

TUESDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2002

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

PRIVILEGE Insurance Reform

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.30 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. Yesterday the Attorney-General and I released a comprehensive package in relation to insurance reform to protect Queenslanders. Unfortunately, there have been a number of misreportings of the package we released. Under the reforms, a parent or guardian would be required to notify a doctor of a claim within six years of the date that the parent or guardian knew or should have known that the child sustained any injury due to a doctor's negligence. Additionally, if a parent or guardian seeks legal advice about the possibility of claiming damages for medical negligence, the period of notification should be reduced to one year from the time they sought legal advice.

This is a very important area of reform. The Attorney will be tabling the full bill in the House this week. I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* the full statement the Attorney and I released yesterday so that there is no misunderstanding.

Leave granted.

Common sense insurance proposals to give more certainty to Queensland

The Queensland Government is proposing to cap general damages at \$250,000, under a common sense package that would give more certainty to doctors, local councils, sporting clubs and others.

The proposals, to be tabled in Parliament this week and circulated for consultation, include changes to the test that determines what is negligent.

Premier Peter Beattie said today: "New tort law reforms will aim to settle concerns of people like doctors that they could be easily sued while innocently delivering vital services.

"Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Rod Welford will table a consultation draft of the legislation in Parliament this week.

"I expect the Attorney-General will introduce legislation to the Parliament in February 2003, after thorough consultation.

"The medical profession is warning it will stop performing some procedures on children in the private health sector unless doctors have more security against future lawsuits.

"There is a risk that babies would only be delivered in the southeast corner.

"We want to ensure regional Queensland women can go on giving birth nearer to home.

"We also want to make sure Queenslanders have the continuing service of doctors who perform complex procedures on babies and children.

"Under the reforms, a parent or guardian would be required to notify a doctor of a claim within six years of the day the parent or guardian knew—or should have known—that the child sustained an injury due to the doctor's negligence.

"Additionally, if a parent or guardian sought legal advice about the possibility of claiming damages for medical negligence, the period of notification would be reduced to one year from the time they sought legal advice.

Mr Beattie stressed the six year limit would only apply to medical negligence.

"Other proposed measures would mean professionals, local councils and sporting clubs could go about their business without living in almost constant fear of receiving a writ.

"Professionals such as doctors would not be negligent if they provided treatment in line with an opinion widely held by a significant number of their peers.

"Councils would not be liable for failing to warn about obvious risks—like the risks of surfing beyond a shark net, or of diving into a wading pool.

"And organisations would not be liable for injuries from obvious risks—like a player being hit in the eye during a cricket match," Mr Beattie said.

Mr Welford said these proposals, along with the proposed \$250,000 cap on general damages, would further reduce upward pressure on insurance premiums.

"We want to destroy any last vestige of an excuse by the insurance industry to charge inflated premiums to local councils and sporting organisations," Mr Welford said.

"Our reforms would change the way in which our society interprets negligence and put a sense of personal responsibility back into the equation.

"There would be a balance between the rights of injured people and the community need for affordable insurance cover.

"The reforms would build on our first package, which included procedural changes to cut legal costs, an end to jury trials in personal injury cases and a ban on no-win no fee lawyer advertising," Mr Welford said.

The proposed reforms are in line with recommendations from Justice Ipp, who chaired the National Expert Panel on changes to the law of negligence.

A summary of the proposals is as follows:

- A \$250,000 cap on general damages;
- No liability for failure to warn of obvious risks;
- No liability for injuries arising from obvious risks in the case of recreational activities;
- No liability in cases where the injured person was engaged in criminal activity which contributed to the risk of injury. This will mean that where a court determines, on the balance of probabilities, that a person was engaged in a criminal act, the person will not be entitled to claim damages;
- Restricted claims where a person's intoxication contributed to their personal injury. This will involve the mandatory reduction of damages to a claimant who is intoxicated, and removal of any special duty owed to people simply because they are intoxicated; and
- A change in the standard of care for professional groups, including doctors, to protect against liability for acts performed in accordance with a respected body of professional opinion.

The laws of negligence would be further clarified by legislation which would:

- Codify the test for determining negligence, and in particular provide that a person is only required to act to prevent a risk that is "not insignificant";
- Codify legal principles in determining whether a defendant actually caused the plaintiff's injury;
- Codify the test for determining contributory negligence and allow damages to be reduced by 100%;
- Limit the scope of liability of public authorities by allowing the courts to take into account their financial resources and other factors;
- Introduce proportionate liability for non-personal injury cases so where there are multiple wrongdoers each bears a share of liability in proportion to their share of responsibility for the harm; and
- Disallow pre-judgement interest on damages for non-economic loss.

Contact: Greg Milne (Attorney-General's office) 3239 6400

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2 December, 2002

Mr BEATTIE: These reforms will protect children, protect the community and ensure that babies can be born outside of Brisbane. If we do not introduce these reforms there will not be a child born outside of Brisbane.

PRIVILEGE

Answer to Question; Drugs

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (9.32 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. I wish to clarify my comments in the House last week in relation to a question without notice from the member for Callide on the issue of drugs. As I had leave from parliament last Thursday and on Friday I had to open a TAFE college in Cloncurry, this is the first opportunity I have had to rise on this point.

In my answer to the member for Callide's question I referred to the fact that under this government we do not have specific drug squads in every area of Queensland. This is something that the National Party announced as a policy proposal in 2001 and something which the state government has rejected. In Queensland we have a centralised State Drug Investigation Group and two regional units in the northern and far northern police regions. They investigate organised drug related offences that cross regional, interstate and international boundaries. There is no all-encompassing budget for the State Drug Investigative Group. It is an allocated expenditure and is resourced in accordance with operational requirements as an integral part of the State Crime Operations Command, which covers a series of investigations. It is important to remember that they are just one part of police drug enforcement in this state, with all our police capable of detecting drug related offences. We do not have specific regional drug squads the likes of which the National Party has proposed, and this is what my comments intended to reflect.

In the same answer I also referred to the fact that there have been decreases in the categories of crimes against the person and crimes against property. In relation to crimes against the person, in 2001-02 rape and attempted rape was down three per cent; other assaults were down one per cent; armed robbery was down 18 per cent; unarmed robbery was down eight per cent; extortion was down 15 per cent; and kidnapping and abduction were down three per cent. In relation to crimes against property, in the last financial year we saw the greatest fall in unlawful

entry offences in any year since 1994-95, with about 7,000 fewer premises broken into. We also experienced about 3,000 fewer motor vehicle theft offences.

I must confess that I had been labouring under the misapprehension that the member for Callide actually cared about the issue of crime in this state. Indeed, he must have been gravely disappointed when this year's crime statistics were tabled and revealed decreases in most of the major crime categories. The member for Callide needs to stop the theatrics on this issue. The Police Service deserves the credit for this year's performance. He should stop criticising it for what are on the whole very positive results.

PRIVILEGE

Transport Inspectors

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.34 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. In a question to the Premier last Friday the Leader of the Opposition claimed that senior Transport inspectors had to be flown to Toowoomba because of staffing shortages. He also claimed that waiting times for inspections had blown out as a result. Nothing could be further from the truth. The facts are that in the week of 18 to 25 October Queensland Transport staff based in Toowoomba were required to participate in a departmental conference. During the absence of the staff, two relief staff were brought in to ensure that local operators were not negatively impacted while the staff were away. The waiting list for vehicle inspections in Toowoomba this year is no different from the same time last year.

ASSENT TO BILLS

2 December 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 the dates shown:

	Date of Assent
"A Bill for an Act to amend the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996"	28 November 2002
"A Bill for an Act to amend the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, Gaming Machine Act 1991, Keno Act 1996, Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994, Public Officers Superannuation Benefits Recovery Act 1988 and Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990"	28 November 2002
"A Bill for an Act to amend Acts administered by the Treasurer"	28 November 2002
"A Bill for an Act to provide for the confiscation of the proceeds of crime, and for other purposes".	29 November 2002

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

Governor

PETITIONS

Collingwood Park State School

Mrs Miller from 172 petitioners requesting the House to undertake an investigation to alleviate the dangerous traffic situation at Collingwood Park State School where there are no adequate or safe areas to drop off or wait for the children.

The following honourable member has sponsored an e-petition that is now closed and presented—

Food Irradiation

Mr Wellington from 429 petitioners requesting the House to: prohibit the establishment of nuclear irradiation facilities at any location in Queensland; oppose the use of X-ray or Electron Beam facilities for the irradiation of foodstuffs at any location in Queensland; ban the import, export and sale of irradiated food in Queensland; call on the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council and Food Standards Australia New Zealand to amend Standards A-17 and 1.5.3 in the Food Standards Code to ban food irradiation in Australia and New Zealand.

PAPERS

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Acting Clerk—

Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Fatigue Management Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 315

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2002, No. 316

MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following ministerial paper was tabled—

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

Prince Charles Hospital Foundation – Annual Report 2001-02

Late tabling statement relating to the Prince Charles Hospital Foundation Annual Report 2001-02

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cairns University

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.37 a.m.): It is again a great day to detail yet another exciting Smart State announcement. I can confirm today that progress is under way to establish a university in Cairns. The submission for accreditation was lodged with the Office of Higher Education in Brisbane on 31 October 2002. It is called the Cairns University Project and has been put together by a group of interested Cairns businessmen and the Swinburne University. The university will be a private stand-alone university. It has been championed by the member for Cairns. I know that she will be delighted, along with other government members in that region.

The cornerstone investor in this project is Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, which prepared the submission and which is underwriting the project in terms of academic content and intellectual property. It will provide a desirably public mentoring role for the new university over its formative years. It will play a major role in ensuring high standards in all aspects of operation. It will lend early essential credibility to the project. Appropriate land for this project has been secured. Land in Sheridan Street near the Convention Centre has been secured for the project. It is central and will further enhance the city-government precinct. Inner city land has proven in other regional centres, like Rockhampton and its old courts complex, attractive to students. The land is of such a size as to facilitate high-quality infrastructure and will let the university play a major role in Cairns life. By its 10th year, the expected benefits for the region are estimated to be in the order of \$90 million to \$100 million. It will offer direct employment as well as associated jobs in retail, accommodation, tourism and transport.

It is expected that the university's specialised research centres will focus on local issues both environmental and social. I am also delighted to detail that Education Minister, Anna Bligh, has established an assessment committee for the submission. The committee includes the Chair, Emeritus Professor Gus Guthrie, former vice chancellor of the University of Technology, Sydney; Professor Ingrid Moses, the vice chancellor of the University of New England; Professor Geoff Wilson, former vice chancellor of Deakin and Central Queensland University; and Mr Nick Stump, the former chief executive of Mount Isa Mines.

Today's announcement that progress is under way is especially smart in that that university offers another substantial diversification to the far-north Queensland economy, especially following on from the October launch of Australian Airlines. That link will be vital and it will offer a safe location just hours in flying time to major education markets in Asia and the Pacific. These are coming together to support one another—tourism and education. The Smart State! It works very well. It is anticipated that there will be specialised research centres focused on local issues, as I said, both environmental and social.

The university will offer broad study opportunities for local people. The significant community benefits include Cairns becoming a true university city. What a great place to study! Right in the tropics; a great environment; a great tourism opportunity; a wonderful lifestyle; and wonderful knowledge to be imparted! No longer will Cairns be simply known as the gateway to the reef. This university will enhance its status as a gateway to greater knowledge as well. A gateway to the reef; a gateway to greater knowledge! Link that in a smart way to the reef, the rain forest, tourism and far-north established enterprises and it enhances both Cairns and the far north as truly the

place to be in the 21st century. It joins other great communities in Queensland like Rockhampton in advancing the Smart State and providing the jobs for tomorrow.

This is great news for Cairns, this is great news for far-north Queensland and this is great news for Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education and Training Exports

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.42 a.m.): While we are talking about education, I would like to make another ministerial statement pointing out that more and more young people from around the world want a Smart State education—and who can blame them! Last year the government established the Queensland Education and Training Export Board to ensure that we make full capital from this healthy interest in our colleges, schools and universities. The board has a goal of doubling the value of Queensland education exports in five years. After one year in business, it appears to be right on target.

Despite the troubled international environment, education exports have grown by an estimated \$104 million in the past year. A year ago the sector was worth an estimated \$500 million—now it is worth more than \$600 million. The Smart State is working, and there is the proof. In the past year, an estimated 6,500 additional full-time fee-paying students have come from overseas to study in our universities. That figure does not include additional students in schools and colleges.

Before the 2002 academic year ended, an estimated 27,500 international students were studying at Queensland's nine universities. They accounted for almost 18 per cent of our university student population. We are also surging ahead in the English language intensive courses for the overseas students sector. In Queensland, the sector—known as ELICOS—has grown by 17 per cent in the past five years. We now have a 25 per cent share of the national market. For the first time this year, Queensland overtook Victoria, and we are now second from the top of the ELICOS league. I think that is a fantastic story. Queensland's education exports employ more than 5,000 people, and the growth prospects are enormous. IDP Education Australia, which is owned by Australia's 39 universities, recently forecast a ninefold increase in the numbers of international students seeking education and training in Australia by 2025.

I have great confidence in the Education and Training Export Board's ability to ensure Queensland gets a healthy share of this growth. The board's senior and influential membership makes it unique in Australia. It is chaired by former state government minister Paul Braddy. He came to brief me last week. The export education thrust is located in my department. It includes five deputy vice chancellors or equivalent, senior representatives from the private sector and three government directors-general. The board is supported by Queensland Education and Training International, which is in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and is headed by Scott Sheppard. The board has been working smart in the regions—including Ipswich, the Gold and Sunshine coasts, Cairns, Townsville and Toowoomba, and also with the alliance of four specialised Queensland agricultural colleges. There has also been a series of strategic visits to important overseas markets.

Paul Braddy has met with key government and industry contacts in China—the fastest growing market for international students coming to Queensland. He has helped providers market their products in China and welcomed senior contacts visiting Queensland. I informed the House last week of recent work to promote Queensland education and training in Japan. Similar efforts have been made in vital markets in South-East Asia and Europe.

While the industry yields great economic and employment benefits, it also makes great social contributions to Queensland. International students enrich local and academic communities, and young Queenslanders establish friendships with international leaders and decision makers of tomorrow. International education and training is an investment in our future and the future of our children.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Rotary International World Convention

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 a.m.): While we are talking about major events, I am delighted to advise the House that preparations for the Rotary convention are going well. Next year Brisbane will host Rotary International World

Convention. Attracting this convention is a coup for Queensland. Over four days in June next year we will have the opportunity to showcase Brisbane and Queensland. Rotary expects up to 25,000 delegates from 28,000 clubs around the world. The Queensland Events Corporation has estimated the economic impact of the convention at \$60 million.

I would encourage delegates to spend time not only in Brisbane but to discover what Queensland's diverse regions have to offer visitors. Later today, at lunchtime, I will be addressing a Rotary International function which will be attended by members of the Brisbane North Rotary Club, the Brisbane Rotary Club, the Mid-City and the Brisbane High Rise Rotary Clubs. I will be telling them we are right behind this convention and will do everything in our power to make sure the Rotary International World Convention delegates enjoy a warm Queensland welcome.

As members of this House who are associated with Rotary would know, the organisation was founded in Chicago in 1905 by Paul Harris, a lawyer. He founded Rotary to encourage high ethical standards and promote a world fellowship of business and professional workers. His ideals are as relevant to the Smart State today as they were almost a century ago.

Delegates to the Brisbane convention will enjoy Rotary fellowship and a host program organised by the Rotary Club of Brisbane. The Rotary convention combined with the Rugby World Cup and the Air New Zealand World Rugby Golden Oldies will make next year the biggest year ever in terms of events-linked international visitation to Queensland. It will be the biggest year in terms of associated economic spin-offs and the busiest events program in the Queensland Events Corporation's 13-year history. I would encourage as many Rotarians as possible to come to Brisbane and say g'day in 2003.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public Accounts Committee Report

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.48 a.m.): I want to deal briefly with the Public Accounts Committee report tabled in the House last week. I draw to the attention of the House that in his foreword the chairman, Ken Hayward, said—

The circumstances that led to those inquiries did not relate to the situation in Queensland. Moreover, the Auditor-General of Queensland has not reported any cases where he has been denied access to information required to conduct his audit.

There was full cooperation from the government.

The Public Accounts Committee tabled its report on commercial-in-confidence arrangements on 29 November. The first recommendation of the committee is that I direct all public sector entities through the appropriate minister to develop and adopt guidelines in relation to commercial-in-confidence consistent with a number of detailed principles.

The committee had little regard for the fact that a comprehensive whole of government response to commercial-in-confidence matters is already being developed. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet has been working with other departments to explore the possibility of developing guidelines to assist agencies entering into commercial agreements in classifying what is legitimately commercial-in-confidence information. We support getting consistency across the Public Service and appropriate disclosure. If it is not in the public interest to withhold financial information it should be disclosed.

However, a fundamental principle is that any information that would undermine a company's competitive position or undermine public sector agencies' ability to negotiate the best deal for Queensland taxpayers will not be publicly released. The Victorian Auditor-General summed up the risks of greater disclosure well with respect to investment incentives when he said 'the publication of the level of assistance provided to a recipient of investment assistance could cause harm to a company's competitive position and undermine the Department's future bargaining position in relation to other jurisdictions, thus damaging the capacity of the Government to compete for investment in the future'.

There is a failure, in our view, of the committee to appreciate that disclosing incentives will ratchet up the level of future assistance and undermine the ability of Queensland to attract national and international investment and jobs. The Public Accounts Committee appears to want to create a system of disclosure—

Dr WATSON: I rise to a point of order. The Premier might like to note that the Public Accounts Committee made it quite clear that that was taken out of context. The Auditor-General did not say that.

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

Dr WATSON: It was simply untrue.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is debating the issue. There is no point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: It seems that the committee member has as much respect for the standing orders as he does for what I am saying and indeed what the Victorian Auditor-General—

Dr Watson interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: I ask for a bit of respect for parliament. There is a failure of the committee to appreciate that disclosing incentives will ratchet up the level of future assistance and undermine the ability of Queensland to attract national and international investment and jobs. The Public Accounts Committee appears to want to create a system of disclosure that defies normal commercial practice and practicability with little additional benefit for the community. It should be noted that the current system of disclosure practised by the Department of State Development—a focus of the committee's inquiry—is greater than the level of disclosure in other major states of Australia. We lead Australia in this disclosure.

Indeed, DSD was already implementing a higher level of disclosure required by the government. Greater details of the level and form of incentives together with performance milestones for job creation are now published in the department's annual report. To expect agencies to continually review the level of disclosure adopted for each contract is one such example of the impracticality of the recommendations. For agencies that let a large number of contracts the requirement would be extremely onerous without any appreciative benefit in public accountability. Further, government owned corporations operate in a commercial environment and requirements for disclosure could have an adverse impact on their commercial interests and ability to operate commercially.

The second recommendation by the committee is that the Premier and Minister for Trade develop a mechanism for exempting the final contract from the cabinet exemption in section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act and put in its place a commercial-in-confidence regime consistent with the principles outlined in recommendation 1. Material that goes to cabinet is exempt from freedom of information requirements. It has always been, and that is the spirit of FOI. This is a fundamental principle that ensures full and frank policy development and disclosure. To begin tinkering with this will weaken the cabinet process and ultimately cabinet's ability to make informed decisions and closely scrutinise proposals. Clearly, the approach recommended by the committee would not be in the public interest and will not be implemented.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

QSuper Fund

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.51 a.m.): I refer to the debate held during the passage of the Treasury Legislation Amendment Act (No. 2) 2002 on Tuesday, 26 November 2002. In my response to the Leader of the Opposition I advised the House that despite the amendment under section 26 to the act the QSuper fund would continue to be required to comply with the provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977 and would still be audited by the Auditor-General. This information was provided to me by the Government Superannuation Office. However, the Government Superannuation Office has since advised me that if section 26 of the act were proclaimed then the QSuper fund would not come under the scope of the Financial Administration and Audit Act although the Auditor-General could continue to audit it by arrangement.

It is the Commonwealth government's superannuation industry supervision legislation which imposes certain requirements on superannuation funds in relation to the audit and timing of financial statements. The Queensland Auditor-General is specifically an approved auditor under that legislation. The intent of the amendment was to remove a specific linkage with the Financial Administration and Audit Act concerning the timing of the financial statements. This amendment would then allow QSuper's reporting obligations to be aligned with those that the Commonwealth government applies to all other superannuation schemes. The change would not affect the state accounts as QSuper is not part of the whole-of-government accounts.

The Queensland Audit Office was involved in the consultation process on the policy and the specific requirement for the Auditor-General to audit the QSuper fund was not to be changed. The state would always require this protection given the state liabilities and the importance of the scheme. Consequently, my original advice to the House reflects a drafting error rather than any policy change. I therefore propose to delay the proclamation of section 26 of the Treasury Legislation Amendment Act (No. 2) 2002 to allow the policy officers and drafters to consider this technical error and frame the correct amendment to ensure that the Auditor-General continues to be required to audit the scheme.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

White Paper Reforms; Answers to Questions on Notice

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.53 a.m.): Our government's Smart State vision will become a reality in schools and TAFEs through our landmark white paper reforms. These reforms will provide more options and flexibility for young people to complete school or achieve qualifications which prepare them for further study or the world of work. The future of every young Queenslander depends on their ability to achieve high-level qualifications and to continue learning throughout their lives. Some schools are already leading the way in building innovative approaches to senior schooling that improve post-school outcomes for young people. Last week I visited two schools in central and northern Queensland which are making a real difference to the lives of their students. The results of these programs speak for themselves.

The aim of the Rockhampton State High School's No Dole Program, which made the front page of the *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* last week, is that no student leaving at the end of year 12 will join the unemployment line. The school has developed strong links with local industry, provides mentoring for students and then tracks them when they leave year 12 to ensure they get into work, further education or training. Of the 139 students who left year 12 in 2001, 136 have already moved into work or further training. It is a great outcome and can only be an example to other schools. It is also an outstanding local success story. In Townsville, St Margaret Mary's College set up a transition program to assist year 10 students who were at risk of leaving school early. These students withdrew from some or all mainstream classes for intensive work on literacy, numeracy, workplace communication, general life and employment skills, and pre-vocational training. They also took part in structured workplace learning and enrolled in TAFE to complete the work education started at school. The program ran in 2001 with 17 students. Of these, 14 completed the course and are still at school and one returned to mainstream classes. These are just two examples of the type of innovative local response the government wants to foster in all schools through the white paper reforms.

Since the announcement of the education and training reforms last week, there have been more than 25,000 hits on the white paper web site. More than 30,000 copies of the white paper have been mailed out to key groups such as schools, community organisations, training providers and employers. I am pleased to see that the Commonwealth Education Minister, Dr Brendan Nelson, supports the direction we are taking. In an interview on Adelaide radio last week, Dr Nelson admitted that all governments, including the Commonwealth—

... need to be supporting school environments that offer options to kids.

I am glad Dr Nelson shares our government's views on equipping young people for a lifetime of learning and earning, because they will only be successful if we have collaboration with the Commonwealth government. That is why our government is implementing the most significant reforms the Smart State has seen in decades, and to date they have been received very well.

While I am on my feet, I want to inform the House that it has been drawn to my attention this morning that answers to six questions on notice are overdue. I take this opportunity to apologise to the House and advise that I have taken steps to remedy this forthwith.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Breaking the Unemployment Cycle

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts) (9.56 a.m.): All too many Queenslanders will be haunted by the spectre of unemployment this Christmas, as they have been in the months and years until now. It is simply not good enough and we must do better. Our most recent initiative in the form of the Education and Training Reforms for the Future provides opportunities to improve pathways from school and

training to work for young people. Just as the Education Minister has been visiting regional Queensland over the past week, I too have visited Gladstone, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and Hervey Bay to ensure that this worthy reform is being addressed at the local level. The government's flagship program for assisting Queenslanders of all ages into work, the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative, continues to generate jobs and assist job seekers across the state. As we approach the end of the year, the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative is fast approaching the 50,000-jobs mark. At the latest count, 48,793 jobs had been created since the initiative began in October 1998. This is a significant milestone. It is almost double our original four-year goal.

