems' \$4 million maintenance hangar at Brisbane airport—yet another aviation coup for this state. Singapore Flying College expects to have the new purpose-built facility completed by the end of this year. In conjunction with the decision by Singapore Airlines to establish the new facility on the Sunshine Coast, the company has chosen local company Aeromil Aviation Services to conduct maintenance and support work. Together these operations are set to provide in the order of 40 new jobs in Maroochydoore.

The decision by the Singapore Airlines subsidiary to choose Aeromil adds a further dimension to the Beattie government's strategy to develop an aviation industry in the state. The Beattie government is committed to positioning the state as a South-East Asian hub for the aviation industry. Singapore Flying College's decision to come to Queensland was an important win, because it will lead to the establishment of the state's first commercial simulator training facility.

Singapore Flying College has estimated that it will create at least 15 new jobs at this facility, and these positions will be primarily ground instructors, management and support staff. Some of the instructors have relocated from Singapore, with a number of instructors also hired locally. The facility is expected to train 140 cadet pilots and 36 first officers a year. These pilots will be accommodated for up to three-month periods locally, which will generate substantial benefit for the local community.

The Beattie government is committed to positioning Queensland as the South-East Asian hub for the aviation industry. To support this ongoing growth, we committed \$10 million in seed funding to Aviation Australia, a new training organisation, to support the aviation and aerospace industry.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Police Resources

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (9.57 a.m.), by leave: It gives me great pleasure to report that, last week, another 74 police officers graduated as first-year constables and are now working right across Queensland. I am also happy to report that six police dogs also attended their official graduation last week. This included Queensland's first ever powder detecting drug sniffer dogs, police dogs Bea and Bodie, who will work throughout the state. I just happen to have a copy of their graduation photos with me. These powder detecting sniffer dog teams were an election commitment by the Beattie government.

Since their establishment in May, Bea and Bodie have assisted detectives in more than 69 searches. The two dog and handler teams were trained by Australian Customs to search for powder drugs and have made a great start to their careers. They have located more than 288 grams of methylamphetamine, 220 grams of heroin, 200 ecstasy tablets and 93 grams of marijuana, along with firearms, drug utensils and cannabis seeds. I am pleased with the activities of the dog squad so far and am sure the performance of the dogs will continue to improve as they gain more field experience. This is just another example of the Beattie government's commitment to cracking down on drug dealers and breaking the cycle of drugs and crime. As part of this, we will be establishing the further drug detection dog team during the next financial year. I look forward to informing the parliament of further progress in relation to this election commitment.

I congratulate Peta-Kaye Croft for representing me at the graduation ceremony last week. I am told that she made a very fine speech and represented this government and indeed this parliament very well.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Capital Works Program

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: The government continues to get on with the job—delivering capital assets for Queensland and jobs for Queenslanders. The Department of Public Works is operating in a climate of strong activity, developing major building capital works projects right across the state. All these projects are on budget, on track and on time. This financial year it is anticipated that Project Services will progress approximately \$650 million in building capital works on behalf of state government agencies. It is expected that these works will generate more than 8,310 jobs for Queenslanders. The majority of these works will be delivered in regional Queensland and, where possible, by local companies—in line with the Beattie government's commitment to build our regions.

I advise honourable members of some of the major construction projects the state government currently has under way. In Brisbane, construction has started on the \$279 million redevelopment of Suncorp Metway Stadium and is on track to be completed for the State of Origin and the World Cup Rugby fixtures next year. Construction of the infrastructure works

external to the stadium commenced in the first week of June 2002. The project will generate more than 3,400 jobs. Work has also commenced on the new government office building in Charlotte Street, Brisbane. The approved budget for this project is \$68.6 million, including \$19 million for the fit-out. This project alone will generate approximately 900 jobs. So far, the Charlotte Chambers that were on the site have been demolished and the schematic design and design development have been completed.

Last month, the managing contractor, Walter Construction Group, was appointed to build the new Brisbane Magistrates Court—scheduled for completion in late 2004. The total project budget is \$130 million and will generate more than 1,300 jobs. And the master plan for the \$228 million Millennium Arts Project has been completed. This project will incorporate the new Gallery of Modern Art and double the size of the Queensland State Library. The project is estimated to generate more than 2,800 jobs. Construction work for the gallery and library will commence in mid-2003.

This government is continuing to make a capital investment in several major projects in Queensland's regions. Last month, the new office building in Cairns was completed. The total project cost was \$17.6 million and generated approximately 240 jobs. The building was fully occupied in July, and has now become home to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Maryborough Correctional Centre is currently under construction and is 90 per cent complete. The estimated project cost is \$94.5 million, providing 1,340 jobs. It is on track to be finished in October this year. And the \$10.55 million Toowoomba Police Station is now well under way with construction halfway completed. It is estimated that 145 jobs will be provided before it is finished in December this year.

This government has continued to work in partnership with industry to provide the building infrastructure necessary to deliver services to the state's growing population. These significant projects not only add to the state's asset base but also create valuable employment opportunities in the construction industry—jobs for Queenslanders. As I have said on many occasions, we are a can-do government and we will continue to deliver for Queenslanders.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disability Funding

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Seniors) (10.01 a.m.), by leave: At the end of June, state and territory ministers for disability services met with the Commonwealth minister, Senator Amanda Vanstone, in Melbourne, with the intention of signing a third Commonwealth-State-Territory Disability Agreement. At that meeting, Senator Vanstone put an offer on the table of an additional \$15 million funding this financial year, to be spread across the country, with an extra \$5 million each year over the rest of the five-year agreement. That translates into less than \$3 million for Queensland in the first year and less than \$1 million in the following four years. While the Commonwealth have backed down from its attempts to make the provision of existing unmet needs money contingent on changes to the disability support pension, its offer is, nonetheless, insufficient. The states and territories have not accepted the offer and we are yet to sign another agreement.

What we have asked for, as a minimum, is growth funding to be maintained at the current level and additional funding to address unmet need. Senator Vanstone this week has written to Queensland disability service providers attempting to justify her position and cast doubt on the state's use of Commonwealth disability funds. I am also writing to service providers to clarify the state's position.

We hope the message gets back to Senator Vanstone about the genuine needs of many Queenslanders with disabilities. We need extra funding for Queenslanders like George, a 43-year-old quadriplegic from the Atherton Tableland who lives at home with his elderly parents. His mother provides his primary care and as she ages and is less able to load his wheelchair into his car his ability to travel privately is reduced. The last time George took a taxi into town was in 1996, at a subsidised cost of \$30 for the two-way journey. George has lived all his life at home with his parents. It is only reasonable for him to want and expect to remain in his home in the future.

George currently has no access to home respite care and no paid carer support. His mother did receive the carer's pension, but once she reached the age of 63 she was automatically

transferred to the lesser paid age pension. The distinction is bureaucratic, because she still cares for her son. George fears that in the event of his parents not being able to care for him he will be forced to give up work and reside in a nursing home. Without substantial support, his lifestyle will change dramatically.

George has applied for a lifestyle support package, funding to pay for a carer that will mean the difference between independence and employment or dependency and despondency. He is one of about 7,000 Queenslanders with disabilities currently on waiting lists for more government support. Roma residents Leonie and Graham McKnight are also waiting on that list. Their son Craig is 11 years old and suffers from Leighs Syndrome, a metabolic disorder that disables him from speaking, sitting up or walking. Craig uses a voice output communication aid, is frail but tough and attends year 5 at a local school. He needs total care on a daily basis. His parents get limited home support but really need regular respite from their intensive caring responsibilities. They have one other child at home and Graham has had to give up work in the last year because Leonie has been ill and the pressures of family support and work could not be reconciled.

The current offer from the Howard government for extra money to meet the needs of people like George and the McKnight family translates into about 30 additional support packages in Queensland this year—30 people out of a waiting list of 7,000. Of all the jurisdictions, the Commonwealth has the greatest capacity to generate revenue to meet the increasing and unmet need for these services and supports. However, in Queensland the Commonwealth provides less than a third of our current \$331 million budget for disability services. Of the \$111.4 million increase in disability funding in this state over the past five years, nearly 70 per cent has come from the state government. This year the Beattie government has provided a nine per cent increase in funding for Queenslanders with disabilities. We have demonstrated our commitment to redressing the historic underfunding of disability services in this state and ensure quality of life for people suffering disadvantage. We will continue with that commitment. We need our national government to make a similar, if not greater, commitment.

I call on the member for Cunningham, who has supported Senator Vanstone and his federal colleagues in the past and criticised me for allegedly 'misleading parliament on these matters', to demonstrate his support for Queenslanders with disabilities and support the Beattie government's call for real growth and indexation under the next CSTDA. For the first time he should stand up for people with disabilities; otherwise he might like to explain to people like George and the McKnight family why he does not support more Commonwealth funding for disability services.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drought Declaration, Balonne and Waggamba Shires

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: Unfortunately, this morning I have approved the drought declaration of Balonne and Waggamba shires in south-west Queensland. The declaration of these shires takes the total number of drought declared shires in Queensland to 38, or 16 per cent of the state. The drought declarations of these shires are effective from 1 August. I am advised by the Department of Primary Industries that there were already 72 individual drought declared properties in Balonne shire and 65 properties in Waggamba shire. All shire declarations are based on the recommendations of the respective local drought committees. There are individual droughted property declarations in another 38 shires.

Under a shire and individual property declaration, primary producers have access to freight subsidies on fodder and water, stock returning from agistment and on stock purchased for restocking. The Queensland government provides a range of assistance measures and support programs in times of drought. Late last month, I travelled through western Queensland and spoke with local community representatives and farming families. It is important for me as minister to discuss these issues with producers in their communities around their kitchen tables, and that is what I always do.

Earlier this week, the government's Rural Queensland Council was briefed by officers of the Department of Primary Industries about the drought situation and the climate outlook. The Queensland government's Centre for Climate Applications has detected a slight improvement in the rainfall prospects for the next three months—August to October. Based on its assessment, the southern oscillation index is in a consistently near zero phase. This means that the probabilities of receiving above average rainfall have improved slightly.

The majority of districts in Queensland have a 40 per cent to 50 per cent chance of getting median rainfall over the next three months. However, the probabilities decrease to only 20 per cent to 30 per cent in north-eastern areas near Charters Towers and Cooktown. Also, the Central Highlands and most coastal districts between Rockhampton and Cape York have only a 30 per cent to 40 per cent chance of at least median rainfall over that period. In the drought-stricken regions of southern Queensland, rainfall probabilities have not improved significantly at all. While the climate forecast has improved slightly, the seriousness of the situation remains and this is evidenced by the declaration of a further two shires.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (10.10 a.m.), by leave: The Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, which was held last Friday in Adelaide, achieved much in terms of positive results. The decisions taken will impact on Queenslanders and other Australians for years to come. I am pleased to report that papers I presented on unfair contractual conditions and fringe credit providers were unanimously endorsed by my state and territory colleagues. MCCA resolved to direct the Standing Committee of Officers of Consumer Affairs to establish a working group to investigate policy options to protect consumers.

There was unanimous support for Queensland's proposal to address unfair terms of consumer contracts and the merits of adopting a more nationally consistent and effective regulatory regime. Uniform legislation is needed to outlaw a range of standard contract provisions such as those included in many mobile phone agreements which are weighted massively in favour of the service providers. The working group will report to MCCA with recommendations by the end of February 2003.

The paper on fringe credit providers proposed further amendments to the Consumer Credit Code which will cap maximum interest rates and charges and define a new category of high-cost loans which will be subject to special conditions, such as a limit on the amount and types of collateral that can be held against the loan to end so-called blackmail securitisation. Legislation will be drafted for presentation out of session to MCCA members. In addition, baby walkers sold in Queensland will have to meet mandatory safety standards from 1 November following another MCCA decision. MCCA agreed to bring forward the new standards for baby walkers, which include requirements for stability, a mechanism to help prevent babies falling down steps or stairs, and safe use warning labels. Baby walkers are a major cause of serious injury to children aged less than one year in Queensland.

Other issues discussed at MCCA included consumer protection for indigenous Australians. Ministers noted the matters raised at the recent national workshop on indigenous consumer issues in remote and rural Australia and agreed that this important issue should be included on the MCCA strategic agenda for further consideration.

In relation to Consumer Credit Code comparison rates, ministers determined that new mandatory requirements for comparison rates in relation to fixed term credit commence on a national basis on 1 July 2003. This will enable consumers to access a schedule of comparison rates to help them shop around for a loan.

In relation to overseas mail order scams, ministers agreed to expedite the development and implementation of a national strategy to address the detrimental impact on consumers of widespread overseas direct marketing scams. Agreed strategies to stem overseas scams included better use of investigation resources, a national public education program and the formation of a working party to examine procedures to stop scam mail reaching its victims.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Work and Family Unit Issues Paper

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.13 a.m.), by leave: This government made an election commitment to establish a Work and Family Unit in the pursuit of helping Queenslanders find a better balance between their growing work and family commitments. I am pleased to say that the ministerial task force which operates within the Work and Family Unit has reached a milestone. Recently, I released the ministerial task force's work and families issues paper, a major discussion paper that will help shape the future of our

workplaces. The task force is calling for public feedback on a number of issues that are central to the changing nature of Queensland's work force—issues like increasing technology, family and carer commitments, child care, single parent workers, fertility rates, and gender equity as well as state and federal legislation.

The public will also be asked to comment on our lengthening working hours, an ageing population and diminishing levels of community interaction. The task force is made up of community, worker, employee, government and independent representatives. It will use the information to develop more than 10 family-friendly trials to be run in various industries around the state over the next two years. The information it gathers will be vital in helping Queenslanders better manage the increasing demands on their time from the community, their families and the workplace. The government is adamant that the people of Queensland have a say on an issue as important as this—an issue that affects every working person. The issues paper is available on the Department of Industrial Relations web site and I table a copy for all honourable members. In conclusion, I would urge all Queenslanders to have a say on an issue that is central to addressing the growing imbalance between our work and family time.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Electronic Petitions

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.15 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the House adopts the proposed sessional orders circulated in my name concerning petitions, including e-petitions.

These amendments provide the necessary changes to the sessional orders to facilitate e-petitions. This government is committed to making the Queensland parliament more accessible to the people of this state. The potential for information technology to support the goal of making the parliamentary process more effective and more democratic is a strong theme in the Restoring Integrity plan my government campaigned on ahead of the last election.

This government has three key e-democracy commitments: to trial community consultation online; to broadcast parliamentary proceedings on the Internet; and to trial the feasibility of the Queensland parliament accepting petitions online. I am delighted that today I am able to report on the e-petitioning commitment.

The select parliamentary committee that I recommended should be formed has assessed the proposed e-petitions model as well as the sessional orders to support the new service. I am very pleased to advise that the committee has provided bipartisan support for the e-petitions model, and I thank it for its consideration of this matter. I now invite the House to endorse a trial of the Queensland parliament accepting electronic petitions—e-petitions. I expect that it is likely that the trial of the e-petitions service will start later this month. I note that Queensland is leading the way in this endeavour. The Queensland parliament will be the first in Australia to host and accept petitions online, and one would expect that from the Smart State.

I am convinced the e-petitions service will revitalise one of the oldest traditions of our system of government—the right to petition the parliament. No longer will Queenslanders necessarily have to physically locate a petition they are interested in supporting. Instead, Queenslanders will be able to locate and, if they wish, join an e-petition through the Queensland parliament's web site.

Queenslanders wanting to initiate an e-petition will first have to find an MP to sponsor the e-petition being posted on the parliament's web site. The e-petition will be presented to the House in that MP's name once the period for posting the petition on the web site is finished. I therefore encourage Queenslanders interested in raising an e-petition to talk to their MPs about this new service.

I want to emphasise that we are at this point simply testing this concept. At this point, we are unable to find a way to readily verify the petitioners' details online as we had originally hoped to do. But we have decided that it is better to proceed with a test of the e-petition system. However, I am confident that this model has given top priority to security and the use of deterrents to minimise the misuse of e-petitions. Of course, the trial will be reviewed and these issues revisited, probably after a year.

I believe the e-petitions initiative, along with the Internet broadcast of parliamentary proceedings to be launched later this year, will constitute some of this government's most

significant achievements in relation to enhancing community and government relations. It is crucial that people are able to make their feelings known to government and know they have an opportunity to influence government. They need to know that parliament and the government are prepared to listen. It is a message that I have been spreading ever since I became Opposition Leader in 1996, and we have never stopped listening.

The system of e-petitions gives all state members yet another means of staying in touch with the public. It is the electronic equivalent of a megaphone and soapbox for the public which gives the public yet another way of having its say. I have asked the Leader of the Opposition if he would be kind enough to second this motion, because it does have bipartisan support. This is about empowering ordinary Queenslanders to let this parliament know their views and their feelings. This is about democracy at work.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.20 a.m.): I have pleasure in seconding the motion moved by the Premier regarding the sessional orders and e-petitions. This is a modern move. The opposition was represented by our shadow minister for justice and Attorney-General on a small committee. Our concerns related to whether the system itself could be abused and whether it would be watertight. This was discussed by the committee, which has put in place ways to ensure verification and to prevent databases being dumped on the system, and so forth. We are well satisfied that this 12-month trial should be given a go. We give it support. It is a modern way of enabling people to lodge petitions. I think it will help people who live in remote areas but who have access to a computer. It has been trialled to a limited extent in Scotland. We support this move. Whilst those checks and balances exist, we certainly support this 12-month trial.

One point has been raised about the limitation of 250 words. I think that should be part of the review process at the end of the 12 months. I understand that this limitation did not apply to written petitions. So that should be part of the review at the end of the 12 months—whether 250 words allows people to adequately express the sentiment of their petitions. However, we give it support.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (10.21 a.m.): I understand that there is a word limit on e-petitions because of the disk space that they will take up. Could the minister clarify why he has introduced the 250 words limit to paper based petitions?

Mr BEATTIE: The reason is that in 1999 someone wrote a petition of 36,000 words. We thought that was a bit rich, because that is not a petition; that is a novel. Frankly, we think that a petition provides an opportunity for people to be succinct. If people are going to petition the parliament, it is not unreasonable to put that petition in a succinct way. I am happy to agree to the Leader of the Opposition's request that in 12 months, when we review it, we include a review of that word limit. That is the answer to the question raised by the member for Gladstone. We believe that views can be crystallised within 250 words. I am happy to include that as part of the review in 12 months' time. We are not trying to cut anybody out. We are just trying to keep it succinct and direct so that people's messages can be conveyed. But after a year, if people want to change that, we are quite relaxed about it. But we cannot have people abusing the system. I mean, 36,000 words is a novel—a very short one, but still a novel.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVILEGE

Townsville Bulletin Article, Alleged Comments by Member for Gympie

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.22 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. I want to draw to the attention of the House an article that appeared in the *Townsville Bulletin* which quotes the member for Gympie as saying that her opposition to the parliament meeting in Townsville was on the basis of cost and that members of parliament were able to take their partners. The article included a further comment by the federal member for Herbert, Peter Lindsay, to that effect.

I advise the House that that is not true. The arrangements for Townsville are very clear. They were agreed to by members on both sides. That does not include partners. If members want to take their partners they are quite welcome to, but they will have to pay for them themselves. Let me be very clear because I want the record straight on this. The costs in Townsville do not include partners. That is what has been reported in the *Townsville Bulletin*. If the member has been misreported I invite her to correct it. I table the article.

Miss ELISA ROBERTS: I rise on a matter of privilege. I never said that.

ELECTRONIC PETITIONS

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I advise honourable members that information sessions for members about the detailed procedures for the e-petitions process will be held on the afternoon of Thursday, 22 August 2002. Further details will be provided in due course. Information will also be forwarded to members' electorate offices in the near future.

Mr Mackenroth: Is the information going to be on the Net?

Mr SPEAKER: Yes, of course.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's report on the Fisheries Amendment Regulation No. 2 of 2002, subordinate legislation No. 110 of 2002, and move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

MEMBERS' ETHICS AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Tabling of Reports

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): I wish to advise the House regarding the procedures of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee relating to the tabling of committee reports under standing order 201, which provides that if the House is not sitting when a committee has prepared a report for presentation to the House a committee may table its report to the Clerk of the Parliament.

Our committee recently reviewed the committee's procedures for tabling and disseminating reports of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. In doing so we also considered the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly relating to the tabling of reports and the processes of both the committee and the Assembly which ensure that members and other persons are advised when a Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee report has been tabled.

The committee believes that it is important that reports to the Assembly by the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee on matters of privilege referred to it are presented as soon as practicable after the matter has been concluded. Indeed, it would be remiss of the committee to unnecessarily delay the tabling of such reports. The committee therefore affirms that it will continue with its established practice of tabling its reports when the parliament is not sitting in accordance with standing order 201 whenever that practice is appropriate. However, our committee was cognisant that tabling of Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee reports when the House is not sitting has the potential to cause difficulty to some members or any other persons to whom a report directly relates who may not be able to immediately access the report when it is tabled out of session.

The committee considered that the current procedure regarding reports tabled when the Assembly is not sitting could be enhanced. After careful and detailed consideration the committee has resolved to continue to table its reports in accordance with standing order 201 when the parliament is not sitting wherever this practice is appropriate. The committee will provide any member or any other person to whom a committee report directly relates with 24 hours notice of the timing of the tabling of the report when a report is to be tabled out of session. The contents of the report however will not be divulged to any party until the report is tabled.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Private Members' Statements

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Lib) (10.26 a.m.): I give notice that tomorrow I will move—

That this House notes that the time for private members' statements has been virtually nonexistent each day this week.

The only member who has been able to make a statement is the Leader of the Opposition. This disenfranchises the members of non-government parties to make statements regarding matters of importance to their electorates.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Labor Party Preselection

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.27 a.m.): The member is right. We all know that the spirit of the agreement was that at least 15 minutes would be allowed to give members on both sides of the House reasonable time in which to make two-minute speeches.

In the time left to me I want to speak about the Premier's dictatorial style and how it is even starting to annoy the rank and file of the Labor Party. Since the Shepherdson inquiry the Premier has centralised every matter within his little inner circle within the Premier's office. If you are not within the circle you have no voice. Now there are signs that the Labor Party branches and rank and file are starting to rise up and are wanting to have a say. The troubles investigated by Shepherdson started in the Townsville area. Now we see the rank and file in Townsville, and particularly in the seat of Thuringowa, starting to want to have a say in who is preselected, or at least have the opportunity to nominate someone for preselection.

Prior to the last election we saw the ultimate branch stack—a branch stack of one—when the Premier stated dictatorially who was going to stand in those six seats—the clean, green seats. We got the member for Capalaba—and we all know about that—and we got the member for Thuringowa. Obviously, there is now unrest because of the lack of performance by the member for Thuringowa. That unrest is showing through in some of the mail that is going around. People are trying to force others not to stand against the member for Thuringowa.

We have dud ministers, and now we obviously have dud members—all protected by the Premier. The rank-and-file members of the Labor Party and the union people want to see a government that actually listens to the rank and file. They want a chance to nominate someone if they wish, not to be bullied out of preselection opportunities. They want to see a government that has a balanced budget, not a massive budget deficit. They want to see a government put services ahead of propaganda.

Time expired.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Industrial Relations, Staff

Mr HORAN (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Premier to the sackings yesterday, at the behest of his department, of two senior staff in the ministerial office of the Minister for Industrial Relations. As of yesterday these staff, who are reportedly part of the ALP's left faction, are on gardening leave because of the repeated failures of old guard factional member the Minister for Industrial Relations. Why has the Premier allowed Labor Party factional stupidity to wreck Queensland's industrial relations system and why has he made staff pay for the failures of his dud minister?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. From time to time there are changes in staff. Yes, two staff members from the minister's office are on leave. Those two staff members will continue their employment with the government. I regularly make changes in relation to staff. I do that in consultation with the minister. This sort of thing happens in the office of the Leader of the Opposition. He has had a whole stack of changes. It happens.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I do, too. They are wonderful people. I love them both dearly. I am happy to say that. They will remain in the employ of the government. It is important that I put that very clearly on the record. They are both very good staff, but from time to time we do reorganisations. This is no big deal. I have spoken to the minister about this. These reorganisations will go on.

Let me be clear: this will not be the first, nor will it be the last. My responsibility is to ensure that we get the best performance from everybody. This is not a holiday; we are in government. I expect changes to be made from time to time. We put different people in different positions to get the best outcome for the taxpayer. I could not say off the top of my head how many changes in ministerial staff there have been since I became Premier four years ago, but there have been quite a number.

Let us go to the questions. Have there been changes? Yes, there have. The Leader of the Opposition is quite correct. There have been. What will happen to these staff? These staff will continue to be employed within the government. I have made that clear. There is no big deal about it. Changes will take place from time to time in various ministerial offices. I understand that

because there are EB negotiations there are always sensitivities to and stories about all of these things, but these are two valued staff and they will remain in the employment of the government.

Drug Injecting Rooms

Mr HORAN: I refer the Premier to his longstanding promise to the people of Queensland that drug injecting rooms would not be allowed in this state and to the statements of his Health Minister in the *Courier-Mail* on 5 July this year that Queensland 'did not have a culture of injecting on the street or in public places' because 'the Premier isn't interested in it'. On 4 April last year all government members voted in favour of rejecting the introduction of injecting rooms. Drugs supposedly scare the hell of out of the Premier, but now his government is jointly funding shooting galleries by stealth right here in Brisbane. Why have the Premier and Lord Mayor Soorley created injecting rooms in Brisbane back alleys with today's announcements of needle trials on Brisbane city streets? Why has he again deceived the people of Queensland and why has he gone soft on drugs?

Mr BEATTIE: It is important that I give a very serious answer to this question. I want to make sure that the answer is clearly on the record. The Brisbane Health Options Team project is a community safety project or pilot project in Fortitude Valley in my electorate, supported by the Brisbane City Council and Queensland Health, which have put in \$40,000 each. It was developed in consultation with the Valley Chamber of Commerce, police and Brisbane Youth Services, amongst other interested community groups, after an approach to government from the Valley business community which I am aware of.

This has been a problem. When I became the member for Brisbane Central 13 years ago we had a major problem in the Valley which we have cleaned up. There has been a rejuvenation and a renewal going on in the valley—and not just in the Valley but also in nearby suburbs—with urban renewal. The Fujitsu building I opened yesterday is part of all of that. We have brought about significant change.

This is about safe communities and minimising harmful behaviour. Merely pontificating without acting will not achieve this, and my government is a can-do government. I am advised by Health that two highly trained officers go on patrol in the Valley on Friday and Saturday nights. If they see someone in trouble they can call for help. If requested, they can provide sterile needles. They also provide counselling and tips on safe drug use.

We have had needle exchanges. When the Opposition Leader and I were health ministers we both supported needle exchanges. I commend the Opposition Leader for doing that. The Prime Minister supports them as well. It is well accepted by the community that sterile injecting equipment prevents the spread of diseases to the broader community, and that includes AIDS. AIDS kills. I will do everything I can to fight AIDS, and I make no apology for that.

The Health Options Team will respond to calls from businesses or members of the public who become aware of used needles lying around. The team is trained to safely dispose of these. What does that mean? It means that we are getting rid of used needles that could be of risk to children or the community. Do I support that? You bet I do. This is sensible and workable. In my view it is a solution for the real world. I do not like drugs. The Opposition Leader is right: they do scare the hell out of me. But I have to come up with policies of government that will deliver outcomes. That is what this is about.

So far the 12-month pilot program has been going for four months. Queensland Health has a number of safe community drug strategies. For example, we have in place a 1800 NEEDLE help line which provides members of the community with advice on the safe disposal of used injection equipment. With the Local Government Association of Queensland we have initiated a sharps management project aimed at assisting local councils better manage discarded needles.

I am advised by Queensland Health—I agree with this advice—that this unit does not supervise anyone injecting drugs, and it is written into the unit's policy that this is not its role. It is an outreach program which is designed to stop the spread of disease, save lives and protect the community. It is an ugly world. We have to have sensible strategies at work. That is what this is.

Public Sector, Enterprise Bargaining

Mr CHOI: Would the Premier inform the House about the review of Public Service enterprise bargaining that is taking place at the moment?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. Industrial Relations Minister Gordon Nuttall and I met with Bob Hawke this week to discuss the review of the enterprise bargaining system in the public sector. Our meeting was simply an opportunity for him to talk to us about any needs that he had. His enormous experience in industrial relations and his knowledge of what is involved in keeping the machinery of government running smoothly make him the ideal person for the job.

Mr Hawke is not due to complete the report until the end of next month, so it is far too early to say anything about the progress of the review. The review aims to make the process for determining public sector wages fairer and more relevant while reducing disruption to the community. A new process is required to remove the need for unions to engage in ambit claims and industrial action to rally public support for a so-called crisis in a particular government service which does not exist.

The meetings that Minister Nuttall and I had with the former Prime Minister were very positive and constructive. He has engaged in some discussions with the union movement. I thank him for that. I thank the union movement for its consultation with him. I thank him for his involvement.

We are seeking to get a system that will work. We want a fair dinkum system. We want a system that will provide a fair outcome for our employees. We want a fair outcome. We want a reasonable outcome. The words 'fair dinkum' are important to us. We do not want our nurses to have to go through the anguish, embarrassments or difficulties of running public campaigns. We believe that they should be given a fair go. That is why we are seeking a new model.

I urge all parties—by that I mean the union movement—and those within government who are involved in these processes to ensure that we discuss a new model for the future. That new model is open to discussion. We have put to the union movement a number of suggestions, but we are happy to accept any suggestions that come forward. I do not have a preconceived idea and nor does the minister. We do not have a fixed view in our minds as to what the new model should be—as long as it works, as long as it is fair and as long as it ends the law of the jungle, which is what exists now.

I put on the record that we are prepared to accept any reasonable model. I invite the union movement again to work with us on developing that model. Bob will obviously do some work on that. I am giving the union movement a clear understanding today that we are prepared to look outside the box, to look outside the initial suggestions. There is always a fourth possibility; that is, any suggestion that comes out of either their considerations or Bob Hawke's recommendations. We cannot be broader than that.

We have had some discussion about terms of reference. We are prepared to work with the union movement in relation to those. We want to fix it—fix it with the union movement and fix it in a cooperative and sensible way. Whether we get agreement at the end remains to be seen, but we are certainly going to try to do that. I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations for his hard work on this. Enterprise bargaining is not an easy process to follow, but we will do our best.

Mr SPEAKER: Could I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Tallebudgera State School in the electorate of Currumbin. Welcome.

Speed Cameras

Mr JOHNSON: I refer the Minister for Police to his criticism of the opposition in this House on Tuesday because we dared raise community concerns about the abuse of guidelines for the operation of speed cameras. I would like to quote from *Hansard* comments regarding the abuse of the guidelines applying to the use of speed cameras on 18 November 1998—

... those cameras are constantly there and they are constantly used simply to entrap drivers. They are not being used to reduce speed; they are being used to entrap drivers and to raise revenue.

Why is it okay for the member for Sandgate, and now Minister for Industrial Relations, whom I just quoted, to voice these concerns about the abuse of the guidelines while the opposition cannot say the same thing without the minister's sanctimonious criticism? Will the minister listen to his ministerial colleague and the opposition and restore community confidence in the use of these cameras by reviewing the way they are being used?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question. This matter has been aired a number of times this week and I thought for once that we were going to get some bipartisan support. The facts are that the cameras were not introduced by Tom Barton or me; the cameras were introduced into the state by Mr Johnson and the coalition government. It was the right decision.

This is the third time this week that the opposition has raise the issue of cameras. The facts are that, as we have stated time and time again, these cameras are not—

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. We do not have a problem with the cameras. I will put that on the record. It is about the placement of the cameras.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr McGRADY: As I said, this is the third time that the opposition has raised the issue of cameras in this state. Cameras are not being used as revenue raisers. Cameras are being used as part of a campaign to save lives.

It is all very well for members of the opposition to try to use this place to grab their cheap headlines. But it is not working, because as I have said time and time again, and as the Minister for Transport has stated, there is nothing worse for people than to have somebody knock on their door and tell them that a member of their family has been involved in either a serious accident or, indeed, a fatality. There are guidelines drawn—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We are going to hear the answer to the question.

Mr Johnson: We want the answer to the question.

Mr SPEAKER: If the member listens, he will hear it.

Mr Horan: We put them there to save some lives.

Mr McGRADY: We have little 'Sir Echo' sitting there just repeating everything that his deputy is saying. The Leader of the Opposition wants to get wise to himself.

There are guidelines in place that are administered by the police. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows the guidelines as well as anybody else. This is just a cheap political stunt. I certainly hope that the efforts that these members opposite are making this week do not result in any serious accidents or, indeed, fatalities on our roads.

Public Servants

Mr ENGLISH: I direct a question to the Premier. Given the high regard that our government has for our Public Service employees, I refer to the need to ensure that these public servants are encouraged to upgrade their skills. I ask: what is the state government doing to help produce the leading administrators of tomorrow?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. A government can have great vision, which we do, and great policies, which we do, in the areas of the Smart State across-the-board, but it cannot deliver them without the experience and expertise of public servants. Many government departments are bigger than all but the major companies and senior public servants need great skills in handling massive budgets and work forces so that services are delivered to the public effectively, efficiently and cheaply.

The problem that all governments face is finding people with the exceptional talents and experience necessary for senior positions—talented although the Public Service is. That is why the state government is helping to create a national school of government to improve the ability and expertise of public servants to deliver services to the public. The Australian School of Government will help us deliver our Smart State policies and so improve the lives of all Queenslanders. An interim board chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of Griffith University, Professor Glyn Davis—the former director-general of my department—is guiding the creation of the new multicampus school.

This is a joint initiative involving several state governments and the Commonwealth government and universities and business schools in Queensland, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. The Australian School of Government will be both a teaching and a research institution with two Queensland universities, Griffith University and the University of Queensland, as partners in the venture. It will offer a masters degree in public administration and an executive fellows program targeted at senior public sector staff.

An agreement is now being finalised between the governments and a range of universities to provide endowment for professional chairs for up to five years. We will provide scholarships for emerging leaders to attend the school. Government will provide scholarships for up to 120 masters students and 80 executive fellows as well as assistance with start-up costs. The Queensland government will fund scholarships for 10 masters degree students and 10 executive fellows.

Every government faces similar challenges. That is why the collaborative approach that we are taking with other Australian governments and a range of universities makes good sense. Queenslanders expect their government to plan well and develop creative policies that tackle the real issues of the 21st century and we need highly skilled people to do just that. The school will help develop the next generation of senior public sector managers, addressing the consequence of an ageing work force and increase the mobility of people within government between both the public and the private sectors.

The school will start in Queensland and Victoria and it is close to finalising arrangements to teach in the ACT. It will open its doors to students in the first semester of 2003. Discussions are under way also about teaching in New South Wales. An international search for a dean has already started. The position was advertised last week and a search company is talking with possible candidates. An international search for the school's foundation dean will begin shortly. The dean will be appointed to a chair now being established by the University of Melbourne.

In conclusion, I welcome the comments by the Leader of the Liberal Party when he said on 4BC—

The government has flagged its intentions to reduce its Public Service numbers ... that reduction of course is warranted because over the past, well, the first three years of the Labor government in Queensland, Public Service numbers increased by about 24,000 across-the-board. So that's the reason why they're now keen to reduce the Public Service numbers and reduce payroll.

I want to thank the Leader of the Liberal Party for his support.

Nerang River and Broadwater Passenger Ferry Service

Mr BELL: In the absence of the Minister for Transport, I direct this question to the Premier. The Gold Coast transportation study is an important document and I believe that it has the in-principle support of the government. A facet of that report is the prospect of a passenger ferry service in the Nerang River and Broadwater and adjacent waterways. My question is: does the government have under consideration any specific proposals for a passenger ferry service in the Nerang River and Broadwater area?

Mr BEATTIE: As the member knows, the Minister for Transport is attending a ministerial council meeting, and I do not have that level of detail with me. I am quite happy to arrange for the honourable member for Surfers Paradise to receive, on the minister's return, an appropriate communication from him in writing. I give that indication on the record.

Nevertheless, I want to say a couple of things about the Gold Coast in relation to transport because this is a matter of importance to the member and, of course, Merri Rose and all the other government members who represent Gold Coast electorates and who raise these issues with me on a regular basis. When we first came to office, I had discussions with the mayor of the Gold Coast about funding. It was just under \$20 million for corrections to roadways in the member's electorate of Surfers Paradise. As the member knows, we spent significant funds upgrading the highway to the Gold Coast. It started under the previous Borbidge government and it was completed by my government. That now has brought the Gold Coast and Brisbane closer together. It has reduced the amount of travelling time. The M1 is a world-class highway which links the two major cities of this state—Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I can tell the Deputy Premier that that has been a marvellous amalgamation. The honourable Deputy Premier was referring to the amalgamation of the Gold Coast and Albert, including Beenleigh, and what that has meant for the Gold Coast.

Mr Bell: What a tragedy!

Mr Barton: We improved the standard of the Gold Coast greatly by putting Beenleigh in with it.

Mr BEATTIE: The local member would agree with that. As a former mayor of the Gold Coast, I know that the member for Surfers Paradise would be passionate about it now. While he had some misgivings at the beginning, he can now see that the vision is real. The Gold Coast is so much better served by bringing those councils together. Oh, the member should not do that to himself—it is not good for his neck!

Turning to issues of public transport, we have made commitments in relation to the Tugun bypass but we have had difficulties with the federal government. Merri Rose has repeatedly pursued this matter in cabinet. Obviously, we intend to continue pursuing this, notwithstanding our difficulties with the federal government.

Two weeks ago, we launched the Gold Coast Light Rail Study, which will take 18 months. I made a pledge in relation to the light rail project to fund the feasibility study with the mayor. In relation to the Tugun bypass, we want the federal government to honour its 1998 commitment to fund the Tugun bypass on a 50/50 basis. They have not done so. I hope that the member for Surfers Paradise and others on the Gold Coast will support us because my Labor team on the Gold Coast is fighting to get the federal government to contribute its share to the Tugun bypass.

This government has done significant things on roads; we are looking at light rail and we are delivering on the Tugun bypass. It is the state's second biggest city and we have put significant and unprecedented amounts of funds into the Gold Coast. We will continue to look after the interests not only of everyone on the Gold Coast but of all Queenslanders.

Foreign Ownership of Land in Queensland

Mr HAYWARD: I direct my question to the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines. Will the minister advise the House about the current level of foreign ownership of land in Queensland?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. Foreign ownership of land has always been an issue guaranteed to stir emotions in Queensland, particularly in relation to foreign ownership of land in tourist areas such as the Gold Coast and Cairns. The popular myth is that foreigners are buying up great tracts of Queensland. However, this misconception is not supported by the Annual Report on the Administration of the Foreign Ownership of Land Register Act 1988, which I seek leave to table for the information of honourable members.

Leave granted.

Mr ROBERTSON: My department's Foreign Ownership Register records as at 30 June 2002 that foreign nationals from a total of 124 countries hold interests in Queensland land. As at 30 June, these foreign nationals owned interests in Queensland land totalling 1,515,144 hectares or just 0.87 per cent of the total land area of the state. This represents a slight increase compared with the 1.454 million hectares held by foreign interests at 30 June 2001. The total 1.5 million hectares of foreign owned land in Queensland represents 26,076 individual parcels of land, worth a collective total value of \$778.1 million. Nationals from the United Kingdom own most foreign-owned land in Queensland, some 293,500 hectares, followed by nationals from the USA, who own 266,900 hectares, then Japanese nationals, who own 230,000 hectares, then PNG nationals, who own 208,500 hectares, then German nationals, who own 113,300 hectares and Canadians, who own 96,600 hectares.

In terms of the value of foreign-held land, Malaysian interests top the list with land worth \$216.3 million, followed by Japan at \$127.9 million, the UK at \$112 million, Germany at \$76.7 million, New Zealand at \$50.1 million and Singapore at \$24.8 million. The largest number of individual parcels of foreign-owned land are owned by Japanese nationals, numbering 4,210 separate parcels, followed by the UK with 3,556 parcels, New Zealand with 3,284, the United States with 2,942, Singapore with 2,588 and Hong Kong with 1,330.

All foreigners, as defined by the Foreign Ownership of Land Register Act, are required to notify the registrar of any acquisition or disposal of land or any interest in land. Notifications given in compliance with these requirements are maintained in the register, which allows for foreign ownership of land to be monitored.

Public Sector, Voluntary Early Retirements

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice to widespread concerns within his department about forced redundancies and to today's media release from the QPSU, which includes some choice comments from Mr Alex Scott, the QPSU general secretary. I table that for the information of members so that I cannot be accused of selectivity. I note that it was also put on the fax stream about an hour ago, so all members should have a copy. It is titled 'No V in VER Injustice'. Mr Scott's comments include the following—

We don't believe the job cuts in Justice will be voluntary. We've raised this issue many times but it now seems the only way forward for us is to raise this dispute.

The media release states—

Mr Scott said the whole criminal justice system has been compromised by the poor employment practices of the department.

There can be no doubt that Justice is the worst employer in the public sector.

Will the Attorney give an unequivocal commitment that there will be no forced redundancies, no restructures of his department and an absolute commitment to job security in his department to address the current appallingly low levels of morale and the employment insecurity?

Mr WELFORD: I do.

Education Queensland, Royal Queensland Show

Mrs ATTWOOD: I direct my question to the Minister for Education. Would the minister please inform members about the role Education Queensland will have at the RNA show this year and how students will be involved?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for question. As honourable members know, today brings the opening of the Ekka, that great Queensland institution. I am pleased to advise members that Education Queensland, along with all other government departments, has a stand in the Frank Nicklin Pavilion. At our stand children will be able to try two 'Where in the World' games. One is a video game and one is an interactive game and they put knowledge to the test in a fun way. It is an opportunity for us to show off the Smart State and to get young people thinking about the importance of education, their future and the opportunities that are available to them. There will also be lots of give-aways, including transfers, magnetic frames and mouse pads.

The showbag pavilion will contain many popular displays of school work. Education will be on show there, demonstrating what is happening in today's classrooms and how that differs in many ways from what happened in the classrooms that many members might recall from years gone by. This year there are 1,087 entries in competition categories, mainly from primary schools. Our aim has been to increase entries and we are aiming to continue increasing entries every year, with a competition that is much more relevant to curriculum and one that is more exciting for young people.

Earlier this year I talked about the quest that the RNA has embarked on, in partnership with Education Queensland, to move beyond some of the more traditional entries of school work. I know that in the past some members have participated in those competitions of anthologies and copybooks. I believe the member for Mount Gravatt is a previous winner in the copybook class.

A Government member: As a left-hander.

Ms BLIGH: As a left-hander—no mean achievement. Today's students are being encouraged to enter web sites, Power Point presentations and web page designs. This gives the exhibition the chance to bring educational displays into the technological age and into the new era of technology in our classrooms. These new IT categories have attracted about 200 entries. We would like to see that built on in the future. Old favourites remain. There will still be student paintings and photography on display.

I congratulate the overall winners of Education on Show. First place went to McDowall State School, second to Bracken Ridge State School and third to Rocklea State School. The RNA also invited four high schools to design the stands to display students' work and Ferny Grove was judged as the best display stand.

I take this opportunity to draw the attention of members to a program called the food and fibre trail, funded by my colleague the Minister for Primary Industries in association with Agforce—

Mr Palaszcuk: Agware.

Ms BLIGH:—and Agware and the QFF. That program is designed to give city kids an understanding of life on a farm, where their food comes from and the importance of the rural sector.

Detention Centres

Mr FLYNN: Premier, the silence over the issue of a detention centre being built in Queensland as proposed by the federal government is deafening. Is the Premier able to indicate the status quo of this proposal? What is the government's view on any such proposal for development anywhere in Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: Before I answer the question, I am sure the member will not mind me saying because of his electorate that I encourage all members to attend the Ekka. Tonight, cabinet, along with the Leader of the Opposition and the Governor, will be attending the formal dinner at the Ekka. On Monday, cabinet will meet at the Ekka, as we have done in recent years, to

highlight our support for the Ekka and to bring together the country and the city. I know that the member for Lockyer will support that.

In 2000 the Commonwealth government announced that it intended to build an immigration detention centre in Queensland. On 4 April 2002 the Minister for Immigration, the Hon. Philip Ruddock, wrote to inform me that the Commonwealth's preferred site for the immigration detention centre was Pinkenba. I acknowledge the responsibility of the Queensland government to deal with illegal immigrants and those who breach their visas; however, I have expressed my concern about the lack of community consultation by the Commonwealth on the preferred site. On 9 May 2002 I wrote to Minister Ruddock and told him that I am happy to work with the Commonwealth in identifying a more appropriate site in rural or regional Queensland for the facility—if they wanted it, which is the answer to the question.

On 4 July 2002 Mr Ruddock wrote to me and advised that he has undertaken some consultations in local and regional communities. On the basis of briefings by the Commonwealth, the facility will initially have 200 beds with core facilities that will enable an expansion to 550 beds. Given that Queensland currently has a capacity for 20 to 24 detainees, which is rarely fully utilised, I have sought further information from Minister Ruddock as to why such a large expansion in capacity is considered necessary. We do not seem to have that number. As the member knows, we have had issues about security. I have argued consistently about issues involving illegal immigrants coming into the Torres Strait. We need effective surveillance. I understand that at the moment there are 15 more Indonesians in the watch-house on Thursday Island.

Mr Flynn interjected

Mr BEATTIE: No. What I am saying is that, as a matter of principle, under the current system, as I read out with those figures, we have only a limited need. If we look at what I said before, given that Queensland currently has a capacity for 20 to 24 detainees, which is rarely fully utilised, why do we need the facility? Admittedly, at the moment there are 15 illegal Indonesian fishers in the watch-house on Thursday Island. We have had a couple of incidents in relation to those people to which the Minister for Police and I have referred. That is putting pressure on Queensland police and on Fisheries nationally. If we add up the numbers, there does not seem to be a need for a facility. We are prepared to explore a facility elsewhere in rural or regional Queensland if the community wants it. But we do not like these detention centres in their current form, because they are poorly run. We do not want another Woomera here. I have made that absolutely clear.

Chemcollect

Mr PEARCE: The Chemcollect program is due to finish in central Queensland today. Will the Minister for Environment say what are the benefits of the program, and are there any plans to run that program again?

Mr WELLS: There are many benefits. I thank the member for his staunch advocacy of this program and his work with private industry to ensure that this program continues. Chemcollect is a program for the collection and destruction of banned, deregistered and out of date or unwanted agricultural and veterinary chemicals.

Mr Palaszczuk: A very good program.

Mr WELLS: I thank the Minister for Primary Industries for the support of his department. The \$5.8 million three-year program is funded jointly by the Queensland and Commonwealth governments. It is making significant inroads into protecting the health of rural Queensland communities, the environment and our vital agricultural export markets from the problems of chemical residues. Before the EPA undertook the Queensland-wide Chemcollect program, many of our primary producers did not have any practical or cheap options for the safe disposal of unwanted chemicals. Many of these unwanted chemicals are more than 40 years old. For instance, arsenic pentoxide was extensively applied through much of southern and central Queensland to control prickly pear outbreaks in the 1920s. Organochlorine pesticides, such as DDT and dieldrin, were also used extensively for pest control in earlier decades until we were alerted to residues in waterways, coastal areas and even in the Antarctic. Unfortunately, in the past unwanted chemicals have found their way into food and fibre crops, jeopardising multimillion dollar export markets. Chemcollect aims to protect the environment and these crucial export industries as well as ensuring a healthier lifestyle and safer environment for all Queenslanders.

Chemcollect gives every primary producer in Queensland the opportunity to safely dispose of unwanted chemicals.

The final two phases of the program have been run throughout central and northern Queensland, so cane farmers can get rid of their unwanted chemicals before harvesting gets into full swing later this month. By the time Chemcollect is completed in August, the final tally of unwanted chemicals is likely to reach about 400 tonnes. The member for Fitzroy knows that the chemical industry plans to continue the excellent work of Chemcollect and will introduce a program called Chemclear for the ongoing collection of unwanted farm chemicals. The Queensland government is justifiably proud of the Chemcollect program and the significant benefits it has brought and will continue to bring to the state.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Maroochydore, I welcome to the public gallery a second group of students and teachers from Tallebudgera State School in the electorate of Currumbin.

Surgery Cancellations

Miss SIMPSON: I refer the Minister for Health to another horror story which has emerged from Queensland public hospitals: a 73-year-old Gold Coast woman with a tear in her bowel who had her surgery cancelled for the third time yesterday. Doreen Pascoe has been waiting more than six months to have a serious infection, which has ulcerated to the size of a saucer and is causing fluid to discharge from her navel, removed from her stomach. How long will the minister allow Queenslanders with potentially life-threatening conditions to continue getting prepared for surgery only to have it cancelled at the last minute? What is the minister now doing to ensure that these serial cancellations do not continue, considering the trauma and angst they cause both patients and their families?

Mrs EDMOND: I am not aware of this particular incident. I am happy to follow it up and get that information.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory!

Mrs EDMOND: We hear again an example of the outrageous behaviour of the opposition, as we hear every day. I am happy to find out the information on that and get back to the member opposite. Any cancellations are something that Queensland Health does not take lightly. Officers have to make clinical decisions at the time in terms of the patient's benefit and the benefit of other patients who may be more serious. They are clinical decisions that are not made by politicians. They are not made by me. I do not interfere in this process. Some of the issues that the member raised relate to cancellations due to industrial action. One of the issues the member raised the other day related to cancellations because appointments had been made with VMOs who refused to see patients as a result of ongoing industrial action. I find that a disappointment. Those patients had been prioritised.

An opposition member interjected.

Mrs EDMOND: You keep blathering on; if you just had the odd amount of decency to listen to a question, maybe you would hear something.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide.

Mrs EDMOND: That patient had been prioritised appropriately and appointments had been made very quickly. Unfortunately, they were made with VMOs, and the VMOs on the Sunshine Coast have been the most militant. They are the most union-oriented and have taken the most industrial action. That is a disappointment to us. Queensland Health is working very hard to make sure that patients, particularly high priority patients, get the excellent care and attention for which Queensland Health is renowned.

QAS Baby Capsule Hire Program

Mr REEVES: I refer the Minister for Emergency Services to the fact that my wife, Megan, and I are soon to have a little one to fill the booties that the member for Bundamba gave me yesterday. With the birth pending, we recently booked to hire a baby capsule from the Queensland Ambulance Service. I ask: could the minister inform the House about this very important road safety program?

Mr REYNOLDS: I thank the member for the question. I am sure that, as an expectant father, this is a very important question for him, just as it would be for all honourable members.

Mr Seeney: Wave the props around.

Mr REYNOLDS: I am sure all members agree that the safety of infants in vehicles should be a top priority for parents, the community, the Beattie government and even the member for Callide. This is a very important safety issue. Regrettably, baby capsules are relatively expensive and outside the reach of many low income families. I am very pleased to be able to say that the Queensland Ambulance Service is doing its part to improve the safety of infants in vehicles with its excellent baby capsule hire program.

The QAS is raising the priority of its baby capsule program to complement the Beattie government's strategic objective on community safety. A review of the baby capsule program will be completed during 2002-03, including enhanced training in business systems to improve the capacity of the ambulance regions in the implementation and management of the product. Those improvements will allow the QAS to continue to more effectively expand the service in subsequent years.

Currently, the QAS offers the baby capsule hire service at selected ambulance stations statewide. Some 4,900 baby capsules are available for hire. To make this service affordable, the hire and fitting fee for a QAS baby safety capsule is kept to a very low \$55. The fitting fee for a privately owned infant or child restraint is \$16.50. Some 990 privately owned infant and child restraints were fitted by the QAS last financial year as part of a great service to the community.

Mrs Reilly: I used them.

Mr REYNOLDS: We hear that the member for Mudgeeraba used them as well. I am sure that one of the children of the member for Mirani will take this advice and have one fitted as well. We have checked more than 3,000 privately owned infant and child restraints through the Nursing Mothers Association, the Family Day Care Association, the district health services and various shopping centres in Queensland. The QAS is a member of CREST, the Child Restraint Education and Safe Travel Committee, and takes a very close and serious interest in child safety. As minister, I am very pleased with the Ambulance Service's contribution to child safety. What better way is there to promote a safer and more supportive environment than through the provision of baby capsules to protect our very young Queenslanders from injury and death on the roads? All honourable members would wish Phil and Megan the very best for the impending birth of their first child.

Police Stations, Workplace Health and Safety

Mr QUINN: I refer the Minister for Police to the embarrassing situation a number of weeks ago when Clifton Police Station on the Darling Downs was forced to close temporarily because it does not meet workplace health and safety requirements, and I ask: has the Queensland Police Service identified any other police facilities that do not meet workplace health and safety requirements and will he detail these to the House? Is there any possibility that further police stations might be forced to close for the same reason?

Mr McGRADY: As the member would appreciate, there are almost 1,000 police stations scattered the length and breadth of Queensland. From time to time, some of these older police stations have some structural problems, and Clifton is no exception. Q-Build was quickly on the job and did excellent work. Obviously, the Queensland Police Service keeps a check on the various police stations around the state. If we see problems, we get Q-Build to move in and it does a very good job.

While I am on my feet, I pay tribute to the minister and in particular Q-Build in allocating almost \$400,000 last year to assist us to repair some of the older homes that the police men and women around the state live in. I would not say that the Clifton situation was an embarrassment. It is an old building. It has served the people of the area well. We will keep checking these buildings and, where necessary, we will repair them.

Baby Walkers, National Safety Standards

Mrs REILLY: I direct a question to the Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading. As a fellow mother I know she would be as disturbed as I am about incidents in the home where children are injured in a range of accidents, including in baby walkers. From personal experience, I would like to advise impending parents—the members for Mansfield is not here; I

will tell him later—of the importance of not leaving babies in walkers near stairs. Thankfully, we got over that one. I ask: could the minister provide further advice to the House about other moves to improve the safety of baby walkers?

Mrs ROSE: I thank the member for the question, because this is a very important safety issue. As I flagged in my ministerial statement this morning, it was an issue on the agenda at the ministerial council meeting of consumer affairs ministers last week. Baby walkers sold in Queensland will have to meet mandatory safety standards from 1 November. The new standards were endorsed last week at the ministerial council on consumer affairs meeting in Adelaide. I am pleased to report that my state and territory colleagues supported Queensland's push to bring forward the new standards. New South Wales already has standards in place. In effect, without the proposed national standard we could have seen the dumping of substandard walkers in Queensland and other jurisdictions. If we had waited until next year to bring in the standards—the federal government's preferred option—scores of potentially dangerous walkers might have been bought as Christmas presents.

Baby walkers are a major cause of serious injury to children aged less than one year in Queensland. The Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit reported that 68 baby walker related injuries presented at 14 hospital emergency departments in 1998-99. More than 90 per cent of cases involved a fall, nearly 60 per cent involving steps or stairs. The high proportion of falls involving stairs probably reflects the prevalence of high-set homes in Queensland. The new Queensland standards will vastly improve stability, with a series of tests to minimise the risk of the baby walker tipping over either forwards, backwards or sideways. They are also aimed at the prevention of falls downstairs, normally achieved by friction strips or some other form of braking mechanism on the undercarriage that operates when the edge of the walker moves over a step. The walkers will also have to carry consumer safety warnings.

The standard of baby walkers is of great concern to numerous consumer groups. Many older-style baby walkers are accidents waiting to happen. We cannot afford to take risks when it comes to young children. The Office of Fair Trading's Product Safety Branch places a high priority on improving the safety of toys and other products bought for children. The branch does not recommend the use of baby walkers. If they are used, parents should ensure that they meet the new standards. But even then parents and carers should remember that the walkers give extra mobility and that the best way to protect babies or young children from accidents is constant supervision.

Consumer and fair trading agencies have a responsibility to do what they can to ensure that products on the market do not pose dangers to children. Having a mandatory safety standard for baby walkers certainly is a step in the right direction. The Office of Fair Trading is constantly monitoring reports of injuries to children and will consider introducing standards in other areas to further boost safety.

Seniors

Mr LESTER: I refer the Minister for Seniors to the fact that earlier this year, amid much publicity, an office was established with responsibility for seniors, and I ask: would the minister be so kind as to advise what funding the Seniors portfolio has been allocated this financial year, how many staff are currently working in this area and what real benefits have been achieved to date to better the lives of older Queenslanders?

Government members interjected.