When the Beattie government first came to office in 1998, we thought we could create 24,500 jobs over four years. In 1998 we decided many of the people we would help would be long-term unemployed. That remains the case today—that is, people who have been out of work for more than 12 months and not being helped by existing systems, people who had fallen through the cracks. Our aim is to help them back onto their feet to give them new skills and enthusiasm to find the jobs they want and to reignite their hopes and aspirations. We also decided to generate new entry-level jobs—apprenticeships and traineeships—to give young people a start to their working careers. Breaking the Unemployment Cycle is now a \$470 million, six-year initiative to help create more than 56,000 jobs across Queensland. In two-thirds of its allocated time, the initiative has achieved more than 90 per cent of its target. Breaking the Unemployment Cycle programs touch almost every area of the community—from private to public sector, youths to mature aged, job seekers to community organisations. We make no apology for declaring that these programs are designed to assist working people and their families and are borne out of long-held Labor Party values.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Australian Health Ministers Conference

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy) (9.59 a.m.): Last Friday Brisbane hosted the Australian Health Ministers Conference. That conference was a great disappointment to the state and territory health ministers, given the lack of commitment by the federal coalition at a time when health services right around Australia face a number of pressing challenges.

This Howard-led government is the highest taxing government in Australia's history, yet it continues to squeeze the lifeblood out of public services such as disability services, housing and health. The federal Health Minister, Kay Patterson, on Friday was not even able to give the states a guarantee that we will receive a similar amount of funding under the health care arrangements currently being negotiated.

The federal government's refusal to pay the health cost index agreed through the current AHCA has left Queensland out of pocket by around \$220 million and is now costing Queensland over \$100 million a year. But what we are seeing is a total lack of concern about the consequences of the federal government's winding back of Medicare and the national shortage of GPs, which is shifting a significant burden on to the state system.

The federal government is pouring nearly \$3 billion a year into private health funds and granting them nine per cent premium increases at the same time as its policies are responsible for shifting more of the cost of health care onto the states, and it refuses to acknowledge the real health cost increases. The claims by the Commonwealth that its private insurance scheme is reducing pressure on the public hospital system is a nonsense. Members in this chamber and the Queensland public know that pressures on emergency departments and pressures on elective surgery have not reduced. Recent figures have shown that public hospital activity is increasing again by 1.42 per cent in 2002.

While the Commonwealth includes the private health insurance subsidy when it talks of increases to health spending, it refuses to include these billions of dollars when discussing how to improve health services and get better value for the health dollar. Queensland's share of this largesse is at least \$500 million per year, and we are not getting anywhere near this value of health services for Queenslanders.

While those taxpayer subsidised private health funds are wasted on non-essential items such as classical CDs and joggers, more and more Queenslanders who cannot find a GP, let alone one who will bulk-bill, are turning up at hospital emergency departments for treatment of ailments

that really could be treated by a GP. Of course, while the federal coalition refuses to meet its obligations, the Queensland government is left to pick up the bill.

I urge all members here today, especially those opposite, to speak out in support of Medicare and to urge the federal government to meet its obligations to Queenslanders in relation to health services.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Privacy Act; Small Business

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for State Development) (10.02 a.m.): I am extremely concerned about small businesses' lack of awareness about their obligations under the federal government's Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000. This legislation came into effect on 21 December 2001 and regulates the way an organisation can collect, use, keep, secure and disclose personal information. The legislation also gives individuals the right to know what information an organisation holds about them, and the right to correct that information if it is wrong, except in very few exceptional circumstances. The legislation automatically applies to any organisation, including not-for-profit organisations. The legislation also applies to all health service providers regardless of turnover.

Small businesses have until 21 December 2002 to determine whether they are exempt from the provisions of the act. If not, they must comply by this date. Organisations with an annual turnover of \$3 million or less are exempt. However, in addition to this threshold, and in order to qualify for exemption, a business cannot be related to a business with an annual turnover of greater than \$3 million; must not provide a health service and hold health records; must not disclose personal information about an individual for a benefit, service or advantage; must not provide a benefit, service or advantage to collect personal information; and cannot be a contracted service provider for a Commonwealth contract, even if the entity is not a party to the contract.

The lack of awareness of this legislation by the small business sector was of particular concern to my Queensland Small Business Advisory Council. As a result, my Department of State Development has actively worked with the office of the federal Privacy Commissioner in the development of the recently released Privacy Act publications specifically targeted to small business. These publications are essential to fill a much-needed awareness gap. However, with less than a month to go for small business to determine compliance and, if required, develop workplace policies and procedures to address the requirements of the act, time is now of the essence. Unfortunately, it is coinciding with the busiest time of year for most small businesses.

My department will undertake to assist in the dissemination of the information to the Queensland small business community. Supplies of each of the recently released publications have been urgently requested from the federal Office of Small Business and will be made available to small business from each of my 19 state development centres. A web site link to the relevant information is also available from my department's web site.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drugs

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (10.05 a.m.): In recent times the opposition has tried to perpetuate a myth that there has been a lack of enforcement by the Queensland Police Service in relation to the issue of drugs. They say that we should have drug squads in every region and that we have only one central State Drug Investigative Group to attack drug trafficking throughout the state. The truth is: if the member for Callide knew anything about policing he would know that all Queensland police are capable of responding to drug related crime. Indeed, the State Drug Investigative Group is just one part of our police drug enforcement strategy.

We need police who are flexible, who can respond to all sorts of crime. That is why we are increasing police numbers by more than any government before us. We have delivered about 550 extra officers this term alone, as compared with 437 delivered during the two and a half years of the former coalition government. We have invested heavily in 16 new tactical crime squads which will be based throughout regional Queensland and capable of responding to any upsurge in serious crime, whether it be drug related crime, property crime or offences against the person.

We have also funded a 20-strong flying squad which can be deployed at a moment's notice to any part of Queensland to assist local police. We have funded more sniffer dogs, including the state's first powder narcotics sniffer dogs. Under the Beattie government we have more illicit market scans to gather intelligence on trends in particular areas and more drug detection machines to attack trafficking.

Our strategies are working. In figures recently provided to me, authorities revealed that they had seized a larger quantity of illegal amphetamines to date in 2002 than they had in the whole of 2001. I am advised that police seized 11.1 kilograms of amphetamines in 2001, with an estimated street value at that time of over \$1.3 million. To date in 2002 they have seized 13.1 kilograms of amphetamines with an estimated street value of nearly \$1.8 million.

Police also closed more illegal drug labs in 2001-02—143 in this period as compared with 98 in 2000-01. The number of seizures of key drugs in 2001-02 has remained stable as compared with the previous year. The 2000-01 Commonwealth Australian illicit drug report noted that Queensland was second only to New South Wales in its number of seizures for amphetamines, heroin and cocaine and had the most seizures for cannabis. Police are attacking drug use and members opposite should support their efforts.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bus Infrastructure

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (10.08 a.m.): The Beattie government is committed to increasing public transport use. Construction on stage 2 of the \$135 million Inner Northern Busway is well under way. The busway's stage 1 was completed in August 2001 during construction of the inner-city bypass. Construction on stage 2 began in September.

When completed it will run from Roma Street under the Normanby Fiveways, along the western boundary of the Victoria Park Golf Course, via Kelvin Grove's educational precinct, to the Royal Children's Hospital. Tunnelling under the Queensland Rail tracks near the corner of Countess and Roma streets is planned to start early in the new year. Work on a 290-metre long tunnel through the Victoria Park Golf Course will start this month. Construction on the QUT Kelvin Grove busway station is planned to start in the middle of next year. Once operational, the Inner Northern Busway will offer passengers a fast and reliable trip between the CBD and the Royal Children's Hospital.

Construction on the \$23 million Springwood bus station is also well advanced. The station is located in an area between the Pacific Motorway, Fitzgerald Avenue, Vanessa Boulevard and the Springwood Mall. This new public transport facility will deliver the world-class benefits of the South East Busway to Logan residents. As part of this project, changes will be made to the existing on and off ramps in the immediate vicinity of the bus station. New off ramps will be constructed to make access to the Springwood business district more accessible to all traffic. The decision to alter the Pacific Motorway access and exit routes was made after considerable consultation with businesses in the area. Shop owners in the area will benefit, as motorists and potential shoppers are provided with easy access to the many businesses that line the service road next to the motorway. Construction of the Springwood bus station started in April this year and is progressing well with the facility expected to be in operation by mid-2003.

Construction of an upgraded bus station at Capalaba is scheduled to start in February 2003. The government has been working with the Redland Shire Council to develop the design of the station. The Cultural Centre busway station structure will be removed from the Cultural Centre and reused as part of the Capalaba bus station works. The total cost of the project is approximately \$8.25 million, with Queensland Transport contributing \$3.2 million towards land acquisitions. The Department of Local Government and Planning is contributing approximately \$1.38 million towards streetscaping works, with the Redland Shire Council providing the remainder of the funds. The project is due for completion in August 2003.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Community Renewal Program

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10.12 a.m.): One of the greatest achievements of the Beattie government has been the Community Renewal Program, which currently operates in 14 communities across Queensland.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the members. The Community Renewal Program is coordinated by the Department of Housing and is delivered in partnership with other state government agencies, local councils and residents. By working at a grassroots level the state government is providing new services and facilities in local communities, making a real difference to people's lives.

This year, the state government has approved 107 community renewal projects worth almost \$10 million across the state stretching from Ipswich, Logan and Caboolture to Cairns, Thuringowa, Townsville and Palm Island in the north. Many different projects have been approved, including new police beats and community centres as well as upgrading local infrastructure. A key focus of the Community Renewal Program has been building the skills of local people through training projects, including first aid, new technologies and arts courses.

Mr Foley: Hear, hear! And very good arts courses, too.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I take that interjection. This year we have also upgraded facilities at local schools and introduced new public transport services like the Blue Dash Bus in Woodridge. I thank the honourable member for Woodridge and the honourable member for Springwood for their support in that regard.

Health workers, youth development workers and recreational officers have also been employed to boost support services in communities. Some of the major projects that have commenced this year include the employment of two local indigenous people to be trained as ambulance attendants on Palm Island. The attendants are supervised by paramedics based on the island and receive TAFE qualifications to assist with pre-hospital emergency care. I thank the honourable member for Townsville, Mike Reynolds, for his support for that project. The attendants have an opportunity to undertake further training to qualify as fully accredited paramedics.

In April, \$410,000 was approved to provide every year 8 student at Glenala State High School with a laptop computer. The Minister for Education and the local member, the Minister for Primary Industries, attended the official launch of this project. Around \$72,000 has been provided to construct a community police beat in Manoora. I thank the member for Cairns for her support for that project. The office is being built to accommodate two full-time police officers. The beat will allow residents to interact with the police, helping to deter crime in the community. A further \$144,000 has been approved this year to continue the Logan domestic violence community response called the Fax Back project. This innovative service has been running since 1999 through the Women Against Violence Support Service and the Logan City Youth and Family Service and helps local police link victims and perpetrators with specialised domestic violence services.

The Community Renewal Program also funds more low-cost but important projects such as \$7,000 for sequential standard house numbering installed in Vincent, which is helping to reduce the time it takes for emergency services to respond to incidents.

Since the Community Renewal Program began in 1998, almost \$48.5 million has been committed for 476 projects, many of which are now successfully completed. The state government will invest more than \$45 million in community renewal projects during the current parliamentary term.

I would like to congratulate all the local members on their hard work and continued commitment to the Community Renewal Program this year—without their hard work and continued commitment, this program just would not work—and the local residents who have been involved in developing projects and ensuring that they meet the needs of local people.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

International Day of People with a Disability

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) (10.15 a.m.): Today Queensland joins the rest of the world in recognising and celebrating International Day of People with a Disability.

It is indeed an important day. It has been 20 years since the United Nations declared International Day of People with a Disability to highlight the abilities of people with a disability and recognise the contribution they make to their communities world wide.

It is critical that we never lose sight of the basic principles of the international year of disabled persons. People with a disability have the same rights as all members of the community. In

Brisbane we will be reflecting and assessing the way forward at a special forum this afternoon. All members of this House have been invited to the forum along with members of the public and the disability community, which will see 10 guest speakers offering their views on what else needs to happen, besides funding, to ensure people with a disability are able to participate as active citizens in their communities. The forum will include presentations from personalities such as David Margan of *A Current Affair*, paralympian Gerard Gosens, Peter Mewett of the Unmet Needs Campaign, and other key players from the disability sector in Queensland.

The topic of this forum 'Can dollars alone do it?' is timely, given the recent work undertaken through Disability Services Queensland's funding reform project. This project will map out future directions for disability funding and services in this state for the next decade. Although this government has injected record levels of increased funding for Disability Services—more than \$110 million since coming to office—we acknowledge more needs to be done. We also know funding alone will not break down the social stigma, isolation and vulnerability experienced by people with a disability. We need individuals, community organisations and business to also take responsibility and work with us in partnership to involve people with a disability in community, business and everyday life.

As part of the celebrations for International Day of People with a Disability, I am announcing the distribution of \$100,000 for initiatives which welcome and support people with a disability in Queensland. These grants are just one small way this government is fostering the long-term inclusion of people with a disability. The funding will be provided to support 37 community based projects which promote the role of people with a disability as active and engaged citizens. The grants will be used for activities such as art exhibitions, expos, family fun days, sporting events and theatrical productions at locations such as Rockhampton, Redcliffe, the tablelands, Hervey Bay and the Gold Coast. It is as imperative now as at any time in our history that we recognise the abilities of Queenslanders with a disability and the valuable contributions they make to society.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.20 a.m.): I can report to the House today that the government's Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority will be cutting interest rates for its loans to assist primary producers under the Primary Industry Productivity Enhancement Scheme. The Board of QRAA officially approved the new rates yesterday. The new interest rates cuts are up to 0.79 per cent. This will be of significant benefit to our farm sector. The Primary Industries Productivity Enhancement Scheme offers concessional loans of up to \$500,000 for activities such as drought recovery, property build-up and purchase of first rural property. In particular, producers can access these loans to build farm infrastructure for the storage of grain and feed or to establish more efficient irrigation systems.

The new rates are 5.82 per cent for a one-year fixed loan, 5.98 per cent for a three-year fixed loan and 6.22 per cent for loans fixed for five years. The new rates will be effective on 1 January. These loans are offered at very good rates. But the loans are even more attractive when considering that no fees or charges apply and that QRAA pays the stamp duty on behalf of its borrowers. These new rates are in line with the interest rate policy for QRAA announced in December last year with the introduction of fixed term choices and bi-annual reviews of interest rates each year.

Last financial year, QRAA approved \$19.8 million in PIPES loans, including \$4.2 million for First Start Farm loans. QRAA has recently announced that it is prepared to consider interest only repayment options to its farm borrowers, particularly in this time of drought. I am advised that 200 of QRAA's borrowers are operating under an interest only repayment option.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Land and Resources Tribunal

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (10.22 a.m.) The Queensland Land and Resources Tribunal has been the subject of an extraordinary public attack this week by the Liberal Party Leader who said that it was an expensive waste of taxpayers' money and should be scrapped. The leader implied that the

tribunal consisted of a bunch of overpaid idlers who had done nothing because of the delay in native title processes. He also claimed taxpayers may face a costly payout to scrap the tribunal. Nothing could be further from the truth. For a start, the Land and Resources Tribunal has jurisdiction over many more areas than just processing mining exploration permits. It has jurisdiction across a wide range of areas: mining, petroleum, fossicking, native title, environmental issues, water, cultural heritage and compulsory acquisitions of land. Despite what the Liberal Leader thinks, the tribunal has not been idle despite the lengthy delays over native title caused by legal challenges in the Federal Court.

Between 1 January 2002 and 31 October 2002 alone the tribunal received 97 new matters, it completed 75 matters and it delivered 78 judgments. Queensland's native title laws were ruled valid by the Full Court of the Federal Court last week. This means that the tribunal will have a full case list for at least the next 12 months, finalising mining exploration permit applications under the alternative state provisions and clearing the backlog created by the previous coalition government. In the longer term, the government is looking at a range of options in relation to the tribunal and those options will be considered by cabinet next year.

One of the options that may be considered is to amalgamate the tribunal with the Land Court so that there is no prospect that taxpayers will face any costly payout to wind up the work of the tribunal and pay out its members. Despite the leader's extraordinary attack, the tribunal has not been an expensive waste of taxpayers' money and it continues to play an important role in a wide range of jurisdictional matters.

SITTING HOURS; ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.24 a.m.): I advise members that the House can continue to meet past 7.30 p.m. this day. The House can break for dinner at 7 p.m. and resume its sitting at 8.30 p.m. The order of business shall then be government business followed by a 30-minute adjournment debate.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Recycled Water, Lockyer Valley and Darling Downs

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.25 a.m.): If there is one lesson that the drought has taught us, it is that we cannot make it rain but that we can provide great schemes to provide for drought mitigation. The National Party has been pushing for some time the great idea to take recycled water from Brisbane and pump it to the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs. This scheme was started in 1995-96 by the National Party Waste Management Committee. The National Party led government provided for the first funds towards a pre-feasibility study and since then it has been funded by successive state governments, the federal government, irrigators and local government councils. This project has bipartisan support and in this time of drought it is so important to ensure that this project continues. A considerable amount of research has been undertaken into feasibility, costs, costs of power and the application of this water over the long term.

Today I give credit to the Minister for State Development because he has pushed this project along. This project has reached the stage where it is getting close to some determination being made. I also give credit to those councils in SEQROC which have been working cooperatively with City to Soil and Vision 2000 to make this project happen. This is one of the greatest projects that could ever happen in Queensland. This project has huge environmental benefits for the Brisbane River and for Moreton Bay. It has huge environmental benefits for the Condamine-Balonne and Murray-Darling system. Most importantly, this project has wonderful economic benefits for the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs and in its first full 12 months of operation will almost immediately provide farm-gate sales increases of the order of \$150 million or more.

In terms of drought mitigation, which is on everybody's minds at the moment, it has wonderful potential to provide for all those irrigators on the Darling Downs who cannot irrigate at the moment and cannot produce summer crops. It is important that the Darling Downs component is part of this because the large volumes of water that will be taken by the downs will make the overall costing of the recurrent costs feasible despite the high capital costs of getting the water over the range. The decision on this project, when it finally comes, about its capital feasibility and so forth must not be based just on irrigation. It is about the entire economy of south-east Queensland and Queensland. It is about its contribution to the environment and its overall value to our state.

Justice Bob Douglas

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): Yesterday I attended with many other members of this House the funeral of Mr Justice Robert Douglas. I was proud to be a friend of Bob's for over 20 years. Bob loved life, Rugby, racing, good food, good wine and, most importantly, good company. Of course, his greatest love was his family. He had a wide circle of friends which included people from across the whole community spectrum. They all were represented at one of the biggest funerals ever seen in Brisbane. From judges and government ministers down to, or as he might say with a laugh 'up to', horse trainers, jockeys and racecourse touts. Bob was a consistent contributor to the community through his pro bono work as a barrister and QC and his involvement in many charities including the Blind Association, the Smith Family, St Vincent de Paul Society and the Mt Olivet Hospital, amongst others.

As a judge, his decisions and sentences were characterised by commonsense and compassion. His achievements are too numerous for me to mention here but were well documented in the press in recent days. I had lunch with Bob, his wife, Jenny, and some friends about three months ago and although he was quite seriously ill then he was nevertheless in good humour, as he usually was. He suffered his terminal illness with great courage and fortitude. He fought the good fight to the end. I am sure I speak for everyone in this House in passing on my sympathy to his mother, his widow, Jenny, and his children Robert, Charlotte and William and his extended family. We all are diminished by the untimely passing of a good friend, Bob Douglas.

Health Services, Gladstone

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (10.29 a.m.): I wish to read two more letters to parliament from staff at the Gladstone Hospital, as follows—

Dear Mr Beattie,

I am a nurse at Gladstone Hospital. I am tired, sad and hell am I mad! I can no longer keep silent while your Minister takes apart our hospital in the name of balancing the budget. The people of Gladstone deserve better. The people of Queensland deserve better. While you spend money taking out full page ads in the newspaper spruiking about basic rights for all, the people of Gladstone are denied even the most basic of rights—the right to health care!

There are no GP's who bulk bill in Gladstone. Even if they did, most of them have a waiting list of a fortnight. They are over worked and under recognised. There is no outpatient service at the Gladstone Hospital. There simply is not enough Medical staff to provide this service. Our specialist Physician asks for services dictated by evidence based medicine and is labelled as demanding and excessive. We cannot keep Junior Doctors because they are overwhelmed by the lack of supervision and the burden of too much responsibility too soon. Nursing staff who have kept abreast of changes in medicine and Nursing practice at their own expense and for no financial recompense are treated as merely bodies who can work in any area at any time without orientation, back up, or often even a meal break. We hang on because we care about the patients. We try to put a buffer between those we care for and the harsh reality that Queensland Health does *not* care as long as they are too weak, too sick, too old or too busy trying to exist financially, to complain. We are often forced to work beyond our scope of practice by the cry that "there is no one else". But you need to know that enough is enough. We don't want advertisements: we want action!

And from another—

Dear Mr Beattie,

I am exhausted after working 10 days straight so I'll get right to the point. Are you aware that the Gladstone hospital has lost the following nursing staff in the last 10 weeks? Two nurse managers not replaced. One clinical nurse consultant not replaced. Three clinical nurses not replaced. Four registered nurses not replaced. There is a further clinical nurse resigning this week. Not only is she prepared to take a job that pays less but she is also dropping a career level.

Four nursing staff have dropped full time employment to go permanent part time. These shifts too have become vacant, thus leaving a big hole in the rosters.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for private members' statements has expired. Before calling question time, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Walkervale State School in the electorate of Bundaberg. Included amongst those students is a young man by the name of Geoffrey Nissen, who is a nephew of the Minister for State Development.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Public Service CEOs, Bonus Payments

Mr HORAN (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Premier to his latest backflip, this time to break his July promise to end the payment of secret bonuses to his directors-general, and I ask: how much is his director-general, Leo Keliher, being paid as a new secret 'market allowance'? How many other Public Service chiefs will get to pocket this secret payment when their contracts are renewed, and when will he demonstrate some accountability and tell taxpayers how much the Public Service chiefs are being paid so they can judge whether or not they are getting value for money?

Mr BEATTIE: As the honourable member knows, the Auditor-General has discussed with the government appropriate levels of accountability. They are reported every year in the reports. In terms of the market allowance involving the director-general of my department—how did this become known publicly? It was reported in the annual report to parliament that I tabled. It was so secret that I told the House.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, can I have some courtesy? As agreed by the Auditor-General, the band at which each director-general is paid is published. It is available. The Auditor-General has established a suitable practice of accountability. We comply with it. Let us talk about this market allowance. Two directors-general are paid this allowance—the director-general of my department and the director-general of Health. Who was the first director-general to get it? The director-general of Health! Who approved the contract? The Leader of the Opposition when he was Health Minister! I was in negotiations with him beforehand. We call it the Horan allowance.

Mr HORAN: I rise to a point of order. The Premier always peddles this. It was a legally binding arrangement which the previous Health Minister had arranged. The Premier rang me and wrote to me asking whether I would honour the agreement. We honoured it and we also quantified it so that we were able to provide a real basis for it. It was a legally binding contract entered into two weeks before and which we had to honour.

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

Mr BEATTIE: All I say is: I rest my case. I was involved in negotiations. I have no hesitation in saying that—none at all. But as I understand it, the contract was signed some months after the Leader of the Opposition became Minister for Health. Let me make it very clear: I have no criticism—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Is the Leader of the Opposition going to babble on or let me answer this question? Mr Speaker, I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition that I have no criticism of him over this—

Mr Mackenroth: For signing that.

Mr BEATTIE: For signing it. I think he got it right. Watching the Leader of the Opposition and watching him as minister, it is the only thing he has got right. But he did get it right, and that showed perception, good judgment and vision. It is the sort of thing that I admire the member for. He got it right on that occasion and I am delighted that he supported the government's position. All I can say about the Horan market allowance—that is what I call it—is that I have continued that Horan market allowance with my director-general, and I thank him for his support.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition?

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ashgrove!

Mr HORAN: I honoured an agreement at the request of the Premier because the fellow had been under a previous arrangement.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will have the question.

Mr Schwarten: Why didn't you scuttle it?

Mr HORAN: Because I am honourable.