Mr LESTER: These are serious issues for everybody, not just seniors. Would the minister be so kind as to provide me with a table outlining the structure of the office, the officers, their phone numbers and so on?

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for Keppel for the question and congratulate him on becoming the shadow minister for seniors. It is good to see that finally the opposition has decided to follow the government's lead and recognise the important contribution that seniors make to Queensland. In terms of a lot of the detail that the member has asked of me today, I do not have graphs, telephone numbers and that kind of detail with me. But I am very happy to provide him with that kind of information. What I can say is that the Office of Seniors' Interests located in the Department of Families has about seven staff. I am not sure of the budget; it is somewhere in the vicinity of \$1.5 million. There is also the Seniors Concessions Branch in the department with five people working in that branch. I do know that the Queensland government spends over \$21 million each year in providing concessions for seniors. I am pleased to tell the member that I

will be addressing the Association of Independent Retirees today, because it is holding its conference here at Parliament House, about these and other issues.

One of the most important roles being undertaken by the Office of Seniors' Interests in the next year will be developing a new forward plan for seniors. We have to have better policies to reflect our ageing population, so that office will be working hard on those forward policies. It will also be actively out there working and promoting a seniors and IT project. This is a project being undertaken in consultation with the Council of Ageing in recognition of seniors' desire to be connected to computers and particularly the Internet. We will be going out there hosting classes throughout Queensland to make sure seniors have that kind of access.

One of the other important things that the Office of Seniors' Interests will be doing in the next year is to ensure that the changes to our domestic violence legislation—because for the first time it will cover seniors, particularly seniors who are in carer relationships—are well understood by seniors in Queensland. The impetus to change the domestic violence legislation came from seniors groups themselves who said that they wanted to have the protection of that kind of domestic violence legislation. Although the opposition voted against that legislation, I am hoping now that it has a shadow minister for seniors it will certainly get better policy advice on the issues that seniors in Queensland are talking about and advocating.

Fraser Island Police Station

Mr McNAMARA: I refer the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to the fact that I recently had the pleasure of unveiling plans for the new Fraser Island police station. I ask: can the minister tell me what sorts of benefits the construction of this facility will provide for the community?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for his question. I also take the opportunity of acknowledging the agitation and the enthusiasm which he has for projects in his electorate. The Fraser Island police station is just another example of the commitment that this government has to law and order, particularly in the Wide Bay area. It is recognised that Fraser Island, which receives an increasing number of tourists every year, requires a permanent police presence. We recognise this, and we are delivering. So it is good news for both the member and the residents of Fraser Island. The construction of a police station has started. It is expected that this facility, which is worth in excess of \$1.3 million, will be completed by the end of this calendar year, barring any unforeseen circumstances.

This project will create 620 weeks of employment for workers. A local contractor has been hired to clear the site. The contractor will soon be seeking other local subcontractors to assist with the project once work begins in earnest. Likewise, the company will also buy some materials locally and rent properties on Fraser Island for the contractors to live in while the station is being constructed. This project demonstrates the Beattie Labor government's commitment to ensuring that capital works projects like this one provide economic flow-on effects for regional communities. I look forward, along with the member for Hervey Bay, to officiating at this ceremony later on this year. It is also a credit to the tenacity of the local member in his agitations, and as a government we are now able to deliver another project in his electorate.

Kilcoy Pastoral Company

Mrs PRATT: I refer the Premier and Minister for Trade to the fact that, as a consequence of federal minister Warren Truss's formula with regard to US export quota allocations, the viability of the Kilcoy Pastoral Company located at Kilcoy is once again threatened. KPC is seeking an allocation of 2,000 metric tonnes of discretionary US quota in order to remain viable. I ask: with the US export allocation in mind, what measures has the Premier taken to ensure the viability of Queensland abattoirs? Will the Premier pursue the federal government to deliver the necessary allocations to ensure the survival of KPC and other Queensland abattoirs?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question because I share her concern. I cannot understand why Warren Truss is going down this road, to be perfectly frank. Indeed, today's *Queensland Country Life*—of which I have become an avid reader—contains a story entitled 'US quota killing Kilcoy', which states—

Kilcoy Pastoral Company abattoir needs extra US beef export quota now being allocated.

The company needs at least 2000 tonnes—preferably 3000t—to ensure its survival.

KPC's allocation had fallen short because of its restructure last year.

The article also says that Kilcoy Mayor, Terry Dredge, says that flawed government policy has threatened to destroy his community—that is, federal government policy. I share his view on it, as does the Minister for Primary Industries.

Frankly, the federal government is putting Kilcoy at risk. We will continue—Henry has been pursuing this matter and we will as well—to pursue the federal government as hard as we possibly can to get better access to the quota. I give the member that clear understanding today. I would hope all members of this House would assist us in doing that. Kilcoy has a special relevance to the ministry because that is where the member for Currumbin and the Minister for Tourism comes from. It is her home town. In fact, her family are farmers in that area.

We are acutely aware of the problem. But this is something above politics. I just say to Warren Truss: come on, we can do better than this. We will do everything we can to support KPC. That is all I can say to the member opposite. I understand her concern, and it is shared by the mayor. We will do everything we can in support. If the member wants to formally write to me, I am happy to pursue that matter directly with the Prime Minister and the minister. Indeed, the Minister for Primary Industries will do the same thing.

While we are talking about regions—and I have answered the question—I advise the House that, following the passing of the bill earlier this week about the parliament being held in Townsville, at 11.40 this morning the Executive Council will pass the constitutional instrument to allow parliament to be held in Townsville. That will be at the Executive Council obviously organised by the Governor. I will be attending the Executive Council meeting because of its importance. A number of members from north Queensland will also be there, such as the Minister for Emergency Services and member for Townsville. I take this opportunity to thank the House for its overwhelming support for the holding of the parliament in Townsville in north Queensland. I want to stress that this is actually a north Queensland sitting of parliament. I know that there was some opposition, but generally members were very supportive, and I thank them for that. I again thank the Leader of the Opposition. We need to make the Townsville sitting of this parliament a success.

Coming back to the issue of beef, we are doing everything we possibly can to ensure that the beef industry has a long-term future in this state. We are deeply concerned about it. Obviously we will do everything we can to assist in relation to Lakes Creek. We had a meeting this morning of a task force consisting of the Deputy Premier, the Minister for State Development and the Minister for Public Works—and this will be extended to include the Minister for Primary Industries—so that we can do everything we can to ensure that the beef industry has a long future, and that includes Lakes Creek and Kilcoy. But we cannot do it without the help of the federal government.

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

JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 14 May (see p. 1562).

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (11.30 a.m.): The National Party opposition will be supporting the bill before the parliament. It is not an unusual practice for the Attorney-General to bring into this parliament one of these major SLUMP bills which, as a matter of course, are designed to address a whole range of issues requiring minor and generally insignificant amendment. On occasion they clarify and ensure consistency between pieces of legislation where amendments have been made but where oversights and other issues need to be fixed without the necessity of bringing major and independent pieces of legislation before the parliament. I understand that this bill involves about 100 amendments to various statutes, many of which are extremely insignificant. Others are more significant, and I shall comment on those as a matter of course. I also intend to refer to the explanatory notes, because there are a couple of issues on which I seek clarification.

Firstly, I refer to the proposed amendments to the Public Trustee Act which allow the Public Trust Office to withdraw its operating and capital expenses from the interest earned from investments in the common fund. The explanatory notes indicate that this is to ensure consistency in government accounting practices. There is a degree of retrospectivity in this. I seek from the Attorney an indication that this will be generally a revenue neutral exercise that will do no

more than meet the real operating requirements of the Public Trustee in meeting its particular obligations.

I turn now to the proposed amendments to the Attorney-General Act 1999. I recollect that when the Attorney-General took over that position he promised to bring into this parliament a bill which would ensure the independence of the Attorney-General. It was a fairly rhetorical contribution. At the end of the day, I suppose that it was quite innocuous and relatively harmless, but it really did little to add to good convention or good policy in this state.

The explanatory notes indicate that this amendment inserts into the act a new section 9A which provides that an application for the Attorney-General's fiat must be made in a way prescribed by regulation. I ask the Attorney-General what that is going to mean. Or is he still drafting that particular regulation and therefore is unable to provide fulsome details to the parliament on that? He must have some idea about the problem that has been identified within the Attorney-General Act in regard to the granting of a fiat, that is, the Attorney-General as the chief law officer of the state and guardian of the public interest taking an action on behalf of somebody to ensure that a fundamental issue of justice is addressed by a person or persons who may not otherwise have the resources to do so.

I turn now to the proposed amendments to the Coroners Act 1958. Generally, the provisions of the Cremation Act were repealed in 1996 and inserted into the Coroners Act. I understand that some of these amendments carry on from there. I do not intend to speak about the clauses individually, but I shall refer to the explanatory notes, which state that the prerequisites to cremation do not apply to parts of a body of the deceased that may be removed as part of a post mortem or special examination under the Coroners Act 1958 and which are not buried or cremated with the body.

No doubt the Attorney is well aware of situations which arise from time to time in which a member of a family has died under circumstances which necessitate a post mortem. Some of those situations may be suspicious in a criminal sense. Others pertain to road accidents. Body parts can be kept, and family members or those having direct responsibility for the deceased person are not always aware that some body parts are removed and kept. I am aware of at least one case—and I am sure that there are more—in which a family has arranged for the cremation of their child and learnt subsequent to that that the child's heart was not part of the body which had been released to them. There may have been a perfectly valid reason for that, and perhaps this particular amendment to this clause might not really address that. I am just wondering what the particular motivation is for this—whether it seeks to address a loophole or to tighten up an emerging legal issue.

I believe that there is concern about some of the procedures dealing with the removal of body parts and their release at the time of cremation or burial. If a body has been released to a family, they assume that it is the entire body. This involves closure for that family. Many people regard the heart as the heart and soul of a body, and they do not want a body to be cremated or buried if that one essential part is missing. This is an issue that we need to address, if not through this legislation then at some future time. Families should be aware of this. Awareness is extremely important when dealing with matters such as this.

I turn now to part 7 of the legislation, which deals with the amendment of the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000. This is a very commonsense amendment, although there may be some concern about it infringing upon fundamental legislative principles or the rehabilitation of offenders legislation. Basically, people with criminal convictions who are released from jail after having served their sentences are entitled, for a range of general purposes in the community, to say that they do not have a criminal history. However, of course there are some exceptions to that including, as I understand it, police officers and others who deal with sensitive situations involving vulnerable citizens. It is probably very fair to allow the chief executive to ask the Commissioner of Police to give a written report about the criminal history of a person who has applied for appointment as a community visitor under the Guardianship and Administration Act, because generally they deal with people who have a decision-making incapacity and are vulnerable. I think that we need to go above and beyond that to ensure that those vulnerable citizens are protected.

There is also a proposed amendment to the State Penalties Enforcement Act, which enables the registrar to grant an instalment plan for an enforcement order for small amounts under \$150. This is designed principally for those people who do not have the capacity to pay. It is a sensible amendment that is well and truly worth the support of this parliament. As well, I understand that a civil enforcement fee of \$75 may be added if a fine is unpaid. This amendment has been included to clarify a situation that existed in the original bill. Because this was flagged and

intended at the time of the passage of the original bill, it does not seem to take the form of a new fee or charge. I ask the Attorney-General how much he believes will be raised annually by the civil enforcement fee.

The bill also contains an amendment to the Supreme Court Act 1995. It provides a greater capacity for the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court to decide the way in which the court will sit and means of notification. The explanatory notes indicate that the Supreme Court will have greater flexibility with regard to sitting arrangements. It takes into account practitioners' use of the Internet to access court timetabling.

I wonder whether this amendment will provide any greater incentive for the Supreme Court to sit more in regional areas. There are places around Queensland in which it would be very sensible to have a sitting of the Supreme Court to provide people with nearer access to justice. The Gold Coast is one of those areas. There are no Supreme Court sittings on the Gold Coast; however, significant numbers of matters that require the time and adjudication of the Supreme Court originate on the Gold Coast.

This problem has existed from time to time. We have indicated in the past that we would like to see a Supreme Court judge based on the Gold Coast. I think the Chief Justice's preference would be to have a system of visiting. I wonder whether this flexible option being inserted into the Supreme Court Act will facilitate the expansion of places throughout Queensland in which the Supreme Court can sit.

As I indicated, the National Party opposition sees no reason to oppose any of the various amendments contained in this bill. The acts being amended are too numerous to talk about individually. To be quite frank, it is not worth taking up a lot of the time of the parliament on these matters because they are simple matters over which there is no disagreement. I would like to hear the Attorney-General's response to those issues I have raised.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (11.42 a.m.): During the debate on this bill I want to take the opportunity to recognise the important and significant role that justices of the peace and commissioners for declaration perform within our legal system. In the electorate of Nudgee there are currently 1,043 JPs and commissioners for declaration. I publicly acknowledge them and thank them for the voluntary contributions they make to our community and for the efficient running of our legal system. JPs and CDecs are recognised as respected members of the community. Their position indicates that they are trusted to act responsibly in the exercise of the duties they perform.

The position is one that has evolved over many centuries, having first been established in England in 1327 as conservators of the peace. In its early history the position carried with it considerable power in the dispensing of justice. Conservators of the peace could punish offenders and hear and determine felonies and misdemeanours. Over time, many of these powers were transferred to other judicial officers of the court system and the position took on more administrative functions within our legal system.

English justices of the peace retain powers to sit as a magistrates court; however, this is a function that is performed only by a minority of Australian JPs. The role of Australian JPs has changed significantly from the days when the position arrived in this country with white settlement in 1788. Today the responsibilities of the position range from witnessing the signing of documents to hearing certain types of court proceedings, depending on the JP's qualifications.

The Justice of the Peace and Commissioner for Declarations Act 1991 made significant changes to the role and position of the JP. The previous single role of a JP was split into three separate positions, each with specific responsibilities. One other important change was the requirement that applicants to the new positions first pass an examination to ensure that they had the required knowledge and skills to perform the role to which they were appointed.

The three new positions created by the act in 1991 were the commissioner for declarations, which is purely an administrative role; justice of the peace (qualified), which has all the powers of a CDec plus some additional judicial functions; and justice of the peace (magistrates court), which has all the duties and responsibilities of the other two positions plus, when sitting with another JP (magistrates court), the power to constitute a magistrates court to deal with pleas of guilty for simple offences. JPs have also retained their historical role as a check and balance on the powers of various state authorities, including the Police Service. There is therefore a great responsibility on JPs to exercise those powers in a judicious manner, particularly in relation to summonses and warrants.

JPs and CDecs jointly exercise powers that are important to people's lives and, indeed, their liberty. For example, many of the documents signed can have significant financial implications for the people involved; some documents may be used in court proceedings where a person's liberty is at stake and enduring powers of attorney documents can control how a person is treated in a hospital or a nursing facility. JPs additionally have authority to issue summonses to direct people to attend a court hearing, to issue warrants for a person's arrest or for a search of their home or property, and also in particular circumstances to constitute a court, either alone or with another JP, to carry out specific duties under our legislation.

These are important and necessary functions of our legal system which rely upon the volunteered efforts of many thousands of Queensland JPs and CDecs. Many JPs and CDecs make themselves freely available to members of the public, and I thank them for that. The web site of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, www.justice.qld.gov.au, has a directory that lists JPs and CDecs who are willing to have their contact details published. Some in my local Neighbourhood Watch groups have acquired permission from JPs and CDecs to have their names and contact numbers published in their monthly newsletters. The Office of the Registrar of Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations also maintains a database, and members of the public can access the contact number of their local JP or CDec if it is requested.

Many JPs and CDecs have served the community for lengthy periods of time. I have had the pleasure on numerous occasions of presenting silver 25-year and gold 50-year certificates to many local people. JPs who believe they are eligible for a long service certificate are welcome to contact my office. I would be happy to make representations on their behalf to the Attorney-General for recognition of their service to the community.

The Department of Justice also publishes an annual bulletin for JPs and CDecs called *Justice Papers*. This is an excellent publication which provides useful and relevant information about the role and any updates or changes to legislation that affect the position. The department's web site also provides an invaluable source of information. New manuals have also recently been produced. Copies are available on loan from my office or can be either downloaded free from the web site or purchased from the department.

I commend the minister and the department for the quality of these initiatives and encourage JPs and CDecs to make use of them. On behalf of the parliament and the Nudgee electorate, I sincerely thank the many JPs and CDecs in my area for their service to our community and the legal system. Our legal system simply could not function without their contributions and sacrifices.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! Before calling the honourable member for Kawana, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of the 2002 state Miss Showgirl finalists.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (11.48 a.m.): They are a very attractive group of young ladies and I wish them all the best for the upcoming exhibition. They should just keep well away from my uncle, ringmaster Warren Cummins.

Mr Springborg: They'd look a lot better sitting in your seat.

Mr CUMMINS: I thank the member for Southern Downs very much. I acknowledge that he looks far better sitting in the Opposition Leader's seat.

In rising to participate in the debate on the Justice and Other Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2002, I mention that this bill contains minor or technical amendments to a number of statutes to correct errors, omit obsolete references and improve operational efficiency. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is responsible for the administration of over 100 statutes. As a result, it is essential that a large number of minor amendments be made to the various legislative provisions to ensure that the statutes continue to work well.

This bill makes amendments to 32 acts within the Attorney-General's Department and one act falling within the portfolio of the Honourable Minister for Local Government and Planning. The large bulk of amendments to the District Court Act 1967 replace redundant references to 'District Court' with the term 'District Court of Queensland'. On 6 June 2002, the constitution of Queensland 2001 comes into force. Under this constitution the District Court is renamed the District Court of Queensland to reflect the statewide nature of the court's work and the fact that it is a higher court of Queensland. The amendments to the act ensure that the act consistently refers to the correct name of the court.

The Powers of Attorney Act 1998 is to be amended to remove the requirement that an attorney appointed under the power of attorney must seek approval of the Guardianship and

Administration Tribunal before dealing in real property of the principal. These are but a few of the reasons why I must commend the bill to the House.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (11.50 a.m.): As the Premier indicated, the Attorney-General is responsible for the administration of quite a number of pieces of legislation—over 100 statutes, in fact. The purpose of this bill is to deal with some of the technical amendments that need to be made to bring matters up to date with respect to the administration of justice, particularly, in Queensland. The idea is to ensure that we deal with these amendments and this cleaning-up process in one legislative step rather than waste a lot of time dealing with numerous alterations by way of amendment throughout the year.

With respect to the major amendments, I propose to deal with approximately half of those and my colleague the member for Southport, who is also on the minister's back bench committee, will, as I understand it, deal with the remainder. The first of these is the Acts Interpretation Act 1954, which has two minor amendments. One is to provide a definition for the word 'instrument' and for the institution known as the CSIRO. That is basically self-explanatory as it is needed for those purposes.

The Appeal Costs Fund Act is also to be amended to provide that members of the Appeal Costs Board are to receive remuneration and allowances as determined by the Governor in Council. The idea is to simplify the mechanism for the review of pay rates for members of the board. The current system involves repeated regulation and amendment to maintain pay rates for members. The proposed amendment allows the variation of rates of pay as determined by the Governor in Council from time to time and it ensures whole-of-government uniformity in remunerating board members.

The Attorney-General Act 1999 itself is to be amended to provide that an application for a fiat must comply with the requirements set out in a regulation. At common law, a person lacking standing can bring an action to enforce a public right if the person gains the consent or fiat of the Attorney-General. This is known as a relator action. Where the application is refused, currently the Attorney-General must report to the House giving reasons for his refusal. As I understand it, the idea of the amendment is to filter out applications for fiats that do not fit within the current legal definition of a fiat and to get over the problem of the act being currently silent as to how an application is to be made.

The member for Southern Downs made reference to the Coroners Act 1958 being amended and referred to some aspects of it. Basically, as I understand it, the amending legislation will enable body parts that have been dissected during an autopsy to be later destroyed without further administrative requirements being sought. As well, another amendment to this act will enable Queensland to participate in the national coronial database so that information from coronial records may be passed on to the national coronial database. It is desirable that Queensland participate in the database to assist Australian coronial inquests and scientists in researching similar deaths that may have occurred in other states.

The District Court Act 1967 is to be amended in line with the amendments to the Queensland constitution. Basically, they are of small consequence in the sense that they refer to the naming of the courts themselves. References to 'District Courts' are to be changed to the 'District Court of Queensland'. These amendments are to be made to be consistent with the naming of the higher courts of Queensland, such as the Supreme Court. As well, the District Court is given power to strike out actions and to award costs where the court has no jurisdiction to deal with a proceeding. This was requested by the rules committee of the court. It appears that previous legislation provided for this event, but it was inadvertently removed by way of an oversight rather than any policy intention.

The Drugs Misuse Act 1986 has a minor amendment to it. The word 'impaired' is to be inserted instead of the word 'handicapped' in the definition 'intellectually handicapped person' which is basically bringing things up to date in terms of current attitudes concerning the meaning of the word 'impairment'.

The Electronic Transactions (Queensland) Act is also to be amended to ensure that a transaction is not invalid because it took place by means of an electronic form for communication, such as an email. There are to be exceptions to that. As I understand it, some transactions cannot be communicated in that way—for example, a legal requirement for a person to serve, lodge, file, sign, produce or retain a document to be used in legal proceedings; a legal requirement for a document to be verified or witnessed by a person other than the author of the document; and an authorisation under the Trust Accounts Act 1973. These exemptions are

necessary for the Department of Tourism and Fair Trading to consider carefully the implications of electronic transactions under those acts.

The Gas Pipelines Access (Queensland) Act 1998 is being amended to a minor degree by replacing the word 'Premier' with the word 'minister' mainly because the powers of the Premier have now been transferred to the Attorney-General under that act. In terms of the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000, to which the honourable member for Southern Downs referred in his speech, it is proposed that the chief executive may ask the Commissioner of Police to give a written report about the criminal history of a person who has applied for appointment as a community visitor. As the honourable member for Southern Downs indicated, care is needed with respect to how people with a disability and who are the subject to the Guardianship Administration Act are dealt with and they have to be protected. Therefore, the provision that criminal histories can be provided is a necessary provision, bearing in mind the welfare of those people.

The Judges (Salaries and Allowances) Act 1967 is to be amended to provide that presiding members of the Land and Resources Tribunal are disqualified from being appointed as members of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. As members of that tribunal, they would deal with their own interests in terms of their income—an obvious conflict of interests.

The Jury Act 1995 is to be amended to include that presiding members of the Land and Resources Tribunal are not eligible for jury service. The Land and Resources Tribunal Act 1999 has quite a few amendments dealing with improving the operation of the Land and Resources Tribunal. The amendments allow for the president of the tribunal to hear any appeals from the presiding members' decisions. Without this amendment, the president could constitute the tribunal differently, with the effect that an appeal of a decision of the tribunal goes directly to the Court of Appeal. This appeal process is undesirable as it increases costs for litigants.

Section 39(2) of the act is to be amended to allow the constitution of a panel to be formed by two or more presiding members. Currently, section 39 contains several configurations for a panel, but that has been amended to include the above panel. The president of the tribunal is of the view that this panel is essential in cases where the particular experience and expertise of each presiding member may be thought appropriate. This additional panel will strengthen and add flexibility to the hearing process.

Section 9 of the act is to be amended to link the retirement age of presiding members to that of Supreme and District Court judges in line with the desire to have consistency of retirement from judicial public positions. The Local Government Act 1993 is to be amended to allow presiding members of the Land and Resources Tribunal to continue to adjudicate matters even if they are ratepayers of the area under consideration.

The Magistrates Court Act 1921 is to be amended to provide a statutory obligation for the Chief Magistrate to prepare an annual report similar to the obligation on the Chief Justice and the Chief Judge of the District Court to prepare and submit annual reports with respect to their jurisdictions.

The Penalties and Sentences Act 1992 is to be amended to clarify that when the Magistrates Court refers a fine option contravention to the State Penalties Enforcement Registry for collection, it must first revoke the Magistrates Court fine option order. This ensures that there are not two fine collection processes operating at once.

In the Powers of Attorney Act 1998, the definition of 'financial matter' is to be amended to remove the requirement that an Attorney appointed under a power of attorney must seek the authority of the Guardianship and Administration Tribunal before dealing in real property for the principle. In practice, this has been unworkable, and I congratulate the Attorney on bringing about the necessary reform in that regard. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (12.03 p.m.): I rise to support the Justice and Other Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2002. As the member for Toowoomba North has already mentioned, it covers numerous acts and the amendments are basically of a minor and sometimes technical nature. I do not intend to go through each of the acts—I will spare everyone that—but I will mention two acts which are to be amended.

The Public Trustee Act 1978 is to be amended to provide that from the interest earned by investments made from the Common Fund and fees and charges received in performing services under the act, the Public Trustee shall, firstly, pay interest to the estates having investments in the Common Fund and after such interest is paid, pay the operating and capital expenses of the Public Trust Office. Such operating and capital expenses are not solely related to administering the beneficiaries' estates. The operating and capital expenses also support the Public Trust

Office's services to other clients, as directed by the Cabinet Budget Review Committee; that is, its community service obligations. These services include preparing wills for free, conveyancing for some clients and discounts on some services. In 2001-02, these community service obligations were estimated to cost \$10.2 million.

This amendment is necessary as a regulation was repealed which previously gave authority for the deduction of such expenses from the Common Fund, as it became redundant as a result of amendments in 1999 to the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977. The amendment will need to be retrospective, as the regulation was made redundant on 1 July 1999. The proposed amendment also incorporates a modern financial accountability measure whereby the Public Trust Office must submit a yearly budget to the minister for his or her approval.

The problem came to light only when the Public Trustee Regulation 1989 was remade in July 2001. This bill is the first appropriate vehicle for that amendment. The act is also to be amended to reinsert a modified section 63A, which 'sunset' on 21 April 2002. This section provided that the Public Trustee must give the Adult Guardian financial resources as approved by the minister. On 14 February 2002, the Cabinet Budget Review Committee decided that the Public Trustee would continue to fund the Adult Guardian. It is essential to secure funding for the Adult Guardian so that the rights and interests of people with a capacity impairment can continue to be protected. Without this amendment, the Public Trustee is not authorised to contribute to the funding of the Adult Guardian. This payment fits into the Public Trustee community service obligations.

Section 5A of the Queensland Law Society Act 1952 is to be amended to allow the Queensland Law Society (Indemnity) Rule 1987 to continue to have effect until 30 June 2004. While Queensland's legal profession legislation is under review, the rule has been extended so that it does not automatically expire on an annual basis under the Statutory Instruments Act 1992.

The Queensland Law Society is currently renegotiating its insurance for 2002-03, as its principal insurer has decided to leave the market. One of the new interested insurers—which would need to establish an office in Queensland—is looking for reassurance that the insurance arrangement will last beyond one year. For this reason, the Queensland Law Society has requested that the Attorney-General extend the operation of the rule for two years. By 30 June 2004, the review of Queensland legal practice legislation, including the requirements for professional indemnity insurance, will be complete. The time taken to review the legal practitioners legislation is justifiable due to the need to consult fully with the legal profession, consumers and other stakeholders in the process. As I said at the outset, this act is basically a housekeeping exercise.

Mr Terry Sullivan: We can hear that you're excited about it.

Mr LAWLOR: I am very thrilled about the act, actually. I am sure that the minister and his staff threw themselves into this with a lot of enthusiasm. Reviewing all of these acts is a fairly onerous task, and I commend the minister and his hard-working staff for the wonderful job they have done. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (12.10 p.m.) I rise to support the Justice and Other Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2002. I reiterate what the member for Southport just said. The Attorney-General is responsible for administering over 100 statutes. In this bill, 34 statutes will be amended. For the Attorney's staff to go through these statutes to find these amendments and for the Attorney to tick them off is an enormous task. A large number of minor and technical amendments are made regularly to update bills so that they have effect in today's law. Sometimes dates, words, et cetera need to be changed. This ensures that statute reform is not delayed, saving valuable parliamentary time.

The amendments to the bill have several elements in common. Generally, they relate to statutes administered by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and have the purpose of increasing operational efficiency. They do not modify the major underlying policy or direction of the statutes being amended. If amendments are not made, the acts to be amended will contain outdated references to legislation or have cumbersome or inoperative provisions. I commend the member for Southport for highlighting the issue about public trustees. I will not refer to that, because the member did that very well. I commend the member's speech in that regard. The legislation will not work as well as it should if these amendments are not carried.

The bill will reform in a minor way the statutes administered by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. Obviously, it has taken some time to put together this measure because the minister has also consulted with some 15 bodies. To do that is also no mean feat.

I also refer to JPs and commissioners for declarations, 800 of whom live in my electorate. Banks and such large institutions that have JPs working for them are making it difficult for these employees to act as JPs and commissioners for declarations in their job because they discourage them from doing their JP and commissioners for declarations duties while working. This puts pressure on other JPs in the area. I have a lot of these people in my area, but the weight, I suppose, of that work is borne by few. I commend my electoral officer, Trish Brookes, the longest serving electoral officer in Queensland. She is an absolute genius. She worked for Ronnie McLean before me and for Jack Houston prior to that. She has been an electoral officer from when electoral officers were first appointed to work for members in 1974.

Mr Shine interjected.

Mr PURCELL: I take that interjection that she is an extraordinary person. She is very experienced and is an enormous help to me. The member for Ferny Grove has told me often that our electoral officers talk from time to time about what a enormous help Trish has been to them. I know that Trish talks to a lot of electoral officers in and around Brisbane. Trish is only too pleased to help any and all of them whenever they ask for help. I also mention Monica Fleming, a JP and commissioner for declarations in my office. Both Trish and Monica do a lot of JP and commissioner for declarations work. Minister, I do not know whether people who are JPs and who work for a bank can refuse to do this work, but it certainly increases the workload of the remaining JPs. I understand that there is complete support for the bill and I commend it to the House.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (12.14 p.m.): It is an absolute pleasure to rise this afternoon in support of the Justice and Other Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2002. I am delighted to be speaking at this time because in the gallery I have a number of guests from the Indooroopilly Senior Citizen's Association. Earlier, we were discussing some of the contents of the bill, and I know that they are quite interested in finding out a little more about it.

As many members would be aware, the Attorney-General has responsibility for the administration of over 100 statutes in this state. The net result is that we need to ensure that these statutes continue to function effectively in our rapidly changing world. There is a frequent need for a large volume of minor and sometimes technical amendments to be made to these legislative provisions. I do not intend to go through these one by one, but that is the reason why the government presents an annual justice and other legislation bill. It ensures that minor and technical amendments which are needed are made through just one statute. This is a quite sensible and economic use of the parliament's time.

The explanatory note to this bill explains that the amendments contained in it have several common features: that they relate, for the most part, to statutes administered by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice; that their purpose is increasing the operational efficiency of legislation; and that they do not modify the underlying policy or direction of the statutes that have been amended in any significant way.

I refer briefly to amendments to the Guardianship and Administration Act of 2000. I have spoken in the House about the operation of this act—in particular in regard to such issues as enduring powers of attorney and what happens when persons find themselves to be unconscious and on life support.

The act will be amended so as to allow the director-general of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to obtain from the Police Commissioner information about the criminal history of a person who has applied to be a community visitor. Currently, the act allows for community visitors to investigate the complaints of people who have impairment of their capacity. When we consider the vulnerability of the client group in this case, it is important that the director-general is aware of whether or not an applicant has a criminal history when appointment as a community visitor is considered. To make sure that the applicant's privacy is protected, this information can be used only for the purposes of assessing the applicant's suitability as a community visitor. It is for this reason principally that I am quite delighted to support this bill.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (12.18 p.m.): I also rise in support of the Justice and Other Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2002. There are a number of minor and technical amendments in order that the statutes continue to work well. Like the member for Indooroopilly, it is the Guardianship and Administration Act to which I now refer as I have a particular interest in the role of community visitors. The amendment to this act will allow the director-general of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to seek and obtain information from the Commissioner of Police about the criminal history of a person who has applied for such a position. The bill says that rehabilitated offenders have protection under the

Criminal Law Act 1986 so that disclosure of their previous criminal history is limited. The proposed amendment overrides the protection but can be justified on the basis that community visitors will be working with a vulnerable group in the community.

The chief executive needs to ensure that the appointed community visitors have appropriate life histories to work with people with a capacity impairment and others. The rights of applicants under the proposed amendment have been protected by providing that the chief executive can use the information obtained through the police checks only to assess the applicant's suitability and for no other purpose.

Clause 23 inserts a new section. It allows the chief executive to make inquiries about the appropriateness and competence of people who have applied for appointment as community visitors under the act. This section also allows the CEO to ask the Commissioner of Police to give a written report about the criminal history of a person, and the commissioner must give the report to the chief executive. This provision is necessary to allow the full disclosure of the applicant's criminal history. Another section provides that the information provided by the commissioner can be used only for the purpose of assessing the applicant's suitability to be a community visitor.

What does a community visitor actually do? Community visitors safeguard the interests of consumers at the visitable sites. The community visitor has inquiry and complaint functions. The community visitor for a visitable site may do all of the things that are necessary or convenient to be done to perform the community visitor's functions. An example would be visiting a site during normal hours but without any notice.

Community visitors are there to promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of children residing in places such as residential facilities, detention centres or authorised mental health services. They have a role to develop a trusting and supportive relationship with the children as far as possible. So their role is to advocate on behalf of the children. Some of the things they might do would include listening to them, giving them some advice and trying to find a resolution to the issues that they raise. Of course, they have many other roles. In other words, community visitors work with our most marginalised and vulnerable in the community. It is their job to gain the confidence and trust of these people in order to advocate on their behalf. Some of these community visitors are inappropriate to perform these duties and it is imperative that this legislation closes the loophole to protect our most vulnerable.

If we take some examples of general visitor transgressions, it makes perfect sense that a person placed in a position of trust should undergo the same rigorous criminal history checks that other government department employees such as teachers do. Recently, a woman was caught trying to smuggle marijuana into the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre in a child's nappy. A female visitor to the Woodford prison was charged with trying to smuggle a quantity of white powder in a plastic capsule into the prison. I believe the contents of the capsule are now being analysed.

Another example is that of a bag of drugs spilling out of a baby's blanket while a woman was visiting her partner. Jason Fairweather, a visits coordinator at Sir David Longland, says it is not uncommon for visitors to use children as drug carriers or as shields from surveillance cameras or the gaze of officers when passing drugs. Recently, Queensland Corrective Services intelligence and Dog Squad staff intercepted a visitor smuggling drugs at Moreton prison. The drugs had been smuggled into the jail in a milk container left in a rubbish bin. Members would recall the escape of five high-security prisoners from the Sir David Longland jail at Wacol. Prison sources revealed that diamond-edged angel wire was used to cut through the cell bars but it had been passed to a prisoner through a hole burnt into the perspex divider during a non-contact visit.

Corrective Services Commission board member Ian Davies has recently called for tighter restrictions on prisoner visiting rights to stamp out jail drug trafficking. He said that tighter restrictions were needed on the visiting rights of prisoners to control drug trafficking. A prison officer told a recent inquest that he believed about 90 per cent of the drugs getting into jail were being handed over at contact visits. This is just the prison environment.

Community visitors have many other powers, including access to children and people with intellectual and physical disabilities. In light of this government's commitment to improving the lives of young vulnerable people, for instance, protecting them from sexual or physical abuse, it is vital that the amendments to this bill are adopted. It sounds a bit sleazy, but if our community visitors are not placed under the same sort of scrutiny that others working in our government institutions are then we fail in our duty of care. I commend the bill to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jarratt): Order! Before calling the honourable member for Bundamba, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of former Premier Wayne Goss. Welcome.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (12.24 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the bill but, more importantly, to recognise the efforts of the officers in the Attorney-General's Department who prepared this legislation. I refer specifically to the staff of the Strategic Policy Unit in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

The Attorney-General administers over 106 pieces of legislation under his portfolio. These cover a range of topics of fundamental importance to the Queensland community, including protection of citizens from discrimination, the prosecution and punishment of criminals, the integrity of our electoral system and the protection of people with impaired decision-making capacity.

In 1989 the Fitzgerald report criticised the Department of Justice for failing to apply proper scrutiny and advice on the operation of Queensland's political and criminal justice systems. Fitzgerald recognised the critical function that the Justice Department has in the public administration of this state. I commend the Attorney for recognising the importance of this function by elevating the position of the Strategic Policy Unit within his department. The Attorney has also taken the important step of rebadging the name of the unit from the Policy and Legislation Division to the Strategic Policy Unit to highlight the important strategic role that it plays in implementing policy for this government.

The unit develops legislation on behalf of the Attorney-General and provides advice on the operation of Queensland's laws and the justice system. In this term of government alone the unit has been responsible for the preparation of amendments to 190 pieces of legislation. The unit advises the Attorney on the development and implementation of the government's policy agenda for the justice system in this state. The unit plays a critical role in protecting the integrity of our justice system and ensuring that our laws are of the highest standard. The importance of having a strong policy unit in the Justice portfolio cannot be overstated. The men and women of the Strategic Policy Unit should be congratulated on their professionalism in relation to this bill.

The department also has many dedicated and professional officers who strive day after day in the Magistrates, District and Supreme Courts in administering justice in Queensland. These officers by and large are quiet achievers. They work in court registries across the length and breadth of Queensland. They often move around the state in their public service positions, and out in rural Queensland they play a significant role in their communities.

I noted that some of our speakers placed on record their thanks to the justices of the peace in their community. As a former registrar and manager of justices of the peace in Queensland, all of Queensland knows that I love our JPs. They are wonderful, community-minded justices who serve our community well. I particularly wish to send a cheerio to one of our JP (magistrates courts) today, Bill Skinner of Townsville, who has been quite sick. On behalf of the House, I wish him a very speedy recovery. The officers of the Department of Justice are professionals who serve the entire Queensland community. They are dedicated public servants in every sense of the word. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (12.27 p.m.): This afternoon it gives me pleasure to speak in favour of the Justice and Other Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2002. As a number of speakers have already said, this bill makes a number of technical reforms to improve the efficiency of our legal system. Along with many honourable members, I receive complaints about the criminal justice system at times. Some of those complaints relate to delays and the complexity of the system. I am sure that all honourable members support these steps that the Attorney-General is taking to improve the efficiency of our legal system.

The amendments contained in the bill in relation to the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000 are to be applauded. Earlier this year the government introduced legislation to require volunteers working with children to apply for a blue card so that their criminal history could be checked. Because of the vulnerable nature of the client group they are working with, this was deemed to be a reasonable step to take to ensure the safety and welfare of our children, a vulnerable section of society.

This amendment bill extends that concept to people who apply to be community visitors—that is, those people whose duty it is to investigate the complaints of people with an impairment to their capacity or who use disability services. I believe that this is a fair extension of that concept to enable the director-general of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to obtain information from the Commissioner of Police about the criminal history of the people seeking to undertake and protect the welfare of those less fortunate in society. As I said, the

client group these people deal with are vulnerable. As such, we have to ensure that the people working with and for them abide by standards of the highest order. I think it is fair and reasonable that their criminal history should be checked to ensure that.

A number of other speakers have complimented the role JPs and commissioners for declarations carry out in our legal justice system. People who hold positions in both of these areas are significant partners in our legal system. In many cases, these volunteers are committed to being the frontline troops for our criminal justice system. People go to them for advice. In my previous occupation as a police officer they were the first filter of the criminal justice system. When a police officer wishes to obtain a search warrant or a summons, they need to prove to a justice of the peace the reasonableness of their actions. Therefore, they are the very first filter in the criminal justice system. I applaud all JPs across the length and breadth of Queensland for being prepared to put their hands up and volunteer to undertake that community service. Without further ado, I commend this bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.31 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Justice and Other Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, I put on the record the appreciation of not only myself but also my office in contacting the minister's office to get clarification of sections of this bill. My staff found his office particularly helpful. I put on the record my appreciation for that information and his office's availability.

I believe that the member for Southern Downs has already raised this issue, but I raise it again because of the importance of the completion of the grieving process for a family. This bill empowers the John Tonge Centre to retain body organs after a post-mortem even though the body has been released for interment. I have to agree with the sentiments that have already been expressed. If this is going to occur, there must be transparency. The family must be advised of the fact that all organs have not been returned for burial, and I believe that the family would find that particularly difficult to deal with. I say this not because I have been directly involved in a situation like this, but I read extensively about the subject when we looked at introducing a private member's bill on organ donation and the due process that should be followed out of respect for the family of the organ donor.

There is a diversity of feelings in the family when a loved one is lost and an agreement has been reached for organ donation to be made. There is a sense of loss. There is a sense of anger at times. Sometimes there is a sense of isolation when the family is not able to access the recipients of the organ donation. All of these things can occur when the donation of the organ was known by family members beforehand. In the case where family members have learnt retrospectively that a body organ has been maintained by the John Tonge Centre and not returned to the family for burial, they will be required to grieve twice. It may only be a body part—and it may easily be dismissed as that—but we are asking the family to grieve twice whether that is the intention of the bill or not.

People have a great affection for families and friends. When the actual funeral service occurs, it is the formal closure of that person's life. Whilst a grieving process has to follow, that funeral service is the formal closure of that person's life. To find out subsequently that a part of that person has been retained for whatever reason again—and I reinforce it—requires the family to cope with the loss of that person. They have to face the fact that they did not have the complete truth and did not inter the complete remains of their loved ones. I believe that this legislation is formalising what probably has been occurring, but formalising does not make it right. What requirements will the government place on government officers to be honest and open with the family of a deceased to ensure that they know if any body parts have been retained after the post-mortem and release of the body?

The other issue I want to query—it may be there, and I apologise if it is—is that this bill gives the power to ask for police information in respect of applicants to the position of a community visitor. I do not have a problem with the fact that the police information is asked to be released. That is not the problem. Community visitors often access people with diminished capacity who are therefore in a vulnerable position. They have contact with those people in relation to determining their level of care, their level of personal security and comfort and to also discuss grievances. There will be a high level of confidentiality and a high level of contact with that person in an isolated manner. The appropriateness of a criminal check being undertaken on an applicant to become a community visitor is important.

However, after the Commissioner of Police has released the information to the government department, what obligation will be placed on that department to destroy the records once a decision has been made? They will be personal files containing quite detailed and intrusive

information. I seek clarification from the minister as to what obligations will be placed on the receivers of that information to destroy it once the application has been assessed.

Other speakers in this debate have commended the JPs in their area. As with all electorates, the Gladstone electorate has a significant number of people who are either commissioners for declarations or JPs. They do their work voluntarily without any recompense. Like all other members in this chamber, I commend them for the work that they do. They have a genuine community heart, especially those who have been JPs for quite a number of years. The Attorney-General responds to applications for certificates recognising 25 or 50 years of service in this area, and they are always appreciated. I put on the record my appreciation to his department for those certificates. Sometimes I wish we could block the '25' out because they will have 37 years, 40 years and all sorts of things. The certificates are a small recognition, but they are a recognition of the service that they give. It certainly gives us the opportunity to say thank you on behalf of our community for the work that they do.

I continue to receive complaints from people in relation to the Queensland Law Society and the fact that it is Caesar judging Caesar. This bill will not do anything to amend that, but I put on the record again that when a person feels aggrieved by a solicitor and turns to the Queensland Law Society for some intervention, investigation or response to the grievance it is often the case for the constituent to feel more aggrieved after the Queensland Law Society process, because it is their peers judging them. At times there seems to be some reticence in confronting the shortcomings of solicitors. That is just a general comment. I look forward to the minister's responses, particularly with regard to the retention of body parts of the deceased and the destruction of the records concerning police checks for applicants to the position of community visitors. I support the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McNamara): Order! Before calling the Attorney, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Mr Philip Bradbourn, a member of the European Parliament.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.40 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate on this bill. As most members have indicated, the bill really involves a number of administrative and technical amendments to various pieces of legislation. Most of those amendments merely tidy up or clarify the existing law. I thank in particular the opposition shadow Minister for Justice, who indicated that the opposition will be supporting the passage of this bill. The member for Warwick raised a number of issues which I will deal with along with issues that were raised by other members in the course of the debate.

I thank also those government members who contributed to the debate. The member for Nudgee paid particular attention to the important role of justices of the peace in our community. From time to time I have the pleasure of attending JPs' training seminars organised by my Department of Justice and Attorney-General. Those seminars are always very well received, as are the certificates of recognition that are provided through local members of parliament for JPs who have spent considerable years in that important role of contributing voluntarily to the community.

The members for Toowoomba North and Southport made their usual erudite contributions to the debate as experienced lawyers in their own right, and I thank them for their contributions, particularly their comments about the amendments to the Guardianship and Administration Act. The member for Bulimba did an outstanding job of filibustering in his usual way. I also thank him for keeping the House alive while everyone else was falling asleep.

I come back to some specific issues raised by various members who sought clarification of some of the amendments in this legislation. Firstly, in relation to the provisions amending the Public Trustee Act, the member for Warwick queried the effect of this amendment. It was in fact well explained by the member for Southport in his contribution, and the member for Warwick might like to read the *Hansard* record of that when it is available. In effect, the amendment gives effect to the current state of play. The original act contained provision for what we are doing, but in the course of subsequent amendments that provision was removed. So we are simply restoring a provision that makes it clear that the existing practice which has been in place for decades ensures that the Public Trustee's costs can be paid out of the capital fund. There are no financial implications other than that. It simply maintains the existing practice. The provision that was previously in place was repealed by amendments to the Financial Administration and Audit Act, so we are simply restoring the provision to maintain clarity in relation to that issue.

In relation to the application for a fiat, this provision amending the Attorney-General Act allows my office to put in place proper procedures when there is application for a fiat. There are not often applications for a fiat, but when they do arrive they often do not really set out adequate grounds upon which I can make a judgment. We need a head of power in the act so that we can make a regulation which sets out the form and content of any application to the Attorney for a fiat. This gives us a head of power to make a regulation—which I understand we have already done—that sets out the form and content of an application for a fiat so that all applications are in a consistent form and provide the information necessary for whoever is the Attorney at the time to make a considered decision about whether the fiat should be granted.

Both the member for Gladstone and the member for Warwick spoke about the amendment to clause 8 relating to dealing with body parts following a post mortem. The existing section provides that certain sections of the Coroners Act 1958 which deal with the authority to cremate or bury bodies and the formal prerequisites to cremation do not apply to parts of the body of a deceased person that may be removed as part of a post mortem or special examination under the Coroners Act and which are not buried or cremated with the body. Under the coroner's rules, which I understand are a regulation under the Coroners Act, material taken at a coronial post mortem has to be kept for such a period as the coroner thinks fit. The proposed new section that we are inserting goes on to provide that the entity possessing the body part taken at the coronial post mortem can issue a certificate that the coroner no longer requires the remains to be kept. That certificate is sufficient authority for the body parts to be dealt with according to the wishes of the family or simply disposed of.

This was an issue to which I did give quite some thought at the time. I can assure both members that under the arrangements that the John Tonge Centre—under the jurisdiction of the Department of Health—has put in place, people are provided with a notice at the time of the post mortem alerting them to the fact that certain body parts may be retained for investigative purposes or, in the cases of minute particles such as blocks and slides, for research purposes. The family members can indicate at that time how they would like those materials dealt with—not the blocks and slides, but certainly any larger body organs—once the coroner subsequently issues a certificate confirming that they are no longer required. The family members are given notice up front so as to avoid the understandable concern that was raised by the member for Gladstone that they might be put to grief twice. So by notifying the family up front that certain organs are likely to be retained they can indicate at that time how they would like them to be dealt with.

I understand that most families indicate that they are happy for those organs simply to be disposed of appropriately at some future time. Obviously very few families would want to have to deal with an issue like that again in the future. But I assure members that under the procedures that are put in place families are alerted at the time of a post mortem that organs may be retained.

As a number of members have indicated, the Guardianship and Administration Act amendment is a new provision that allows for criminal history checks to be undertaken in respect of the appointment of community visitors. Community visitors are part-time and in some respects lay contributors to the important work of the Office of the Adult Guardian.

Community visitors go through a training program, after which they are engaged on a sessional basis to attend on retirement homes and other facilities where the elderly, infirm or others with diminished responsibility are living. The purpose of their role is to ensure the wellbeing of people in those facilities, to assist in resolving any concerns or conflicts that sometimes arise between residents and the managers of those facilities and, in exceptional circumstances, to report to the Adult Guardian instances of potential abuse or breaches of the law. Community visitors do have a very important role. As members indicated, they come into contact with many people who often have diminished responsibility or who are otherwise lacking in legal capacity. For that purpose, the integrity of the work they do must be kept above reproach, and I think in those circumstances criminal history checks are appropriate.

The member for Gladstone raised the suggestion that the information gained in these criminal history checks should be used for the purpose of the selection or appointment of community visitors but should thereafter be disposed of and not retained. I take on board the suggestion of the member for Gladstone. The provision we are putting in place does put a statutory duty upon the chief executive of the Department of Justice to ensure that the information obtained through these checks cannot be used for any purpose other than assessing

the suitability of the community visitor for their role. I will give further consideration to whether we should go further than that.

We impose a statutory obligation on the chief executive in relation to the use of that information. We have not specifically or expressly imposed an obligation to dispose of the information once it is received. I will consider whether it is appropriate to require that information to be disposed of or whether it is appropriate for it to be used if the person ceases to be a community visitor for a time and then applies to rejoin the program as a community visitor. It may be appropriate to keep the information and use it again for that purpose at a future time. You would not be able to do that, of course, if the information had been disposed of. I understand the concern raised by the member for Gladstone and I will give it some further thought in the implementation of these provisions.

I refer to the civil enforcement fee. Under the State Penalties Enforcement Registry the new fee of \$75 is imposed. This fee was set at that level based on the budget established for SPER at the time the registry was first proposed and budgeted for. I undertake to inform the member for Southern Downs about the anticipated budget revenue from that fee. It is a relatively small sum in the scheme of things. In the minority of cases in which that fee is imposed and not recovered, the fee is converted to an equivalent time of default imprisonment, if we get to use that as a last resort measure. We are not currently using that if we can avoid it.

In relation to the Supreme Court sittings, there was no particular rationale for this change other than to give effect to what the Chief Justice already does in relation to the setting of sittings. The main purpose of the amendment was to clarify that he can notify the sitting timetable by means other than just the daily newspaper. The provision will now allow the timetable to be published on the Internet and updated more regularly than the gazetted timetable would otherwise be.

In a purely technical sense, the first part of the amendment being inserted will allow greater flexibility. From time to time I discuss with the Chief Justice the allocation of circuit judges. Although I have not raised the proposal for a possible Gold Coast circuit at this stage, I know that there are a number of members with an interest in that. In due course I will canvass the need or desirability of that with the courts.

I think that covers most of the issues that have been raised by honourable members. This is in effect a SLUMP bill that pulls together a range of minor changes that are justified on the basis of improvements that are identified in the course of the day-to-day operations of the department. I again thank the opposition for its support for the bill. I will be happy to answer any further questions during the committee stage.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.57 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Committee

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr WELFORD (2.31 p.m.): I move amendment No. 1—

1. Clause 2—

At page 8, after line 14—

insert—

'(6) Schedule 6, to the extent it amends the Justices Act 1886, section 222(2)(b), is taken to have commenced on 17 November 2000.'

Mr WELFORD: The commencement provision is to be amended to retrospectively cure a technical drafting error in an amendment to section 222 of the Justices Act. This amendment allows the amendment in the Justices Act to retrospectively commence on the commencement date of the Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2000. It is a technical amendment.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I do not oppose the amendment moved by the Attorney-General and it is not my intention to oppose any of the subsequent amendments. However, I wish to make one general comment. I understand that the convention of this parliament since we passed a motion earlier this year or late last year was that explanatory notes should generally accompany amendments. I am not being difficult and I acknowledge that the Attorney-General gave lots of

notice for this amendment, and I appreciate that. The amendments were handed out in the last parliamentary sitting week. I would just like to make the general observation that it is something that we are trying to encourage. It is something that we adopted last year when the member for Nicklin moved a motion in this parliament in that regard. Sometimes it is helpful to have the explanatory notes when dealing with amendments. I know that the Attorney-General is always very fulsome, as is his department, in his briefings. I do not have any issues, but I just raise it as a matter for further consideration in the future because we have amendments to subsequent bills that we will be debating this afternoon as well that do not have explanatory notes.

Mr WELFORD: I have no objection to the issue that the member raises. I will make sure that some notes are made available to him immediately.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

Mr SPRINGBORG (2.34 p.m.): Earlier today I expressed some issue relating to the processes that are followed by the coroner and, for all intents and purposes, carried out by the John Tonge Centre, with regard to the retention of body parts or forensic samples for future research, verification and evidence. The member for Gladstone also expressed some issues.

I am grateful for the explanation that was given to me by the Attorney-General. Although in the Attorney-General's reply I understand that he said that there are procedures for the retention of body parts—which are generally organs and other samples, and the family is notified of that when that post-mortem is undertaken and that there will be the chance that organs, body parts and other samples may be taken for those purposes, which I outlined—there seems to me to be a problem with the subsequent notification to people. Maybe it is just that those people do not understand, because a couple of people have come to me because they have interred or cremated the body of a family member and were unaware that that person's organs were missing.

To me, there seems to be a couple of possibilities as to why that was the case. It could be that those people were given advice by the coroner that, as the Attorney-General said, there will be the possibility that some body part may be removed and may be retained for subsequent disposal and that those people did not understand that, or the advice was not given to them, or the advice had been given to those people but they were of the mistaken belief that the organs had been returned with the body at the time of release for internment or cremation.

The Attorney-General might not be able to answer this question today, but I have had some concern about this matter expressed to me. That is why I raised it earlier. There are some issues for family members with regard to retained organs. It may be just a simple matter of communication and those people not properly understanding. It is a difficult time and people are very stressed—and I know that from personal circumstances. There may be some procedural issues that need to be addressed.

Mr WELFORD: Yes, the issue that the honourable member raises is one that the government is acutely aware of. Basically, the situation is this: up until a few years ago, it was standard practice, if I can put it that way, that when post-mortems were done, the pathologists or the pathology centre determined whether certain samples should be retained. Sometimes they are retained for legal purposes—for the purpose of determining the cause of death, a criminal investigation and so forth. Sometimes they are retained subsequent to assessments of the cause of death for the purpose of research into that cause of death.

As I say, it was common custom and practice for whatever part or tissue sample that was retained for all intents and purposes to no longer be regarded as part of the body. So the body went off to be buried by the family and that was the end of it. The family were never told.

Of course, this matter became an issue a year or so ago in New South Wales or Victoria when there was a kerfuffle about people not being made aware. As it happens, when I discussed this matter with the Health Minister, I was told that Queensland Health had, ahead of that incident in the other states, already put in place this system that I outlined this morning where people are notified.

I am not exactly sure what date that started, but it was a couple of years ago. Theoretically, there may be people who have buried a family member some years ago who never knew at the time of burial or cremation that a body part had been retained. It could still be sitting in storage or

in a medical research facility somewhere for that purpose. It is understandable that some people may be concerned—although some people are not—to know whether that has occurred.

However, this is the current state of play: the Minister for Health has indicated to anyone who is concerned that they are welcome to come forward and make inquiries and that they will be notified. The feedback I have received is that very few people have taken up that invitation. The instances the member has referred to are likely to be examples which predate the procedures which are now in place. People are provided with brochures and quite good information now. I am happy to obtain copies if the member wishes to see what is provided now. The procedures in place are very clear. The family is notified and appropriate consent forms are obtained where body parts will be used for transplant, research, and so on.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I thank the Attorney for his explanation and I acknowledge the steps the government has taken to try and make this process far more transparent and to ensure an appropriate level of regulation. We are dealing with a very sensitive area and, inevitably, if there is not a degree of openness and transparency—even if there is nothing sinister involved—people do not understand that there may be a perfectly reasonable clinical reason to maintain those samples. It may seem like some form of sinister government process. We are dealing with some people who feel very much aggrieved. The process of personal grief is different for different people. The Attorney is absolutely right: for some people it is not a big issue and for others it is.

My office was contacted a few weeks ago by a person whose son died of an overdose here in Brisbane. It may have been an accident. They live in South Australia and so they took the body back home. Subsequently, they learnt that the heart was not with it. However, they may have been relating events which were a year or so old—and I will get that information—and this legislation may have fixed that.

I thank the Attorney for the distribution of explanatory notes subsequent to my raising that issue earlier.