Release of Mr A. J. Murdoch

Mr HORAN: I refer the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to his belated public admission that 'obviously after the decision was made I was informed' of the unescorted release of notorious serial rapist Arthur James Murdoch onto the streets of Rockhampton. I refer also to his statement after the subsequent public furore, 'I don't believe he should be released onto the streets,' and I ask: why did the minister risk public safety by allowing Murdoch's release in the first place, and will he now apologise to the courageous police officer whom he vilified and also to the public and admit that he got it wrong again?

Mr McGRADY: Can I make it perfectly clear that there are certain rules and legislative requirements of a minister. The facts are that, whether it was introduced by the previous government or this government, on matters such as this it is not the minister who makes these decisions.

Opposition members interjected.

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

Mr McGRADY: It is not the minister who makes these decisions. These decisions are taken either by the director-general or by the relevant parole board. Does the Leader of the Opposition understand that?

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked the question. We will hear the answer.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members are always complaining that they do not get an opportunity to hear answers. The minister will give the answer and the opposition will listen.

Mr McGRADY: Decisions of this nature are taken by either the director-general or the parole boards, as was the case when Russell Cooper and other coalition ministers were in government. The facts are that I was advised after the director-general had signed the approval for this person to go out. Regardless of the minister's view, under the legislation I cannot change the decision. The director-general made a decision to cancel. They are the facts, whether the opposition or anybody else likes them or not.

Mr Horan: Did you ring him up and tell him?

Mr McGRADY: No, I did not ring him up and tell him at all.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr McGRADY: The Leader of the Opposition asked whether I got it wrong. No, I did not get it wrong, because it was not my decision. When is he ever going to learn? However, this does give us the opportunity to debate whether or not the system we have in place is the correct system. I am more than happy to enter into a public debate as to who should be responsible for people of this nature and whether or not these people should be allowed out or kept in. This is an issue that I am sure could exercise a good debate in this parliament.

Wine Industry

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I refer the Premier to the fact that his efforts in promoting the Queensland wine industry are unmatched, and I ask: can he detail what others might be doing in this exciting area of production and can he detail to the House where Queensland wines are being exported?

Mr BEATTIE: This is a great story. Last week I supported Granite Belt producers Tony and Mary Cominos, of Kominos Wines, Severnlea, in farewelling their latest export into Asia—their Vin Doux 2002. They believe 2002 will be the best vintage in a decade. Who am I to argue? They are wonderful people. As members are aware, my insistence on Queensland wines being served at government receptions and functions on overseas trade delegations is greatly appreciated by all in the state's wine and grape industry, and they have said so. So successful has it been that it is now being picked up by others. While in Toowoomba for last month's Labor caucus retreat, at the civic reception at the Empire Theatre Mayor, Dianne Thorley insisted on Toowoomba-only wines for her council's reception. I thank her for that. The wines included at that reception included the Preston Peak 2002 Sauvignon Blanc, the Jimbour 2000 Vintage Shiraz and the Gowrie Mountain Estate 2001 Chardonnay.

The member also asked about where we are exporting Queensland wines. I am delighted to share with the House a comprehensive list of where Queensland wines have been exported over the past two years. It is a very interesting list. It shows that Queensland wines are going to the world. Over the past two years, Queensland wines have been exported to the following 11 countries: United States, Clovely Estate, Ballandean Estate—as many people would be aware, we helped open the door in South Carolina for Ballandean exports; United Kingdom, Ballandean Estate; Hong Kong, Romavilla Winery, Kominos Wines; Korea, Jimbour Wines; Japan, Mount Tambourine Vineyard and Winery, Albert River Wines; Canada, Albert River Wines; Switzerland, Mount Tambourine Vineyard and Winery; Philippines, Mount Tambourine Vineyard and Winery, Ballandean Estate; Taiwan, Kominos Wines and Ballandean Estate; Singapore, Kominos Wines; Netherlands, Bald Mountain.

That is a great story. I remember the days when people from the southern states used to throw off at Queensland wines. They do not do it any more because our wines have come of age.

A government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, and I am happy to take them again. This is a great industry. We see diversification not just on the Granite Belt but also in the South Burnett and Roma. It really is a fantastic industry. I want to encourage the people involved in wine production and grape production to keep doing it because they are world class.

Drought; Stock Inspectors

Mr JOHNSON: My question is directed to the Honourable the Minister for Primary Industries. I refer to the worsening drought conditions in western Queensland and the increasing number of primary producers seeking urgent drought relief through the individual drought property scheme. Is the minister aware that the Charleville DPI office does not currently have a stock inspector working there because that officer is on long service leave and his replacement has also gone on leave? This is not good enough. Why is not the department replacing absent stock inspectors so that primary producers can obtain urgent declarations? Is this not yet another case where this government's VER program is affecting service delivery when primary producers are facing the worst drought in living memory?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. At the outset, may I say that I refute the latter assertion that the honourable member made against the Department of Primary Industries staff and this government. May I say a couple of things on the issue of IDPs? All individual droughted property declarations—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Has the honourable member heard of a local drought committee? Local drought committees make the recommendations. Those recommendations are then sent to the minister.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The minister will answer the question and the matter will not be debated across the chamber.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Once an IDP is approved by the local drought committee that approval comes to myself as minister and I approve it. Part of the rules of issuing an IDP—

Mr Seeney: The stock inspector does the assessment. You have to have a stock assessment.

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

Mr PALASZCZUK: That is where the honourable member is so wrong. No wonder those opposite are sitting on 8 per cent. No wonder the people in the country have no respect for those opposite because all they do is knock, knock, knock.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. The stock inspectors are the convenors of the drought committees. They are not there.

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

Mr PALASZCZUK: Once again, let me explain to the honourable member that any member of the local drought committee can convene the local drought committee to make an IDP. That is where those opposite are so wrong. Why are they not positive? Why do they not come out for once and tell us what they would do to assist our primary producers if they were in government? Why do they not lift up the phone and ring the federal government? Why do they not ring Warren Truss, a member of the National Party and the Agriculture Minister, and get him to do something about exceptional circumstances, because that is where the main issue lies? The issue concerns the availability of exceptional circumstances to our primary producers. None of those opposite have lifted a finger to get on to Warren Truss because all they want to do is knock, knock, knock. That is why they are sitting on 8 per cent. That is why their leadership is under challenge. Those opposite are showing no leadership at all. If they did the right thing by our primary producers and got stuck into Warren Truss perhaps then—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The honourable member is safe for now. My advice to him is to get behind our primary producers in relation to exceptional circumstances and do—

Mr Johnson: We are.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Oh, you are? What has the opposition done? Come on! Those opposite have done absolutely nothing. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Smart State; Biotechnology

Mrs LAVARCH: My question is directed to the Honourable the Premier. I ask: what impact is our government's positive pro-business approach to attracting investment having in European markets?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Kurwongbah for the question. Smart State is going to the world. I am delighted to tell the House that Queensland's reputation as the Smart State has resulted in *Euromoney* magazine assembling a feature on our burgeoning biotechnology research and industry generally. *Euromoney* magazine is part of the British Daily Mail Trust Group stable of publications and web sites and boasts a readership of 160,000 leaders from the finance world. It is a key group. These are the people we want to invest in not just biotechnology but other Smart State industries.

Euromoney Institutional Investor PLC provides business information in specialist, cross-border markets through its magazines, books, Internet sites, electronic databases, training courses, seminars and conferences. It has offices worldwide. *Euromoney* magazine is billed as the online journal of the world's capital and money markets. It advertises itself as the world's most authoritative source of information on trends in international banking and capital markets.

Euromoney is dedicated to covering the world of international finance. We need that money for the future. The magazine's publicity says it also offers interviews with international authorities on financial matters. I understand the magazine is planning to focus Queensland as the lead area to set up in the Asia-Pacific region.

I was pleased to take part in a lengthy interview with the magazine on Queensland's biotechnology industry. I told the magazine how the Queensland Government's Bioindustries Strategy is building on Queensland's unique competitive strengths and obviously our biodiversity. This strategy is designed to facilitate the commercial development of Queensland's bioindustries, increase our global competitiveness in attracting research and development investment, facilitate strategic alliance development and attract investment. But I said we need venture capital to enable Queensland to turn its ideas and research into commercial reality and jobs.

Under my government, Queensland is growing its R&D and high-tech industries but we still need venture capital to help get these ideas to full commercialisation and production. We have made significant advances. I was asked why international biotechs should choose Queensland over the rest of Australia and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region. I explained how my government has positioned Queensland as Australia's Smart State. It is the most diverse and fastest growing economy in Australia. For the past decade our economic growth has averaged almost 5 per cent, one-and-a-half per cent ahead of the rest of Australia, and future prospects continue to be bright.

International biotech and other high-tech companies have come to Queensland because of our robust economic growth, highly skilled and multilingual work force, low business costs and world-class infrastructure. My government's pro-business approach to attracting investment stimulates innovation and growth. Business advantages such as these, combined with our magnificent lifestyle, make Queensland the perfect place in which to invest, work and live. The lack of venture capital when we started four and a half years ago was an impediment to development of the biotechnology industry. We are overcoming it in a number of ways and one of them is promoting it to the world through magazines such as this.

Fire Ants

Ms LEE LONG: My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. The minister's department has an extraordinarily small budget of some \$357 million this financial year. Of this, \$42.6 million is earmarked for the eradication of fire ants in Brisbane's urban areas. As the Beattie government is so committed to introducing more and more user-pays taxes, especially in rural areas, I ask: is the Beattie government contemplating charging the people of Brisbane a user-pays tax for this service?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I say at the outset that the DPI budget for this year is a record budget, and the budget's main priority this year is in the area of biosecurity—that is, assisting our primary producers to overcome any imported pests and diseases that come through our borders.

An honourable member: Like One Nation.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I am too kind to take that interjection. I believe that the member for Tablelands is very narrow minded in her attitude to the issue of fire ants. I do not want to go through a lesson of what fire ants can do to the rest of Australia, especially in the area of agriculture. One only need look at livestock in the United States where fire ants are eating away at the eyes of cattle. That would make one think that we never want this pest to get out from the capital city where it is now into our country areas because that would mean our primary producers would have to completely alter their property management plans, and that is the last thing we want. If the honourable member thinks the state government's contribution of \$11.7 million over the next three years is too much, then I believe that she is coming from the wrong direction.

Fire ants are a national issue. That is why the federal government is supporting us. That is why all the other states are supporting us. That is why the people of Brisbane are supporting us, because together we will be able to eradicate the fire ant menace from Brisbane to ensure that it never, ever penetrates our country areas because I shudder to think of the results on our primary producers if in fact this ever did happen. In conclusion, I think the honourable member is ill-informed on two points—that is, firstly, the size of the Queensland budget and, secondly, on the fire ant eradication campaign in Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Southport, I welcome to the public gallery a second group of students from the Walkervale State School in the electorate of Bundaberg.

Dental School, Gold Coast

Mr LAWLOR: I refer the Minister for Health to the fact that the Beattie government continues to lobby the federal government for a medical school to be established on the Gold Coast to address the shortage of doctors. I ask: what is being done to alleviate the statewide shortage of dentists?

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the member for Southport for his question, because I know that he has repeatedly raised the issue of a shortage of dentists in Queensland and has been a strong advocate for the establishment of a new dental school on the Gold Coast. He and other local members will be thrilled that their lobbying on behalf of the Gold Coast community has paid off. Griffith University will today announce plans to establish a new dental school on the Gold Coast. The new school will open its doors in 2004. I understand that it will be the first new dental school in Australia since 1946, when some of us were babes in arms. This is great news for the Gold Coast and great news for Queensland.

While the Griffith University vice-chancellor will provide full details today, I am advised the new degree programs will include dentistry, dental prosthetics, dental technology, dental therapy and oral hygiene. The total planned intake across all five programs is 55 full-time students a year. The dentistry course will take 20 students. Students will qualify after completing the three year Bachelor of Oral Health in Dental Science and two year Master of Dentistry. The degree programs in dental technology and dental prosthetics will address the absence in Queensland of a training program for dental prosthetics as well as the lack of any university level training in dental technology. The Bachelor of Oral Health in Dental and Oral Health Therapy will offer 10 graduate entry places.

This announcement is welcomed by the Beattie government. The Gold Coast is the fastest growing region in Australia, and that is why we will continue to push for a local medical school to meet the rapidly growing demand for services. Adelaide with 1.4 million people has two medical schools, yet south-east Queensland with 2.1 million people has only one medical school. The Gold Coast with 450,000 people and growing rapidly does not have a medical school, yet Canberra with just 320,000 people does. It was disappointing to hear the federal minister on Friday suggesting that we should continue to import medical school graduates when she recognised the need for an extra 230 medical graduates in Australia each year. That is irresponsible and it denies young Australians the opportunity that people overseas may have to train to become medical practitioners. This is great news for the Gold Coast. We will continue to lobby the federal government to support a medical school on the Gold Coast and to make the Gold Coast a hub of expertise in medicine and health.

Queensland Ambulance Service

Mr MALONE: I refer the Minister for Emergency Services to an alarming incident that happened on Monday of last week in a general practice surgery where a patient suffered a cardiac arrest. When the emergency number 000 was called, which took more than five minutes because the com centre was overloaded, the ambulance was then directed to the caller's billing address and not to the actual address of the incident. I ask: given that this is becoming a common problem, will the minister now instigate an urgent inquiry into these incidents to ensure the public safety of Queenslanders?

Mr REYNOLDS: I thank the member for Mirani for the question. I share with him a concern to ensure that the 560,000 instances that we have in Queensland each year are attended to by the Queensland Ambulance Service in the very best possible way. From time to time human mistakes may be made, and systems mistakes can occur. As soon as the QAS received this complaint from the doctor involved, it launched an investigation immediately. So there is no need for me to take that call from the member opposite today. That investigation was started immediately. Indeed, the QAS contacted the doctor two days later with some preliminary feedback. The communications centre was extraordinarily busy on that day. The QAS communications operators were inundated with 000 calls at that particular time and the QAS is currently reviewing its backup procedures and policies given the instance that has actually occurred.

Today I want to share with the member for Mirani some of the preliminary feedback we have received. Preliminary investigations have revealed that the caller hung up and called back, which put the call to the back of the queue, contributing to the delay. Whilst as Minister for Emergency Services I am sorry about the delay, I want to reassure Queenslanders that when they do call for an ambulance they will get one. There are times when the number of calls coming in is extraordinary—above the average, above the normal. We pride ourselves on having a state-of-the-art communications centre supported by all the latest technology. Our Brisbane centre handles more than 300 calls for help a day.

To help the QAS to help the public, I take this opportunity to urge people to use the 000 number only in emergency situations. There are times when people do not. In this day and age of mobile phones, we can get dozens of calls relating to one incident and that can place incredible demand on our centre. These things happen—that is, we receive dozens of calls to 000 relating to one particular incident. People should never dial 000 for non-emergencies. In every instance where there is a perceived delay or an actual delay I will take that up as minister as will the Commissioner of the Queensland Ambulance Service. Overall, we respond to 560,000 instances per year and we respond in the very best possible way we can. I say to all members of the House that in the 'most admired profession' results last week our ambulance officers topped the firies, who came second. It was the other way around last year.

Queensland Tourism Awards

Ms BOYLE: I refer the Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading to the fact that the Queensland Tourism Awards last Friday night shone the focus on Cairns and the tropical north. I ask: will the minister please inform the House of the success of tropical north Queensland tourism operators?

Ms ROSE: I thank the member for the question. She certainly is a very strong advocate for the tourism industry in tropical north Queensland. I was very pleased to attend the 2002 Queensland Tourism Awards last Friday night at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. The awards, which are an annual event staged by Tourism Queensland and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, acknowledged the level of excellence within the tourism industry and its contribution to the state's economy. The awards also honour the achievements and contribution of those thousands of individuals who have built Queensland into Australia's top holiday destination. State winners progress to the national awards, to be held in Adelaide in February 2003, where Queensland has an enviable record of success.

It has been a challenging 12 months for Queensland tourism, but our operators maintain their enthusiasm and positive outlook. The 2002 Queensland Tourism Awards acknowledged the efforts, commitment and dedication of the tourism industry. They honoured the best of the best—those who had demonstrated a commitment to the pursuit of excellence in their business operations.

The brightest star of the night was the tropical north Queensland region, which won 11 awards. Tropical north Queensland operator Wilderness Challenge claimed the award for best overall entry, which was one of the evening's most coveted awards and included the prize of a \$10,000 advertising campaign provided by Tourism Queensland. The Whitsundays—the member for Whitsunday was at the awards with me—Brisbane and the Gold Coast won five awards each, the Sunshine Coast took two and Roma's Big Rig won the new tourism development category for excellence in the planning of tourism infrastructure.

One of the most acclaimed awards was received by Australia Zoo, being named major tourist attraction, a category long dominated by the big Gold Coast theme parks. This was a great triumph for Steve and Terri Irwin. Their Australia Zoo was not only successful in its own right; it has also made a significant contribution to tourism on the Sunshine Coast. More than 110 Queensland operators were recognised in some way at the awards, whether as winners, finalists or Yellow Pages directions award winners.

The evening was also an opportunity to reflect on the Year of the Outback and to recognise the uniqueness of the outback. I table the list of winners from the 2002 Queensland Tourism Awards. I offer my congratulations to them all. To those who did not take home awards this year, there is always 2003. The heritage and cultural tourism award went to the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, which is in my own electorate. I congratulate it.

Drought, Exceptional Circumstances Assistance

Mrs PRATT: Will the Minister for Primary Industries assist the Kingaroy shire in its lodgment of exceptional circumstances documentation to ensure no delays occur in receiving assistance and, if required, meet with council representatives? How many individual shires have now been classified eligible for EC in Queensland? Does the minister support and promote the single shire application, as Kingaroy is surrounded by shires which have received rainfall recently? What is the minister currently doing to ensure the drought affected shires have no delay whatsoever in receiving that assistance?

Mr PALASZCZUK: Could I get a clarification from the honourable member? Is she referring to exceptional circumstances or is she referring to the state government drought policy?

Mrs Pratt: Exceptional circumstances. What are you doing to assist all shires to gain exceptional circumstances funding?

Mr PALASZCZUK: If the honourable member is talking about our drought policy, currently in Queensland—

Mrs Pratt: No.

Mr PALASZCZUK: All right. Let us talk about exceptional circumstances. The member shook her head, so we will talk about exception circumstances. I take her cue.

Currently the only areas that are under exceptional circumstances are on the Darling Downs. A submission has been partially approved for the Peak Downs area. I understand that, together with Agforce, DPI is working on three or four other applications for exceptional circumstances. What all honourable members need to know is that for exceptional circumstances to be declared by the federal government we do not have to put our shires on the drought declared list.

This drought in Queensland is the worst on record. If we go back to the mid 1990s when that 'dreadful' person Paul Keating was the Prime Minister of Australia—all of those people opposite would say that he was the worst Prime Minister we have ever had—we see that he, just like John Howard, our current Prime Minister, went into New South Wales. The Prime Minister's first visit to a droughted area was last week and, because he saw that the situation was so bad, there and then he decided to take over exceptional circumstances from the federal Minister for Agriculture. I welcome that. I welcome the Prime Minister of Australia taking over exceptional circumstances, because that is a very important issue on the national agenda.

Let us get back to Paul Keating. He made the same sort of visit to Queensland in the mid 1990s. What did he do? He was so taken aback at the droughted situation here in Queensland that he declared the whole state under exceptional circumstances—the whole state! Our drought is worse than the 1990s drought. Therefore, those opposite—eight per cent; unwanted by their own constituency—for once should do something to help their own people. They should get on the phone, get on to Warren Truss and get on to John Howard to get up here and have a look at our drought and then do exactly the same as Paul Keating did when he was Prime Minister.

Safety at Parties

Mr MICKEL: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Can the minister inform the House about measures police have taken in several Queensland regions to work with the community to ensure the safety of young people's parties?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for Logan for the question. I note his interest in parties. In actual fact, it was the member for Cleveland who was the driving force behind the recent establishment of the Celebrate Safe program in the suburbs of Wynnum and Cleveland. I congratulate all local members in the area, the local police and the local Lions Club for their efforts to ensure young people can have an enjoyable and safe party in their area. Similar initiatives have also been successfully established in Mackay and in Gladstone. I understand that police are trying to set up a similar program on the Sunshine Coast.

There has been an increasing concern in recent times about large numbers of gatecrashers attending teenage parties at private residences, running amok and in some cases behaving quite badly and of course illegally. Young people have just as much right as anybody else to celebrate, but when scores of gatecrashers arrive unannounced the trouble can really start.

The Celebrate Safe program allows parents to register their parties with police so that police can organise extra patrols. An information pack is also distributed to parents in order to assist them to prepare. This includes posing key questions such as: who will be attending, how many people will be there, will there be adult supervision and what is to be done with alcohol brought by a guest? It also advises against advertising parties on the Internet or indeed by fliers.

Coming into the holiday season, this is an issue that many parents will have to deal with. By following the guidelines suggested by the police parents can ensure that a fun, safe time is had by all. I always say that the best policing needs to involve the community working together with the police to make their neighbourhoods safer. This program, in my opinion, is a perfect example of just that.

Public Housing

Mr HOPPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing. Figures released by the minister last week show that there are more than 28,000 current applications for public housing. How does the government intend to fit 28,255 Queensland families into the 310 dwellings it plans to build in this financial year? I know that the minister will blame the federal government, which is currently offering \$682 million over five years. Is it not true that the housing shortage is this government's fault given that it has reduced the number of dwellings built each year from 900 under Borbidge in 1998 to the paltry 310 it will build this year?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank Dorothy for the question. Either he is the Rip Van Winkle of this parliament or he is a couple of decades short of a rosary.

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order. I find that comment offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I withdraw it. How thin-skinned! And the member used to be an old horse breaker!

A government member: He can dish it out.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes, he can dish it out, but he cannot cop it. The fact is that everybody on this side of the parliament and most people on the other side of the parliament have been awake to this issue for the past four years.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: This is precisely what I have been warning about.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: No wonder the member's popularity is below room temperature. The truth of the matter is that this is precisely what I have been warning about.

Ms Bligh: You spoke about it last week, didn't you?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Just last week I made a ministerial statement about it. I think that anybody with any ears heard it, it was that clear. The fact is that between the National Party's effort and the Commonwealth government's effort we have lost \$410 million. If the member seriously expects the taxpayers of Queensland to pick that up, he is more stupid than I thought he was. The truth is that we cannot, without increasing taxation in this state, just pluck 410 million bucks out of

nowhere. But that is what the member expects us to do. I have warned and warned and warned that this would be the case, and the truth is—

Mr Horan: You've got money for a bridge and an art gallery.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The member is knocking the art gallery now. He has knocked the Suncorp Stadium more times than Imelda Marcos has shoes. The reality is that his backside will be the first one in a corporate box. I bet the member 500 bucks right here and now—let us see if he will take the money—that he does not have the guts not to go over to the Suncorp Stadium to watch a game. Let us see if the member will take the bet. Does he declare that he will never go to the Suncorp Stadium? Of course he will not! He is a hypocrite!

An honourable member: I'll hold the money.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Anyone could hold the money. I bet the member 500 bucks right here and now that he will not declare Suncorp Metway black. Let us see what sort of a hypocrite he really is.

I will get back to the question. The issue is a very, very serious one. Finally, it has entered the member's cranium that this is a serious issue. I just hope that, instead of lying down to those grubs in Canberra who are pushing people—the battlers of this state—onto the street, he stands up for the people of Queensland for once. Let us see his policy on housing. Let us hear him say in this parliament what he will do about housing. I am delighted that I am part of a government that has increased funding to housing by \$130 million more than what the member's party spent when it was in government.

Boating Safety

Mr HAYWARD: I direct a question to the Minister for Emergency Services. Over the next few weeks hundreds and thousands of Queenslanders, interstate visitors and tourists will be on the water in boats and other water craft. I ask: can the minister advise the House how people can best be prepared when taking to the water over the Christmas holiday period?

Mr REYNOLDS: I would like to thank the member for Kallangur for the question. Today, I stress to all honourable members that they need to sell the message of the importance of water safety in each of their electorates over the coming weeks. Whether it is in an ocean, a river or creek, the Australian Volunteer Coastguard, the Volunteer Marine Rescue Association, other emergency services and other workers and volunteers spend a great deal of time over the festive season rescuing and advising people who have not taken basic precautions before leaving the shore.