Mr WELFORD: I take this opportunity to table those explanatory notes.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mr SPRINGBORG (2.43 p.m.): The Attorney need not fear that I intend to prolong the committee process. I have only a couple of questions to ask on the clauses. Clause 9 deals with a national coronial database. Of course, we will have a new Coroners Act and a new Office of State Coroner some time in this financial year, hopefully, which will be wonderful. It is long overdue, but it is a great thing. Proposed section 59AA states—

The Minister may, for the State, enter into an arrangement with a government or non-government entity responsible for maintaining a database about coronial inquiries and investigations ...

There may be a perfectly simple answer for this. I understand that the government has databases with this information. Obviously this involves fairly sensitive information relating to some of the research which is gathered and some of the findings of coroners around Australia.

With regard to a non-government entity being responsible for maintaining a database, no doubt there are processes and protocols which will have to be followed to ensure the same degree of regulation as would be the case if a strictly government entity was responsible for maintaining that database. I wonder if the Attorney can inform members of the safeguards which will be put in place surrounding non-government entities which are responsible for maintaining a database? I am not trying to be a conspiracy theorist in any way—there is obviously a reasonable answer for this—but I would like my curiosity to be assuaged.

Mr WELFORD: I assume the member's curiosity relates to the security of information. The information is being provided to the national coronial database, which is managed by the Monash University Centre for Coronial Information. This amendment is inserted specifically to authorise us—as we have done for a year or two now—to transfer, in batch form, coronial information to the Monash University database. I am advised that depending on the format of the data provided—and this matter is still being resolved—it is possible, even though people's names are not necessarily supplied, that coronial data may be transferred in a way that could be identifying. I am sure the honourable member knows what I mean.

For example, unique causes of death might, by their nature, identify a person if it was a prominent incident causing death. Statutory protection is needed against the transfer of that identifying information and we are providing for a lawful authorisation here. However, the Monash University centre is subject to the Commonwealth government's privacy regime and they are, therefore, able to be monitored according to the privacy principles that apply to the private sector.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Mr WELFORD (2.47 p.m.): I move amendment No. 2—

2. Heading before clause 10—

At page 11, line 5, after 'COURT'—

insert—

'OF QUEENSLAND'.

These and subsequent amendments are of a machinery nature and I see no reason to elaborate further.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 10—

Mr WELFORD (2.48 p.m.): I move amendment No. 3—

3. Clause 10—

At page 11, line 8, after 'Court'—

insert—

'of Queensland'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 15, as read, agreed to.

Clause 16—

Mr WELFORD (2.48 p.m.): I move amendment No. 4—

4. Clause 16—

At page 13, after line 19—

insert—

'(2) Subsection (1)(a) and schedule 1, part 1 expire 2 years after this section commences.'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 16, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 17 to 74, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 6—

Mr WELFORD (2.49 p.m.): I move amendments Nos. 5 to 7—

5. Schedule 6—

At page 46, after line 11—

insert—

'3 Section 36, definition "District Court judge", after 'the District Court'—

insert—

'of Queensland'.

6. Schedule 6—

At page 52, after line 3—

insert—

'4 Section 222(2)(b), from 'and the recognisance'—

omit, *insert*—

'and the recognisance to the registrar of the court stated in the notice;'.
'

7. Schedule 6—

At page 54, after line 16—

insert—

'STATUS OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT ACT 2001

'1 Section 6, new section 2—

insert—

' "nominated reporter" means the person nominated by a laboratory to prepare a parentage testing procedure report in relation to a parentage testing procedure carried out at the laboratory.'.

'2 Section 13, new section 11A(1), from 'A person' to 'order'—

omit, *insert*—

'The nominated reporter'.

'3 Section 13, new section 11A(1), 'the procedure'—
omit, insert—

'a parentage testing procedure under a parentage testing order'.

'4 Section 13, new section 11A(4) and (5), 'person who prepared the report'—
omit, insert—

'nominated reporter'.

'5 Section 13, new section 11A(7), 'person who made the report'—
omit, insert—

'nominated reporter'.

Amendments agreed to.

Schedule 6, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

DRUGS MISUSE AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 14 May (see p. 1561).

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (2.52 p.m.): The National Party will be supporting the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. As indicated in the Attorney's second reading speech, this basically brings to a conclusion a process which started in early 1998 to trial the growing of industrial hemp in Queensland. It has been a fairly long road. Upon reading the regulatory regime which will be established by this bill, one can see that it has been well thought out and probably puts in place a framework which will ensure, all things being equal, that the industrial hemp industry in Queensland can be expanded as investment and research sees fit. For most of the time that I have been in this place a range of proponents have said to me that there is a very strong case for looking at growing alternative sustainable crops which produce significant amounts of fibre and other biomass for various industrial purposes and, in some cases, medicinal purposes as well.

When one deals with industrial cannabis, it raises the eyebrows of people generally. It might surprise this parliament to note that the trial legislative framework which has operated to date was put in place by the then National Party-led coalition government. At the time, the Primary Industries Minister, Trevor Perrett, was very keen, as was his policy committee, to put in place a framework to see if it was practical to grow industrial hemp in Queensland. I remember the debates at the National Party conferences and at central council about this. There was a fairly open mind with regard to it. Of course, we have to draw a very strong distinction between industrial cannabis and the other variety of cannabis with which many people in the community have defied the criminal law and sought to use for their own purposes or, in some cases, even illegally grow to create an illicit drug problem in this state.

The variety of industrial cannabis we are dealing with here has a very low THC concentration. That is crucial with regard to the regulatory framework. One of the great concerns of people when this was put in place was that we did not necessarily want this to be a 'going soft' on the production of cannabis in this state. Therefore, a distinction was drawn between the THC level inherent in industrial cannabis and the very high THC level in cannabis varieties grown for the illegal market. Of course, with regard to the illicit varieties of cannabis smoked by people, since the 1960s there has been a significant increase in that THC level. Some of that has been as a consequence of hydroponic production which, in some cases, increases that THC level. With regard to the varieties of industrial hemp we are dealing with, it would be virtually impossible for a person to consume enough of it to provide them with the high that they were seeking, because this would be impossible without making oneself sick or possibly doing something else as well. Prescribing particular and acceptable levels for THC, the drug content inherent in all cannabis, is an essential and very necessary way to restrict and ensure the appropriate degree of regulation for its production by industry.

A little while ago the member for Bulimba said, 'Is there a great cause for people out there to grow industrial cannabis?' I am not sure how many people want to do it, but from time to time people say to us, 'Would it not be wonderful if we were able to do this? It uses less water. It produces huge amounts of biomass and fibre. It will be this wonderful saviour for agriculture and rural communities and an alternative crop for Queensland.' That is probably overstressing the mark a little. We need to be sensible with regard to the cultivation, research and marketing of

these new crops. We should not say, 'No, we will not do it because there might be some stigma attached to the fact that it is cannabis or hemp.' If somebody wants to grow it, if there are ways we can appropriately regulate it, if it is to provide us with an opportunity perhaps to provide better sustainable agriculture in some places to suit various land forms, why should we not do it? That is what this is all about today.

About five or six years ago I remember attending a rally in Glen Innes in northern New South Wales about the then famous Eastlink powerline. I was on the stage with a member of the New South Wales Upper House who was a notorious campaigner for liberalisation of certain laws and who was there in a suit made of industrial hemp. I say good luck to him. It is certainly not the cut of suit I would like to wear, but nevertheless I am sure it was a very robust fibre. This fibre has been used for a very long time to make certain types of clothing. There are obvious industrial and other purposes for the oil which comes from it. There is the potential to be able to make paper. There is also the potential, as the Attorney points out in the explanatory notes, for fuel production. I imagine that that would be by producing the amounts of biomass that may be possible for the likes of industrial diesel. Perhaps that could be explained by other members in this debate.

I have acknowledged in this parliament that I recently had the opportunity to attend the international biotechnology convention in Toronto. I was there with the members for Robina and Lockyer, the Premier and the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy. It was fascinating to sit through some of the break-out sessions on biotechnology and to see the sorts of things that scientists around the world are now doing in regard to the manipulation of plants and animals. This is not just about transgenics where we take a gene from a plant and put it into an animal or whatever the case may be but about making all sorts of innovative uses for plants that may have had one particular use in the past.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that you have a very strong interest in new industries. If we are good at growing something, we should find other uses for it. I was speaking to a researcher in Toronto about the humble tobacco plant. At the moment, in our country the tobacco industry is virtually on its knees because of a number of factors. To an extent, anti-smoking campaigns are working and also products are coming in from overseas. That researcher said, 'Perhaps if people on the tablelands are good at growing the tobacco plant they should continue to do that, but why not genetically manipulate it so that it produces fibres that are more useful, acceptable and valuable than tobacco?' As I understand it, there is some early experimentation with using the tobacco plant for the production of human insulin. That is the sort of genetic manipulation we are talking about.

I made that diversion for the purpose of illustrating to the parliament that there are uses for plants that we have not even considered at the moment. The production of polymers from plants was highlighted at Toronto—polymers that would have otherwise been created using fossil fuels that have been lying in the ground for millions of years. Scientists have been able to inject enzymes to speed up the creation of polymers in order to make all sorts of things—for example, plastics. In addition, experiments are being conducted to make polymers directly within plants, cutting out one part of the process.

With respect to industrial cannabis, this plant has the capability of producing enormous amounts of biomass and fibre that could be important for use in fibre, paper and fuel production, and also oil production for medicinal purposes. However, we should not get too caught up in believing that it will be the saviour of agriculture in this state. Like anything, it requires a lot of research and development and it requires people to take on new techniques and technologies that are essential to ensuring that it can be grown properly, productively and viably.

I do not think that, following the passage of this bill today, thousands of primary producers in Queensland will rush out and turn over their farms from wheat, cotton and olives to hemp or go from grazing cattle or sheep to hemp. But some people will want to take it up, and that is what this legislation is all about.

Water use and Cubbie Station has been addressed at length in this parliament. On radio people are asking, 'Why don't you grow hemp out there instead of cotton?' I think that is simplistic. I do not think the margins on a broad scale would be enough to replace the margins, opportunities and economic structures established around Dirranbandi for the production of cotton. Nevertheless, somebody might want to do that.

We need to be very careful about getting overly enthusiastic about industrial hemp production and where that might lead. There will be opportunities. It might start off as a niche but it might get bigger and better as we are able to refine, research and develop better types of

industrial hemp with more than the traditional uses. That is an opportunity that must be made available.

I note that the administrative responsibility for this bill will be delegated to the Department of Primary Industries. That makes a lot of sense. To date, the legislative responsibility has rested with the Attorney-General in relation to the classification of this plant. By and large, this bill is about establishing the regulatory regime in a whole range of areas. That regulatory regime is about the processes that people need to go through before they can be licensed as a researcher or a grower. As I understand it, there are a couple of different categories of people involved in the research and development of this plant. There is a category 1 researcher licence, a category 2 researcher licence and also a grower's licence. Different people will be involved in this industry at different levels, whether it be in research and development, the marketing or the growing of the product.

I would like to know—and perhaps some of the government members yet to speak might have this information—what sort of indication there is about the level of market uptake. That is probably not a statistic that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General would have. Primary Industries probably has that information. What sort of expression of interest has there been from the growing community with respect to investment in this industry? I would be interested to know how many people have participated in the trials to date, how many people who started the trials have continued the trials, how many people have expressed an interest in getting into this industry, and what level of financial investment we will see after the passage of this bill today and we have this regulatory regime in place. Also, what level of market research has been undertaken with respect to the uptake of these products and commodities? As I indicated earlier, we know there is some interest. However, sometimes the interest generated in some of these sunrise industries does not reflect the real opportunity for making an ongoing viable economic return. In this case I am talking about industrial cannabis.

People in my electorate have become involved in a whole range of things. For example, jojoba was popular about 20 years ago. However, this crop is probably quite different. If we are going to encourage people to be involved in the production of and research and development into industrial hemp, we need to know that our marketing is done properly and that we have a facilitation process. Grower cooperatives or organisations will be doing that. Also, the government, through the Department of Primary Industries, which has been traditionally involved in this area, will be involved in marketing and development.

If people are going to become involved in this industry, they need to know that they are investing for the right reasons and they need to know the opportunities and the pitfalls. These are not strictly issues for the Attorney-General. They are certainly issues for the Department of Primary Industries as it seeks to develop and encourage people into this new industry.

A process to ensure that people who may be involved in this industry do not use it as a front for the production of illicit varieties of cannabis—that is, cannabis with high levels of THC—is important and is facilitated in this legislation. I acknowledge that. It is not only hypothetically but also realistically possible that we might have people who are licensed to grow and produce industrial hemp and harvest it for whatever purpose, whether it is for fibre or for the seed—as I understand it, the seed can be marketed only to other people who want to grow the crop commercially—who have set that up as a front for the illegal production of industrial cannabis.

Importantly, proposed new section 98, in relation to the power of entry without warrant, enables inspectors who have a reasonable suspicion that there is evidence of an offence against the act or that it is being used to commit, continue or repeat an offence to gain entry.

It is important that there is that particular process. I have no doubt that the majority of people in this industry do the right thing. However, human nature being what it is, and the opportunity for profit not just legally but illegally as well, there is always the chance that some people are going to do something wrong. That is why a very strong and very strict regulatory regime is needed. My concerns have been addressed by the contents of this bill and the explanatory notes.

As I indicated, the National Party will support the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill, which principally has as its objective the establishment of a proper futuristic regulatory environment to facilitate the production of industrial hemp in Queensland and also the promotion and growth of that industry in this state. Therefore, the opposition has no hesitation in supporting the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! Before I call the honourable member for Burnett, I welcome to the public gallery this afternoon the National Servicemens Association of north Brisbane.

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (3.10 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to support the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. The passing of this bill will have an impact on my electorate of Burnett. However, firstly I want to touch on a few things that the member for Southern Downs said.

I agree with the member for Southern Downs that we should not get our hopes up and get too excited about industrial hemp, because it is not going to save the rural sector. It provides another avenue for farmers to rotate their crops, but it will not make them wealthy. This crop does not require the same investment as tree crops or sugarcane, where the investment is over four years. In fact, the hemp will be harvested within six months, regardless of whether it is a seed plant or fibre plant. Therefore, it will sit well not only with the sugar industry but also with other crops because of the short span between plant and harvest. Add to that the fact that the plant uses less water than sugarcane, and it has created a lot of excitement in my electorate.

Most of the trials were done through Crop Tech, which is based in my electorate. I also believe that some trials were done in Stanthorpe and Toowoomba with varying degrees of success, taking into consideration the climate. I was told by John and Jim Hall from Crop Tech that the reason for the trial in Stanthorpe and higher altitude areas was that the basic seed came from Canada. It was old seed and they tried to duplicate a similar climate to where the crop was being grown in Canada. After amending legislation in 1998 to allow research to be conducted, Crop Tech has got to the stage now where it can modify the original seed from Canada to suit local climates and soils. So the process has come a long way.

John Hall tells me that Crop Tech is receiving heaps of phone calls from all sorts of areas, such as cosmetic companies and aloe vera companies. The aloe vera industry, which is also a growing industry in my electorate, is very interested to look at the oil content of the seed. The crop has certain properties for cosmetics; it also has nutritional value. I am told that it also runs well in a gearbox. The thing with hemp is the diversity of the products that can be made from the same source. In relation to the fibre content, it can make anything from building materials, car parts and polycarbonate fibre to a light concrete, which has a higher strength and lighter mass.

There are a number of uses for hemp. There is an agreement between car manufacturer Mercedes and the European Union that a greater percentage of its vehicles be made from recyclable product. The world market for that is about 40,000 tonnes or 50,000 tonnes at present. With other manufacturers going online in Europe, the market demand could be up to 300,000, 400,000 or 500,000 tonnes within a period of 10 years. Therefore, this is not a get rich quick scheme, but it has a future compared to other plants used in commercial agriculture at this time.

In contrast to the sugar and chicory industries in my electorate, hemp has a small harvesting time of six months. It sits very well with the sugar industry. In addition, its harvest is in the sugar industry off season. There is also the opportunity that some of the old sugarmills could become involved in the value-adding process of the plant. So this industry would work in particularly well in my electorate. This crop creates another option for the farmers in my electorate who are struggling in the sugar industry. As I say, this is a positive future for them. Considering that the plant uses less water than sugarcane and has a shorter harvest time of six months, I have been told by Crop Tech that it will return somewhere between \$30 and \$35 a tonne. That is not a bad return considering that our farmers are getting \$23 or \$25 a tonne for sugar at the moment if they are lucky. So there is value in such a crop. I reiterate that it is not going to make people rich, but it will enable them to earn a living.

On the harvesting side, Crop Tech is still working out whether it will use a broadacre harvest or a stool type harvest. These are early deliberations as yet and it will depend on various factors. The seed crop, which will stand about three feet tall, is similar to wheat. It will suit broadacre farming such as that carried on in the west of the state. The stool crop—which is expected to get up to 10 feet or 12 feet—is more reliant on water and will therefore suit coastal regions. So that crop will suit a region such as my electorate.

There are a lot of things in favour of hemp. The benefits are that it gives farmers more sustainability and a cash crop which could add to their earnings, especially with the sugar industry in dire straits at the moment. There are other things going for it as well. John Hall tells me that as soon as this legislation is passed seed production will go into full mode. It will probably be about 12 months before commercial quality seed will go out to the public.

I have been to Crop Tech and waded through its sea of cannabis. I have to tell members that, considering my background, it is an eerie picture. Crop Tech tells me that within 18 months the plant could be commercially viable and could be delivered to a value-added centre. It is

hopeful that this industry will take hold in the Burnett, because Crop Tech has had a lot of inquiries from all over Australia. It is something positive in contrast to what farmers have to deal with now. I commend the minister for bringing the bill to the House.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (3.18 p.m.): I rise with pleasure to speak on the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002, which will pave the way for the expansion of the industrial hemp industry in Queensland while licensing commercial production under tightly controlled conditions. A large range of commercial opportunities in many industries around the world has resulted from the demand for renewable natural fibres. Therefore, hemp has the potential to provide significant opportunities for employment and environmental benefits in our great state.

We have seen an explosion of natural fibres being used in products such as fencing, furniture, flooring and marine components. In the year 2000 the northern American markets for natural fibre or plastic composites exceeded \$150 million per annum. It is predicted that by 2005 this market will reach nearly \$1.4 billion per annum. Queensland needs to be in a position where it, too, can start reaping the rewards of this growth industry, and this bill enables that to occur in a responsible manner. If we look at the European Union, it is expected to exceed 100,000 tonnes a year by the year 2005. It has set a target that, by the year 2015, 95 per cent of each car produced must be recyclable. Hemp fibre is currently being used for internal moulding in some European cars—another market that we should be exploring.

Industrial hemp products are made from a type of cannabis plant with negligible levels of the drug tetrahydrocannabinol—I prefer to call it THC—levels that are too low to have anyone smoking or ingesting the product to get a high. This bill does nothing to change the current law whereby it is illegal to possess an industrial hemp product that could be inhaled, smoked or ingested—regardless of the THC level. This industry is not new to Queensland. In fact, Queensland has been trialling it for four years. During the trials producers have made substantial investments to bring the industry to such a level that it can now go out and start taking advantage of this internationally growing demand. In Queensland we have even more of a competitive edge. A high yielding variety has been developed to thrive in the tropics. This is of great benefit to the people in the tropics as it will provide significant opportunities for economic, employment and environmental benefits.

This bill provides for licensing to be done under tightly controlled conditions. The licensing of plant breeders and commercial growers of fibre and seed will be stringently scrutinised to ensure they are suitable to participate in the industry. They will undergo criminal history checks and anyone who has committed a serious offence—including a drug offence—in the past decade will be disqualified from holding a licence. This rule will also extend to executive officers of corporations seeking to enter the industry.

Grower licences will provide for the field production of industrial hemp fibre and grain. Growers will be required to use seed that has been certified as having a THC concentration of not greater than 0.5 per cent. Because environmental conditions can sometimes cause minor fluctuations in THC levels, a tolerance level of one per cent THC has been allowed for growers. This will ensure that they do not inadvertently breach the provisions of the Drugs Misuse Act. It is generally considered worldwide that industrial hemp has a THC concentration of under three per cent.

Plant breeding licence category 2 provides for plant breeders to conduct research on cannabis plants and seed with a THC concentration of less than three per cent. The aim of plant breeding research is to develop varieties with improved production and product characteristics combined with THC levels of 0.5 per cent or less. Industrial hemp inspectors will monitor the activities of licensed growers and plant breeders. This will include taking random samples of plants to determine the THC levels.

As I said earlier, this bill allows for the expansion of an industry that will have huge effects on manufacturing, beauty products, building products and many, many more industries. Not only are we having to compete internationally, we also need to compete with other states. Currently Victoria and Tasmania have legislation that permits commercial hemp production. The trial in Queensland has allowed only for research into industrial hemp fibre, with no provision for research into hemp oil or grain. The proposed amendments will address this deficiency by including hemp grain and derivative products in the legislation.

The member for Burnett demonstrated great knowledge about the growing of industrial hemp. On a recent interstate trip I was able to visit a shop called the Hemp Shop. I had a pleasant time looking at the range of hemp products, testing body lotions and trying on hemp

clothing. It was really a wonderful retail experience. So while the member may have more experience in growing industrial hemp, I certainly have experience in the retail side. I have a soap here. It is lavender and lemon grass. It comes in a range of fragrances and colours. Unfortunately, I am not on commission to sell this—what a shame! I look forward to using more of these products. I certainly believe that they will become more and more available and that they will become more popular.

Mr Pearce: What's it like on your skin?

Ms STONE: It is beautiful and soft on your skin. I can recommend it thoroughly. I know that in the past industrial hemp was one of the world's largest agricultural crops and traded commodities. In the 1930s and 1940s this started to decline with more synthetic fibres being introduced. Now we see a resurgence of this product—one that is certainly playing a significant role throughout the world. As I have stated, this is a growing industry, and this bill will enable continued research, as well as commercial production, marketing and trade in industrial hemp. This is great for Queensland, as I am sure that by providing more opportunities we will see Queensland as the world leader in the production of industrial hemp. I commend all the ministerial and departmental staff who have worked hard on this bill to ensure these opportunities for our state. This is good for Queensland, it is good for jobs, and it is good for the environment. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (3.24 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to support the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. Indeed, I am positively excited by the prospects made possible for my electorate and the whole of Queensland through the passage of this bill. I have not often had an opportunity to participate in an action that has the potential to reinvigorate an entire industry, but I believe that this amendment bill will quite likely lay the foundation for just such a revolution.

I cannot help but note a certain irony attached to the presentation of a bill that seeks to pave the way for the introduction of a hemp industry in this state. I am reminded of the saying that the more things change the more they stay the same. Evidence exists to suggest that hemp was one of the first crops ever to be cultivated. No doubt this was largely because it was easy to grow, required little water, was very hardy and could be used for a wide variety of purposes, including such things as providing fibre for rope and clothing and as a food source—particularly as an animal food. In fact, hemp has probably been around since people kept chooks in their cave backyards.

One of the consequences of improved standards of living and increased leisure time at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries was the tendency for people to look to so-called recreational drugs like alcohol, cocaine, tobacco and cannabis to complement their lifestyle. Interestingly, some of these drugs have consequently been outlawed while others remain both legal and widely used. The rights and wrongs of that situation could be the subject of debate at another time and place, but I do note that cannabis sativa, which includes varieties grown predominantly for fibre, was outlawed throughout much of the Western World at various times during the last century. Since being declared a dangerous drug in Queensland it has been an offence to cultivate, use or traffic the drug in any form.

In the early 1990s the Queensland government took what I suppose can be described as the fairly courageous step of initiating discussions with industry bodies about the potential of investigating research and development of industrial hemp as a possible commercial commodity. The Industrial Hemp Advisory Committee, comprising representatives from government, departments and industry, was established to investigate these possibilities. As a consequence of this action, in 1998 the Drugs Misuse Act was amended to allow for controlled field trials and plant breeding research of low drug content cannabis sativa to occur over a three-year period. This period was extended by a further 12 months and is set to expire in December this year.

Suffice to say that the results of research undertaken in Queensland and across Australia over the past few years have indicated an enormous potential for both the growth and manufacture of products from industrial hemp. One of the prime motivating factors for the development of industrial hemp as a crop is that it can be used to produce a wide variety of products from paper and clothing to structural building materials and geotextiles. Couple this with the fact that it is an ecologically sustainable, renewable and recyclable resource and its potential expands exponentially. The global market for hemp products appears to be almost insatiable. Take, for instance, the fact that the European market has stipulated to its members that 95 per cent of each car produced must be recyclable by the year 2015. Because hemp is a source

product for many internal car components, we begin to realise the enormous potential of this product.

There are many reasons why I believe that industrial hemp has a great future in Queensland. Its versatility and diversity as an agricultural crop make it well suited in areas that are currently crying out for diversification. The sugar industry, for example, stands at a crossroads. And while I am not suggesting that hemp will ever replace sugarcane as a crop of choice, it will provide a viable option for those canefarmers who either exit the industry or want to diversify. Hemp also appears well suited to complement horticultural production in places like Bowen where inconsistent prices and pests and disease regularly force marginal operations to the wall. The wonderful thing about hemp as a crop is that it is drought resistant, has relatively few threats from pests and disease and can actually improve soil condition and repress soil-borne diseases. I am very excited at the prospect of hemp being grown on a rotational basis with crops such as tomatoes, as there appear to be many symbiotic factors apparent in the relationship. Importantly, industrial hemp has been shown to have gross margins comparable to other summer crops but with lower outlay and lower risk factors.

Queensland has several advantages over other states of Australia when it comes to growing industrial hemp as a stand-alone crop. Firstly, we have the potential to grow two crops per season in our warmer climate, compared to the single crop available to southern states and other countries with temperate climates. It also seems likely that varieties of industrial hemp suitable for tropical and subtropical climates may be more vigorous than varieties suited to temperate regions. But herein lies the immediate problem for industry development. We do not yet have sufficient stocks of suitable seed available to get under way.

That is why this legislation is particularly important. It establishes three licence categories that are appropriate to the level of research and development still needed to develop suitable plant varieties and seed stocks. The first licence category relates to plant breeding and will provide for plant breeders to conduct research on cannabis sativa plants and seeds with a THC concentration of greater than three per cent. While cannabis plants with a THC level of three per cent would still be considered in the category of a dangerous drug, it is necessary to allow licensed breeders access to such seeds and plants for the purpose of plant characteristic selection. The bill provides appropriate checks and balances to ensure that plants with higher THC concentrations are not used for purposes other than those pertaining to plant selection and breeding.

A second plant breeding licence category will provide for plant breeders to conduct research on cannabis plants and seeds with a THC concentration of less than three per cent. Again, there is sufficient flexibility in this category to allow meaningful research to be undertaken. I understand that it may be some three to seven years before sufficient stocks of viable seed will be available for large-scale cropping, particularly in tropical and subtropical areas. This bill ensures that important research in the field of plant breeding, including that using DNA marker assisted techniques, can continue to occur.

The other category created through this bill will provide for the field production of industrial hemp. Growers will be required to use seed that has been certified as having THC concentration of not greater than one half of one per cent, with a tolerance level of up to one per cent.

As I mentioned at the outset, I am positively excited by the future potential of an industrial hemp industry in this state. I wish to thank the Attorney-General for bringing this bill to the House. I also pay tribute to the Minister for Primary Industries and his staff and department, who I know have played a major role in the development of this amendment bill. I am happy to support the bill and I commend it to the House.

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (3.31 p.m.): I rise today in support of the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. As the member of a largely rural electorate, I support any new initiatives aimed at perhaps improving the economic viability of the region and strongly support economic growth opportunities. It is vital that, in light of the harm the deregulation of the dairy industry had on many farmers and their families, farmers be given an opportunity to diversify in order to maintain economic feasibility and, most importantly for them, to stay on the land.

Unfortunately, throughout the community there is a sense of unease about the use of industrial hemp for commercial purposes, basically as a result of a lack of knowledge regarding hemp and the more familiar and illegal marijuana. Therefore, it is imperative that people are made aware that the two are not the same. The form of industrial hemp which is the focus of the bill is not beneficial for illicit drug purposes.