I want to make sure that this festive and new year season is a safe time for our boaties. Boaties need to be properly prepared before taking to the water during the Christmas-New Year holiday period. These holidays are the busiest times on the water and among the busiest times for rescue services right along the coast of Queensland. Boaties should have adequate fuel for the trip, radio communications and fresh water. They should also ensure that appropriate safety equipment is on board. I also mention that it is compulsory for boaties to have an EPIRB on board if they are travelling more than two nautical miles offshore. Skippers should ensure that they use their radio to log on and off with the Australian Volunteer Coastguard Unit or the Volunteer Marine Rescue Unit. Both of those units do a tremendous job for Queensland.

It is a fact that the reason most trips ended in tragedy was the seagoers' inability to alert authorities that they were indeed in trouble. This situation is compounded if they have told no-one where they are going or how long they are expecting to be away. It costs as little as \$139 to buy a marine band two-way radio. That is cheap when it can help save lives. I also warn people not to rely on mobile phones for communication. Mobiles are extremely unreliable, especially as most people cannot recharge their batteries when they are on board a boat. As well, because the phones will be left off to conserve batteries, emergency services cannot get in touch with people when they need to.

Far too many tragedies occur over the Christmas period, most of which could be avoided easily. I strongly urge anyone taking to the water to ensure that the most basic precautions are taken, such as servicing the vessel's motor regularly, carrying torches, batteries and a first-aid kit and, of course, not overloading the boat or themselves. Emergency services volunteers and workers will be on high alert over the next few weeks to ensure that people have a safe and enjoyable festive season on the water. But the responsibility must be shared by the boat owners as well.

Underground Powerlines

Mr QUINN: I refer the Treasurer to a letter that I received recently from the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Jim Soorley, in which he provided me with details of the Beattie government's latest efforts to put further hurdles in the way of undergrounding powerlines across our suburbs. I table the letter. The Lord Mayor stated that to date both the council and Energex have shared the cost of undergrounding powerlines on a fifty-fifty basis, but he informs me that Energex has just advised the council that it will be reducing its contribution from 50 per cent to 33 per cent, making it even harder for councils to afford the cost and, therefore, delaying further undergrounding programs. I ask the Treasurer: why has the government made it even more difficult to improve our suburbs?

Mr MACKENROTH: I would have thought that if the Lord Mayor of Brisbane had a concern with Energex changing the cost, he probably would have had more luck writing to me than to the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: I probably do. I do not read them all, but I probably will get a Christmas card from the Lord Mayor. He, too, will probably want to go to Suncorp Stadium when it is opened. I am unaware of the Lord Mayor's concerns and, as he constantly writes to me about his concerns regarding everything that happens at Suncorp Stadium, I would have thought that, if it was something that concerned him, he would have written to me about this. I will have a look at the matter that the Leader of the Liberal Party has raised. I will see what it is. Perhaps I will send him a letter that he can send back to Jim.

Wet Tropics Management Authority

Ms MALE: I direct a question to the Minister for Environment. I ask: could the minister explain to the House why the Wet Tropics Management Authority is currently underfunded?

Mr WELLS: Yes, I can, and I thank the honourable member for the opportunity to do so. The other day in this House the honourable member for Hinchinbrook asked me if I would put on the table the amount of money that I have put into the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the amount of money that the federal government has put in so that we could have it on the table. I am very happy to put it on the table. These are the amounts. Last year the Queensland government put in \$2.64 million. This year the Queensland government put in \$2.64 million—the same amount. Last year the Commonwealth government put in \$3.65 million. This year they put in \$2.2 million, that is, \$1.45 million less, and they have not paid a penny of that money to the Wet Tropics Management Authority yet because they have not signed off on the budget. How is the Wet Tropics Management Authority running? Because the state government is paying for it. The money that they are spending at the moment is being honoured by the Queensland government out of that \$2.64 million that I talked about.

It is very, very strange that the honourable member for Hinchinbrook should be doing things such as putting out press releases that say 'Wells leaves north Queensland Wet Tropics high and dry because the Queensland government has not paid its money in'. That is the very opposite of the truth.

Mr ROWELL: I rise to a point of order. The minister has actually reduced the amount that he put in from \$1.7 million.

Mr SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Mr WELLS: No, no, the \$1.7 million is part of the \$2.6 million. That \$1.7 million is available in exactly the same way as it was available last year. It is being used for the purposes of maintenance of the parks.

The honourable member is a great lover of the truth. He loves it so much that he does not like to expend it. He loves the truth so much that he puts only half of it in any proposition that he makes. He is a conservationist of the truth. He saves the truth only for special occasions. There is no truth whatsoever in the media release that the honourable member put out.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr WELLS: I pause to take the interjection from the honourable member because I am anxious to respond.

Mr Rowell: The Daintree rescue package—tell us about that. How much did you put in and where?

Mr WELLS: One-third from WETMA, one-third from the Commonwealth, one-third from the state. I know that the member thinks differently, but he is wrong, wrong, wrong on every point. The honourable member is not the biggest and most innumerate dolt in the opposition, but he should be able to do better than this.

Western Darling Downs Rescue Package

Mr HOBBS: I refer the Premier to his commitment in parliament in February this year to arrange a meeting attended by the Minister for Primary Industries to develop a recovery plan for the western Darling Downs. The Western Downs Solution Group was offered substantial funding in May 2002 from the federal Agricultural Development Partnership program which requires matching funding from the state government. The Bureau of Rural Science is prepared to financially support the socioeconomic study with an additional \$100,000, no strings attached, provided the partnership agreement between both governments is reached. The stage 1 application for the \$160,000 had been submitted and, regrettably, it appears the DPI's half-share funding of \$80,000 is not forthcoming. Will the Premier urgently investigate this matter with a view to a quick resolution as time is running out and the funding could be lost?

Mr BEATTIE: I was partly listening and partly conferring with the Minister for Primary Industries because, as members know, I try and give constructive answers where I can.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: You know, you don't have to be rude all the time. I actually think this is a serious question. It is easy to be the village idiot. I want to take the member seriously, so perhaps others should give a bit of courtesy for once.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Particularly to one of your colleagues. The minister has indicated that he is prepared to continue to discuss this issue with the member. As the member knows, this is designed to help rural communities, and at this time we understand the need to do so. We have a range of comprehensive programs to assist rural communities, covering everything from drought assistance, which we dealt with in this House last week during the member's motion on drought, to putting money into the heritage trails which go all the way to Charleville, which is in the member's electorate. The member and I were out in his electorate not so long ago opening a particular facility. We are trying to put money into the bush and into regional communities. We understand how important this is. Henry has indicated a willingness to continue to discuss this matter with the member. I suggest to him that sometime this week or next it would be appropriate to discuss the matter further. The minister has indicated a willingness to continue to talk to the member about it this week.

I shall make a couple of other points while I am on my feet. Agforce has approached Henry and me to support a number of activities it is organising. On 11 December, along with Christine Scott, I will be visiting central Queensland to attend an activity that Agforce is organising, bringing the community together. It is bringing the community together in three areas around the state that are adversely affected by drought. One of the things I think we in this House often forget—I am talking collectively and not individually—is that while we often talk about assistance for drought and the implications of the drought and what it means for farm land and for the produce, we often forget the human element. That is one reason we gave \$500,000 to the Farmhand appeal. It was designed to actually provide assistance to people on the land who are in dire straits.

I want to congratulate Agforce on doing this, because it enables people to share their problems, to discuss them. Because of the distances in rural Queensland, too often people think they are the only ones going through that degree of hardship. That is why we have had problems with family dislocation, the occasional suicide, break-ups and those sorts of things. We are right behind those three gatherings being organised by Agforce.

Mr Hobbs: With this particular deal, all you have to do is put up \$80,000 and you get back \$260,000 worth of work.

Mr BEATTIE: The minister has indicated a willingness to talk to the member about it. His difficulty is that he was not sure of the numbers or the details of the figures. The member has provided more than has been provided by the Commonwealth. The minister will obviously discuss this matter. Part of Henry's difficulty was not having that level of detail. We need to have that before we can make or reach any agreement. I suggest that the member talk to Henry and let us see what we can do.

Timber Plantations, Byfield

Mr PEARCE: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities to the timber industry and its demand for quality softwood and hardwood. Can the minister advise the House of any developments that ensure Queensland can meet future demand for timber?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I would like to take the opportunity today to update the House on the developments of the Byfield state forest near Yeppoon in the member for Keppel's electorate. I am sure that this issue is of great interest to the member for Keppel and I am quite sure that the member for Keppel will also keep an interest in this issue long after he has left this parliament. I am also sure that his successor, whether it be Labor, Liberal, National or any other, will also take a keen interest. I am sure that the member will keep them informed on it. I can announce today that the government recently purchased a further 1,800 hectares and that plans are well under way to secure an additional 1,500 hectares in early 2003. These acquisitions will bring the total amount of land available for plantation expansion at Byfield to 4,900 hectares.

Last year I announced in this House that DPI Forestry had purchased a further 2,990 hectares for the expansion of the Byfield estate. Plantation expansion of this scale greatly enhances the economic feasibility and opportunity for local processing and will bolster the competitiveness of the timber industry in Queensland through increased long-term resource availability. DPI Forestry is Queensland's principal forest grower, supplying more than 80 per cent of log timber used by the \$1.7 billion per annum industry. Through DPI Forestry, the Queensland government is purchasing formerly cleared agricultural land for plantation development and is undertaking extensive reforestation of that land. The government is also further committed to expand both plantation softwood and hardwood throughout Queensland.

I would like to take this opportunity to update the House on our hardwood plantation program. We all can well remember the government's commitment to plant 5,000 hectares of hardwood plantation. Well, we are well on track. We have secured the 5,000 hectares. We have planted 4,600 hectares. We were very fortunate with the little bit of rain that fell around Gympie in that we were able to continue our plantation program there. Now we have only 400 hectares to go. Were it not for the very dry spell we have had, all of it would have been planted. All in all, it is great news for central Queensland and for our timber industry because we are well on track to ensuring that our Queensland timber supplies both in the softwood and hardwood industries will satisfy the needs of our timber industry in years to come.

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

PRIVILEGE Stock Inspectors

Mr HORAN (11.30 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. This morning the Minister for Primary Industries endeavoured to mislead this parliament about the important and key role of stock inspectors, and I want to set the record straight. I will quote the Primary Industries web site as at this morning. It states—

DRAS is administered by the Rural Risk Strategies Unit ... of the Department of Primary Industries ... and through Inspectors of its Animal Health Service (Stock Inspectors) at the field level.

The local Stock Inspector is also the coordinator of the Local Drought Committee ...

...

Producers who consider their properties are drought stricken should contact their local Stock Inspector—

that is if he is there—

and apply for an IDP declaration.

...

IDP declarations for livestock dominant enterprises remain in force until such time as they are officially revoked by a Stock Inspector or are superimposed by an area (shire) declaration.

...

Producers must demonstrate to the LDC Coordinator (Stock Inspector) that a reasonable level of self-reliance in drought management has been undertaken before an IDP application can be considered.

Finally, the DPI web site states—

The application for an IDP declaration is made by the property owner, share-farmer or lessee to the local Stock Inspector on an 'Application for Individually Droughted Property (IDP) Declaration Form ... available from the local DPI office.

...

On receipt of a completed formal application for IDP status, the LDC Coordinator (Stock Inspector) will assess the application.

This clearly shows that the minister has endeavoured to mislead the parliament. I put this on the record so that the parliament can know the correct and proper role of the local stock inspector, provided there is one in the district.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Opposition Year in Review

Mr HORAN (11.32 a.m.): With just three sitting days remaining for the year, I thought it opportune to review the parliamentary year that was 2002. We all experienced the constant stream of media releases and brainwashing from the Beattie machine, so much so that it is hard for anything else to penetrate the noise of that propaganda warfare. This last sitting week is a good opportunity to remind the House of just where we have been this year and to remind members of some of the National Party wins and Beattie backflips for the year.

When the sweltering January rolled around, one of our first acts for the year was to call on the government to procure the services of a super-helitanker like the Elvis helicopter that was drafted into New South Wales to fight the bushfires there. The member for Mirani pursued the minister all year to prepare for the summer, but in usual style he has procrastinated and only in November did he start to look seriously at the options for aerial firefighting after the devastating and tragic October fires on the Darling Downs and the Granite Belt. January also saw the member for Maroochydore target the Health Minister for her appalling mismanagement of Queensland's mental health facilities. Do members remember John Paul Gabriel, Mark Briscoe and the Health Minister who goes missing in action when a crisis is at its peak? In January the National Party introduced its six-point plan to address the insurance crisis, which the government again procrastinated on taking up, and only yesterday, a full 11 months after we suggested a cap on payouts, has the government responded. The member for Southern Downs has been at the forefront of the National Party's policy development on these insurance problems.

February saw Mr Ray Hopper, the member for Darling Downs, take over the crucial public housing portfolio, where he has made a great contribution to helping keep the government accountable for how it spends taxpayer dollars. And hasn't he exposed the Minister for Housing! He helped highlight some of the untidy litigation history of one of the Premier's so-called 'clean team', the member for Capalaba. We held the first of the National Party regional shadow cabinet meetings, this one in Charters Towers in north Queensland. There we also detailed our policy for a department of northern development with its own minister and a place at the decision-making table—a department of the north for the north with real teeth, with the minister being part of the budget decision-making group, the Cabinet Budget Review Committee. It only took till February for my Deputy Leader and member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, to get a backflip out of the Transport Minister when he highlighted the licence fiasco, where the government was going to cancel the licences for six months of those who had just forgotten to renew their licences. Quite rightly, that plan was ditched. The member for Gregory led the way with his plan to introduce compulsory blood tests for unconscious motorists, a policy subsequently adopted by the government and put into law some seven months later.

In March I spoke with the ABC new acting managing director about a TV news service for the north and received a very favourable hearing. It was gratifying to see that in August the state government decided the Nationals were right and joined the call, as if it was its own original thought. The member for Callide referred his constituents' complaints about maladministration of the Department of State Development business grants to the Auditor-General. This reference prompted a wide-ranging review that also brought in the Crime and Misconduct Commission, and eventually found that in fact the government had failed to properly administer the grants, leaving it open to claims of corruption. The Auditor-General and the CMC both made recommendations for improved accountability of Queensland government grants and the monitoring of commercial-in-confidence arrangements.

In April the Premier concocted a stunt to throw in the towel on the waste water pipeline project for the Darling Downs, only to have the Prime Minister's office stop the game playing by revealing that the Premier was playing very loose with the truth. The member for Warrego showed that the Minister for Racing had been meddling in the supposedly independent process for choosing a chairman of the Thoroughbred Racing Board, and that whole process now forms part of a Crime and Misconduct Commission investigation that has been ongoing ever since.

In May the member for Hinchinbrook and the National Party went into bat for the sugar industry and called for an immediate cash injection for the industry. Unfortunately, all it got from the Beattie government was more debt, and later in the year a paltry \$30 million made up of more debt and more refocusing of training programs and a plan by the Queensland state government to get rid of the single-desk selling arrangement, which is essential and necessary for Queensland canefarmers. We highlighted the failure of the Tourism Minister to back her rhetoric on irukandji jellyfish with the money to achieve real headway.

June saw the Beattie government again follow the lead of the National Party through its adoption of a civil confiscation scheme for the proceeds of crime. The shadow Attorney-General introduced a private member's bill to cover the civil forfeiture of the proceeds of crime back in May, but in June Labor introduced its own copycat legislation. The Premier also went weak at the knees when he refused to discipline his Racing Minister, who had obviously and blatantly bullied her driver, so much so that the woman ended up having to take the issue to the newspapers to get some satisfaction. The National Party made its first call for an ethanol mandate to help save the struggling sugar industry—something the Beattie Labor government has been playing catch-up with ever since. It even voted down our private member's bill. But by far the most serious issue to arise in June was the confession from the Treasurer that his budget, for the second year in a row, was massively in debt—\$486 million worth of debt. Even that figure was outrageously inaccurate, with revelations mumbled onto the record just last month that instead the debt is closer to \$900 million, taking the two-year loss to a horrendous \$1.8 billion. Mr Ray Hopper was heavily involved in lobbying the state and federal governments to save the Jondaryan Woolshed, whose future is now secure thanks in large part to the work of Ray Hopper.

July was the month the Nationals promised to mandate ethanol fuel at 10 per cent. This was a vital move aimed at giving sugar producers at least some security of market. If there is no guarantee that there will be a market for ethanol, then no-one is going to invest the money required. The government spent much of the middle of the year embroiled in industrial disputes while I took the opportunity at the National Party's annual conference to outline my vision for Queensland. The shadow cabinet went to Mackay in July, and that was the month we saw off the government's attempts to destroy the township of Dirranbandi with its ill-conceived scheme to effectively buy Cubbie Station. The member for Beaudesert kept at the Minister for Education, particularly over plans to introduce a preparatory year for young schoolchildren while not even allocating any money for its introduction. There is still no indication where the money is going to come from for the extra resources—facilities and teachers—that will be needed.

In August the National Party promised to force future governments to be open and honest about tax, fee and charge increases after this Labor government introduced sneaky new transport fees just weeks after 'forgetting' to mention them in the budget. We held a Gold Coast water forum with the members for Callide and Warrego, and we learned that the government was planning to double the amount of taxpayer funds going into corporate giants.

In September the parliament found itself in Townsville, as I am sure many honourable members will recall. I would like to again place on record my appreciation to the people of Townsville, as well as the staff of the parliament for making what could have been a very difficult exercise one which went off with as few inconveniences as possible. Again, I say thank you to the staff. But of course that is where we first learned of the state government's secret plan to do away with the single-desk selling policy for sugar—a move the National Party has vowed to vigorously oppose at every turn. The member for Hinchinbrook caught out the Minister for Primary Industries sneaking in new hidden taxes on the state's cattle and horticultural producers behind state parliament's back. In September we also helped to pressure the Attorney-General back off the Volkens case because of his personal relationship with the accused—something in which he had previously seen no conflict.

In October the National Party held its tax forum here at Parliament House with industry, community and academic leaders. We unearthed the ongoing problems with the Wageline hotline service that largely involve long periods on hold, recorded messages and many casual and inexperienced staff. The member for Southern Downs also outlined the National Party's 'pull a gun, go to jail' policy—a real and effective deterrent to gun crime.

Last month shadow cabinet held its shadow cabinet meeting in Mareeba and we saw the Health Minister finally acknowledge the enormous problems with medical indemnity cover. The Premier was forced to reveal his \$40 million propaganda budget.

The member for Cunningham has outed the Department of Families as the department that staff love to leave with a staggering 14 per cent yearly turnover rate. We learned that the member

for Keppel is planning to move on at the next election. I thank him for his almost 30 years of dedicated service to this House and to the people.

Of course we have the biggest backflip of all. Who could forget last week's government backdown on the discrimination laws for non-government schools—again forced by the National Party. December started only on Sunday but already we have seen the government adopting National Party policy in the areas of insurance and the counter-terrorism reference of power to the Commonwealth.

In all, it has been a busy year for the National Party in pursuing all of these and many more issues of accountability with this government. It has been a busy year for the government finding new ways to adopt National Party policies—

Time expired.

Public Housing, Fraser Coast

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (11.41 a.m.): I rise to place on the record my concerns at the failure of the federal government to provide appropriate assistance and support for my electorate of Hervey Bay, particularly in the area of housing. It is no exaggeration to say that Hervey Bay is facing a housing shortage which has reached crisis proportions. I see the member for Darling Downs, the shadow minister for housing, leaving the chamber. Perhaps that is appropriate because I do not think he will have the benefit of having this roof over his head after the next election.

I have an outstanding community housing sector in Hervey Bay, with great organisations such as the Fraser Coast Community Rental Group and the Hervey Bay Housing Coalition doing great work. Hervey Bay is growing strongly. We have brilliant growth in our student numbers at the University of Southern Queensland's Hervey Bay campus. The new prison at Maryborough is also putting pressure on housing because there are 270 permanent jobs being filled at the prison, and eventually next year the families of inmates will put more pressure on the housing market.

The state government is doing its bit and the Minister for Housing, Robert Swarten, was on the record in this House again today detailing his concerns about the availability of public housing. The Department of Housing's budget has increased by \$130 million to address housing shortages. I was delighted to be able to announce on behalf of the minister at the recent AGM of Hervey Bay Housing Coalition a grant of \$660,000 to buy two new two-bedroom houses and two more four-bedroom houses for the coalition. It will bring the coalition's housing stock to 21, and I wish to congratulate the housing manager, Marilyn Sard, and the coalition's committee on the great work they do. They improve the houses under their control and are an outstanding example of what a dedicated group of volunteers can achieve. They have an outstanding balance sheet and are a model for all community organisations. Nevertheless, in the absence of any Commonwealth assistance by way of meaningful increases in the federal housing budget the situation will just get worse.

At a time when the Queensland government has increased its commitment to public housing to \$130 million, the federal government has decreased funding by \$410 million. What this translates to is families looking for housing on the Fraser Coast being offered accommodation in Mount Isa and Biloela because there is simply nothing available in our area. I have had people in my office who have been to every agent and every housing group in town and found nothing.

Last week, Kim Linton, who is the coordinator of the Fraser Coast Community Rental Group, was reported in the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* as confirming that her organisation is turning people away daily. Kim is an outstanding coordinator and a dedicated and committed person. I have spoken with her on numerous occasions about the looming crisis. She is doing a fantastic job, managing some 45 properties, and she is a fearless advocate for the public housing sector. But she cannot meet the demand without significant additional housing stock being put on her books.

I fear that a situation which has now reached crisis point will, in a year's time, become a disaster if Commonwealth assistance is not increased. The state government is doing its part. I call on the member for Wide Bay, Warren Truss, to put the plight of people in his electorate who cannot find housing on the agenda for federal cabinet's consideration. Cities like Hervey Bay need growth. For jobs, for stability in our housing construction industry and to protect jobs in the teaching sector by making sure that our schools continue to grow, we need more housing.

People are going to continue to move to the coast. At all levels of government we have a responsibility to ensure that people are not left to sleep in cars or on the beach. I support Kim Linton's analysis that 'drastic changes by the Federal Government in the way of extra funding and

better forward planning were the only solutions for the future'. Kim knows what she is talking about. She has had years of experience at the coalface. Her concerns are not party political but are the result of genuine fear for the safety and comfort of the people she serves. They are my fears, too. They should loom large in the minds of every member of this place who wants to see people with a roof over their heads.

I call on the federal minister and the state shadow minister to produce some concrete proposals to increase funding in this area. We have a disaster looming; we know it, we can see it and everyone is talking about it, but the federal government is not working on it consistently. \$410 million cut out of the public housing sector by the Commonwealth cannot be replaced by the Queensland government. This must be addressed, as houses are not built overnight.

The Commonwealth government encouraged home ownership via its first home ownership rebate scheme. I support that scheme; it was a good scheme which put many people into their own homes. But the direct result of that has been a dramatic decline in the availability of housing on the rental market. In Hervey Bay about 700 rental properties have gone off the market over the last two years.

A government member: It is a great place to live.

Mr McNAMARA: It is a great place to live. The time for action is now.

Woongoolba State School

Ms KEECH (Albert—ALP) (11.45 a.m.): On 11 November this year I had the privilege of attending Woongoolba State School's very moving Remembrance Day commemoration ceremony. At the invitation of the school's principal, Don Harris—a dedicated educator and highly respected community leader—I laid a wreath on behalf of the people of Albert. Woongoolba State School has a proud history of commemorating Remembrance Day, with this year being the 20th anniversary of the service.

One of the largest projects the students have ever undertaken was the decision to erect at the school a permanent memorial to commemorate Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. In 1979—the Year of the Child—the school started to look at the best way to remember our local and, indeed, Australia's fallen servicemen and women. As children are the most likely to suffer the ill effects of war, the project was a great way to get the students involved at a very practical level.

The school sent letters to Commonwealth departments, the Australian consul in Turkey and the officer in charge of the War Graves Commission in Turkey. At first, they simply hoped to obtain a small stone from the cliffs of Anzac Cove and a bag of sand from the beach. To the students' surprise, the officer of the War Graves Commission offered to shape a stone from the Lone Pine cemetery quarry and to supply a bag of beach sand.