There is a shop just outside my electorate which promotes and sells a huge range of hemp products ranging from clothes, bags, soaps, oils and paper products, just to name a few. From the number of people seen milling around the shop, there is clearly a market for it. Part of the interest in hemp based products, I believe, relates to the fact that it is an environmentally friendly product. In this age of increasing environmental awareness and personal responsibility, I feel that this industry has quite a promising future, as can be seen by current trends in the EU and the US.

To those who have some reservations about the advantages of hemp fibre products I say that it has been proven over many years of research that this fibre is extremely strong. It has even been used in the past by the US military for parachutes. That is just an indication of the hardiness of hemp when it is converted into fabric. Hemp is even more versatile and longer lasting than most cotton based products.

Previously I spoke about the potential economic benefits to the farming community from the regulation of hemp as a commercial industry. Also, in the growing of hemp there is very little need for the use of herbicides and pesticides. According to the Australian Department of Health, every four months each acre of hemp grown will produce 10 tonnes of fibre. Hemp can produce four times the amount of paper per acre than 20-year-old trees. It requires less bleaching than pulp from timber and, according to Mica Stark from the University of New Hampshire, research has also shown that hemp has the ability to suppress weeds and soil-borne disease and that the deep root system improves soil structure.

The most important fact, which is covered in this bill, is that the allowable hemp crop must consist of a very low content of THC, specifically less than three per cent. Marijuana, the drug which most people would be familiar with, has levels of THC between three per cent and 24 per cent. This means that industrial hemp will not be conducive to drug taking.

A producer partaking in the hemp industry will be issued with a licence and will be subject to strict eligibility criteria, including criminal history checks. If a grower, after being supplied with a licence, fails to comply with the regulations of that licence it can be either suspended or cancelled.

I emphasise, particularly to members of my electorate who may be interested in this emerging industry, that this legislation will not affect in any way the situation that the growing of marijuana for personal use or for sale is illegal. There is a clear distinction between the illicit drug trade and the use of hemp for legal commercial purposes. Finally, I do hope that people who are currently looking for an opportunity to diversify into a market that has the possibility to be extremely lucrative give the cultivation of hemp for industrial and horticultural purposes some serious consideration.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (3.35 p.m.): I am pleased to be able to speak this afternoon to the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill. Industrial hemp has been known by numerous names over the years—industrial hemp, cannabis, cannabis sativa, Indian hemp or simply hemp. It has been used over centuries for various purposes. It has been grown for the production of items such as food, textiles, paper, rope, fuel, oil and stockfeed as well as, of course, for medicinal, spiritual and recreational purposes, as we have heard.

It has been thought that hemp is one of the first plants ever to have been cultivated by humankind. There seems to be general agreement in learned circles that hemp originated in the Far East, probably in China where the greatest diversity of hemp germ plasm is to be found. Early in the 20th century industrial hemp was considered an important and beneficial crop throughout the Western World. However, as a result of the development of synthetics and hemp's classification by the Western World as a drug in the 1920s and 1930s, the production of industrial hemp was confined to Asian countries such as India, Bangladesh as we now know it and the eastern European bloc of countries.

However, since the late 1980s there has been a resurgence of interest in fibre products, arguably driven by the green movement, with a view to the saving of trees by growing renewable, non-wood fibres in place of clearing forests for paper and building materials. This interest has gained momentum and credibility with Japan, for instance, setting a target date of 2010 to have 10 per cent of its paper production being sourced from non-wood fibre sources. To this end also there is significant interest in hemp and kenaf trade developing within China itself. Whilst hemp can be used to fill this market, there are opportunities for much higher valued products—textiles, building materials, cosmetics and food—being derived from hemp. Many of these are associated with niche markets sympathetic to the conservation movement.

For a time hemp was being promoted as the ultimate crop requiring no pesticides, no fertiliser and no irrigation, as well as being good for the soil. Clearly, however, an agricultural

system such as that would be unsustainable, and attitudes are now changing to reflect reality. Hemp's image is broadening as a wide range of new hemp products are being developed. There is now some market segmentation for ethically produced goods and growing support for biodegradable and natural products.

Over the past two years there has been a coming of age with the growing recognition within the government and the general community that industrial hemp can make a useful contribution to the economy and that the crop can be grown under conditions that do not compromise law and order. Of course, there is a big difference between industrial hemp and marijuana, and I refer to what is called the THC concentration—tetrahydrocannabinol—which is the classified psychoactive, that is, mind-altering ingredient, in cannabis sativa that is produced in specialised glands or glandular trichomes. These are found primarily in the flowers surrounding these seeds and, to a lesser extent, on the leaf surface of the plant. The difference between marijuana and industrial hemp is that the psychoactive element, or THC concentration, exists in significantly lower levels in industrial hemp. However, since seed is produced in these areas of the plant, traces of the THC can then cling to the seed hulls through the flower head's sticky resin. The concentration of the THC varies according to environmental influences, such as oxygen, light, moisture, temperature and genetic factors. It is generally accepted that only cannabis sativa with a THC concentration above three per cent is considered attractive as marijuana and less than three per cent is considered industrial hemp. The United States National Institute of Drug Abuse notes that most ordinary marijuana has an average of three per cent THC. Much of the illicit cultivated cannabis sativa has a much higher THC concentration. For example, sinsemal, also known as skunk, has a THC concentration range from 7.5 per cent to 24 per cent and greater.

The history of hemp in Australia is interesting. In 1937, the Australian government agreed to the inclusion of cannabis sativa in the 1925 Geneva opium convention. This placed cannabis sativa alongside cocaine and, obviously, opium as prohibited imports. After the law to eradicate cannabis sativa in the United States was passed, similar efforts began in Australia. New South Wales was the first state to declare cannabis sativa a noxious weed with all other states following suit soon after. Of course, we know that significant penalties now apply to the unlawful cultivation, sale or distribution of cannabis sativa in Queensland.

In Queensland, the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 defines cannabis sativa as a dangerous drug. In early 1998, the act was amended to allow for controlled field trials and plant breeding research for the purposes of assessing the potential for commercial fibre production. A management system of protocols and guidelines has ensured that the trials have been conducted in accordance with the legislation and that trial participants have been vetted annually. A number of controls were put in place to ensure that there has been no conflict between trials and the drug trade. These controls have included police checks, routine inspections by industrial hemp inspectors, record keeping, the secure storage of seeds, site signage, THC sampling, and harvest controls. As I understand it, the control of these experiments now comes under the Attorney-General or his Department of Justice.

I commend the bill to the House. It allows Queensland to carry on research into what could well be of very important economic benefit to the state's economy. Clearly, the fibre has a multitude of uses. It has been around for literally centuries and I am very pleased that the government has a broad and open-minded view on this matter in the interests of Queenslanders to come.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (3.44 p.m.): I rise in support of the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. This bill paves the way for the expansion of the industrial hemp industry in Queensland. Let me begin by explaining that this legislation makes a clear distinction between industrial hemp and the illicit drug marijuana. I am led to believe that at one point hemp was one of the most widely used fibres in the world. Its uses included the manufacture of paper, rope, fabrics and textiles. Hemp has been grown for many years in many areas throughout the world, but during the 1930s it was banned in western countries. It is argued by some persons that this was as a direct result of lobbying by the petroleum industry.

However, industrial cannabis is considered to be quite different from the illicit drug marijuana. It is considered industrial when the tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, drug content is under three per cent. The illegal drug marijuana has a THC level of between three and 24 per cent. Industrial hemp can be used, for example, in the manufacture of building materials, car components and clothing. Its growth in Queensland will create jobs and enable Queensland's primary producers to be part of a world market. I understand that the European Union is particularly keen on products manufactured from industrial hemp.

For the past four years, trials of industrial hemp have been carried out in Queensland. This bill amends the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to enable the full commercial production of cannabis fibre and seed to allow for research into the use of cannabis as a commercial fibre and seed crop and also to allow for plant breeding programs for developing new or improved strains of cannabis. This will all be carried out initially for a trial period to see how it works in practice.

At this point, I think it is important to mention that the government remains committed to combating the illegal production and supply of illicit drugs in society. This legislation allows for a clear differentiation to be made between the illicit drug market and what is to be the future development of a legal industry with international demand for industrial hemp fibre and seed products.

Only those persons who are either researchers or who hold a grower licence will be authorised to deal with cannabis sativa and then it can be dealt with only in prescribed ways. This bill also ensures that persons genuinely engaged in publishing or processing instructions for producing cannabis sativa only for the purposes of the industrial hemp industry will have a legal defence. I am also pleased to note that there will be criminal history checks conducted and that persons convicted of a serious crime within the previous 10 years will not be eligible to obtain a licence to grow industrial hemp.

I know that there is a lot of support in the community for the growth and sale of products utilising industrial hemp products. In my own electorate of Indooroopilly I know that there is a lot of interest, particularly at the University of Queensland where there are researchers who have an interest in this area. As a result, I am pleased to see that Queensland is about to engage in the commercial production of industrial hemp. I think that it is another Smart State industry and I am pleased to support this bill.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (3.48 p.m.): It is with pleasure to rise this afternoon to debate the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. It is important to acknowledge that this bill is not about weakening the existing drug laws in Queensland but that it is about increasing the economic viability of regional Queensland. A number of speakers have mentioned the differentiation between the illegal crop that we know as cannabis sativa, or marijuana, and the legal plant that we are discussing this afternoon of industrial hemp.

This legislation is not about amending the laws to increase the trade in marijuana in Queensland. That is not the intent of this bill, nor will that be its effect. Industrial hemp will be genetically modified to have consistently low levels of tetrahydrocannabinol or THC, the active substance contained in marijuana that has mind-altering effects. Industrial hemp has different characteristics. It is taller, stringier and the fibres are significantly different. This difference allows it to be utilised in more diverse ways. This plant could potentially lead to significant economic recovery in a number of regional areas. Currently, a range of primary industries are under threat due to low international prices and this could be used as an alternative crop. The increased ability of farmers to diversify and protect against international fluctuations in the market must be complimented.

I believe that this is a smart plant for a Smart State. It has a great range of uses, from clothing to increasingly high-tech products. I am somewhat familiar with the current use of carbon fibre in a range of aeronautical and automotive applications. Months ago I would not have believed this but, as a result of my research when preparing for this bill, I have become aware of the potential high-tech uses for what is a naturally occurring fibre. Potentially, this plant could increase the level of return to our farmers in regional areas. It has significantly lower water consumption rates than some other crops. This plant could increase returns for farmers and decrease water consumption in some areas of Queensland. The benefits to Queensland from this amendment are to be applauded.

The government acknowledges that the genetic root of this plant is the illegal substance, cannabis sativa, and so inspectors will be appointed. The government does not want to be seen as giving an inch and have some unscrupulous primary producer take a mile. Inspectors will be out and about doing random checks and audits on this fledgling industry. I hope that this industry will go from strength to strength. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (3.52 p.m.): I rise to speak very briefly to the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002 and to support the bill very strongly. I have a significant number of sugar producers in my electorate, as do many members. The sugar industry is a very significant part of the Wide Bay economic base. I share the community's great concern about the difficulties in the sugar industry posed by very low world prices which, in most cases, have put the price of

production above the world market price. Our farmers are obviously having grave difficulty producing sugar at a price that is profitable when the world price is down as low as US 5c a pound.

This issue has to be confronted with smart and different thinking and with new strategies. The sugar industry needs options. I recently returned from an overseas trip which included Taiwan, a proud sugar producing country with a long history of industry involvement. Taiwan recently announced that it will exit the sugar production market in 2004. The Taiwanese government has formed the view that it is unlikely to be able to produce sugar at a profit in the foreseeable future and has decided not to continue. A debate is taking place in Cuba along the same lines. Again, Cuba is a country founded upon sugar. It is part of the national culture. Cuba is also at a point where it simply cannot make sugar pay.

We are working very hard in Australia—and perhaps this is the subject of a different debate—but there is no question that we must give our primary producers different ways of producing crops that are profitable and which allow them to stay on the land and allow families who are of the land to maintain that tradition. Industrial hemp is a good alternative crop and the government is to be congratulated for pursuing this so vigorously.

Other alternative land uses, such as chickory, have great potential. Again, the Department of State Development has been working very hard to see chickory go into production as a companion crop to sugar. Similarly, ethanol is a different end use for the sugar crop. These are Smart State alternative ideas which we must pursue if we are to give those industries a new lease of life and a future. I want to keep people on the land. I want to keep people who produce sugar and primary industries in my area, farming, working and making a profit. This legislation gives them hope. I congratulate the minister for bringing this legislation forward and I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (3.55 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to allow for the commercial production of industrial hemp sativa fibre and seed, commonly known as industrial hemp. Back in 1989, the act was amended to allow for controlled field trials and plant breeding for a period of three years for the purpose of assessing the potential for commercial fibre production. From the notes I have read, an extension was allowed under section 43Y of the Drugs Misuse Act, which expires on 18 December 2002.

Apparently, the recent trials produced really good results with the strains developed for the tropical and subtropical climates we experience here. The report goes on to state that these high yielding strains have the potential to place Queensland growers at a distinct competitive advantage in relation to other states and countries. With that in mind, in this ever-decreasing world of global markets, perhaps this is an avenue we should be exploiting. Throughout Queensland there has been a downturn in many industries and I would suggest that there are many who have watched the dairy industry become a struggling one, the timber industry become almost non-existent and we now find the beef industry and primarily the abattoirs facing severe hurdles with the current US quota allocations. Sugar is presently undergoing a very hard time.

Many people who have been forced out of their family line of business and chosen careers have been, and still are, searching for avenues to diversify into. At the moment it is one of my pet projects to endeavour to have an ethanol plant established in my electorate, as we have all the necessary elements to encourage the promoters of ethanol to consider that part of the South Burnett, perhaps even Kilcoy, as ideal sites. People have come to my office at various times seeking to have industrial hemp become a commercial crop. Again, I believe the Nanango electorate would be ideal for this particular crop.

The avenues open to this crop are quite diverse. I was well aware of the possibilities for rope and clothing. I have seen quite a few outfits made of hemp and, unlike the member for Southern Downs, I liked many of the items displayed. They had a cool, relaxed, lazy lifestyle look about them, which suits Queenslanders very well. What did surprise me and in fact stopped me purchasing a shirt was the price. It was not so much that it was expensive—which it was—but that I did not have enough money on me at the time. I would have loved to try it to see how it did wear because I was told that its wearing capability is extremely good. I was also well aware of the use of the product for paper and I would think that the greenies and environmentalists would embrace this as a method of protecting our forests, as we know how passionate they are about trees.

What I did not know about hemp was the use of the seed of hemp as a food item. One of the articles I discovered in my research stated that there was a projected world population growth of three billion in the next fifty years, which will inevitably bring massive rises in demands for food, which in turn places enormous pressure on our available agricultural land. This is apparently a very fast growing and sustainable crop. The article also stated that hemp has the potential to set regional Australia on the path of prosperity and to alleviate global resources in textile, food, energy and paper products—obviously the words of a person who believed very strongly in the future of hemp. If I remember correctly, the first time I ever saw hemp cosmetic products was at Eumundi. I found the skin creams to be very good and in fact I do use them. I do not know whether they will preserve me as well as others, but perhaps I can use them forever.

With regard to the trials held, the results of the experimental plantations in New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland and New Zealand were very promising. The trial in the Lockyer Valley, I believe, yielded about 18,500 tonnes per hectare in 90 days. That is enough to double traditional farm incomes made from cereal crops. One of the better attributes is that this crop is very resistant to disease. Therefore, the need to chemically treat these crops is reduced. Even more interesting was the information that if hospital garments were made from hemp and treated in a particular way they would be 100 per cent golden staph free. As all those who have encountered golden staph would attest, this possibility could only be extremely beneficial.

My research has also revealed that industrial hemp is in fact legal in all countries of the Western World except the United States. In France, even the legal tender is made out of hemp. Mention hemp and the first word that springs to most minds is marijuana and the images of people getting high. I read somewhere that, if that is what a person thinks first, they are probably still wearing flares. This is a bit of a worry because I still wear flares; they are fairly fashionable. The fact is that this industrial hemp is extremely low in THC and reports reveal that one would have to smoke 300,000 to 400,000 tonnes to get a little high. I do not believe anyone would be willing to smoke that much.

Government members interjected.

Mrs PRATT: They are only brand-new. Maybe the shop I got them from was way behind.

A government member interjected.

Mrs PRATT: Yes, they are coming back in. And hipster flares, too; I think they are coming back in. The legalisation of industrial hemp for commercial production provides for a distinction between industrial hemp where the hemp has a THC level of under three per cent and marijuana hemp where the THC level is up to 20 per cent. This bill in no way changes the fact that marijuana is an illegal substance. The penalties remain unaltered and will be enforced stringently. This crop is not a 'you-beaut, whizzbang, let's make a million dollars' crop. This is like many other crops where only hardworking people will make a reasonable living and some kind of income.

These fibre crops have traditionally been produced in countries where labour is abundant and cheap. As a result, the production systems have been simple and labour intensive. However, for commercial production in Australia, mechanisation is required at all stages of production. Anyone considering growing hemp needs to be well aware of all involved. I suggest that they do their research and do it well. To allow this emerging industry to capitalise on what appears to be a fairly promising report, we need to look at developing a commercial arm in what could potentially become Queensland's newest emerging industry. This bill allows for that. I support the bill.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (4.03 p.m.): The Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill provides for the lawful commercial growing of industrial cannabis, or industrial hemp as it is more commonly known. Listening to the speakers before me, it is clear that this is an industry and a crop with enormous potential. For instance, one of the important characteristics of hemp is that it produces about four times the amount of raw fibre as an equivalent sized tree plantation but takes only about four months to reach maturity. There is significant opportunity there in terms of the amount of fibre produced per hectare.

As outlined by a number of speakers, the fibre has and can have a number of uses: paper and cardboard manufacturing, carpets and fertilisers. Its major use is in the production of textiles. It is also used in construction materials and, more recently, in the fibre materials or plastics used in motor vehicle manufacturing. With the increasing pressures on that industry to produce lighter cars, that will open up a significant market for fibre products in the future.

Suggestions are that the world demand for fibre products is increasing exponentially. Over the next 50 or so years it is projected that demand will grow from around 50 million tonnes currently to about 130 million tonnes. Although the significant potential of hemp is acknowledged

in the current research, it is also necessary to acknowledge that there is a lot more work, research and experience required before we will be able to realise the full potential of this crop.

There are a number of barriers. Currently, the Australian pulp and paper manufacturing industry is not showing significant interest in industrial hemp. More work needs to be done in terms of utilising hemp as opposed to wood fibre for the production of paper and paper products. The costs of production need to be substantially reduced to make it more attractive than the current predominant use for paper manufacture, which is woodchips. Aligned to that, production levels per hectare also need to be significantly improved.

Despite those hurdles, the potential benefits from all the research and information available appear to far outweigh any of the hurdles or obstacles that currently exist. It is important for the public to understand—and this has been an issue outlined by a number of speakers—that industrial cannabis or hemp is not marijuana. Hemp is grown for its fibre content. Its THC content, the hallucinogenic chemical significant in marijuana, is less than 0.3 per cent. In reality, it has no effect if it is smoked.

Over the past four years, Queensland has been conducting trials concerning the growing and breeding of industrial hemp. That work has now developed to a stage where it is necessary to pursue the establishment of a commercial market for this product and to expand it. This bill amends the Drugs Misuse Act to enable full commercial production of commercial hemp. It enables further research into its use as a commercial fibre and crop and also allows for plant breeding programs for the development of new or improved strands.

Its growth and use under the act will be regulated by a rigorous licensing system which includes criminal history checks on applicants. Separate licences will be issued for researchers and growers under strict eligibility and operating requirements. Hemp presents a great opportunity for a new agricultural industry in Queensland. The bill proposes a sensible and effective regulation of this industry. I congratulate the minister and the department on this initiative and commend the bill to the House.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (4.08 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002 and to commend the minister for all the hard work done to get the bill to where it is today. As discussed, the bill provides a legislative framework for the licensing, researching, growing and processing of industrial cannabis. A number of speakers have touched on the importance of making sure that we get it right and that we bring the public on board with us so that they understand we are talking about industrial hemp and not cannabis.

There have been trials in place for several years in Queensland. It is good to see the type of work that has come out of those trials. It is also interesting to see that we are now doing the full cycle. We have trialled it and will look at growing it. If we go back to the early part of last century, hemp was grown and used quite widely before it was suddenly decreed that it could not be used anymore.

Mr English: The more things change the more they stay the same.

Ms MALE: During the trials, producers have made substantial investments of time, money and know-how to bring this industry to the level where it is ready to take advantage of growing demand. We have heard about the high-yielding varieties being developed that thrive in north Queensland, and this has the potential to give Queensland a competitive edge over other states due to our temperate climate. It is certainly going to be an emergent industry and it has been noted that it is still a farming industry and will still require all of the hard work that farmers always put into their crops. However, we will also be able to take advantage of research and direct that towards the best possible advantage of farmers and the manufacturing process.

I imagine there will be quite a demand for recyclable and natural materials. As I go through my Glass House electorate, and especially in the Maleny area, everyone is talking about sustainable growth, sustainable use, recycling materials and making sure that when we produce goods we do so with materials that can be recycled. I noted from the briefing paper the United States is reaching the stage of requiring cars to be made almost entirely of recyclable material.

I have a dream and I would like to give members a glimpse of the future when we talk about our life in the house of hemp—industrial hemp. In the future, we would wake in the morning, have a shower using hemp soap and hemp shampoo. We would dry ourselves on a hemp towel and apply hemp skin care and cosmetics. We would then get dressed in our hemp shirt—

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: Hemp bag.

Ms MALE:—with our hemp bag and top off the outfit with some hemp jewellery. We would walk into the hallway across the hemp carpet hall runner and curse our teenage son for leaving his hemp skateboard in the way for everyone else to trip over. We catch the aroma of freshly brewed coffee that our partner has started in the kitchen—as my husband always does. The coffee finishes percolating through the hemp filter as we reach the kitchen. We open the kitchen cupboard, made entirely from hemp, take out our cup to make a coffee cup and notice that the door is squeaking. We remind our husband to grease the door with some hemp oil.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: What a good husband he is.

Ms MALE: He is indeed. Before we go to work we decide to fertilise our vegetable garden with hemp fertiliser and, as we exit the back door, we are greeted by our dog, who has been kept wonderfully warm through the night by his hemp bed and blankets.

Mr Neil Roberts: And you put on your hemp hat.

Ms MALE: Exactly; we are very sun conscious in Queensland. As we get in our hemp car to travel to work, the builder who is doing our extensions rings on our mobile to revise his quote—as they always do—to say that the price of hemp mortar has gone up due to increased demand. That is just a brief insight into what the future holds for us due to the initiative and foresight of the Beattie Labor government. We will make sure that when the Premier rises to speak in this House about the wonderful results of hemp production we do not have our hemp earplugs in place on that day.

I have been a bit light-hearted with that overview of how we might be living our life in the future, but it is very important that as a state we take advantage of the important new happenings within the Department of Primary Industries and the type of innovative work that our growers and farmers are willing to do to create sustainability in their industry and also to create a better lifestyle for all of us.

I was glad to see that the licensing provisions are very strict. Obviously, we have to make exemption under the relevant sections to deal with trafficking, supply, possession and the production under the Drugs Misuse Act 1986. That has all been tightened up and I believe everyone is supportive of what we are doing. For example, there will be research licences. We are hoping to ensure through that process that the types of uses and production of hemp increases to such a stage that it is a viable crop for our primary producers. A grower's licence will enable a grower to possess industrial cannabis plants and seeds and to produce the plants to full size before being harvested and manufactured.

A number of safeguards are in place. I am aware that inspectors will have wide-ranging powers for entering premises, looking at particular plants and having them tested. Having reached the stage at which the community supports the growing of industrial hemp, we need to make sure that we maintain their confidence in us by ensuring that the growers are doing everything strictly by the law so that the industry can grow and prosper. I congratulate the Attorney-General on bringing this bill forward and all of the researchers who have been writing the legislation and working through the community consultation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (4.14 p.m.): The Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002 is a very important and natural extension of existing sections of the act that were established to allow the trial of planting and harvesting cannabis sativa for commercial fibre production. Trials have been running for the past four years in several Australian states and now there is the opportunity to take full advantage of an ever-growing world market.

Interest has been expressed from Canada, the USA and Europe in reviving hemp industries, with large-scale research projects under way in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Germany to develop viable markets. France has a continuing hemp processing industry while Northern Ireland has blended up to 40 per cent hemp with flax successfully, and its only problem is a constant source of supply. We cannot afford to miss the boat.

Hemp has been around for a long time. It is the earliest known woven fabric, dating back to the eighth millennium—between 8000 and 7000 BC. For more than 1000 years BC up until 1183 AD hemp was the biggest and most important agricultural crop for many civilisations. It was produced in many countries until it was phased out or banned in the 20th century. It was replaced by fossil fuels, timber, synthetics and petrochemicals, which was a disastrous decision for the environment and for what is arguably the earth's most primary renewable and useful resource.

Until about 1800, hemp seed oil was the most consumed lighting oil in the world. Between 70 per cent and 90 per cent of all cordage was made from hemp until 1937. For thousands of

years, good paints and varnishes were made with hemp seed oil. For eons, the art canvas was made of hemp. The paintings of such greats as Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Gainsborough were mostly painted on them.

Ms Keech: Wish I owned one of those.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: I also wish I owned one. Today's uses are so varied, including building and construction materials, carpet backing, PVC piping and paints. In fact, with the uses that I have just mentioned I could imagine an entire house being built with hemp. Obviously, the member for Glass House would be very happy to live in such a house—with her husband, of course.

Other uses include insulation products, paper and paper products, organic reinforcement and matting for erosion control, clothes and rope and twine. I am not the only Sullivan who has spoken on the virtues of hemp. In March 1998, my husband, Jon, while speaking to the Police and Other Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, supported the trials of commercial hemp growing in Queensland.

Ms Keech: He was a great member.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: He was a great member. He stated that after watching an ABC documentary titled *A Billion Dollar Crop* he was interested to learn that hempseed oil is one of the best things that can be used in lowering cholesterol levels in people. That is good news for all of us. Another comment Jon made was that as a country we would benefit from having an additional crop available to our rural producers. It is a sturdy and fast-growing crop and in Australia a yield of 10 tonnes per hectare of dry hemp stalks is expected where rainfall is in reasonable supply. It is a crop that can be grown in virtually any climate or soil condition on earth. It needs no chemicals, has few weed or insect enemies except those who wish to ban it. Hemp is softer than cotton, warmer than cotton, has three times the tensile strength of cotton and is many times more durable. It may not be too long before honourable members start wearing hemp skirts and hemp suits.

Ms Keech: I'd wear it.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: I am glad.

Ms Keech: We'll be sitting on hemp seats.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: As the member said, we will be sitting on hemp seats. It is very durable. Members should rest assured that they could certainly hand down anything made of hemp to their children and grandchildren. This bill will reap benefits for job growth and eventually, if hemp can be grown for biomass, it could fuel a yearly trillion-dollar energy industry, replacing fossil fuels like coal, oil, natural gas and—wait for it; it gets better—nuclear power.

Mr Cummins: How much?

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: A trillion dollars.

Mr Cummins: Not a zillion?

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: Not a zillion. Biomass can be converted to methane, methanol or gasoline at a fraction of the current cost of fossil fuels. This conversion would save our atmosphere from acid rain, eliminate sulphur based smog and reverse the greenhouse effect—and probably save the planet. We are doing the right thing and I am proud to be part of a government that is heading in this direction.

Licences for the commercial growing, processing, marketing and trade of industrial hemp—which is quite distinct from the illicit drug marijuana—will be strictly monitored and anyone applying for a licence will be stringently scrutinised. Licence fees will cover criminal checks, regular site inspections, conduct audits of records and the tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, sampling of plants to ensure that levels do not exceed legal standards. Only those persons holding either a research and/or a growers licence will be authorised to deal with cannabis sativa in certain ways. This is not a new industry but a revival of an ancient one. It will re-establish the traditional production of hemp, which two centuries ago was the most popular textile fibre in use. I thank the minister and his staff for the introduction of this bill and commend it to the House.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (4.20 p.m.): I am pleased to rise in support of the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002, which is not well titled in terms of the real business of this House. This is an opportunity area for agriculture in the state of Queensland for the future, and unfortunately there are not many. I dare say that other honourable members could list the difficulties for their own agricultural industries in their electorates. Whilst I must admit that I have not taken a special

interest in agricultural industries as they are based outside my electorate in far-north Queensland, I nonetheless want to take the time this afternoon to recognise the tremendous opportunity and the potential there is in the hemp industry and its growing, particularly on the tablelands adjacent to Cairns.

Farmers and producers on the tablelands have had a very hard time for many years. With the necessary shutting down of the timber industry there came tremendous family dislocation and loss. There has been deregulation of the dairy industry. There has been the closing down to a very substantive degree of the tobacco industry. We know that our sugar farmers are in trouble. As if all of that is not enough, there is drought. It is therefore high time, and indeed a good time, for there to be some potential way forward that may be, in the long term, profitable for our farmers. How fine indeed it would for us, as members from around Queensland, to stand in this House and boast of the profitable crops that our various farmers are able to grow.

The opportunity is particularly good in far-north Queensland where, thanks to the tropical climate, it would be possible to grow two crops per year. That may contribute significantly to profitability, given the difficulties we might have in making the industry profitable in other ways. Areas in which we would have difficulty were demonstrated to me during my recent visit as part of Minister McGrady's trade mission to Taiwan and the Philippines. In Taiwan it was apparent that that country is hungry to look for opportunities in partnership with Australia and in particular in partnership with Queensland because in these last few years we have a history of strong representations and contacts and have built strong relationships right across the business community.

Taiwan's vision, as it were, of the partnership it could have with various industries, businesspeople and the government in Queensland is this: it says that Queensland has so much room, so much ground and so much space. To Taiwan that is something of an amazement given that on that tiny island it has the same number of people, or near enough, as we have on this whole continent of Australia. It is well aware of our advanced environmental management systems, of our clean air and of our clean water. Therefore, it sees us as an ideal place for agricultural production. What it believes it can bring to the partnership is geographic location within easy reach of billions of people who will be needy of the kinds of agricultural produce that we can provide. It says that surely there is a way that we can work together to optimise the benefits for ourselves as well as for those businesses in Taiwan prepared to invest and take part in the effort that will be required. It strikes me that hemp production is one such product which may well suit such a partnership arrangement.

With the help of partners, such as companies in Taiwan, we may be able to overcome some of the barriers that still have to be resolved. For example, there are problems with continuity of supply. We have already had this problem in pursuing the sale of mangoes to overseas markets. The populations of Singapore and Hong Kong are such that they require, in order to sign their contracts with far-north Queensland farmers, an absolute surety that they can have continuity of supply. This is difficult when we have lots of small farms which are subject to various events, sometimes climatic and sometimes from other sources, which have not been able to guarantee supply. That is where, unfortunately, we have missed out on contracts. Perhaps with this newer industry of hemp growing we have a chance to put in place ways of ensuring that continuity of supply.

We also need to look at productivity per hectare and, always at Australia's disadvantage, the delivery and the processing costs before we can be sure that this opportunity can indeed be turned into a permanent industry that can, in the medium term at least, be profitable. There are so many opportunities in terms of the use of hemp—furniture, automotive, paper products, construction materials, food and beverages, and textiles. All of those opportunities mean that this is an industry that we should, in our various positions—whether it be as farmers, as people involved in industry development, in export or members of parliament—take as seriously as we can. The bill before the House today paves the way so that our lead department, the Department of Primary Industries, can make sure that it facilitates in every way possible the development of this promising industry for the state of Queensland.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (4.26 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill, I support the legislation and want to raise some issues that I have found in my investigations, as have other speakers in this debate. Proponents of the fibrous stalk say that it can reshape the paper and apparel industries, reduce world deforestation and pesticide use, yield new building materials, and provide nutrient-rich foods that can reduce heart disease. There is only one slight problem with hemp, however—that is, in most countries it is still illegal. It is also

called marijuana. Often described as marijuana's misunderstood cousin, industrial hemp is from the same plant species that produces marijuana. Unlike marijuana, however, industrial hemp has only minute amounts of THC. We have pot, the sweet smelling greenish herb that gives you a high when you smoke. The other is industrial hemp and puffing it gives you a headache. I do not know that from experience; I know that from what I have read. It is the latter that we are discussing today.

I was very impressed with the list of products that could be made from hemp: automotive products for the insides of cars; bags and luggage; body care material; clothing; construction materials; cordage; food; bathroom, bedroom, dining room, kitchen and living room furniture; paper; pet care and livestock products; plastics; sporting equipment; and toys were some of those listed. When I went into some of the details of those products I found that, even within each of those categories, there are a significant amount of subcategories that can be created. I do not think that the development of an industrial hemp industry in Australia is going to be the end of all of our problems. I do not think it is going to be this huge new product that is going to revolutionise our energy production or anything like that. What it does provide is an alternative crop.

In northern Queensland, tobacco producers have almost ceased being able to earn a living from growing their product even though the tobacco industry continues to promote its product. Where farmers are geared up for this type of production—that is, there is a slight shift to a different product but with the same farming processes—it gives them an opportunity and some dignity to make a living. The need for paper and other fibre products, including fibreboard, packing materials and pulp, is skyrocketing in the Third World. It seems that demand for such products precisely tracks economic and educational progress. But the costs for timber firms buying forest land, cutting trees and processing wood in the face of global environmental activism are zooming upwards.

If we can provide those countries that have an increasing demand for such products with an environmentally acceptable alternative, that is certainly a wonderful place for them to start. Paper manufacturing firms are eager for new sources of fibre, and hemp is certainly one of the options that is available. A pro-hemp business council stated—

It's the strongest, easiest to grow and has the broadest geographical range.

While trees require decades to grow, hemp matures in 100 days. So over time hemp yields two to four times as much fibre per acre as wood. A lot of other statistics have been made available through information on industrial hemp.

I know that this legislation contains regulations to control farms to ensure that hemp is grown only for industrial purposes. I read an article from someone overseas who is on the law enforcement side of things. Their experience was that initially the opposition to the growing of industrial hemp was on the basis that it would be difficult to distinguish in a paddock the industrial hemp from the marijuana with the high THC content. However, the requirements for industrial hemp are diametrically different from those relating to the growing of marijuana for recreational and other uses. With industrial hemp the plants are grown inches apart, they grow to between 12 and 18 feet high, they have sparse leaves on top, and only the stalks are harvested. People who grow marijuana for drug purposes are after a predominance of leaf, and they are looking for small plants. Theoretically at least there should be a way of ensuring that paddocks that are set aside for the growing of industrial hemp can be supervised and monitored.

As I said, many farmers in Australia have had their industry undermined—whether it be through competition policy, global trading or simply government policy, state and federally. They are finding that farming endeavours in which they and their families have been involved over many decades now are not even providing them with a viable living. As I said, hemp is not going to be the salvation of Australia, and it is not going to be the salvation of all farmers in Australia whose commodities have lost value. If we can identify and safely provide alternate crops for farmers to investigate, that would be most welcome. I look forward to this crop becoming one of a number in our country.

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (4.32 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. The amendments in this particular bill simply provide for the lawful commercial production of industrial hemp fibre and seed in Queensland. As members would be aware, the previous amendments to the act allowed only for research into industrial hemp fibre, with no provision for research into hemp grain or grain oil. However, industrial hemp grain and grain products are considered to have important high-value commercial opportunities. The proposed amendments in this bill address this deficiency by including industrial hemp grain and

derivative products in the legislation. Four years down the track, the trials have produced some significant findings that may present Queensland with an opportunity to establish itself as a world leader in the production of industrial hemp fibre. The successful passage of this bill will allow the industry in Queensland to conduct further research and explore field production on a much larger scale.

The amendments are also designed to facilitate commercial interest in growing, handling and processing industrial hemp through the issuing of DPI licences for research and commercial fibre and grain production. It is hoped that this can pave the way for the creation of a new industry within Queensland's agricultural sector. As we all know, a number of Queensland industries are facing difficult times. Industrial hemp's versatility and compatibility with current farming systems makes it a viable and environmentally sound alternative for crop rotation with traditional crops such as cotton and sugar or indeed, where appropriate, a sound replacement crop which will bring renewed vigour to a number of rural communities and diversification of its economic base. Industrial hemp could provide a number of opportunities for existing farmers wishing to diversify and can provide an additional source of income as a rotation crop.

The move toward industrial hemp as an alternative crop has been met with some scepticism—some of which stems from a lack of understanding of the plant and its capabilities and uses. Mention the word 'hemp', for example, and the narcotic substance cannabis, or marijuana, immediately springs to mind for many people. Of course, there are vital differences between the two, and it is important not to confuse them. The fundamental difference between the two lies in the level of narcotic THC. In industrial hemp the THC level is less than 0.3 per cent, compared with between three per cent and 10 per cent in narcotic hemp. Industrial hemp cannot be used as a substitute for marijuana because its THC content is too low to produce any type of psychotropic effect. The two plants do, however, look remarkably similar in appearance, though industrial hemp is taller and less branched than marijuana.

There has been a worldwide resurgence of interest in hemp for production of a whole range of products over the past decade. Much of the research to date has concentrated on hemp as paper products, although the potential for other industrial uses, and in particular textiles, is also promising. Industries globally are now searching for ecologically sustainable renewable, recyclable fibre sources, and as a result the demand for renewable natural fibres is growing rapidly. With this, industrial hemp products internationally are experiencing a substantial increase in demand.

In addition to this there is a significant market for products produced from industrial hemp grain. With these market opportunities the development of a commercial industry has the potential to provide significant opportunities for deriving economic, employment and environmental benefits to rural and regional Queensland and the state as a whole. Industrial hemp fibre has excellent properties for a range of uses from geotextiles to building materials and car components. Industrial hemp oil produced from grain has a number of uses ranging from paints to soap. New processes and new products that could open new markets for Queensland production, processing and value adding of industrial hemp are currently being researched and trialled.

The use of industrial hemp fibre as interior motor vehicle components has been a growing phenomenon over the past few years. Cost advantages, a comparative weight reduction, occupational health advantages and the plant's good environmental credentials mean that we may see it emerge as a preferred material for use in this market. As an example, the European Union has stipulated to its members that 95 per cent of each car produced must be recyclable by 2015. With its biodegradable nature and tensile strength similar to fibreglass, hemp fibre is ideal for manufacturing products such as insulation and reinforced composites now being used as internal moulding in some luxury European cars. With these targets the EU estimates that over 100,000 tonnes per annum of processed hemp fibre will be required by car manufacturers by 2005, up from 40,000 tonnes per annum in 1996. The important factor for us here in Queensland is that at least 70 per cent of this fibre will need to be sourced from outside Europe. In terms of textile production, fabrics containing at least 50 per cent of hemp fibre have been shown to block the sun's UV rays. In fact, many fashion houses, including Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein, now offer hemp fashions across the world.

A high-yielding variety of industrial hemp that is developed to thrive in the tropics has the potential to give Queensland a competitive edge over other states and temperate countries. As a valuable, low-cost biological resource with rapid growth capabilities and little need for costly herbicides or pesticides, Queensland cannot afford to miss the boat on this emerging agricultural market. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (4.40 p.m.): This bill has my enthusiastic support. I commend the Attorney-General on his carriage of these amendments as they relate to industrial hemp. I thank him very much for all of his help. As the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities, I believe that this legislative change will open up the potential for a new industry and new export opportunities for Queensland.

Industrial hemp fibre and grain products are experiencing an international increase in demand and have the potential to provide opportunities for economic development, for jobs and for environmental benefits here in Queensland. These amendments will now enable this emerging industry to move from a research and development phase to commercial production and will allow commercial groups in Queensland to take advantage of a range of market opportunities.

Industrial hemp can be grown to produce both fibre and grain. Traditionally, hemp fibre products have included paper, rope and textiles, but there are opportunities for much higher valued products such as insulation and linings for high-quality motor vehicles, building materials, oil and chemical absorption materials and animal bedding. I inform the House that once this legislation is through Suzi Q, one of my dogs, will probably be the first animal in Queensland to sleep on a bed made of industrial hemp.

Ms Boyle: What about Rusty? Rusty will expect to be first.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Who's Rusty?

Ms Boyle: Isn't that the Premier's dog?

Mr PALASZCZUK: Thank you. Rusty would sleep soundly on a bed made of industrial hemp. But Suzi Q will be a lot happier. The other products will be kitty litter and mulching materials. Value-added products using hemp will include oil paints, varnishes, printing inks, solvents and putty, cosmetics and animal feed.

As we all know, a number of Queensland industries are facing very difficult times. Industrial hemp's versatility and compatibility with current farming systems makes it a viable and environmentally sound alternative for crop rotation with traditional crops such as cotton and sugar. Industrial hemp could be a sound replacement crop which will bring renewed vigour to a number of our rural communities and diversification of their economic base. Industrial hemp is a viable summer cropping option for irrigated or summer rainfall arable land in tropical and subtropical regions. Plant varieties suitable to Queensland conditions, however, will be critical to the success of the industry, as previous speakers on the bill mentioned.

A major focus over the next two to three years will be the development of new high performing varieties. An additional benefit of the plant breeding research is the considerable potential to export intellectual property in plant breeding and varietal rights. This bill provides an innovative legislative framework that will allow Queensland to participate at the forefront of this exciting industry, enabling it to capture a sustainable competitive advantage for Queensland both in research and in commercial production for value-added products. A robust licensing system developed and managed by the Department of Primary Industries will ensure that there will be a clear distinction between legal and illegal activities.

This bill is good news for Queensland. It will provide new opportunities and business and technological advancements that will benefit rural and regional Queensland and the state as a whole. I honestly commend the bill to the House. I urge all members to support the bill and to support the development of what could be a significant new industry for Queensland.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (4.43 p.m.): The Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002 is a very important initiative that will pave the way for the expansion of the industrial hemp industry in Queensland, again showing that the Beattie Labor government represents all Queenslanders. The regulation of a commercial industry for industrial hemp will create jobs and enable Queensland growers and manufacturers to ride a possible wave of world demand for hemp products. I will touch on some possible ways rural producers may benefit into the future.

I am aware that there are at least two possible income streams from hemp fibre. The first is the sale of raw stalk and the second is the sale of processed fibre. Raw stalk can be used for garden products, plastic production, paper pulp and in the building industry. Raw stalk can also be onsold for further processing for higher valued end uses. Processed bast fibre has fundamentally two different markets—the non-woven/geo-textile market, including fibre plastics, and the general textile market, including lint for paper pulp.

The hemp seed's superior nutritional qualities give rise to a wide range of foods. Income may also be generated by an extensive range of products and processing technologies to established world markets. Hemp seed is the nut of the industrial hemp plant. The seed is high in many nutrients and contains no psychoactive effect which is associated with the drug plant. Some of the nutritional benefits of hemp seed may outweigh those of soya and flax, hemp seed's nearest alternatives. Hemp seed allegedly contains a perfect balance of omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acids and GLA. These EFAs cannot be produced by the body but are essential to good health. Hemp contains 24 per cent to 34 per cent superior protein and high-quality dietary fibres.

There are another two types of hemp based plastics—hemp fibre plastic composites and hemp stone. Hemp fibre plastic production is based on hemp fibres being mixed with a small quantity of polypropylene. Importantly, hemp fibre plastic is equally capable of using recycled plastic and as a finished product is itself recyclable. This material can be injection moulded to produce a wide variety of traditional plastic products. Hemp stone is a new manufacturing process which produces plastic-like products from 100 per cent hemp material. No polypropylene is utilised in this process and it can be fully biodegradable. I thank Ecofibre Industries Ltd for supplying me with some of that information. It distributes *Hemp Files*, which is a regular update to people closely involved with the company.

It is interesting to note that hemp is a regionally based industry requiring over 2,000 hectares of suitable overhead irrigated broadacre land available annually for cropping over 100 days, normally from October to January, within 60 kilometres of a local fibre processing mill. Often the mill will require between \$5 million and \$9 million to establish. It needs to be well supported by local infrastructure, including access to sites, rail, port, et cetera. That is good news in terms of job creation throughout Queensland.

As we know, for the last four years Queensland has been conducting trials and it is now ready to take full commercial advantage of a booming world market. Accordingly, this bill amends the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to enable the full commercial production of cannabis fibre and seed, research into the use of cannabis as a commercial fibre and seed crop, and plant breeding programs for developing new or improved strains of cannabis. These amendments are a natural extension of the existing sections of the act, which was set up to allow a trial of the industry. The act was amended to include a new part 5B. This provided an exemption to allow the trial planting of cannabis sativa for commercial fibre production under strictly controlled terms and conditions. Trial plantings were allowed for an initial period of three years. This period was extended for one year until 18 December 2002.

This legislation clearly differentiates between the illicit drug market and the development of a legal industry to exploit the international demand for hemp fibre and seed products. Industrial cannabis is considered to be industrial when the THC drug content is under three per cent. Marijuana—cannabis sativa—used for illicit purposes or known as a recreational drug can have a THC level from three per cent to 24 per cent.

This bill contains a strict regulatory system to ensure a clear distinction between legal and illegal activities. At its core is a stringent licence regime. I commend the minister and his department for the good, hard work that has been done. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (4.50 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. It is interesting to note that only eight per cent of the world's production of pulp paper comes from non-wood materials. If the industrial cannabis plant can be produced efficiently enough to replace the traditional timber source, it should be encouraged. Like timber, it would be a renewable resource and capable of being used in a multitude of other products.

I note Agforce's comments that higher-yielding varieties still need to be developed and a time frame of five years has been suggested before any results from this potential research could be expected. It is clear the challenges include more than simply accessing a market. Farmers in the Tablelands electorate are used to diversifying. Each time they do, it costs a lot of money as each industry requires its own set of infrastructure to be put in place. Farmers will need to be sure that there are markets for their product signed and sealed beforehand, otherwise they could find themselves in a similar position to those in my electorate who diversified into tea-tree and rice and other crops only to find that they could grow a beautiful crop but then could not sell it. Why? Because they could not compete with cheap imports as we have little or no tariff protection anymore.

It is interesting to note that a crop of industrial cannabis produces almost four times the amount of raw fibre as an equivalent timber plantation and it takes only four months to mature. At this point I would like to mention another crop that can produce a similar product, and which is trying to get off the ground in my electorate. It is based on the existing banana industry. Paper, building products, clothing, rope and a host of other products can be made not only from the banana trunk but also from the leaves and stems. This is after the banana bunch has already been harvested. So it is a second crop. As well, there is a market in Asia for the bell and if it is done that way, the growing costs, especially for the chemical application, drop significantly. The leaves can be made into fabric, which I have seen made into beautiful clothing and tablecloths. The stem is used to make rope and string and other products. So not only can the banana bunch be used but so can every other part of the plant. Into the bargain, it is clean and green, biodegradable and an industry that is already in place.

It would be good to get some real government assistance for this project as it would be good for many regional areas of Queensland. The owners of the technology are seeking funding and are presently going through the available channels. It sounds like this new venture with the cannabis plant will produce outcomes similar to that of the banana fibre project. However, the banana fibre process uses unbroken, long-strand fibres that are not pulped. As a result, I am told that they provide enormously strong and useful product.

I understand that there is a problem with sensitivity regarding the amount of sunlight required in the production of the cannabis plant. Not enough light causes the plant to mature too early, thus limiting yield. This could affect us on the Tablelands as I am told that our daylight hours are shorter than they are in other areas. However, Mareeba enjoys an average of 300 sunny days a year. As the world's population grows, so will demand for this type of fibre.

Farm forestry is also trying to get off the ground in my electorate but is making a slow start due to the length of time that it takes to get a return on an investment. With cannabis, a crop could be ready in four months. With banana fibre, a turnaround can be achieved in eight months.

It is interesting to note that seven companies in Australia produce about 77 per cent of Australia's total consumption of paper and cardboard. One problem for the industrial hemp proposal is that changes would be required to existing pulping technology, which suits wood. With timber still available from public forests, it is unlikely that significant alterations will be made in the foreseeable future.

It is not only from the cannabis plant and the banana plant that attempts are being made to produce paper and other products but also from wheat. Attempts have been made on this in Victoria, but so far I understand that it has not got off the ground. Another interesting factor to come out of this debate is that, from 2006, member countries of the European Union will be responsible for the dismantling and recycling of the motor vehicles that they manufacture. For all new models after 2005, the EU has set a target of 95 per cent of recycling of automotive plastics used in their manufacture. The USA's process is not as far advanced as the EU's yet. It is envisaged that cannabis has the potential to be an ingredient in the fibre-reinforced polymers used in motor vehicle manufacture but will have to compete with other potential fibre sources.

At present, industrial cannabis can be grown legally in 30 countries in the world. The distinguishing factors from marijuana are that the industrial variety contains only a very small fraction of the psychoactive ingredient, THC. It has a longer stalk and produces fewer leaves. The THC chemical in the industrial hemp is below a 0.3 per cent concentration and it is regarded as ineffective. The plant's own genetic make-up precludes it from being changed into marijuana plants and vice versa.

Cotton and hemp have often been compared. Although the water requirements are similar, hemp is said to produce two to three times the yield. There are three categories of cannabis plants and three of seed. Industrial plants are those with a THC content of not more than one per cent. There are also three types of licences that may be issued. Two are for research and the third is a grower's licence. Stringent rules apply to applicants. In conclusion, I welcome any promising new industry for our farmers and rural communities, especially as so many of our traditional crops are in such deep trouble.

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (4.55 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. This bill will pave the way for the expansion of the industrial hemp industry in Queensland. It will allow areas such as my electorate of Burdekin to take full advantage of an industry that produces a range of products, some of which include clothing, building materials and car components, just to name a few.

The primary objective of this bill is to amend the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to facilitate the commercial production of industrial cannabis sativa fibre and seed, also known as industrial hemp. This bill will continue the process of industry development for the Queensland industrial hemp industry that commenced in 1998 with controlled field trials and plant breeding research. The bill will also allow the processing and marketing of, and trade in, industrial cannabis sativa fibre and seed and their derivative products.

Currently, part 5B of the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 allows for limited trials of controlled planting of industrial hemp for research purposes to assess the potential for commercial fibre production. The trials permit exemptions, by regulation, from the provisions of the Drugs Misuse Act 1986. The current legislative arrangements expire on 18 December 2002. There is also significant increased international demand for industrial hemp fibre. Industry proponents are seeking a legislative base to allow the development of a commercial industrial hemp production industry.

People wishing to participate, or who are participating in any agricultural industry, need to conduct research on the characteristics of the crop and its agronomic requirements to enable them to make decisions about entering the industry or to grow the crop optimally. Other general researchers, possibly located at universities or agricultural agencies, also need to be able to access this information to enable them to provide advice to industrial hemp growers. The provisions in this legislation will provide protection from section 8A of the act for those people who are genuinely engaged in publishing or possessing instructions for producing cannabis sativa for the purposes of the industrial hemp industry.

A grower's licence will enable the grower to possess industrial cannabis plants and seeds. Growers may possess only certified cannabis seed, which is seed harvested from cannabis plants with a THC concentration in their leaves and flowering heads of 0.5 per cent or less. Growers will grow industrial hemp that usually has a THC concentration of 0.5 per cent or less. However, they are authorised to possess industrial cannabis sativa to grow with a THC concentration of up to one per cent. This is to take into account increased THC levels that may come with climatic or environmental changes. Without some tolerance levels, growers would be exposed to criminal prosecution under section 57 of the Drugs Misuse Act 1986. It has also been amended to provide for the defence of reasonable diligence, which is only available to persons licensed under part 5B. Researchers and plant breeders who are under more tightly controlled conditions will have access to industrial cannabis sativa of less than three per cent and, under the strictest conditions, three per cent and above.

This bill allows people in rural areas, who are feeling the hardship of impacts on primary industry production in Queensland, to look at alternatives to existing crops or to supplement existing crops and products. I support the bill and I commend it to the House.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (5.00 p.m.): The Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002 will have the effect of opening up new industries in Queensland. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to allow for the lawful commercial cultivation of industrial cannabis. This is a big step in paving the way for agricultural growth in Queensland.

The fibres of the hemp plant are called bast fibres. The inner core and the outer bark of the plant contain fibres which can be used to produce textiles, quality paper and newsprint. Cannabis plant varieties which are incapable of producing useable marijuana are referred to as industrial hemp. Some regard this raw material as environmentally friendly and capable of being used for a myriad of products. The production of industrial hemp is seen as a possible alternative to existing fibre material such as wood, cotton and synthetics, products which are the subject of increasing environmental concern. Growing industrial cannabis is more efficient agriculture than a tree plantation of the same size. It will produce almost four times the amount of raw fibre and takes only four months to grow to maturity. It will provide farmers with an extra source of income if added into a rotation program of grain production.

The bill provides a legislative framework for the licensing, researching, growing and processing of industrial cannabis. It outlines the various categories of plants and seeds. Industrial cannabis plants are those with a THC content of not more than one per cent. It will be absolutely crucial to this legislative framework's acceptance by the community at large that it be used only for industrial purposes. The benefits of this legislation are wide-ranging in terms of producing raw materials and sustainable agriculture in Queensland. This bill is truly an indication that Queensland is the Smart State. I commend the Attorney-General for bringing this bill to fruition.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (5.03 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to rise in support of the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. This bill is certainly about many things. During this debate, members have heard about the biology of this particular crop, the innovations relating to it and the various legal aspects of it. In my view, this bill is really about economics and technology; they are at the heart of this bill. We hope that it is an innovation which will have major impacts upon our economy in the long term. It is also about creating technological advances through innovation in plant species and the ultimate application of those plant species.

Over the past 150 years of Australian history, the domestic economy experienced sustained growth only when international economic conditions were buoyant and, conversely, when depression and recession were not. Economic growth has certainly played a very important role in policy making for governments throughout this century and a half. Population growth and debates over population have also figured prominently. However, these debates have been surpassed by the fundamental tenet of moving toward integration with world markets, otherwise described as a movement in recognition of globalisation in its many forms. This legislation is about the more efficient use of resources and creating greater efficiency throughout our economy. This can be done in a number of ways, for example, by the reallocation of resources between sectors. Most importantly, it is about technological improvements in our market, which is the real future.

Queensland has come out of a period of great protection in its economic history. The National Party has been very attached to agrarian socialism as a fundamental tenet in economic direction. As a result, we have experienced a highly protectionist mode of production in this state in particular, and in the Australian economy in general. Clearly, by definition, that does not foster innovation.

Mr Shine: Or competition.

Mr FENLON: Or competition. I take that interjection from the member for Toowoomba North. Queensland has come out of a long period where innovation and competition were blatantly and outrageously stifled by the economic policies of the Queensland government to protect and contain this economy. Those days are over, I am glad to say, and the fact that this bill is before the House is an indication of that. We are now moving into the international marketplace and we have to innovate. Producers on the ground are prepared to experiment and to be part of this wider scheme to find new products, markets and technologies—whether it be plant or other technologies—and to move in that direction.

Historically, Australia has been at the wrong end of the scale in terms of research and development funding and its application to our economy. I am glad that this is gradually changing. The support for this particular venture into hemp production is a feature of that. I hope that this is a microcosm of what is occurring throughout the Australian economy generally and Queensland specifically. Rural industries are experiencing a lot more innovation and imagination. For example, the fruit industry is looking at new products, directions and markets that will create new jobs for Queenslanders in the future. This particular piece of legislation is simply one building block to ensure that the right machinery is in place, in a technical and legal sense, to allow these innovations to occur.

I wish those people in the marketplace well who have the courage to get out there and take on these new industries. People who enter into new industries are some of the bravest people in our state and deserve the greatest rewards. Risking everything to go into an untested and unproven industry and to enter the international marketplace is a very courageous thing to do. I wish those people well. I wish the minister well in terms of the implementation of this particular legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KEECH (Albert—ALP) (5.09 p.m.) I am happy to speak on the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002. This bill is an incredibly innovative bill and presents real commercial opportunities for the cane farmers of Albert. I had a 20-minute speech prepared for this bill, but in the interests of time and the fact that regional members need to get away to their electorates as quickly as possible, I will severely shorten the length of my speech. In doing so, I welcome the extension of the trials of industrial hemp in Queensland and congratulate the Attorney-General and the Minister for Primary Industries on their action in bringing this bill to the House. The crop is a real opportunity for economic benefits in regional Queensland, particularly in Albert. It is an opportunity, but we do have a long way to go. Industrial hemp is promoted as a potential rotation crop, but more research needs to be done to obtain correct strains which will grow best in the regions. It is important that the research and growing be undertaken in a legal, controlled and regulated manner. Given Queensland's sunshine and availability of suitable land, it is important that the Queensland government take advantage of these opportunities to obtain a sustainable

competitive advantage for our state. This is innovative legislation. It is smart legislation. I certainly welcome it. I commend it to the House.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (5.10 p.m.): It is about time that we introduced this legislation. It is another string to our primary producers' bow. My only concern is that there will not be enough interested growers, because we need a certain bulk of product to be produced and grown to make it work. I know that that is not this minister's responsibility; it is the responsibility of the DPI. We need to provide a few more resources and we need to get good technical information to growers on which they can rely. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (5.12 p.m.): I commend the minister for his successful approach to this legislation. Members before me have given the details of why this legislation should be brought in and the safeguards that pertain to this legislation. Therefore, it deserves the support of both sides. In conclusion, on behalf of the Speaker I seek leave to table a non-conforming petition presented to him by local medical professions.