After lengthy correspondence and much persistence, the stone and sand finally arrived at Woongoolba State School in 1980. The next challenge was to prepare a suitable setting for the memorial stone. Plans were drawn incorporating gardens that already had seedlings from the Gallipoli lone pine planted. The local council and small businesses helped with the establishment and landscaping of the gardens. If members visit the school they will be made aware that the stone which now sits on the lawn is the same that is used at the Lone Pine cemetery at Gallipoli.

The school has hosted remembrance services on every anniversary since the memorial was opened on 11 November 1982. As happens with Anzac Day, crowds continue to grow each year. This year over 300 people, including students, parents, community leaders, representatives of the Beenleigh RSL and returned service people enjoyed the moving ceremony. The service was led by school captain Mitchell McClintoch, ably assisted by Tania Wesche. I have to agree with principal Don Harris that the fact that the students lead the service themselves has embedded a culture of being Australian into the students' lives. Thankfully, today's students have never known the horrors of war and the destruction that conflict brings to ordinary lives.

Each year on Remembrance Day at Woongoolba State School students have the chance to remember the innocent men and women of Australia who have laid down their lives in conflict. They have the chance to stop and think of how lucky they are to be living in a free and democratic society, free from the cruelty of war and oppression. They have the chance to remember the thousands of young Australians slaughtered on foreign soil. Those Australians who died in past wars had no such chance and on 11 November each year we honour them and remember their sacrifice. After the ceremony was completed, senior students escorted the returned servicemen from World War II and this year from Vietnam to a morning tea in the library.

There they had an opportunity to meet their heroes, who patiently answered the questions of the students.

In closing, I want to recite an extract of the poem by John Marsden entitled *A Prayer for the 21st Century* which was sincerely read at the ceremony by Tania Wesche—

May the bombs rust away in the bunkers,
And the doomsday clock not be rewound,
May the solitary scientists working,
Remember the holes in the ground.
May the knife remain in the holder,
May the bullet stay in the gun,
May those who live in the shadows
Be seen by those in the sun.

I congratulate Don Harris, the teachers, the P&C, the students and the Beenleigh RSL and thank them for inviting me to participate in their Remembrance Day ceremony. May Remembrance Day continue to serve to remind us of the futility of war and the passion with which our young people recognise the sacrifices of our servicemen and women. Lest we forget.

Water Conservation

Mr FLYNN (Lockyer—ONP) (11.50 a.m.): For water, zero hour is here. No rain. No rain. No rain. Each one of us can now claim to be accurate weather forecasters just by using these words. Rain is the only viable answer to the massive problem of water shortages in vital areas. Time and time again I have spoken, as have others, on the issues of water supply and conservation. Time and time again urban authorities have dismissed the problem as not really affecting them until they suddenly discover that, with summer crops now following winter crops being reduced in output by as much as two-thirds, prices will be going up. Money is what makes them take notice. It does not take a Rhodes scholar to work that one out. For quite some time we have been pushing for major conservation initiatives in our cities and townships to use water more efficiently and, in some circumstances, even ceasing its use. Early last year I suggested to the Brisbane City Council that it embark upon a program of installation of water tanks wherever possible in every residence and business. This suggestion was immediately dismissed as typically simplistic One Nation policy. If that is so, why is the Brisbane City Council examining that idea as I speak? I suppose I should say that it is better late than never.

There are many other initiatives that will go some way to helping us stretch out and conserve our liquid gold until it rains. Not least amongst these would be a ban in city and major centres on the use of mains water to wash cars, hose down yards or any other use which could be more beneficially carried out by using tank water. Cars should be washed using car washes which recycle water. This might provide a stimulus to new business and might even provide additional employment. Everyone from the Prime Minister down is advertising this drought as the worst on record, yet we talk about a lot of expensive plans to supply water to rain-starved rural areas without acknowledging that none of these plans will provide any relief for at least five years. As I speak, farmers are walking off the land. We cannot wait. As necessary as these plans are—and I support them—it is becoming clearer that farmers are unlikely to be able to afford the projected minimum of \$150 a megalitre for renewed water or \$110 for Wivenhoe fresh water, which, I might add, is the cost of the water only at the dam wall. Farmers at large say that \$70 a megalitre is the most they can afford, and even that would be a stretch.

I apologise if I have the figure for renewed water incorrect, but the government and some minority farmers have chosen to hide the draft feasibility report behind the secrecy provisions of commercial-in-confidence which, according to the Public Works Committee's own report, is a much corrupted concept. We need a generational investment from both federal and state governments for long-term solutions, but we have to act now to assist our rural sector not only with financial assistance in the way of loans and grants but also with the implementation of immediate strategies to curb the incredible wastage of water at a domestic level.

I acknowledge the splendid initiatives by both the Laidley and Gatton councils in my electorate of the Lockyer in their efforts to curb excessive domestic water usage. Laidley has been brave enough to make its restrictions compulsory. Whenever one restricts what people consider to be their natural rights one chances their arm, but the Laidley Shire Council has seen fit to take that step and I commend it for that. I do not think it will be too long before Gatton may have to follow suit in making them compulsory. Useable water on and in the ground is a finite resource and we waste it at Australia's peril. We need to do something now, not in five years time.

Pine Rivers Youth Crimestoppers

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (11.55 a.m.): Last week the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, Tony McGrady, in answering a question from the Leader of the Opposition advised of the substantial increases to the funding of the Crimestoppers program in Queensland, funding that is increasing from \$880,000 in 2001-02 to over \$945,000 this year. This reaffirms our government's commitment to Crimestoppers and its place in fighting crime in our state. Crimestoppers is a unique partnership between the community, the police and the media and operates in Queensland as a limited liability non-profit company with a state board and 23 regional Crimestoppers committees. It has operated in Australia since 1987 and reports on its web site that in the past 15 years across Australia it has received 1,131,750 calls which have resulted in 21,537 arrests and 82,938 charges being laid, which in turn has resulted in over \$35 million worth of property being recovered and \$649 million worth of drugs being seized. While these figures are impressive, there is always more that can be done to get the message out.

I am pleased to inform the House of a trial that is under way at Bray Park and Pine Rivers state high schools to introduce the concept of Crimestoppers to students to empower them in their dealings with crime and illegal activities. The project, Pine Rivers Youth Crimestoppers, has the policy objectives of changing students' attitudes towards reporting criminal activity and associated information; increasing student awareness of Crimestoppers, its ideals and contact phone number; increasing the amount of phone calls made to Crimestoppers in the Pine Rivers police district; delivering participative lectures to all students in years 8, 9 and 10 at Bray Park and Pine Rivers high schools in term 4 of 2002 with lecture topics including drugs, alcohol, assaults and property crime and how these offences affect everyone in the community; and, finally, delivering participative lectures to new year 8 students in term 1 of 2003 based on the interim assessment results and findings.

A survey of students at both high schools revealed that not one of them knew the Crimestoppers phone number, and I hope that the same cannot be said about members of this House.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: I know it. It's 1800 333 000.

Mrs LAVARCH: Very good, member for Pumicestone. Not one knew the number, yet 87 per cent of year 10 students knew someone who was using drugs, shoplifting, breaking and entering, stealing from cars or doing graffiti or other wilful damage. The survey also showed that students viewed dobbing as socially unacceptable, and this was the main reason they do not share the information they know. They know who is doing what in the community but are presently not sharing that information with their parents, other adults or those who have the power to do something with the information. However, if one looks at the 2001-02 police statistical review, it can be seen that in cases of crimes against the person females aged between 15 and 19 years are most likely to be victims of crime. In fact, young people are increasingly becoming victims of crime. Young people are more likely to be subjected to assault or attack or have their property stolen or damaged than any other group in the community.

I am most impressed by the way the students at both these high schools have embraced this trial program. This has been evidenced by the number of students who recently entered the Youth Crimestoppers logo competition. I congratulate Teegan Wilson of Bray Park State High School for her winning entry—an excellent poster with a 'no graffiti' message and the Crimestoppers number. I also place on record my congratulations to school based police officer Constable Ty Connell and Bray Park police beat officer Senior Constable Adam Willmot for advancing this project through the Bray Park Community Consultative Committee.

I am confident that the aim of this trial, to change young people's willingness to report information and to know the Crimestoppers number, will be met. In fact, Ty and Adam are striving to have 99 per cent of young people in these schools knowing the Crimestoppers number by the end of the project. I wish them well and once again congratulate them on this initiative.

Forde Report

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (11.59 a.m.): The 1999 Forde report into the abuse of children in Queensland institutions shocked and saddened the state. The veracity of the deprivation, cruelty and sexual abuse in the state's orphanages and detention centres between 1935 and 1999 has been accepted but sadly not fully acted upon.

The Forde report made 42 recommendations that were intended to go some way to restore the wellbeing of the victims of historical abuse. The Beattie government has forsaken the victims of historical abuse by neglecting two key recommendations of the report—recommendations 39 and 40. Recommendation 39 states—

That the Queensland Government and responsible religious authorities establish principles of compensation in dialogue with victims of institutional abuse and strike a balance between individual monetary compensation and provision of services.

Recommendation 40 would see the Queensland government and responsible religious authorities fund an independent 'one-stop shop' for victims of abuse in institutions to provide a range of services.

The Queensland Nationals recognise the validity of recommendations 39 and 40, and yesterday shadow cabinet approved a five-point plan to ensure the full implementation of these recommendations. The Beattie government has made no real effort to address the pertinent parts of recommendation 39—that dialogue be opened with a view to striking a balance between compensation and services. The government has rubbed salt into the wounds of victims of institutional abuse by referring them to the futile exercise of seeking compensation through the courts, a futile hope for survivors because, as Mr Beattie well knows, few have the means to finance court action and Legal Aid is unwilling to help because it has little scope to support civil cases due to lack of resources. The statute of limitations means that such action is doomed to fail.

The Beattie government has not even bothered to find out how many survivors of institutional abuse are out in the community doing their best to overcome this abuse largely alone. The National Party in government will commission a survey to determine the number of survivors of institutional abuse and the type of compensation and provision of services sought by those survivors. The results of this survey would feed into the formation of a protocol 39 working group. The working group will bring to the table survivors, the government and responsible churches to enter into the dialogue for which recommendation 39 calls. The working group would be responsible for formulating a plan to deliver an appropriate balance of monetary compensation and, importantly, services. This is not a problem that is going to go away—not now, however much the Beattie government thinks it can rule a line through the inquiry and move on, and not even completely in the future, when we start to deliver appropriate services.

Survivors and their families need ongoing support to overcome the lasting problems childhood experiences have left them. Recommendation 40 provides the mechanism to deliver this support. The one-stop shop would be established under the auspices of an accountable and relevant incorporated non-government organisation. It would be funded by the government and church authorities but, in terms of organisation and culture, belong to the survivors. It would provide services including ongoing counselling for victims and their families; facilitation of educational opportunities, including literacy programs; advice regarding access to individual records, documents and archival papers; specialised counselling services for indigenous victims of abuse; and assistance to former child immigrants for reunification with their families.

There is a level of fear in the community, and certainly on behalf of the government, that addressing recommendations 39 and 40 will cost too much. The National Party acknowledges the community's concern but knows that to ignore this issue will cost too much, both in human decency and in social support needs now and in the future. Tragically, there can also be a generational impact with some victims of abuse so overwhelmed by their experiences that their own families may become victims in turn.

We do not know the full extent of the impact of historical abuse because the Beattie government has scratched the surface and then moved on. The Beattie government set up the Forde inquiry process, and victims of historical abuse who came forward went through a great deal of pain in telling their stories. They did so with the fair expectation that their issues would be addressed. At this point I will quote one of the survivors of institutional abuse—

We are the abused and it was us who had the integrity and grit, with the support of the inaugural Childrens Commissioner, that pushed for this inquiry. We have obviously intentionally been left behind; because we have seen very little of the alleged expenditure to our direct benefit. We were recently informed by a Departmental Senior Officer that there is no funding available to assist ex-residents, in spite of the fact that the Families Department allegedly had received additional funding to help us. Your—

that is, the government's—

spurious statements in Parliament show your true actions. You consistently bypass your opportunity on numerous occasions to move and heal the wounds of the past. This has in the main been done in 'SMART STATES' of Canada,

Eire, and New Zealand. You expected the churches to 'kick the Forde Foundation tin'. Show full and honourable leadership first Mr Premier.

Of all the Beattie government's PR claims, the fiction that it has met the Forde recommendations is one of the most disappointing.

Queensland Tourism Awards

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (12.05 p.m.): I have spoken many times previously about the importance of tourism to the electorate of Whitsunday. 2002 has been a particularly difficult year for those in the industry. They have had to dig deep and act laterally in order to overcome an industry downturn.

In an increasingly competitive marketplace, natural beauty alone cannot be relied upon to attract tourists to an area such as the Whitsundays. Quite frankly, it has been the vision and sheer hard work of the dedicated folk in Tourism Whitsunday, along with the tenacity and persistence of individual operators, that underlies the region's ability to survive and indeed flourish.

Mr Shine: And your efforts.

Ms JARRATT: I thank the member. This effort was duly rewarded on Friday evening at the Queensland Tourism Awards, where six out of a possible 29 awards available statewide were returned to the Whitsundays. For me personally, the most significant of these was the award for destination promotion, for which entrants were required to demonstrate the ability to foster greater consumer awareness of a region as a tourist destination. And the winner was Tourism Whitsunday. This award gives recognition to the enormous amount of work that has been put into promoting the Whitsundays both in Australia and internationally. The TW team, under the able guidance of CEO John Dean, are a well-oiled machine who market their product aggressively and successfully. It is especially poignant that TW should win this award at the very time that John Dean has announced his retirement from the organisation.

Mr Mulherin: He is a great guy. He has done so much for the area.

Ms JARRATT: He has done an enormous amount for the region. I want to place on record my open and complete admiration for the fine job that John has done at the head of the organisation and thank him on behalf of the people of Whitsunday for his uncompromising dedication to our region.

Another great highlight of the night was a presentation of the president's award for excellence, which this year went to Daydream Island's Vaughn Bullivant. I know that the award caught Vaughn by surprise and rendered him almost speechless—a rare event—but he is certainly a worthy recipient of this prestigious award. Daydream Island opened after extensive renovations just one week after the horror of September 11 and the collapse of Ansett. So if ever an operator faced an uphill battle to secure a niche in the market, it was Vaughn and Daydream Island. If ever there was a person prepared to face the challenges head on, it was Vaughn and his Daydream Island staff. They have done just that by providing a destination of unique quality and facility. This award proves that fortune favours the brave. I congratulate Vaughn on his courage and commitment to the region and his island.

The category of luxury accommodation was taken out by the fabulous Hayman Island. Lloyd Donaldson and his team can be justifiably proud of this award as it is testament to the uncompromising elegance and superiority of service that is the Hayman experience. Last year Hayman Island went on to win the national tourism award for luxury accommodation, and I feel quite sure that our state's representation is in excellent hands again this year. Congratulations to everyone from Hayman Island for their magnificent and consistent contribution to the tourism industry.

While the Whitsundays certainly has a great reputation for its luxury accommodation, we are also very proud of our budget and family style resorts. This year the winner of the standard accommodation award went to Club Crocodile Long Island. Club Croc provides an excellent standard of rooms and facilities for those on more limited budgets who want to experience everything that a tropical island holiday can offer.

The list of Whitsunday winners goes on. This year the award for significant tourist attraction went to Fantasea Reefworld, a fantastic destination situated on Hardy Reef, 39 nautical miles from the Whitsunday coast. The Fantasea Reef pontoon has capacity for up to 600 visitors, with all the mod cons and coral viewing facilities one could hope for. Fantasea proprietor David Hutchen has always been a great supporter of the Whitsunday tourism industry, and the

confidence he has shown in the region through the establishment of Reefworld is to be applauded. He and his team at Fantasea surely deserve the recognition and accolades inherent in this award.

Last but by no means least, I want to mention the award for significant festivals and events, which was this year presented to the 2001 Hann Race Week at Hamilton Island. This fantastic event saw 182 yachts enter the annual race week which, according to Club Marine's online report, was the second biggest fleet of offshore yachts ever assembled for competition in Australia. Not only does this event present a magical vista of sleek vessels sailing in pristine waters against a background of stunning islands and beaches, it also provides a huge economic boost to Hamilton Island and the larger Whitsunday region. Like all of the Whitsunday's six winning entrants and many more who were not successful on the night, the 2001 Hann Race week is part of what makes the Whitsundays one of the world's most desirable destinations. My hearty congratulations go to them all.

South-East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (12.10 p.m.): An article headed 'Environment minister successful in BBQing koalas', with the subheading 'State development lost as public assets burn' states—

Kilcoy graziers battling a wildfire fanned by strong easterly winds today cursed the Minister for the Environment for removing large areas of native bush from proper management'.

That article was written in response to this government's policy of locking up state forests. As the drought continues, these types of articles will increase as firefighting becomes an almost daily event with an ever-increasing element of danger as the fires become totally uncontrollable.

I rise to speak about the South-East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement and land assessed under that agreement. I refer in particular to the recent designation of land in the Bunya Mountains, which until now has been classified as forest tenure so that cattle producers and beekeepers had access to that area. However, that area is now to be classified by the government as part of the Bunya Mountains National Park. The land in question is at the foothills leading to the Bunyas. The decision to change its designation under the RFA can be described only as a sneaky, land-grabbing exercise. The general feeling in the community and among the members who were appointed to assess the land tenure options for the forest is that the working group was purely a set-up. The government's pledges to consult the community are no more than an exercise to placate the community with no expectation that notice will be taken of those concerns. It is more than obvious that the government's community consultation process is now being used as a blind—and not only in this instance; it is becoming a general trend in relation to many issues that affect communities. I could relate many instances as it appears that the only time that the government really consults and listens to the community is when it has been caught out.

This is a disturbing trend by the Labor government as it formulates legislation by stealth. The Bunya land move is a classic example. At a time when the state is experiencing one of the worst droughts on record, many primary producers need all the help that they can get, not further barriers put in their way. Access to cattle agistment is essential in these dry times for primary producers. Now they have been denied that access.

The government cannot deny the stealthy way in which it has gone about this forest designation. For instance, the Nanango Shire Council and the working group first learned about this decision at its November meeting. A similar situation is now being faced by the Kilcoy Shire Council in regard to the state forest on the Conondale Range, which has traditionally been used by the cattle producers and beekeepers.

When is this government going to learn that, for the little mileage that it gets out of pandering to minority groups, it is destroying not only the livelihoods of producers but also it is affecting the economic contribution that those producers make to the state's economy. When is the government going to learn that as these extra areas are locked up to appease conservationists, they are creating a potential haven for feral animals and allowing the onslaught of lantana and other noxious weeds. Where is the sense in these sorts of decisions?

I have never heard of any greenies going en masse to fight bushfires in areas that have been locked up through their lobbying. That is the case now—with dry weather, the build-up of undergrowth, no forest maintenance, no access roads to many areas and land that is now unable to be managed for sustainable use. Where will the greenies be when noxious weeds such as

lantana strangle and decimate the very areas that they are supposedly trying to protect? I can tell members now that they will be in their urban homes watching television as brave SES volunteers risk their lives fighting fires, all because the very land that has supposedly been locked up by the government and the Greens for its protection burns, destroys homes and takes lives. Back-burning is essential. It not only helps to prevent fires but it is also an essential part of good management practice. The Aborigines did it, we have done it for many years, and now this government has stopped it.

Farmers can no longer be held out to be vandals. The modern farmer practises proper land management better than they did at any other time in our history. On the other hand, this government has been cited as conducting mismanagement of forests through neglect. This is another, more devastating, form of vandalism. The RFA was supposed to be set up for farmers to use as a model for their land management for the next 25 years. But the government appears have gone back on its word. What is happening now is apparently not what the graziers and beekeepers were informed would happen at the inception of the RFA. The very people who have a real knowledge and interest in proper forest management have virtually been excluded. This and the next generation will pay for the government's blinkered approach to the problem.

Sadly, the proof of what I am saying can be attested to in part by the current tragic bushfires that have occurred in New South Wales—another Labor state that pandered to the green vote, and which is now paying the price through the devastating loss of flora and fauna as well as losses to its communities. This government has failed to get the budget right and we have gone deeper into deficit. It failed and continues to fail the health system, which is collapsing and continues to fail in all manner of issues, because it fails to conduct proper consultation with the community groups that understand the issues. This government will go down in history as the vandal that destroyed this once great state.

Queensland Enterprise Workshop Program; Fone Zone

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (12.15 p.m.): From July to October this year the Queensland enterprise workshop program was conducted by the fabulous Queensland company, Achaeus. The QEW is a three-month program of high-intensity action conducted on a part-time basis for developing Queensland entrepreneurs. Since its inception, Achaeus has been providing services in Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and South Africa. Achaeus assists high-growth and emerging businesses to develop new opportunities through a better understanding of the entrepreneurial and capital raising processes. Achaeus offers education programs and services in entrepreneurship, opportunity evaluation, business innovation, strategic marketing, intellectual property, business planning and venture finance. Through well-established networks, Achaeus also provides entrepreneurs and high-growth businesses with access to capital, leadership, management, marketing and legal expertise.

Over the course of Achaeus' QEW program, developing entrepreneurs study a variety of disciplines that are essential for their future business success. These include topics ranging from strategic marketing and finance, intellectual property and venture capital raising, leadership, team building and negotiation and presentation skills. The program combines the resources of Queensland industry leaders and high-profile professional and experienced Queensland business practitioners to present a program that is rich and balances hands-on experience and theory. This practical program provides the opportunity for participants to develop a powerful strategic business plan for their companies and organisations.

I had the great pleasure to attend the Queensland final of the QEW program on 25 October and I was immensely impressed by the enthusiasm, passion and quality of the business plans presented by all participants. The Queensland final was won by Louise Broekman and Steve Cranitch, who presented their proposal, EasyPost, an outsourced mail service for SMEs. Last weekend, Louise and Steve took out the coveted national title in the business planning competition for entrepreneurs. This is the fourth consecutive year that a Queensland team has won the Australian title. I want to congratulate all involved in this unprecedented record. This consistent level of success of Queensland teams has been facilitated with great support by the Beattie Labor government through the Department of State Development.

Another successful entrepreneurial company is Fone Zone, which has its head office and national training centre at Eagle Farm in the electorate of Clayfield. Established in 1993 with only one outlet, Fone Zone is Australia's largest, independently owned specialist mobile phone retailer, and has grown from strength to strength in what some may see as a highly competitive and volatile industry. The change in the mobile communication industry in 1994 saw the repositioning

of Fone Zone's core business from selling carriers' airtime services to the retail market. This involved offering mobile phone products and services through traditional retail shops in major shopping centres. Their first retail store opened in December 1994 at the Gold Coast's Pacific Fair shopping centre.

Many people felt this was a high-risk venture in mobile phone retail shopping; however, the company successfully opened 15 retail stores in 1995 due to high retail traffic in shopping centres. Along with its alignment with Telstra MobileNet, Australia's largest digital network, Fone Zone now offers the latest model mobile phones and other telecommunications equipment and is committed to remain a leader within its industry and beyond. The company prides itself on the level of service it delivers to both the corporate clients and retail customers and aims to ensure that its service exceeds clients' expectations.

Fone Zone has established what they call a CARE Culture. CARE stands for Customers Are Really Everything. This acronym is a simple but effective reminder that the company serves both internal and external customers. Fone Zone also has a set number of core values from which all team members must operate in order to meet the company's goals. These core values are extremely impressive, some of which include: the aim to deliver exceptional customer service; encouraging competitiveness and a will to win; supporting the growth and development of their staff; avoiding excessive bureaucracy; and of course being proud for being profitable. Fone Zone continues to grow its retail channels and now has 55 stores nationwide throughout Queensland, New South Wales, ACT and Victoria, with many more planned.

In addition to its successful retail market, the company has also achieved impressive results in corporate and government markets. By June 2004, Fone Zone is aiming to be known as one of the most exciting float opportunities on the Australian market. The company is one of the state's most dynamic businesses making waves across the nation and I commend its amazing growth and development.

I had the opportunity of visiting Fone Zone yesterday. I have to say that I was extremely impressed with its passion and the way that it treats and understands its staff. The company is very much into training and employment. I congratulate Fone Zone on its business.

Racing Industry

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (12.23 p.m.): Last Tuesday, the member for Southport tabled documents during his speech on the Liberal Party's position with respect to prize money for the racing industry which he interpreted to be contradictory to my statements of 6 November 2002. This is simply an incorrect interpretation of the material tabled. Let us put this issue in context. On 30 October 2002 the members for Southport and Mansfield directly accused me and the Liberal Party of ignoring representations from the racing industry to siphon off gaming machine revenue to bolster prize money for the racing industry at the time the coalition government altered the gaming machine regulatory arrangements following the November 1996 white paper. Nothing could be further from the truth. The documents tabled by the member for Southport simply reinforce the position outlined in my 6 November speech.

The member for Southport began by quoting from page one of a letter dated 30 September 1996 to me from Bob Templeton, the then chairman of the Queensland TAB. I am not sure whether the member was provided the complete letter, but for the sake of completeness I now table the whole letter together with the attachment to that letter. There are three points to make with respect to the letter and the attachment. First, the 30 September letter was sent to me during the white paper development process and was not only read by me but was part of a consultation process with the TAB. I took this into account when making my address on 6 November. Second, an examination of the letter and the attachment shows quite clearly that the Queensland TAB was interested in becoming a monopoly supplier of gaming machines and monitoring services. This was seen as a prelude to the privatisation of the TAB and was about maximising the capital value and thus price of the TAB on its sale. It was not about maximising prize money for the racing industry. Even the reference to TABCorp in the submission was about price earnings multiples and the potential capital value of a privatised TAB—not about prize money for Queensland racing.

The TAB was not alone in making such representations. I recall similar discussions with the Golden Casket, Jupiters, Tattersalls, TABCorp and AWA Gaming. They were entitled to do so. But governments need to be wary of claims by corporations that there is a public interest in their gaining a government mandated monopoly.

Third, it is worth recalling that clubs and hotels had a different view. They were virtually unanimous in their view that they did not want the Queensland TAB to have anything to do with gaming machines, let alone be a monopoly supplier. Clubs and hotels considered the TAB arrogant and uninterested in their welfare. Experience told them a monopoly TAB would be detrimental to their interests. The fact that this perception seems to have changed under a privatised TAB in competition with other private monitoring agencies is a credit to TAB management. This reinforces the observation that industry structure is critical to establishing the right incentives.

Turning to the other documents tabled by the member for Southport, it is worth noting that the white paper was released on Thursday, 18 November 1996. Public meetings across Queensland were held by me the following week. Submissions on the white paper were taken until Christmas 1996. Further negotiations took place between 23 January and 14 February 1997, with a final agreement involving clubs and hotels being reached on Friday, 14 February 1997. I briefed cabinet on Tuesday, 18 February, and cabinet endorsed the new gaming machine arrangements I presented. These were publicly released on Wednesday, 19 February 1997.

Consequently, except for the first letter to me of 30 September 1996, all of the documents tabled by the member for Southport postdate the actual decision process. It is worth noting, however, that even in the letter of 5 May 1997, when the legislation was before the House, the Queensland TAB was still pushing for it to be the 'sole licensed operator under the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 1997' in order to maximise the price of a privatised TAB. There was not a mention of prize money for the racing industry.

Finally, let me remind members that many hoteliers had extensive links to the racing industry, to the ALP and to the National Party. But when they attended my public consultations, let me assure members that they only raised concerns about the return to them as hoteliers. In a market economy with a democratic tradition, that is their right. And it is a right I respect. But do not now try to rewrite history and blame either myself or the Liberal Party for the plight of the racing industry and the fact that it receives no money from gaming machine revenues for its race day prize money. To use racing parlance, when it comes to a conflict of principles, always bet on 'self interest' as at least one knows it is trying. And so it was with the TAB, hoteliers and other players during the 1996-97 gaming machine review and restructure.

Substance Abuse

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (12.26 p.m.): The final report of an inquiry into the inhalation of volatile substances was released in September 2002 by the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee in the parliament of Victoria and was given to me by a barrister in Townsville, Kevin Rose, whose understanding and commitment to the indigenous community in particular is not only sensible but also constructive and compassionate; he is very public in his support. The Children's Commissioner also released the *Volatile substance misuse in Queensland* report. I speak today because of the alarming number of new cases of substance abuse and its effect both on the abuser and the wider community. In Townsville we have our share of volatile substance abuse, but I am pleased to say that we have a very active working group across governments and NGOs who have come up with an agreed position and a number of practical recommendations. With this in mind, I can say that our community has been quite progressive in trying to deal with the problem, which is very underresearched.

Having said that, I believe that we have come a long way to addressing an ever-increasing community problem. It needs to be said that it is very difficult to come up with recommendations to address the problem when so little research has been done. This also has implications for success rates. But these reports, which are comprehensive, may act as a catalyst for further research into what amounts to neglect of substance abuse issues. It would be fair to say that substance abuse is not solely a drug problem but a problem about young people who use drugs as a symptom of their individual problem. This is what makes the issue so complex because we have to address the underlying causes of inhalation of volatile substances. Further, media attention has, to date, reported sensationally and often quite irresponsibly about substance abuse. This of course has the potential to promote copycat behaviour and can also stigmatise and demonise the young people, which ultimately will encourage the commencement and continuation of that particular behaviour.

Partnerships at a local level between the relevant stakeholders is critical if we are to prevent the tragic consequences of substance abuse. For instance, substance abuse in indigenous

communities must be handled sensitively and must be specific to the needs of those communities. Importantly, the views of young people must be heard and their input included in any strategies to deal with the problem. The Victorian report recommends a national response, headed up by a national steering coordinating committee, to coordinate prevention and treatment policy activities. I agree with this proposal. But because substance abuse requires urgent attention at a local level in every state, coordinating efforts like the partnerships in Townsville are paramount.

We would agree that substance abuse should not be criminalised, but I suggest that we need to be firmer in apprehending and detaining young people under the influence of a substance. I have spoken in this place previously on the same issue of compulsion with respect to public drunkenness. When will we be realistic and put welfare above rights? Police should be able to seize any intoxicant or volatile substance product from a child who is consuming, about to consume or suspected of consuming and so on. These children are frequently young, sometimes homeless, dysfunctional and violent.

In Townsville, many responsible retailers have sale restrictions, for which they are to be commended, but it is very difficult to mandate purely because a new substance will always be found to replace the banned or restricted intoxicant. A national approach and further research is very much needed in this area. Because so many communities are trying to address this problem, I feel that a state coordinating committee on volatile substance abuse needs to be established. In talking to young sniffers, reading reports and participating at the local coordinating group, I have gained a pretty good insight into the attractions of substances and their devastation. I show members a picture of Sophie, who is 15. She says that chroming is like 1,000 heroin rushes. For Michael, who is also 15, it gets rid of boredom, and time disappears. What seems like 15 minutes turns out to be half a day. I have a number of other cases as well.

I will finish by saying that data illustrating the extent of the problem is hard to come by, although international data is emerging. The magnitude and prevalence of volatile substance abuse is not insignificant and in Australia I think only two national studies have been conducted about mortality rates. Locally, we know that chronic users lead marginalised and destructive lives, engage in violent acts and commit crimes including victimising others and offending. Perhaps assisting police with legislative change may go a long way to addressing the issue, and certainly children should be protected as should the community.

A program of detox and rehab must occur before we can address the wider issue, that is, the causes. This requires the will of all levels of government working closely with the community. Logical consequences of an act and accepting responsibility for one act, or lack of responsibility, must be placed firmly on the agenda—not blame and ignorance. The welfare of our young people is critical, so let us get back to basics and use a little sense—remove, regulate, supervise and, above all, see it as a range of problems.

CORONERS BILL

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to provide for a coronial system, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.31 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Today is an historic day for Queensland's coronial system. The Coroners Bill 2002 represents a major overhaul of Queensland's coronial system, with a stronger emphasis on preventing deaths and a more sensitive and compassionate approach to families. For the first time, Queensland will have a coordinated, standardised and accountable system overseen by a state coroner. There will be a focus on identifying emerging patterns and all our coroners will have powers to recommend changes to prevent future deaths. We have designed the new coronial system to be

far more sensitive and compassionate towards families. There will be improved information and support, a greater sensitivity to different cultures and beliefs, and families will be given greater access to coronial documents during investigations. Nearly 3,000 deaths a year are reported to coroners throughout the state requiring some level of investigation. An effective and efficient coronial system can play a valuable role in preventing future deaths.

Queensland is a decentralised state and to have an effective coronial system we must have coroners located throughout the state. Therefore, the bill continues the current provision that every magistrate is also a coroner. At the same time, the Coroner's Bill 2002 will create, for the first time in Queensland, the position of State Coroner, who will ensure the coronial system operates efficiently and that reportable deaths are investigated to the appropriate extent. The State Coroner will be the central point to facilitate Queensland's ongoing participation in the national coronial information system. To ensure administrative consistency and best practice the State Coroner may issue guidelines about how coroners perform their functions in relation to investigations generally. These guidelines must have regard to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and must be issued about—

the investigation of deaths in custody;

investigations of deaths involving human remains found in suspected traditional burial sites; and

the doctors who are approved to conduct autopsies.

The State Coroner will have to provide an annual report to me about the operation of the act.

The bill modernises the categories of deaths that have to be reported. In particular, it provides that 'deaths in care' and 'deaths in custody' have to be reported to a coroner. Both these terms are comprehensively defined in the bill. All deaths in custody have to be investigated by either the State Coroner or Deputy State Coroner in accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. There must also be an inquest. The reason for defining 'death in care' in the bill is to give certainty to whom it applies.

The bill also provides guidance for circumstances where a Queenslanders dies interstate or overseas. A Queensland coroner would not investigate such a death if the death has been reported to a coroner in that place, or a cause of death certificate is issued. This ensures the coronial system does not duplicate investigations and that families do not have to suffer further distress. However, there is a safeguard that provides a power for the Attorney-General to order a coroner to investigate such a death occurring overseas or interstate.

The bill enhances the investigation powers of coroners. It also amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities act 2000 to allow the coroner to issue a search warrant, and to provide the police with search powers under the warrant. It provides an additional entry power to police on suspicion of death or injury. Under the bill, coroners and police can require people to give them information relevant to an investigation prior to an inquest. People do not have to give this information if they have a reasonable excuse, which includes the possibility they could incriminate themselves. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my second reading speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The bill acknowledges the importance of autopsies in the coronial investigation process.

A coroner who is investigating a death must order an autopsy except in circumstances outlined in the bill.

Before making an order for an autopsy requiring an internal examination of a body, the coroner must consider whether this may cause distress to a deceased person's family because of cultural traditions or spiritual beliefs.

The coroner must also take into account any particular concerns raised by a family member or other person with a sufficient interest.

Mr Speaker, it is important there is communication with families about the autopsy process and whether it has been necessary to remove an organ for testing.

If an organ is removed during the autopsy, the coroner must be informed prior to authorising release of the body.

The coroner can then order the release of the body without the organ if he or she is satisfied that:

- 1 if practicable, a family member has been informed of the removal of the organ; and
- 2 the retention is necessary for the investigation of the death—despite any concerns that have been raised with the coroner about the retention.

Coroners will be required to review at 6 monthly periods the retention of organs kept at autopsy.

An organ can be returned to family members if they want it after a coroner has determined it is not required to be kept.

Mr Speaker, in some cases it may be appropriate for the investigation of a death to culminate in an inquest.

The bill sets out what the coroner may consider in deciding whether or not to hold an inquest.

This includes the wishes of any family member, the prevention of further deaths and any guidelines issued by the state coroner.

There must be an inquest if:

- 1 the death is a death in custody
- 2 the death is a death in care and there are issues about the deceased person's care
- 3 the State Coroner orders it;
- 4 the Attorney-General orders it or
- 5 the District Court orders it.

An application can be made to the coroner for an inquest to be held.

If the application is refused by the coroner, there is a right to have the application heard by the State Coroner and then the District Court.

Mr Speaker, the bill also addresses the powers of the Coroners Court. It gives the court the ability to require a person to give evidence, even if that evidence would tend to incriminate the person.

Such a power may be needed in certain cases so the Coroners Court can find out what really happened to cause the death and make meaningful recommendations to prevent it happening again.

This power can only be exercised at an inquest and not in the pre-inquest coronial investigations.

There are safeguards regarding the subsequent admissibility of evidence given under this power, namely that the evidence is not admissible against the witness in any other proceeding, other than a proceeding for perjury.

Any information, document or other evidence obtained as a direct or indirect result of the evidence given by the witness cannot be used against the witness in any criminal proceeding.

Consistent with interstate trends, coroners will not have to consider whether a person has to be committed for trial.

This will enable the coroner to concentrate on finding out how the death occurred.

There will be an obligation for coroners to give information to the relevant prosecuting authority if the coroner believes that an offence has been committed.

The coroner can also pass on information to any relevant professional disciplinary body and the Crime and Misconduct Commission.

Coroners will be able to comment on anything connected with a death investigated at an inquest that relates to public health or safety, the administration of justice or ways of future prevention.

If these comments impact on the operation of a government agency, the coroner will forward them to the appropriate minister and chief executive.

This is a compulsory requirement in relation to deaths in custody and deaths in care. The Attorney-General also gets a copy in these cases.

The State Coroner's annual report must contain a summary of each 'death in custody' investigation and a summary of any other investigation that the State Coroner believes should be brought to the Attorney-General's attention.

Mr Speaker, we recognise the stress caused to families by lengthy coronial investigations and we realise the importance of the family being able to access information quickly.

The bill allows for family members and other persons with a sufficient interest to access investigation documents about a death directly from the coroner.

For public interest reasons and for the protection of people's privacy, there are safeguards to ensure information is not released inappropriately, such as any information which may prejudice a police murder investigation.

The coroner will not release information about the personal affairs of people, such as information about a person's medical history, unless it is essential to the investigation.

Mr Speaker, it is now almost 50 years since the current legislation was introduced into this parliament.

This new bill provides for a single point of accountability and central coordination for the Queensland coronial system by establishing the State Coroner.

It will provide coroners and police with the powers needed to do their job properly.

This bill will herald a much-needed change which will maintain and guarantee a coronial system that is efficient, effective, responsive and compassionate.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

CREMATIONS BILL

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

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to regulate the process of cremating human remains.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.36 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Cremations Bill 2002, which I am introducing now, generally reflects existing provisions about the cremation of bodies contained in the current Coroners Act 1958. Its main purpose is to ensure that the body of a person whose death is suspicious or should otherwise be reported to a coroner is not cremated without discovery.

As a general rule, a human body cannot be cremated or buried without a cause of death certificate. The cremation of human remains can mean that evidence of a death occurring in suspicious or otherwise questionable circumstances is destroyed for all time. This is why the current provisions dealing with cremations, contained in the Coroners Act 1958, have a further requirement that a body has to be examined by another doctor prior to cremation. Similar regimes operate in most other Australian jurisdictions. The Cremations Bill 2002 contains this safeguard.

Like the Coroners Act 1958, it contains a requirement that a doctor—other than the doctor who issued the cause of death certificate—has to issue a 'permission to cremate'. This doctor must examine the body prior to the permission being given. The exception to this is where an autopsy has been conducted by order of a Queensland Coroner. In these cases the coroner will issue the permission to cremate.

This bill also has a secondary objective—to guarantee, as much as possible, that bodies which contain cardiac pacemakers or anything else which can explode or cause injury during cremation, are not cremated. The bill achieves this secondary objective by providing that the 'permission to cremate' cannot be issued unless the person issuing it is reasonably satisfied that the body does not contain something which can explode or cause injury during cremation.

There are other features of the bill that should be highlighted. For example, in circumstances where a death occurs overseas the Cremations Bill makes it clear that if a body is repatriated to Queensland for cremation a 'permission to cremate' will still have to be issued by a Queensland doctor. The bill, like the current provisions of the Coroners Act, alters the common law rights of a personal representative to determine how a deceased person's body is to be dealt with. This is done, firstly, by requiring that a deceased person's wishes that his/her body be cremated are to be carried out. Secondly, the bill provides that a cremation cannot occur when certain people, usually related to the deceased person, lodge an objection.

The bill places certain obligations on those in charge of crematoria, including an obligation to give the ashes to the applicant after the cremation has occurred. The bill also obliges the person in charge of the crematorium to keep the applications, as well as the permissions to cremate. The exception to this is when the coroner issues the permission to cremate. In this case, the coroner keeps the application. Keeping the relevant records at the crematorium will ensure that all of the records relating to the cremation are kept in one location, should future access to them be required.

Under the current provisions, a de facto partner cannot make an application for permission to cremate or object to a cremation. The bill addresses this deficiency by giving a de facto partner the same rights as a married partner both to make an application for permission to cremate and object to cremation. This is consistent with the amendments to the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 recently passed in this place.

Finally, prior to 1996, the provisions governing cremation were contained in a separate act. It has been decided to have a separate act again, because the scope of the provisions is now wider than deaths subject to the coroner's jurisdiction alone. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

TERRORISM (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL 2002

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.41 p.m.):, by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to refer certain matters relating to terrorists acts to the Parliament of the Commonwealth for the purposes of section 51(xxxvii) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.41 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The terrorists attacks in the United States and Bali have, sadly, demonstrated that no one is immune from terrorist activity. Combating terrorism is a challenge for governments around the world and requires cooperation at the state, national and international level. Queensland, along with other state and territory governments, has been working with the Commonwealth to give Australians the best possible protection of tough antiterrorist laws.

The Terrorism (Commonwealth Powers Bill) 2002 is about closing off all possible escape routes for terrorists facing the Australian justice system. It ensures that the Commonwealth has the power it needs to outlaw terrorist activity. After the events of 11 September last year, the Commonwealth government convened a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments—COAG—also known as the 'Leaders Summit', to discuss terrorism and trans-national crime. From that summit came 20 resolutions aimed at fostering a higher level of cooperation between the Commonwealth, the states and the territories. This cooperation was demonstrated by the recent signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Counter-terrorism arrangements on 24 October this year.

The Commonwealth has already passed laws putting new terrorism offences into the Commonwealth Criminal Code in reliance upon its existing constitutional powers. Of course, the Commonwealth has no general criminal law power or terrorism power. Therefore, it is technically possible that there may be gaps in the legal constitutional basis for the Commonwealth offences. This could become the focus of litigation challenging the validity of the Commonwealth Criminal Code offences. No one wants terrorists escaping conviction on a technicality, especially terrorists who may be active in Queensland.

We agree with the Commonwealth that it is desirable and expedient to fill the gaps and eliminate, so far as is possible, constitutional uncertainties. This bill gives effect to that agreement by authorising a state referral of power to the Commonwealth of the necessary powers under section 51(37) of the Constitution.

The bill is short. The main provision is clause 4 which refers power to the Commonwealth to make laws with respect to terrorist acts or actions relating to terrorist acts as set out in the Commonwealth legislation, the specific text of which is annexed to the bill. A terrorist act is an act intended to advance a political, religious or ideological cause and to intimidate and cause serious harm. It does not include legitimate protests or industrial action that is not intended to cause serious harm.

The offences also prevent participation in groups declared to be terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiah. The power to amend the terrorism offences and the associated criminal responsibility provisions have also been referred. An intergovernmental agreement will ensure that the Commonwealth will not amend the legislation without the agreement of the majority of states and territories. Queensland's interests are protected in this regard by clause 5 which provides a specific power to unilaterally terminate the reference with a proclamation from the Governor. This proclamation takes effect three months after it is made.

Schedule 1 of the bill sets out the Commonwealth legislation which is the subject of the referral. Importantly, the Commonwealth legislation ensures that the state's criminal laws will not be affected by the reference. Clause 100.6 of the Commonwealth legislation makes it clear that the new terrorism offences are not intended to exclude or limit the concurrent operation of any law of a state or territory. An inadvertent, indirect consistency can be remedied by a Commonwealth regulation made under clause 100.7. This will permit a regulation to modify the operation of any terrorism offences.

The Commonwealth terrorism offences will be governed by the criminal responsibility provisions of the Commonwealth Criminal Code. This bill is not intended, and should not be allowed to compromise the fair trial of any person but is focused merely on ensuring that any legal technicalities relating to the Commonwealth's constitutional powers will not impede the prosecution of a person accused of terrorism. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

BODY CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (12.45 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997, and certain other Acts.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (12.45 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The unit and apartment sector of the real estate market is becoming increasingly important to Queensland. More and more Queenslanders are choosing unit living to suit their lifestyles. Many people, both from within Australia and overseas, are choosing commercial or accommodation units as investment properties. And the continued growth of tourism in our state relies on accommodation being available—much of it in community titles schemes. To meet these needs, Queensland needs an effective legislative framework for the successful operation of community titles schemes and bodies corporate.

The Body Corporate and Community Management Act was passed in 1997, establishing a more flexible framework than had previously existed for community titles schemes. Because of the legislation's complexity, the government of the day committed to review the act to ensure its objectives were being achieved.

The Beattie government launched a formal review of the legislation, consulting with community members and industry stakeholders. The result is the proposed amendments to the act that are before the House today, which, as a consequence of the review, also amend the Acquisition of Land Act 1967, the Land Act 1994, the Land Title Act 1994 and the Integrated Planning Act 1998.

The provisions of the Body Corporate and Community Management Act that deal with the creation of titles in community titles schemes will be transferred to the Land Titles Act. This will allow more consistent dealing with titling issues, and facilitate the future transfer of responsibility of the BCCM Act to another agency.

The proposed changes will enhance the act's capability to provide an effective framework for existing community titles schemes, as well as accommodating trends in a popular and rapidly developing industry. The issues that have generated most discussion relate to management rights—where a resident manager provides caretaking services for a scheme and acts as a letting agent for owners who wish to use that service. A scheme's success, and the success of related investments, relies on a strong working relationship between the resident manager, the body corporate and individual owners. Unfortunately, this does not always happen. With two distinct owner types—those who live in their properties, and those who use them as investments—tensions can arise because of their different priorities, especially if one group feels the resident manager is concentrating on the needs of the other.

Investor owners can feel disillusioned if their returns do not meet their expectations, especially if they are paying an increasing amount for resident management services. Bodies corporate can feel trapped in long-term agreements that fail to meet their needs. This bill seeks to bring balance to the management rights issue, proposing new codes of conduct to govern the activities of letting agents and service contractors like resident managers. Where there is a breach of this code of conduct, bodies corporate will have the power to require the transfer of the management rights business within a maximum period of 11 months. To prevent undue influence being exerted over owners when a body corporate is considering using those powers, this decision must be made by secret ballot with an independent returning officer. The time frame for the sale allows the rights to be sold at market rates meaning that management operators will not be unfairly disadvantaged. The effectiveness of these transfer provisions relies on them also

being applied to existing schemes. It is essential that no-one waits up to 25 years for a management rights term to expire before these situations can be addressed.

Many developers establish management rights agreements when they create a new scheme, agreements that are not always appropriate. These amendments will force developers to act in the interests of the future body corporate when entering agreements and also give bodies corporate and contractors a chance to review the contractor's duties and remuneration within three years of the agreement's establishment. This review will be by negotiation and will not afford an opportunity to either terminate the agreement or change its length. In commending this bill to the House, I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Another area needing some balance is the issue of term limitations on agreements. With increased control over management rights, bodies corporate shouldn't be prevented from extending agreements to the balance of the term to the term's limitation. To this end, the term limit provisions will be clarified in the regulations.

Under these amendments, bodies corporate will be allowed to buy areas used for caretaking and letting duties, including the unit occupied by the resident manager. This lot will become common property, and must be leased for the purpose of conducting a letting business.

The Act already contains provisions about adjusting lot entitlements, and these amendments will clarify and extend those provisions. Under the Act, there are two lot entitlement schedules:

The interest schedule defines relative ownership of common property in a scheme and is used to set contributions for matters related to individual lot value, like insurance and rates.

The contribution schedule is used to set contributions to the day-to-day operation of the scheme that should be shared by all lots, like maintenance of common areas.

The Act stipulates that lot entitlements should be equal under the contribution schedule, and reflect market value under the interest schedule, unless there are just and equitable reasons for the schedule to be set differently. Entitlement adjustment is granted by the District Court.

This Bill addresses four matters in this area:

First, it provides guidance for the lot entitlements by the developer, with the same criteria to be used for their adjustment.

Second, a specialist adjudicator will be able to adjust lot entitlements, as an alternative to the District Court.

Third, parties applying for lot entitlement adjustment by specialist adjudication will bear their own costs, to avoid threats of costs being sought against people opposing an application.