Leave granted.

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (5.14 p.m.), in reply: I thank all members on both sides of the House who contributed to this debate. It has been a lengthy and comprehensive discussion of what is a significant reform in the law relating to the regulation of drugs misuse, designed really to kick-start a new industry for the state. Members have made significant contributions to the discussion of a range of areas. Many members outlined how the bill puts in place a strict regulatory regime to ensure that there is no confusion between the illicit drug trade and the hemp industry proposed by this legislation. As members indicated, that regime includes licensing of growers and researchers, the criminal history checking of potential applicants, exclusion of those applicants who have a criminal history for any serious offences and, of course, additional information that the CEO can ask for. Industrial hemp inspectors will have the power to enter and inspect any crop, with the ability to make random checks for THC concentration of plants. Of course, there are tough penalties for illicit drug production.

The member for Southern Downs indicated that the opposition will be supporting the legislation. The member asked some questions regarding the practicalities of market uptake and the sorts of expressions of interest in growing hemp that have been made. Of course, this is a matter which will be managed by the Minister for Primary Industries, although I am aware that the Department of Primary Industries has already done quite a deal of work in this area. Most of the work so far has been at an R&D level, although I am advised that the North American fibre market, for example, is expected to grow from \$150 million in scale in 2000 to over \$1.4 billion by 2005. It is timely that we position ourselves in the marketplace for hemp products, given that the European Union recently stipulated that 95 per cent of each car produced must be recycled by 2015. Hemp-based products provide an opportunity to contribute to that very ambitious goal. In other words, over 100,000 tonnes of processed hemp will be required by 2005. At least 70 per cent of this is likely to be required to be sourced from outside Europe.

Until the legislation is in place and we have serious expressions of interest, it is difficult to anticipate the actual level of uptake that we are likely to see in Queensland, suffice to say that there have already been dozens of inquiries across the range of agricultural industries. A number of these were mentioned by members who spoke in the debate, including reference to the cotton, dairy, horticulture and sugar industries. The member for Gladstone raised an issue regarding the difficulty distinguishing between paddocks of illicit drugs and the industrial hemp. We expect that DPI inspectors will be able to take random samples and with relatively simple laboratory analysis determine and distinguish industrial hemp from illicit marijuana crops. When people are granted a licence, they will be asked to inform their local police station of their activities so the police as well will be able to monitor people growing hemp in the locality for which they are responsible and ensure that licences are checked and complied with. Of course, any illicit crop production will be subject to the full force and effect and penalties of the Drug Misuse Act. I thank again all members for their contribution to the debate, especially those government members who shortened their contributions to enable us to finish debate on this bill today. I thank the opposition also for their support of this important initiative. Before I finish, I seek leave to table the explanatory notes for the amendments in committee.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) in charge of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr WELFORD (5.19 p.m.): I move amendments Nos. 1 to 7—

1. Clause 7—

At page 14, line 4, after 'possess'—

insert—

'for research purposes'.

2. Clause 7—

At page 14, lines 11 and 12—

omit, *insert—*

'(c) to supply—

(i) class A and class B research cannabis plants and seed to a category 1 researcher or a person authorised under a regulation under section 48 to possess class A and class B research cannabis plants and seed; or

(ii) class B research cannabis plants and seed to a category 2 researcher; or'.

3. Clause 7—

At page 14, after line 32—

insert—

'(h) to supply processed cannabis to a person authorised under a regulation under section 48 to possess processed cannabis.'

4. Clause 7—

At page 15, line 4, after 'possess'—

insert—

'for research purposes'.

5. Clause 7—

At page 15, after line 33—

insert—

'(h) to supply processed cannabis to a person authorised under a regulation under section 48 to possess processed cannabis.'

6. Clause 7—

At page 16, line 7, after 'plants'—

insert—

'and seed'.

7. Clause 7—

At page 16, line 26, after 'plants'—

insert—

'and seed'.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (5.20 p.m.): I move amendment No. 8—

8. Clause 12—

At page 47, lines 9 to 11—

omit, *insert—*

'12 Insertion of new s 136 and sch

'After section 135, as renumbered—

insert—

'136 Transitional provision for regulation provisions in force under repealed part 5B

'(1) Until the end of 18 December 2002, the relevant provisions of the regulation continue to have effect as if the repealed part 5B had not been repealed.

'(2) In this section—

"amending Act" means the Drugs Misuse Amendment Act 2002.

"regulation" means the Drugs Misuse Regulation 1987.

"relevant provisions", of the regulation, means the provisions of the regulation that were in force immediately before the commencement of this section for the purposes of the repealed part 5B.

"repealed part 5B" means part 5B of this Act as repealed by section 7 of the amending Act.'

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (5.22 p.m.), by leave: Issues relating to fisheries are primarily the responsibility both in this place and in ministerial councils of the Minister for Primary Industries. My officers recently became involved in an information gathering exercise because the Commonwealth government, through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, has been conducting a major consultation. That consultation has been directed towards establishing representative areas throughout the reef intended to preserve representative ecosystems supporting the life cycles of biodiverse species of the reef. This will lead to significant rezonings by the Commonwealth.

Although the area subject to state jurisdiction is minuscule in comparison to that administered by the Commonwealth through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, consisting as that state jurisdiction does in some places of nothing more than the area between high water mark and low water mark, it made administrative sense to piggyback on the Commonwealth's consultative process. That was in order to receive information that might be relevant to the comparatively small area administered by Queensland.

The purpose of the Environmental Protection Agency's involvement in this consultation was not so that the EPA could initiate changes to its zoning. The purpose was that the EPA be armed with information necessary to respond to changes when eventually those may be proposed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Of course, the EPA is not about to propose changes to the status quo in Queensland waters. My department is not, and will not be, taking any steps independently to change that status quo.

Our election undertaking was to refine the zoning of state marine parks to complement where practicable the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's plans. Of course, we will do this. However, it is not good public policy for the tail to wag the dog, and we will await the Commonwealth's proposals with interest.

I believe it should be possible for the Commonwealth to establish representative areas within the vast tracts of the Great Barrier Reef that preserve its biodiversity without impinging on sustainable fishing opportunities for Queensland. I assure fishers that my department will be vigilant to encourage the Commonwealth to do so. Equally I assure conservationists that my department will be vigilant to play its part to ensure that the biodiversity of the reef is preserved. The state coastal management plan is unique in Australia in that it addresses all of the coastal issues and has as its fundamental principle maintaining people's access to the beach. That includes their capacity to go fishing in areas close to established coastal communities.

The coastal plan specifically states that 'development and use of the coast is to maintain and, where possible, enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors'. It further explicitly requires that the social value of fishing is protected. Let me say also that this Commonwealth initiative, if handled correctly, has the capacity to enhance that quality of life by preserving the biodiversity of the reef.

My department's consultative process is now completed. My department received eight submissions and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority received many thousands. GBRMPA has undertaken to share information with us, including any submissions it has received which bear on the comparatively small area administered by the state.

I thank all those who took part in the consultative process. Although the status quo remains in place in Queensland waters, their thoughts will be valuable to my officers when eventually it becomes necessary to respond to the Commonwealth's plans and will assist us in ensuring that Queensland's zoning continues to articulate with Commonwealth zoning in a way that preserves fishing opportunities while conserving biodiversity.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (5.26 p.m.):
I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 20 August 2002.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (5.26 p.m.):
I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Emu Park-Rockhampton Road

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (5.26 p.m.): I wish to make a few comments in relation to the Emu Park-Rockhampton road. This road is experiencing increased traffic flows on almost a daily basis. The Barrier Reef housing development in the Emu Park area has seen a lot of housing constructed in the area. Kinka Beach is also going ahead. I mention also the Zilzie development. This has resulted in a lot more traffic on the road. The only passing lane is towards the Yeppoon-Rockhampton railway line crossing at Nerimbera. There are no other passing lanes along that road. The road is in reasonably good condition, but at this point the road is urgently in need of upgrading or reconstruction. Parts of that road have been reconstructed. However, on the more winding sections of the road it is sometimes difficult to overtake.

A lot of the people living in the Emu Park-Zilzie area are a bit like me—senior. It so happens that I still have a job, but some others do not. As one gets a bit older, one can tend to drive a bit slower. An accident is waiting to happen, with impatient drivers wanting to drive at the speed limit being caught behind some of these residents. The Emu Park-Rockhampton road needs upgrading and widening. I call on the powers to be to make money available. Some very good work has been done on the Rockhampton-Yeppoon road, but it is my view that it should be double lanes each way. That would solve a lot of the problems. Some work was done in the time that Dennis Hinton was the local member, and a number of passing lanes have been constructed since. We need also to look at the scenic highway linking Yeppoon and Emu Park. This is known as the scenic route and is advertised as such. However, drivers need to know what they are doing on those roads, particularly when towing a caravan. There is a lot of winding road and there is very beautiful scenery.

Stepping Forward Declaration

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (5.29 p.m.): On 25 July I joined with the Minister for Youth Affairs, the Hon. Matt Foley, to launch a joint declaration by Commonwealth, state and territory ministers for education, training, employment, youth and community services. The Stepping Forward declaration, which I have a copy of here, represents a new way forward in improving pathways for all young people and is a significant achievement—it is a real first, in fact—to seek cooperation between all state governments and the Commonwealth. The minister was a key player in the development of the joint declaration and the gathering of national support and signatories. He is in fact to be congratulated for his vision and commitment to the youth of Queensland and Australia.

In government we are in the business of shaping the future. We cannot possibly hope to do this without talking to and listening to the very people who will be the major players in that future—our children and our youth. I am very excited by the joint declaration's stated vision of an Australia in which young people's opinions and contributions are sought and valued. The declaration sets out a number of challenges related to supporting and responding to young people's needs. Most importantly, the declaration commits governments to developing practical ways to increase social, education and employment outcomes for young people at risk. The great

challenge will be to see how politicians, community leaders and public servants react, because strangely enough and sadly the majority of mature adults in our society do not think that young people have much of value to say.

However, I do not agree. I have found that when young people speak out they are very passionate and have a lot to say. They are very passionate about things like the environment, human rights and social justice. They despise inequality, intolerance and prejudice. They care about the future and they want to secure not just a healthy society but a healthy planet. They worry about these things—and many other issues—to the very core of their being. Their sense of helplessness is what causes them to feel despondent, isolated and disenchanting, and that is when many adults think that they do not care and do not have anything to say. The problem is that they care too much, but they certainly have little faith in our system of democracy in representing their needs.

Too many young people feel alienated from our political systems and our governments and think that they have no relevance to them or their futures. That is why many do not enrol to vote at 18, because they do not think that their vote will make a difference. It is up to us as politicians to make the processes relevant to them, to communicate with them and to listen to them. This declaration and things like the Queensland Youth Charter are positive steps forward, but they require the commitment of all politicians on all sides of politics and all community leaders to work together in practice. I encourage members to get hold of the declaration, read it, talk to their community's young people and think about ways in which they can make the sentiments within these documents a reality.

Hybrid Coal and Gas Turbine System

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (5.32 p.m.): On Tuesday in the Matters of Public Interest debate I foreshadowed the fact that the federal Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Hon. Ian Macfarlane, would be visiting my electorate today to launch a breakthrough in coal technology—the hybrid coal and gas turbine system. I am pleased to say that it went off without a hitch today. When he threw the switch, the system did warm up and actually work.

As I have indicated previously, this new technology will significantly reduce fugitive gas emissions from underground coalmines and potentially save the mining industry millions of dollars annually in reduced expenditure for managing waste coal. Of course, it has the added benefit of having significant positive environmental effects. After all, coal emissions represent something like 6.7 per cent of Australia's total greenhouse gases, with environmentally toxic gas emissions from underground coalmines contributing 5.7 per cent. Toxic emissions from the spontaneous combustion of tailings and coal deposits also add a significant amount.

The benefits to industry from today's launch are the following: firstly, methane emissions from coalmines can be converted to energy for the mine's own use with the excess electricity generated being fed back into the electricity grid system; secondly, fugitive greenhouse emissions will be reduced, which of course has a positive environmental effect; thirdly, mines using the technology may be entitled to carbon credits for reducing environmental damage, and this of course is of significant interest to overseas investors, particularly the Japanese; fourthly, mine waste coal will be recycled to a useable form, reducing the proliferation of environmentally unfriendly dams and spoil piles; fifthly, a highly flexible system in terms of fuel type which can use methane from both gas drainage and mine ventilation air; and, sixthly, the potential to use ash from the kiln to produce lightweight expanded aggregate which can be used to make a range of products, including lightweight concrete and concrete blocks, clay brick filler material, insulation material, and soil stabilisation and landscaping fills. Mines will be able to sell the aggregate or use it in day-to-day mine operations. Finally, waste heat from the process can also be used to dry tailings, which will then be burnt or added to the exported product. It can also be used to desalinate waste water. At the launch today I was talking to other entrepreneurs who have made further developments in this area.

Fire Ants

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (5.36 p.m.): In 1990 this place heard a ministerial statement by the then Minister for Emergency Services and the now Deputy Premier. The statement told of the National Party cover-up of the appalling situation of residents of Kingston living on and around

land contaminated by hazardous materials. I am extremely proud to say that it was a Labor government that went to the assistance of Kingston residents, who had black sludge oozing from the ground in their yards. While those residents of Kingston certainly know the results of having toxic chemicals in their backyard, it is with shame that I must inform the house that Logan City councillors do not.

The Logan City Council has called for banned chemicals to be released in backyards in the fight against fire ants. Councillor Collins is quoted in the local *Quest* newspaper—and I have the article with me today for the House to see—as saying that he believes we should compare the loss to the environment of using powerful chemicals to nuke fire ants with the processes of a more environmentally friendly treatment. This is a council which tells people on acreages what they can and cannot do with their vegetation because it is good for the environment, but it is okay to fill it with toxic chemicals! He went on to say that this is reminiscent of the early days of dealing with fire ants when the DPI was inundated with suggestions from people wanting every manner of banned chemical used indiscriminately against the pest. The chemicals that Councillor Collins wants to use have a half-life of more than 50 years in the environment—50 years of contamination throughout the entire food chain, and, yes, that includes us.

The chemical baits used by the national fire ant eradication program have a half-life of between three and 24 hours. The DPI's well-coordinated program has seen a 96 per cent response rate after four treatments. The chemicals are aimed at fire ants and the only non-target species affected is the green ant—so different from what Logan City councillors wish to see happen. That leads me to the comments of the deputy mayor, who says—

Fire ants would destroy residents' lifestyles by preventing the use of backyards, parks and increasing health costs.

In fact, he says that we have been too soft. Well, what would toxic waste do for the backyard? What would toxic waste do for the parks? And what would that oozing sludge do for the weekend barbecue? I ask the people of Logan: do they want to be known as the city of toxic waste? Do they want to walk around in oxygen suits, as this article depicts? I do not think so. A space suit is not the type of clothing I want to wear on the weekend.

The people of Logan want safe and pleasant surroundings for their children. They want to enjoy the parks, they want to enjoy their backyards; they do not want chemicals spoiling their lifestyles. The government reacted quickly when first advised of the fire ant problem. It has not just responded quickly; it has responded in a manner that is not intrusive to people's lifestyles but is still very effective. The best form of assistance that councillors from Logan City can give to the fire ant campaign is to sit down somewhere quiet, have a cup of tea and let the professionals get on with it.

Brisbane Markets

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (5.40 p.m.): I rise to speak about the Treasurer's announcement earlier this week that the Brisbane Markets will be sold by the Queensland government for \$74 million to a private consortium led by Landacq. The markets have been a valuable asset for the development of the horticultural industry in Queensland and are testament to our 6,500 fruit and vegetable growers, who have contributed to its growth and sale of produce worth \$650 million each year. The announcement concludes a process that has been bound in a form of secrecy. The Treasurer has continually refused to have any part of the proceeds from the sale reinvested back into the markets or to support Queensland's fruit and vegetable growers. Instead of investing the sale proceeds into market development and research and development projects to support the continued growth of the industry, the Treasurer will approve \$2 million for the provision of environmental and community infrastructure, including education, and set aside the former DPI research station site for future commercial use.

There are other ways the government can generate revenue for the education maintenance program, but it should not come at the expense of a great industry that will continue to make enormous contributions to Queensland. Outside of this, given the government's \$883 million budget deficit, it would be no surprise for the Treasurer to have sold off more of the family silver—in this case the markets—to prop up his budget black hole. The sale of the Brisbane Markets also highlights how insincere the Labor Party is in claiming that it opposes privatisation. If this Treasurer sees a possible cash grab, he is there.

I will wait with interest to see the Treasurer's movements on the privatisation of another important service in Queensland, the provision of electricity. Aside from the economic wisdom of this decision, the question I also ask is: how could the Minister for Primary Industries possibly stand by and allow his government to get away with robbing Queensland's fruit and vegetable growers of this particular asset without any return? I believe that it is an absolute disgrace. An industry which has provided a great deal of support to the Queensland people by way of income is now being denied any return on that investment. It is absolutely appalling that we have a government that once again fails to recognise another very valuable rural industry in Queensland. I am extremely disappointed with the outcome.

Walloon State School

Mr LIVINGSTONE (Ipswich West—ALP) (5.42 p.m.): It is appropriate at this time to acknowledge the outstanding achievement of the Walloon State School in reaching its 125th anniversary. The school is justifiably proud of its long history of delivering quality education to the children of Walloon and surrounding districts for so many years. The school actually commenced its life in 1865 under the name of Guilfoyles Creek. However, the Walloon State School was officially established and opened on 9 July 1877, with one-fifth of the costs being raised by the local community. Can anyone imagine in this day and age if we opened a school and the local community had to raise one-fifth of the costs? We would get hung. I also note that most of the people who lived in that area were railway workers on very low incomes.

The history of the school reveals that parents had to struggle to raise this money and to continue to contribute for improvements over the years, especially through the Depression and other difficult periods such as two world wars. Despite these hardships, each generation of parents has understood the importance of providing an education for their children, and even today the school would be greatly disadvantaged without the wonderful contribution of parents, friends and volunteers.

From an era where children would have been issued with little more than a slate and slate pencils, the students of today have excellent educational resources, and with computers and Internet access they are provided with everything necessary to take them forward into the 21st century. Today's students have opportunities to explore specialised areas of education such as music, science and languages other than English, but they are also confronted with a much more complex and challenging world than that of the first students at the school in 1877.

Walloon State School's very first teacher was a Mr Kemp, who came from an area now known as Haigslea. I have no doubt that he would be gratified to see the progress that has been made in the last 125 years, as evidenced by the Smart State programs that are so much a part of our school system today. In a world that is changing more rapidly than at any time during the history of this or any other school, I congratulate the teaching staff and the supporting parents and citizens association on their efforts in providing the Walloon State School students with every opportunity to participate in successful future careers.

Cooloola Cove

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—ONP) (5.44 p.m.): I would like to take this opportunity to praise a local community group from my electorate. The members of that group, known as Cooloola Cove People Power, have through intense lobbying persuaded their local council to allow them to develop an educational eco-park on an 8.23-hectare site within Cooloola Cove. For those not familiar with Cooloola Cove, it is nestled between Tin Can Bay and Rainbow Beach and is two and a half hours from Brisbane. The site, upon completion, will encompass a network of walking trails and gardens. It will have displays of native bush tucker and native medicinal areas. The native walking trails will follow the natural waterways, which People Power plan to revegetate with endemic native riparian vegetation in order to encourage native fauna back to the area.

Among the aims of the Cooloola Cove People Power organisation is the creation of a recreational area for residents in which to socialise and exercise and to improve the safety of residents who like to walk or ride on specific tracks, as well as providing an easily accessible area for people with disabilities to utilise. It is hoped that this eco-friendly environment will encourage eco-tourism to the area, thus providing the community with a much-needed economic boost and provide additional opportunities for employment. The people of Cooloola Cove are hoping that this walkway will be included in the great walkways program.

The People Power organisation realises the importance of educating our youth about the need for environmental awareness and the development of sound environmental practices. People Power has therefore incorporated plans to provide interesting displays and programs to school and youth groups. I wish to extend an invitation to members, and in particular the Premier, to come along to the cove on his forthcoming visit to the Gympie electorate to meet this enthusiastic group of people and to provide encouragement and support for their proactive and ambitious plans for the economic and environmental sustainability of their little patch of Queensland.

Ashworth House

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (5.46 p.m.): I want to speak about a wonderful aged-care facility in my electorate, Ashworth House. Ashworth House is a 60-bed aged-care facility in Zillmere that caters for aged and disabled residents. It forms a part of the services offered under the umbrella of the Prince Charles Hospital District centred on the Prince Charles Hospital at Chermside in the electorate of Stafford.

At the outset, I want to pay tribute to the wonderful and caring staff and volunteers who work at Ashworth House. They create a very welcoming environment for residents and visitors alike. Their professionalism and care is self-evident and valued by all associated with the facility. Ashworth House boasts an extremely active and supportive volunteer group, the Friends of Ashworth House. Since my election, I have witnessed the wonderful and valuable work of this group. They have contributed greatly to the health and wellbeing of residents—something for which I know the management, staff, families and friends are eternally grateful. I thank them sincerely for their considerable efforts.

Two recent initiatives of the Friends of Ashworth House are its heritage and sensory pathway and the acquisition of a new commuter bus. The heritage and sensory pathway is a wonderful outlet for residents. It winds its way around the beautifully kept gardens of Ashworth House, stimulating the mind and the senses with interesting plants and information bollards. The pathway received funding under the state government's Community Jobs Plan initiative and provided meaningful employment opportunities for a number of previously unemployed people. The Minister for Employment, Training and Youth, Matt Foley, opened the pathway at a ceremony last year.

The most recent project of the Friends of Ashworth House involved the purchase of a \$58,000 wheelchair accessible bus. I was pleased to attend the recent launch of the bus along with residents, staff and representatives of the several organisations that provided financial support. These included the state government's Gambling Community Benefit Fund, which provided \$30,000; the Tzu Chi Foundation; the Commonwealth Family and Community Services Department; Kedron-Wavell Services Club; and the Rotary Club of Geebung. I thank everyone for helping to make this project a reality. The new bus will provide residents and their families with more opportunities to engage with their local community.

I was also pleased to announce recently the Health Minister Wendy Edmond's approval of \$500,000 to install airconditioning at Ashworth House. This is a fantastic bonus, and I am absolutely thrilled for the residents and staff. It is planned to have the airconditioning installed this year. This will make conditions much more comfortable for everyone and will add value to the excellent and quality care provided to the aged at this first-class facility.

Year of the Outback, Recognition of Women

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.49 p.m.): It is with much pleasure that I rise to speak this evening about Walking Together. Walking Together is a concept of the central west Queensland committee of the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame. It is about recognising the women of the outback in the Year of the Outback 2002.

A life-sized bronze statue will be sculpted by Mrs Rhyl Hinwood of Brisbane. The committee is looking for funding in the vicinity of \$60,000 to make this life-sized memorial to the women of the outback a reality in the Year of the Outback 2002. Mrs Rosemary Champion, chair of the committee, has worked long and hard and has made numerous representations to ministers seeking support for the memorial to become a reality.

I lend my support to the idea this evening. I believe everybody should support this idea in recognition of the wonderful work done by Aboriginal women, European women and women from other ethnic backgrounds over a period of 150 years since the outback became an integral part of the Australian environment and culture. I believe that this statue will complement the recent unveiling by the Hon. the Premier, Peter Beattie, of the working women's display at the Australian Workers Heritage Centre in Barcaldine. This display symbolises the wonderful work that has been done by working women right across Australia since settlement of this magnificent country in 1788.

I have already written this afternoon to the Hon. Henry Palaszczuk, Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities; the Hon. Merri Rose, Minister for Tourism; and the Hon. Judy Spence, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, seeking the full or part-funding support of their departments for this project.

I believe this memorial would be a wonderful compliment to the outback women of the past for the significant contribution they made and for the hardships they endured in raising their families and giving their love, commitment and dedication to the communities of the outback over such a long period of time. When all is said and done, it is the women who kept the families and communities together. They still do that. I trust that the government can support this magnificent concept.

Helitech Pty Ltd

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (5.52 p.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the work of Helitech Pty Ltd, which is based at Eagle Farm in the electorate of Clayfield. Helitech is an Australian owned and controlled private company involved in a number of Australian and overseas aerospace related business enterprises. It specialises in the sale and support of military and civil rotary wing aircraft in the Australasian region.

With a history spanning over 40 years and employing over 200 staff in south-east Queensland, Helitech has developed extensive capabilities in the marketing of new and used aircraft, aircraft maintenance and component overhaul, the design and conduct of traditional metal and advanced composite repairs for military and civil fixed and rotary wing aircraft, aircrew and technical training, the distribution of spare parts, systems engineering and program management.

As a major supplier to a wide range of commercial customers and the defence forces of Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, Helitech is a financially sound business. It makes an invaluable contribution to the growth and expansion of jobs in the aviation industry in south-east Queensland. The company invests heavily in training a specialised work force and is one of only three internationally accredited Bell helicopter Textron training facilities.

Over the years Helitech's commitment to training has benefited the aviation industry, with many of the senior licensed engineers and chief engineers in the region having served time as apprentices or adult tradesmen at the Helitech Service Centre. Helitech boasts one of the highest ratios of apprentices to licensed and qualified engineers in the aviation industry, with approximately one apprentice for every six qualified engineers.

Helitech also has a strong relationship with the Australian Defence Force. It provides civilian flying instructors, maintenance test pilots, loadmaster instructors, ground school instructors and over 90 maintenance and logistic support personnel to support the Army Aviation Training Centre at Oakey on the Darling Downs. With the experience gained with the Australian Army, the company is well equipped to provide helicopter flying training and maintenance training for military forces in South-East Asia, a market that is being actively pursued by the company at present.

Helitech's future in the aviation industry is solid. It provides extensive maintenance for the Army's fleet of Kiowa light observation helicopters and is a major overhaul facility for the fleet of Blackhawk and Seahawk rotor blades. It recently won a major contract with the Royal Australian Air Force to provide composite repairs to engine shrouds on the fleet of F111 aircraft. It also supports Virgin Blue's Boeing 737s with a range of composite repair services. Earlier this year the company was approved to repair the tail rotors of US navy helicopters based in the region.

Helitech is a fine example of a local Queensland based company with a proud history of supporting development of the aviation industry in the region. Its management is committed to a continuous improvement in the service it offers and it deserves our support. It is a wonderful example of a company with a Smart State vision.

Community Groups

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (5.55 p.m.): At lunchtime today members would have noticed two groups mingling in the colonnade area of the parliamentary complex. One of them was the Association of Independent Retirees. I saw among the group Bill Turner, one of my constituents and a member of the AIR, which was meeting to discuss issues relevant to its membership. The second group was the National Servicemens Association of north Brisbane. This group visit was organised by Alan Clayton, a former attendant at the parliamentary complex. I had the privilege of hosting the National Servicemens Association's visit here. I thank the attendant Margaret, who took them around.

My point in bringing these visits to the attention of the House is that they demonstrate the variety of groups established within the community to address the needs of certain people. Rarely do these groups make the front page of even the local paper, and they would not make the *Courier-Mail* unless there was some disaster within their ranks. Yet by their work these groups achieve significant benefits for their members. Tonight I acknowledge groups such as the National Servicemens Association and the AIR for the work they do for their members. I offer them my continued support in the work they do.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.57 p.m.