Fourth, it provides further guidance on matters that need to be considered when adjusting lot entitlements, specifying the factors a court or adjudicator may and may not consider when deciding what are 'just and equitable' circumstances.

The Bill includes new provisions on scheme administration. Bodies corporate will be able to authorise a body corporate manager to perform the functions of the committee, helping schemes with no resident owners and other schemes where it is difficult to form a committee. Safeguards on this include procedures for delegation of this duty, and a limited term of authorisation which will be included in the regulation models, currently being developed.

Complementing these provisions, schemes with existing body corporate committees will no longer be able to delegate their powers to a body corporate manager, avoiding the problems inherent in shared responsibility between a committee and a manager.

The Bill also simplifies the procedure for changing a community management statement. Instead of the current practice requiring a new statement to be submitted to a general meeting for each change, where owners can't vote to accept only some of the proposed changes, bodies corporate will be able to pass resolutions to alter particular parts of the community management statement.

The Bill addresses the development and establishment of schemes, concentrating on staged developments.

The community management statement that commences a staged development sets out the developer's intention and concept for the scheme. The amendments will clarify the roles of both the developer and the body corporate as each stage progresses.

For example, if the developer wants to change the order of stages but otherwise stay within the disclosure of the community management statement, the body corporate must consent to the revised community management statement showing the re-ordering.

If more substantial changes are proposed, and a new development application is required, the body corporate may object to the local government through the usual processes. If the proposal is approved, the body corporate again needs to consent to the new community management statement.

Some local governments have, in the past, misapplied their notation powers when it comes to community management statements, but these amendments prevent local governments requiring changes to community management statements that aren't relevant to their jurisdiction.

The Bill also increases the requirements for disclosure to potential buyers, whether lots are being sold off the plan or as existing lots, a measure that will enhance the Act's consumer protection measures.

A number of minor amendments are included in the Bill for legislative clarity and, due to the number of amendments, it has been necessary to renumber the sections in the Act to avoid long term confusion.

Mr Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to implement changes that were independently assessed as necessary to balance the competing interests of lot owners, the development industry and the management rights industry.

It is the product of a consensus reached through co-operation and negotiation by stakeholder groups in the community titles industry. I commend their commitment to acknowledging the needs of other groups and their willingness to compromise in the interests of developing practical, workable legislation.

This Bill will achieve a number of things. It will balance the competing interests of unit owners, the development industry and the management rights industry. It will improve the dispute resolution service underpinning this legislation. It recognises and supports the changing nature of the community titles industry with its increasing number of investment and multiple use projects.

Mr Speaker, this legislation is recognised, both interstate and internationally, as a strong model for establishing and administering community titles schemes. These amendments build on this strong foundation and I am pleased to commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. N. I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) (12.51 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend certain local government legislation.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mrs Nita Cunningham, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. N. I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) (12.52 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Local Government Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 primarily amends four acts—the City of Brisbane Act 1924, the Local Government Act 1993, the Local Government (Queen Street Mall) Act 1981 and the Local Government (Chinatown and The Valley Malls) Act 1984. The bill also makes minor consequential amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997. Since the Local Government Act was introduced, my department has conducted evaluations of components of the act to ensure it remains an up-to-date legislative framework that provides for an efficient, effective and accountable local government system.

A discussion paper on local government revenue raising powers was released in May 1999 to stimulate discussion about a range of general and technical issues relating to the revenue powers of local governments. The issues raised included the level of flexibility afforded to local governments to respond to community needs and the extent of transparency in local government decision-making processes. The discussion paper also included a number of proposals for legislative change arising from the Ombudsman's 1998 report on an own motion investigation under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974 entitled *Rate recovery practices of local governments in Queensland*. The findings of this evaluation have been used as the bases for the development of the bill, which addresses a number of the issues arising from the report.

The major objective of the bill is to adjust the current provisions for local government revenue powers in order to provide local governments with appropriate flexibility in revenue raising, improve the accountability of local governments in revenue raising and clarify the intended purpose and improve the workability of some current provisions. The proposed changes to the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act will achieve a number of key outcomes. First, the amendments will improve the accountability of local governments by developing new requirements for a revenue policy and a revenue statement to better inform the public about the principles underlying revenue raising measures. Second, they will provide greater flexibility in the use of local government revenue powers by providing separate heads of power for local governments to set commercial charges and regulatory charges. Finally, the bill will improve the workability of the City of Brisbane Act and Local Government Act in relation to the making, levying and recovery of rates and the granting of rating concessions.

The proposed changes to the Local Government (Queen Street Mall) Act and the Local Government (Chinatown and The Valley Malls) Act will achieve two main outcomes—clarifying that Brisbane City Council has the power to tow or bump away illegally parked vehicles in its pedestrian

malls and repealing provisions providing for a penalty infringement notice regime for prescribed offences under the two acts and local laws supplementing these acts. This will enable the council to utilise the state penalties enforcement regime instead. A key principle in the legislative framework for local government is that autonomy needs to be balanced with accountability. The amendments in the bill enhance accountability by providing for greater transparency in local government decision making, and better transparency means communities can better judge whether local governments are acting appropriately. Local governments can use the flexibility given in the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act to decide how the rate burden is shared across the community.

There are legislative requirements for local governments to prepare a range of planning and policy documents with opportunity for community involvement and scrutiny and one of these planning documents is the revenue policy, which provides for specific accountability and transparency measures in relation to revenue raising by local governments. During the consultation process, it became apparent that there were limitations with the existing requirements—that is, there is no requirement for a council to indicate its general approach to revenue raising in advance of the budget. Because of time constraints, I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Therefore, in order to improve the accountability and transparency of revenue policy decisions, the Bill amends the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act to replace the provision relating to the revenue policy which currently must be specified in the budget with new publicly available documents.

The first document will be called a Revenue Policy, but must be adopted in advance of the budget, to clearly set out the principles to be used by a local government in setting the revenue component of the annual budget and the broad strategy it plans to use to raise revenue. Principles for setting rates and charges, such as the extent to which a user pays approach is adopted, would be set out in the revenue policy.

The intent is for a revenue policy to be strategic in nature, consequently, local governments will need to prepare their revenue policy in advance of their budgets, in the same way a local government prepares its corporate plan prior to the budget.

Adoption of the revenue policy prior to the budget is a means of strengthening the rigor of the budget process. It also increases transparency so that the public is better informed about the local government's general approach to revenue raising.

Once the budget has been developed, a Revenue Statement is prepared, which is to be an explanatory statement to accompany the budget, outlining and explaining the revenue measures adopted in the budget process.

Another key amendment to the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act is removing the current legal uncertainty about the heads of power that apply to the making of commercial charges. The Bill amends the Acts to clarify that local governments can set commercial charges in the same way that a private sector entity can, and clearly separates this from the power to fix regulatory charges, such as charges for the issuing of a permit.

The Bill also provides a new head of power for the fixing of regulatory charges by resolution or by local law. The policy intent is that regulatory charges should recover no more than the cost of providing the service.

I would now like to turn to the amendments in the Bill to improve the workability of the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act in relation to the making, levying, recovery of rates and the granting of rating concessions.

Currently, local governments wishing to grant rating concessions to ratepayers who meet certain criteria, such as pensioners, have to deal with applications on a case-by-case basis. This can create an administrative burden for many local governments who must assess and process each application individually, as well as a burden on ratepayers wishing to take advantage of any applicable concessions.

The Bill will amend the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act to simplify the administrative burden for local governments and ratepayers by giving local governments the scope to approve concessions for the affected ratepayers as a class, rather than requiring separate individual applications.

This could be of benefit to rural areas that have been affected by droughts or other natural disasters, as local governments will be able to provide for a class concession without the need for individual applications. In balancing greater flexibility with greater accountability the Bill also enhances the transparency of concession powers under the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act by requiring local governments to state the purpose of the concession as part of the revenue policy before granting a class concession. The concession policy will only apply to the classes of land specified in the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act where rating concessions may be offered.

In response to the State's 'Damage to Roads Policy', the Bill will enable local governments to cooperatively respond to cross boundary matters by enabling a special rate or charge to be levied on properties in another local government area that will benefit from services, such as roadworks, required in more than one local government area.

Other amendments to improve the workability of the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act include:

- making it clear that a rate notice is valid if issued to the owner listed on the local government's land record at the date of issue;
- enabling a purchaser or their agent to notify a local government of a change in ownership of rateable land;

- explicitly providing that rates are a charge on the land and enabling local governments to register overdue rates as a charge with the Queensland Resource Registry;
- clarifying that a local government may make a local law about the recovery of airport landing charges from the holder of a certificate of registration issues for the aircraft, rather than recover the charge from the owner of the aircraft;
- requiring local government's to specify the criteria and categories for differential general rating as part of their Revenue Statement;
- allowing a local government to initiate sale of land procedures earlier for vacant or commercial land, where rates have been overdue for more than one year and a court judgment has been obtained; and
- once a court judgement has been entered for overdue rates, providing local governments with the ability to recover legal costs as an overdue rate.

It is expected that the Bill will not adversely impact on local governments or the community. The new transparency measures are not intended to require additional resources to be allocated by local governments. It will be up to each council to decide the overall measures needed to achieve appropriate levels of transparency. The provisions in the Bill are intended as minimum standards. My Department will also assist by providing training and updating the Department's Revenue Raising Manual.

The intent of the legislation is to provide local governments with a framework to raise revenue for infrastructure and services in an efficient, accountable and equitable manner.

There has been some 3 years of consultation on developing this Bill. In 1999 a discussion paper was released which commenced the consultation process. Draft legislative proposals and an associated consultation paper were released for public comment in August 2002.

Nearly 500 hard copy consultation kits, comprising the consultation paper and draft Bill, were distributed to stakeholders, including chief executive officers of local governments, Members of Parliament, peak representative bodies, other associated government departments and agencies, offices of political parties, and other interested people and organisations. Over 1200 copies of the consultation paper and over 1700 copies of the draft Bill were downloaded from the Department's Web site.

And of the 27 submissions received only 2 opposed the draft Bill.

The review of local government revenue raising powers centred around providing greater flexibility for local governments, balanced by accountability. The Bill provides a number of measures to enhance flexibility for local governments. The proposed revenue policy and revenue statement is seen as an appropriate way to balance the flexibility that councils have in raising revenue.

The Local Government Association of Queensland has advised it has no objections to the Bill.

Given the broad range of issues considered during the review, a number of matters raised in the review process are not proceeding in this Bill as they require further consultation or assessment before a legislative proposal can be finalised.

Finally, but most importantly, I want to thank all those who made submissions in response to the draft legislative proposals. The submissions have assisted greatly in finalising the Bill. Legislation dealing with local government revenue powers can be complex and balancing the needs of councils in providing services to their communities with the interests of those affected by their decisions is not straightforward. The provisions in the Bill are designed to achieve an appropriate balance. Ultimately the community is best served by councils acting responsibly and with foresight to ensure the long-term future of their communities.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (12.56 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (12.57 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am very pleased to introduce the Workplace Health and Safety and Another Act Amendment Bill 2002. The bill aims to ensure the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 continues to provide for

an effective modern regulatory regime that meets the needs associated with the changing nature of the labour market and ensures appropriate health and safety outcomes are achieved for all workplaces and that appropriate consequential amendments are made to the Electrical Safety Act 2002.

According to the Industry Commission, each year in Australia approximately 500 workers die while at work and a further 50,000 are injured or become ill. The human costs are immeasurable. The cost to the economy is more than \$20 billion a year. Queensland accounts for, on average, approximately 100 of those 500 work related fatalities throughout Australia each year and the estimated total cost to Queensland gross domestic product is \$3.5 billion. Figures from the ILO indicate that Australia has a comparatively poor international record with an overall fatal injury rate three times as high as that of Britain, Sweden and Japan and double that of the United States. As I said, the effect on workers in terms of pain, suffering and cost is substantial. The direct cost to employers is reflected in compensation payments made to workers, increased premiums paid for workers compensation insurance, days lost and the need to retrain injured workers or to train new workers. Indirect costs impose an even greater burden. Occupational injuries and diseases also place a strain on valuable public resources such as hospitals and the welfare system.

While I am pleased to report that the rate of compensated lost time injuries has decreased to 15 per thousand workers from 18 per thousand workers in 1998, more needs to be done. In 1989 Queensland introduced workplace health and safety legislation in line with the United Kingdom. The Robens model was based on moving from prescriptive regulation to a system based on performance based regulation. The new legislation specified safe outcomes rather than prescribing specific procedures. While some changes were made to the legislation in 1995 and 1997, the main principles upon which the legislation is based remain largely intact. A recent independent review into the organisation and delivery of health and safety services in Queensland recommended a review of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 to ensure it reflects changes in the labour market and meets contemporary regulatory needs. In view of the time, I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Changes in the labour market and, more particularly, the growth of 'contingent' workers, have affected the nature of the key relationships at work. The anticipated growth in 'contingent' workers and the complexity of new work arrangements require an examination of the current legislative framework particularly in regard to balancing the legal obligations at the workplace and strengthening the consultative mechanisms between employers and employees.

Mr. Speaker, while the key focus for workplace health and safety must always be on prevention, particularly through increasing knowledge and awareness of risks to health and safety and strategies for minimising these risks, enforcement activity has a direct link with the level of compliance with workplace health and safety standards and the incidence of injury and illness at work. Designing an appropriate regime that secures optimum compliance also requires consideration of penalties, incentives and the tools available to the Inspectorate to adequately perform its role.

The legislation must also provide the flexibility for the introduction of new technologies and businesses to function and grow in order to meet community standards and the needs of today.

Mr Speaker, there has been extensive consultation on this Bill.

Consultation commenced with industry, government and the community through the release of an issues paper in December 2001. A number of proposals to amend the Act were subsequently developed after consideration of the submissions in response to the issues paper. These proposals were presented to the Workplace Health and Safety Board in August.

After further development, the proposals were distributed to stakeholders in October 2002 for comment. In total, more than 100 submissions were received and more than 100 key stakeholders were consulted in face-to-face meetings to canvass feedback on the proposed amendments.

A final set of proposals has been developed for introduction into the House today.

I would now like to outline some of the key features of the Bill.

The traditional focus on the employer as the primary person with legal obligations for health and safety has become increasingly problematic due to a range of new labour market and contracting arrangements. The current provisions tend to rely too heavily upon the traditional employer/employee relationship and do not adequately reflect changes to work arrangements and the complexities of the modern workplace.

The amendments seek to strike a more appropriate balance of legal obligations based on who has control of the risks at the workplace.

Mr Speaker, the current legislation requires employers to ensure a safe workplace, but does not specify how this is done. The amendment specifies the key elements of the legal obligation to ensure a safe work environment. It specifies that the legal obligation to ensure a safe workplace includes providing safe systems of work, equipment, substances and training.

In addition, the amendments seek to balance the legal obligations of employers with others who exercise greater control of risks at the workplace. These include suppliers, persons in control of buildings used as workplaces, and persons who conduct undertakings that may affect the workplace.

The amendment will require suppliers to supply plant that is safe as well as information about its safe use. There have been examples where faulty equipment, ranging from cranes used at construction sites to gas cylinders used at backyard barbecues, which have posed serious risks to workers and members of the public, has been supplied from overseas markets.

Under these proposals, suppliers will be required to ensure that equipment that is supplied is safe and is accompanied by safety information. This is in accordance with all other jurisdictions in Australia. Such an amendment is designed to reduce the possibility of unsafe equipment being supplied to Queensland workplaces or supplied in Queensland to be transported to other States.

It is unfair, Mr Speaker, to require employers, especially small employers, to be wholly responsible for ensuring that equipment is safe. They buy equipment on the assumption that it has been tested and proven safe. The amendments provide a solution for these employers by requiring suppliers to ensure the equipment they supply is safe. They can do this, for example, by making enquiries and checks at the point of supply. Employers and members of the public will be able to purchase equipment knowing that checks have been made to ensure it has been safely manufactured or tested in the country or place of origin and that safety information is provided.

Mirror provisions will also apply in the case of substances supplied to workplaces that pose a risk to health and safety. This requirement is not onerous as there is an existing national Material Safety Data Sheet system that provides the necessary safety information for hazardous substances.

The Building and Construction (WHS) Taskforce (2000) recommended that an obligation be placed on designers, engineers and architects to ensure that the design of a building or structure used as a workplace does not pose a risk to the health and safety of those involved in the use, repair and maintenance of the building or structure from the design.

A quality safety management approach acknowledges the need to identify and design out foreseeable hazards as early as possible particularly at the design phase. The National Occupation Health and Safety Commission's Safe Design Project Report identified the construction industry as having many unique workplace hazards. The Report noted a failure by legislation to adequately address the duties and responsibilities of persons involved in designing buildings and structures.

The proposed amendment seeks to impose an obligation on those involved in the design of buildings to ensure they are designed so that they can be used, repaired and maintained in a safe manner. This may include designing into a building something as simple as anchor points so that a platform can be used to safely clean windows. The obligation will be restricted to the design of the building and not its subsequent use or alteration. It will also be restricted to those matters that a designer has direct control over, taking into account other parties who might take part in the design of a building such as owners and developers. Transitional provisions are provided to ensure that this will apply to new designs only. The provision will exclude residential premises.

The amendments address risks associated with buildings and fixtures and fittings. Under current provisions, employers who use buildings as workplaces have the legal obligation to their workers to ensure the building and fixtures meet safety standards whether the employer owns the building or not. This may occur, for example, where the employer is leasing the workplace premises and may have limited or no control over the building in which the workplace is located. Leases may provide for a variety of uses, and in some cases may allow tenants to alter fittings and fixtures, with or without the landlord's consent.

A provision to require a person in control of a building or in control of the fixtures, fittings and equipment in a building to ensure they meet legal requirements will allow a more equitable distribution of responsibility for health and safety based upon the creation and control of risks. Again, the provision will exclude residential premises.

The amendments outlined so far, Mr. Speaker, have addressed the current imbalance of legal obligations in the Act that are unfairly weighted against employers, especially small to medium sized employers. They seek to balance the obligations to control risks at the workplace by imposing obligations on those that are most able to control them. This is in keeping with the Robens style philosophy on which the Act is predicated.

The next series of amendments focus on another aspect of the Robens model, and that is improving workplace consultation between employers and employees. The core elements of workplace consultation in the Workplace Health and Safety Act are workplace health and safety officers (WHSOs), workplace health and safety representatives (WHSRs) and workplace health and safety committees.

A WHSO is required to be appointed by an employer where 30 or more persons are employed at a workplace. A WHSO is required to undertake approved training under the Act and has certain functions under the Act, but no mandatory tasks. In other words, after a WHSO is appointed and trained by an employer, there is no obligation on the employer to use the expertise of the WHSO or his or her services. Mr. Speaker, there are some 16,000 trained WHSOs with current qualifications in Queensland. This represents a significant resource that could, and should, be used more effectively.

The proposed amendment will require employers to enable WHSOs to conduct at least one workplace health and safety assessment each year using criteria developed either by the Division of Workplace Health and Safety or agreed to by the workplace health and safety committee at the workplace. A WHSO will be required to record the results of the assessment and submit them to the employer along with any recommendations to rectify any identified unsafe workplace health and safety conditions and practices.

An employer will be required to ensure the WHSO conducts the workplace health and safety assessment and provide appropriate resources for the conduct of the assessment and then take appropriate action to rectify any identified unsafe workplace health and safety conditions and practices.

Workplace health and safety representatives are representatives of workers who play a key role in fostering co-operation and resolving health and safety issues at the workplace. It is not mandatory for every workplace to have an elected representative, however, an employer must permit the election of a representative if requested by the workers at the workplace. The legislation requires the employer to only appoint one representative at the workplace unless agreed otherwise between the employer and the employees.

In order to improve the quality of consultation at the workplace, the amendments will allow representatives to request approved training and require employers to meet the cost of it. The nature and length of the training will be prescribed by regulation, subject to further negotiation with the parties. Consideration will be made for recognising current training that representatives may have. Where there is a dispute regarding issues relating to representatives, including their training, the parties may refer the dispute to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission for resolution.

The amendments will also include anti-victimisation provisions to provide statutory protection for workplace health and safety officers and representatives in the exercise of their functions and for any worker who raises health and safety concerns at the workplace.

With regard to compliance, an appropriate enforcement regime is required to encourage good performers and punish poor performers.

The Government recently considered the appropriate level of fines for offences under the Electrical Safety Act 2002 and the Dangerous Goods Safety Management Act 2001. It is appropriate for the penalties under the Workplace Health and Safety Act to mirror other legislation designed to ensure health and safety.

The change is considered important in that it will signal to the community and the courts the seriousness of the offences under the Act and the consistency of penalties for offences under all safety legislation relating to workplaces.

In addition, the Bill includes a new mechanism, an "enforceable undertaking", that has been introduced as part of a holistic approach to enforcement, broadening the options available to help achieve compliance with the Act. While relatively new to state legislation, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) currently uses enforceable undertakings under the Commonwealth Trade Practices Act 1974 as an option for enforcement with its legislation. The Electrical Safety Act 2002 provides for the use of enforceable undertakings for breaches of electrical safety obligations.

Mr Speaker, an enforceable undertaking is an additional tool to prosecution. It allows the chief executive of the Department to enter into a written undertaking with someone who has breached the Act that sets out what actions a person or company will take, over and above rectification of their breach of the Act. For example, a company may agree to provide publicity or educative programs to deter potential offenders, or implement programs to prevent future contraventions. This can be used as an incentive to improve health and safety, rather than as a punishment for having failed to comply with the legislation.

However, it is important to note that enforceable undertakings will not replace prosecution for non-compliance. Rather an undertaking can only be entered into as a means of settling a complaint prior to a prosecution hearing. Just as importantly, an enforceable undertaking will also be a legally binding commitment—enforceable in a court.

The changing nature of the labour market not only reflects the contractual basis upon which labour services are provided but also reflects changing workplace arrangements. Outworking, mobile work, agency hire workers, franchising, self-employment, working from home, and casual work, for example, are not conducted in traditional workplaces. Inspectors, therefore, need to have appropriate levels of access to places where they reasonably suspect work is being performed.

Inspectors also need access to places where specified high risk equipment (such as lifts) is situated. In addition, inspectors need to be able to inquire into the circumstances and probable causes of workplace incidents. The amendments ensure all these are adequately provided for.

The amending Bill also modernises some definitions. The notification provision for "serious bodily injury" (SBI) requires an overnight stay in hospital for an injury to be notified to the Division. This does not take into account modern treatment methods, especially as there is a movement away from hospital admissions to day surgery and community-based care. Many serious injuries occur that do not require subsequent admission to hospital as an inpatient, and there are times when a relatively minor injury may result in an overnight stay in hospital.

It is considered that one way to achieve notifications of serious injuries would be to include injuries resulting in "the loss of a distinct part or organ of the body" regardless of the duration of the stay in hospital. Such an approach also harmonises the process with WorkCover reporting requirements, thereby streamlining these requirements for business.

Under the amendments, "work caused illnesses" are reportable if they are contracted by a worker in the course of doing work and to which work was a significant contributing factor.

The current definition of "dangerous event" is ambiguous and subjective, with many employers expressing difficulties in interpreting the definition.

To promote clarity and simplicity, it is considered that the events to be notified to the Division are specified in the definition. These events include the collapse of a building or an uncontrolled explosion or fire.

Finally, Mr Speaker the amendments address and update a number of definitions that are related to the building and construction industry. The Bill will increase the threshold for the appointment of a principal contractor (PC) at a "construction workplace" from \$40 000 to \$80 000 in line with the QLeave threshold, in order to standardise, simplify and reduce the regulatory burden on the industry.

Under current arrangements, the client/owner is generally required to appoint a PC for a construction workplace or becomes the PC by default if no appointment is made. The proposed amendment will provide for the appointment of a PC by an approved form in order to clarify the identity of the PC.

It is also proposed, Mr Speaker, to include a provision that allows owners to appoint more than one PC for a site with the approval of the chief executive of my department. This flexibility is important in large sites which may be under the direction of a number of major contractors.

As I stated earlier, Mr Speaker, extensive consultation has been undertaken in the development of this Bill. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those stakeholders and persons who participated through their submissions and comments to the various consultation and issues papers released for public comment.

I am pleased to say that as a result of the consultation in the lead up to the Bill there is broad support for the legislative framework as outlined. I look forward to the continued strong participation of stakeholders with the implementation of the Bill. I also look forward to working with stakeholders in developing and delivering the information and awareness strategies to promote the amendments to the Act.

Mr Speaker, improvement has been seen in Queensland's workplace health and safety record in recent years. As I touched on earlier, Queensland's incidence rate for injuries requiring a week or more off work has dropped over the last 4 years from 18.3 to 15.2 injuries per 1,000 workers (from 1997/98 to 2000/01). This reduction in injuries can be attributed in major part to the effectiveness of the workplace health and safety legislative framework.

Although we're improving, there is no room for complacency as every fatality and every injury at work is one too many.

Mr Speaker, I believe this Bill represents the next significant milestone in reducing the number of deaths and injuries in Queensland.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.01 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

EDUCATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 7 November (see p. 4534).

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (2.30 p.m.): As the title of the bill indicates, this is a miscellaneous piece of legislation. It covers many areas, from preschools through to universities. In all it amends 11 acts. In summary, the opposition will support all amendments.

The first section relates to the university senate. I spent seven or eight years on the University of Queensland senate. It was one of the most enjoyable periods I have had in my time in politics. I would recommend it to all people because it certainly makes one aware of the funding issues within universities, how the lack of university places affects places such as Queensland, how curriculum has to be decided by the senate and how the student guilds and unions come under the control of the senate. As well as serving on the senate, one can work on separate committees such as the works committee, the discipline committee or the appeals committee, which really brings one down to the other side of life as far as some of the university students are concerned.

The first policy objective covers a small problem that a senate faces. It is the problem of costly and impractical arrangements in the process of filling casual vacancies on the governing bodies of universities. Quite obviously there are many anomalies which occur, and sometimes even the sincerest effort by legislators fails. However, the amendments in part 2 of this act seem to be a sincere effort to cover all of the anomalies which can be envisaged. Quite obviously, the composition of each senate or governing body is different. That is why there has been a need for each body to make its own contribution. Because each university has made its own submission, it is obvious that each has covered its own problems.

One of the problems universities have to face is that of education places at universities. There is no doubt if we go back into history at the federal level that before the population movements out of states such as New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania to states such as Queensland and Western Australia there was a criteria for determining how many university places each state should have. There is no doubt that when these population movements out of those south-eastern states to states such as Queensland and Western Australia occurred, both federal politicians and state politicians of all political persuasions failed to address the fact that states such as New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia should have lost places in comparison to the gains Queensland and Western Australia made because of their population movement. There is no doubt whatsoever that all politicians of all political persuasions were not game to attack the problem of taking university places away from New South Wales, Victoria or South Australia.

Whilst extra places may have been given to Western Australia and Queensland over the years, we have never come to grips with the fact that there are many students in Queensland

who achieve much better passes in their final year of high school than their counterparts in south-eastern Australian states and yet do not get into university. So we have this ridiculous situation of students in Queensland clearly being disadvantaged as compared to those in south-eastern states, and politicians being unable to adapt the criteria.

What they are saying now is that of all the extra places that are being awarded more are going to Western Australia and Queensland, and rightfully so. We have to continue to push that, but we should have taken places away from those south-eastern states when the population was moving out of there and given extra places to Queensland and Western Australia, which were experiencing special growth. That is a reluctance which has disadvantaged many of our own university students.

The second objective of the legislation is to remove a restriction on competition that has been identified following the implications of the national competition policy. Part 3 of the act allows for the fact that international educational institutions which are approved to deliver the curriculum of a foreign country are not involved in this accreditation regime. I would be interested to hear from the minister if there are any examples in Queensland of an international school receiving government funding but being allowed to deliver the curriculum of a foreign country. I would be most concerned if an international school, such as a Japanese school, was set up in Queensland to deliver a Japanese curriculum for Japanese students but yet received government funding for that curriculum.

The meeting of certain obligations by the Department of Education in the Overseas Student Act 1996 is necessary if we are to create a nationally consistent scheme in regulating the education and training industry for overseas students. We certainly need to allow the inspection of premises of providers of education and training to overseas students. Even in this legislation we are identifying the fact that at this stage we have not been able to move in and look at the premises of these new schools. I had two such schools. I had both Kooralbyn and Hills, or Jimboomba. Secondly, we need to have controls over the curriculum. Whilst I was involved in the setting up of both Kooralbyn and Hills, we have to be sure that the curriculum continues as it was promised. It is easy for those schools to adapt, especially if a country such as Japan goes through an economic downturn and there are not enough students for particular courses. There would be concerns if they therefore did not continue the curriculum that they had promised the Education Department.

There is no doubt that there is a need to ensure that the new accreditation and funding regime applying to non-state schools in Queensland preserves the previous entitlements of non-state schools. Quite obviously we have to guarantee accreditation in preschool, primary, secondary and special education. Sometimes it may be necessary to cancel a preschool accreditation and continue the accreditation for the primary school in the same location. There are also situations where schools operate on different sites.

I have several concerns about what can happen with non-state schools, and I bring to the attention of the minister and the department several problems I have noted with the recent downfall of Kooralbyn International School. Kooralbyn was an extremely unfortunate circumstance. People such as Cathy Freeman and Adam Scott went to school there. The school always had the Australian champion cricket team and golfers who won internationally. Yet in this year Kooralbyn has failed. Having seen Kooralbyn set up, I worry that the same thing might happen to other private schools.

Kooralbyn set itself up with a board or a group of trustees who looked after its finances. But at a particular time in 2001 they realised that things were getting tough, so they gave the control for the running of Kooralbyn to an organisation in New South Wales. Parents were worried that a group from outside of Queensland was set up to run Kooralbyn. Clearly that group was going to be dispassionate if the crunch came. And the crunch did come. It then turned around and said to the previous trustees and the board, 'Things are tough. You have to go into liquidation. We cannot see how you are going. We will have to pass it back to you as a group of trustees.' And the trustees, being private people, said, 'We cannot take it.' Therefore, within hours, they handed it over to liquidators and put the administrators in. Clearly, these people were going to close down the school immediately. Within hours, people were standing at the gate as the kids went home on a Friday afternoon, handing a note to the kids saying 'School will not be here on Monday'. If we allow these sorts of schools to set themselves up as Kooralbyn did and then fall as quickly as Kooralbyn did, something is wrong. I would ask that the minister does look at what happened.

Surely, there must be some proviso for these students to have some of their finances returned, because the administrators, Ernst and Young, told these people on the Friday

afternoon that parents of students up to and including year 11 who have already paid their tuition and boarding fees for terms 2 and 3 would not have to pay those fees again, but parents of students attending year 12 who have paid tuition fees in advance will be required to pay tuition fees again to the new high school that they were going to attend, Hills. Many of these students—international students, boarding students who had paid their fees for the whole year—were told in June that they would have to pay their second term fees again at the new school that they went to. They had no guarantee. Those parents who were yet to pay tuition fees for terms 2 and 3 would pay those fees to Kooralbyn. Why would they have to pay them to Kooralbyn? Kooralbyn has gone into liquidation. The kids were told, 'On Monday there is no school here. You will have to find another school.'

The other difficulty that occurred was that the students' records were left at that school. The group that bought the school—but not to run a school—had complete control over the students' records. I wrote to the minister about this matter. The minister tried whatever she tried to do to overcome this situation, but it was proved that the records of those students were owned by the new company that had bought the facilities at Kooralbyn. So these students' records, with all of the comments on them, were left at the school and were in the control of the people who bought the school site.

Surely there is something wrong if Education Queensland does not have control over a school that goes down and the fees that have been paid by overseas students and boarding students have to be paid again to the new school that they go to. If it is that Education Queensland could not control what was going on or did not have sufficient control to be able to take the school records out of the facilities, then once again I think that there is something wrong with our system. If any private school in Queensland can find itself in the same situation as the Kooralbyn International School found itself in—on a Friday afternoon handing notes to kids saying, 'There is no school here on Friday; in fact, the school does not even exist'—then I believe that the government has a problem.

The fourth objective in this legislation relates to the need for the Board of Teacher Registration to increase the board's power to inquire into events during a teacher's prior registration. This will enable the board to commence an inquiry, irrespective of how many years had passed since the registration ended. We support the fact that this objective is necessary so that, if we are to ensure that a person is restored to the register, children can be protected. I would appreciate it if the minister could advise how far back into a person's personal police records those checks can be made. Who has access to those records? What is the process whereby the Board of Teacher Registration asks for those details and searches those details? I note that this process is subject to the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986. Does this mean that there is indirectly a time limit during which personal records can be accessed by the Board of Teacher Registration?

The fifth objective of the bill is to address the need for Griffith University to overcome the fact that it has several colleges in separate locations and needs to incorporate them as part of the whole university structure. Personally, I congratulate Griffith University on the reputation that it has achieved, especially on its courses that initially were considered soft when compared to the standard courses that were offered by the more traditional universities. Although the fact that Griffith University has worked at many locations and has caused difficulties, there is no doubt that, by doing that, it has offered many advantages for Queensland students living in areas outside the metropolitan centres.

The sixth objective ensures that the new accreditation and funding regime applying to non-state schools in Queensland preserves full non-state school entitlements. The seventh objective shows that this legislation is a miscellaneous bill because it refers to the preschool trials and ensures that parents of children attending the trial would not be in breach of the compulsory attendance provisions of the Education Act.

I am most concerned about the way in which the present government is treating preschool education in this state. Many teachers and parents of my age were educated during a period when people believed that children should remain at home in the care of their parents until they were ready to enter year 1. But society has changed very quickly in this area, and now with the concept of working parents and social activities for young children provided by kindergartens, child care and preschool, there is a community acceptance of the benefits that can be offered by preschool education.

There is a need to cater for the demand for full-time, non-compulsory, non-academic preschool activities. The public has shown the government that if this is not provided by the state

government, then the public is prepared to move to the private school system to access full-time preschools. Many government preschools are closing simply because parents are moving to the private school system where they find that the full-time preschool facilities are available. During the estimates committee I heard the Minister for Education admit that she would like to put in preschools throughout Queensland, but at this stage she does not have the money. So we now have this decision to have trial preschools for full-time preschool and go through a period of consultation. This is going to be a long period of consultation. I know that the minister has said that we have to get it right—'We have to consult, we have to do the right thing'—but there is going to be a long period of three or four years where we are going to go through part-time, non-compulsory preschools in Queensland. Queensland will be the only state in Australia that does not have full-time, non-compulsory preschool education for our children.

I see a massive advantage in preschools, especially in terms of the socialisation of children and the activity based programs that they offer. During this period of consultation we will see the forces of discontent rising. This discontent will increase as the delay incurred during the consultation process increases. This discontent over full-time preschool will come from parents who see limited teacher aides to assist the teachers in these trial preschools. Limited assistance in preschools will mean a more standard curriculum with limited play-way activities and activities that lead to the socialisation of young children. Trial preschools are limited to those schools that elected to implement the programs in their schools simply because they had the physical facilities. Large areas will miss out. Discontent will rise. There is no doubt that opponents of the concept of preschools will come forward with criticisms of a system that is being implemented by this government on a shoestring budget. As I have stated, the opposition will support this legislation.

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (2.37 p.m.): It is a delight to rise to speak to the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. I will be supporting this bill, as indeed I expect most members of this House will. It is very good legislation. It addresses a range of important issues and I am delighted to support it. I note that the bill amends 11 acts. I propose to confine my comments to those four acts that relate to primary and secondary schooling in particular, although I certainly support the other amendments that are made in relation to public universities and extending democracy within the system for placing people on senates and various committees at universities.

I welcome the amendments that are designed to ensure the equitable and transparent treatment of all non-state schools as well as improving the efficiency of accreditation of non-state schools. This year, the Glendyne Farm and Youth Training Centre in Hervey Bay gained accreditation as a non-state school. I thank the Minister for Education for the close attention and assistance that she gave to having Glendyne's application approved. I know from my frequent visits to Glendyne and the regular advice that I have received from its manager, Ray Krueger, that it is an organisation that puts every cent that it can into its kids. It is an excellent non-state school and achieving non-state school accreditation has allowed Glendyne to stabilise its cash flow. I know that, as Glendyne also has an unending list of planned additions to the school, those streamlined procedures for the assessment of sites will certainly be welcomed as it expands its operations over the years.

I also welcome, as I am sure will all members of this place, the amendments this bill makes to the Education (General Provisions) Act to include an explicit power for the minister to seek a criminal history report regarding persons who wish to teach at an international educational institution. It is a point that probably does not need labouring, but in the current climate there is no doubt that the public of Queensland, parents and teachers expect very close supervision of people who work with our children. I welcome that reform. I also take this opportunity to endorse the Education Training Reforms for the Future and the provisions which this bill makes for preparatory year trials from 2003 to 2005. With those few comments, I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (2.51 p.m.): I rise to support the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. This bill seeks to amend 11 acts, seven of which relate to public universities in Queensland and four to the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989, the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996, the Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988 and the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001. The bill does not create a new legislative regime.

There are a number of unrelated objectives of the bill. The first is to deal with costly and impractical arrangements in the current processes for filling casual vacancies on the governing bodies of Queensland universities. The amendments will generally allow for the filling of casual

vacancies by providing for the appointment of the candidate who came second in the ballot. The second is to ensure that Education Queensland meets its commitment to the national competition principles agreement. This will be achieved by amending the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 to remove a restriction on the approval process for the establishment and conduct of international educational institutions which offer the curriculum of overseas countries.

The third is to amend the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 to enable the Department of Education to meet obligations prescribed at a federal level as part of a national scheme to regulate the education and training industry for overseas students. This will be achieved by inserting a power to allow Education Queensland as the registering authority the right to inspect premises where education is being provided to overseas students and a power to charge for this inspection. The fourth is to provide protection to children in Queensland schools by providing the Board of Teacher Registration with an extended power of inquiry to review events during a teacher's prior registration. The amendment, which recognises a recommendation arising out of the CJC report *Safeguarding students: minimising the risk of sexual misconduct*, will empower the board to commence an inquiry regardless of how many years have passed since the previous registration ended.

The fifth is to address a change in the structure of Griffith University incorporating the campuses of Logan and Gold Coast and three colleges of the university as part of the overarching university structure. This amendment will have the effect of ensuring that students and staff of the colleges will no longer be excluded from voting in university council elections or from standing for office. Further, the functions of Griffith University will be amended to reflect the university's special interest in and commitment to the cities of Brisbane, Logan and the Gold Coast.

The sixth objective of the bill is to ensure that under the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001 and the funding and accreditation regime applying to non-state schools in Queensland, non-state schools are given sufficient time to take their entitlements. The amendment will effect modification to the public notification requirements attached to the alteration and cancellation of accreditation and the assessment of sites added to a non-state school.

The seventh objective of the bill will be to amend the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989, which remedies an unintended consequence of conducting the preparatory trial year of education. The act currently requires children between the ages of six and 15 to attend school unless a dispensation has been granted by the minister. Some children involved in the trial may turn six during the year, therefore placing their parents in breach of the act. That amendment will ensure that parents who have children participating in the trial and who turn six during that period will comply with the act. The schools, both state and non state, that have been nominated to take part will be defined in the regulation. One of these schools which will conduct the preparatory year trial will be Goodna State School. I personally thank the principal, Gary McCarthy, the teachers, teachers aides and the P&C, particularly Debbie Bell, for their work in preparing the school for the preparatory year trial.

In summary, this bill seeks to do a number of important things. It will, through amendments to seven university acts, provide a more efficient and democratic operating environment in those institutions. It will ensure that institutions that wish to offer the curriculum of an overseas country are clearly informed of the conditions required for them to operate. It will also ensure greater safety for students. Teachers who are delivering the curriculum of an overseas country are not subject to the checks of the Board of Teacher Registration. This bill will provide the minister the power to request a criminal history check from the Commissioner of Police.

The education of overseas students is an increasingly important sector. This bill provides for the inspection of premises where courses are being delivered to ensure that they are appropriate and suitable. It ensures the safety of all our school children by ensuring that teachers are subject to an unlimited period of review of their previous teaching, not just the one year now prescribed in the act. It ensures that non-state schools are dealt with fairly in respect of taking up their entitlements under the Education Accreditation (Non-State Schools) Act and that unnecessary bureaucratic procedures are reduced. The bill also clears the way for the first phase of the Education and Training Reforms for the Future initiative, ensuring that parents of children participating in the trial are not unintentionally breaching the General Provisions Act.

Finally, it redefines the definition of the term 'indictable offence' to include an indictable offence that has been dealt with summarily. All the university acts and the Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988 deal with the appointment of members to these statutory bodies. These

acts have provision for disqualification of persons who have been convicted of an indictable offence. The law currently deems that a person who has been convicted of an indictable offence that was tried summarily has been convicted of only a simple offence. The amendment will ensure that convictions for such offences can be taken into account when a person's suitability to hold office as an appointed member of these bodies can be considered. This bill deserves the support of the House. It is about efficiency, about cutting red tape, about looking after this state's most precious resource—our children. I thank the minister, her staff, my staff, especially policy adviser Don Wilson, all the officers of Education Queensland and the statutory authorities who have assisted with this bill.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (2.58 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. I commend the minister on the initiatives contained in this bill and note that the bill provides for a new method of dealing with casual vacancies in the office of elected members of the university councils and senates in the case of the University of Queensland. Generally, I understand that this bill allows for the filling of casual vacancies by the provision for university councils to appoint the candidate who came second in the most recent ballot for the vacant office. I think this is forward step. The minister indicated in the second reading speech that the changes to the university acts will enhance the corporate governance fabric of Queensland universities, and I certainly agree with this change.

As the bill touches on the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 and the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2002 I take this opportunity to raise with the minister a question that was recently raised with me by a bus driver employed by a private school. The driver has, as I understand it, a requirement to apply for a blue card, that is, a working with the children card, because of his bus driving employment, although it is only on a part-time casual basis. The bus driver has brought to my attention that other bus drivers who do exactly the same duties in collecting and driving children to and from school do not have to apply for the blue card because they are employed by a private bus company and not the school. Can the minister clarify this apparent anomaly that exists in the current law?

One other matter that I have been asked to raise with the minister—and I take this opportunity to do so during the debate in relation to the bill—relates to the number of teachers who take on the role of acting in a higher position. In one school in my electorate there certainly seems to me to be a very concerning number of teachers acting in higher positions.

Has the department considered placing time limits on how long a teacher can act in a higher position without a teacher's status being clarified? It is fine for a teacher to act in a higher position, but that should be only on a temporary basis; it should not go on for the lengthy durations for which I understand teachers are acting in higher positions. I would like the minister to clarify this matter so that I can relay her response to the parents in my electorate. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (2.59 p.m.): In speaking to the education bill I wish to re-emphasise a point I made last week. The point missing last week in the debate on schoolteachers was the need for excellence in school teaching. Unless we are a government that is committed to the highest standards of excellence in our teachers, we cannot achieve that for our pupils. One of the methods that the government has embarked upon of offering an incentive for people who feel they are worn out to get out of teaching is a good one. Excellent teachers need excellent teachers working beside them. That will lift the whole standard of the educational attainments of the students placed in their care. I wish to emphasise that everything we do in this House has to be about lifting the standard of teaching towards excellence.

However, today I want to focus particularly on the need for us to attract to Queensland as many overseas students as we possibly can. Over the years I have heard various members from the One Nation Party condemn the fact that we have overseas students in this state. They do so on the incorrect basis that such students are taking the places of Australian or Queensland students. These students are here over and above. They are also providing work opportunities for Queensland and Australian teachers. In fact, where my brother-in-law works, at the University of Queensland, if it were not for overseas students the small section of his faculty would have to dismiss four staff.

Overseas education in Australia is more than a billion-dollar industry at the moment, and it is not new to us. In the fifties we had a scheme called the Colombo Plan, where we asked people to study in Australia, return to their country and take those skills with them. What has that got to do with modern Australia? The point is this: those students eventually work their way up in government and have a deep understanding of Australia—an understanding, I might say, that

transcends the statements given out from overseas political leaders in Asia on occasions. I will tell honourable members how that plan worked in Australia's and Queensland's favour.

Not so long ago we had pork producers in this state acting as a cheer squad for Pauline Hanson in the mistaken belief that she had some answer to their problem. The problem was the amount of imports of pork product. Simultaneously to that, a virus broke out in Indonesia and Malaysia. The leaders of those nations then looked to the country they had been educated in, namely, Australia, looked at the quality of our other meat exports and instantly turned to Australia to fill that need. That is why we have a pork industry today that is going very well for us—in fact, so well that we no longer hear any protests. Pauline Hanson was not able to offer the solution; the solution was education. It was education from way back in the Colombo Plan. We have a billion-dollar export industry called education.

I wish to inform the House about a very moving ceremony that I was involved in a couple of weeks ago in Vietnam. Vietnam is the third biggest importer of Australian education. It is an \$80 million industry. I am told that Australia has the biggest student intake from Vietnam—500 students a year. The important thing is the job match at the end of that study. I have been told by the Australian embassy that 97 per cent of the students returning from Australian universities are matched up and able to get a job. So we come then to the moving ceremony that I was involved with.

Last year I visited a school in Hanoi, the Trung Vuong School. It was a school in much need of library equipment. In fact, it did not have a library; there was not a book in it. The principal appealed to me to see what we could do to collect curriculum materials or just basic books for that school. When I went back to my electorate and mentioned it to business, Neighbourhood Watch, P&C and school groups, there was a dramatic response to the community. I am delighted to say that we had the largest book collection ever, which has found its way to Hanoi and by now, I hope, into that school.

The school invited us to its 85th anniversary. We got to meet the President of Vietnam, former teachers and pupils. Hopefully, out of that arrangement a school in Logan City, John Paul College, will be able to set up a sister school relationship with that school.

Mr Reeves: A great college.

Mr MICKEL: It is a great college and it is about to be an even better one, because it is going to look outwards and create a connectability that, I hope, in time will allow us to develop tertiary studies students who come here and study at quality universities in Australia.

Mr Reeves: It has had some great teachers.

Mr MICKEL: It has excellent current teachers and, I understand from the member for Mansfield, who has a vested interest in these things, an excellent former teacher, who no doubt will re-enter the profession and provide that excellence in teaching that I was talking about.

Whilst in Vietnam I also had the opportunity to meet with government officials in the Quang Ninh Province in the Ha Long Bay area. I had the opportunity to visit an orphanage. I want to leave honourable members with this thought. There are 75 pupils in that orphanage, ranging in age, I am afraid to say, from a new-born baby with HIV/AIDS all the way up to students who are about 18 years of age. There are 75 of them. That orphanage operates on \$A10 per student per year. One of the small offerings we gave that orphanage—and all honourable members will be pleased with this—was enough money to give them a Queensland Day meal last Friday. But a meal on its own is not enough. We have decided that what they need is ongoing education. The way I think we can provide education is to collect some funds to enable them to buy a television set and a video recorder so that lessons can be played on the recorder and those kids can learn some skills. Because they do not have life's advantages of a family unit, maybe—just maybe—we can give them the opportunity to develop some life skills to be able to obtain and retain employment. It is a scheme that we are committed to and I hope to get my community groups on side with it.

One of the other things that we discovered in that province is a great opportunity for Queensland. It is the opportunity in the tourist sector. Vietnam, emerging from years of isolation, is very keen to develop its tourist infrastructure. But what it needs fundamentally is training in the tourist industry. A number of hotels are being set up. There is an opportunity for TAFE Queensland to be involved in training staff in some of the four-star hotels. As a result of their staff completing a course at TAFE Queensland, they will become five-star hotels. The manager is very keen for Queensland TAFE to be involved in that. I am pleased to say to the House that, as a direct result of our visit, Ken Smith, the director-general, would have gone down to that province

either this week or late last week and met with those people. I hope there are export opportunities for Queensland, because that will create jobs and revenue, which will mean more money for the Queensland education system. It is a two-way street.

I noticed that the Honourable the Premier mentioned in reply to a question or in a ministerial statement last week that he considered education was a \$500 million investment and opportunity for Queensland. He mentioned how Australian Airlines is fitting into a program to bring students to Queensland from Japan. Last year alone there were 7,000 Japanese students studying in Queensland. That may have been at secondary and tertiary levels. I do know this: in visits I have made this year to Hong Kong and Taipei I have found that there is an excellent opportunity for us to ensure that our tertiary sector benefits.

The Central Queensland University in the electorate of the honourable member for Keppel has an excellent opportunity and a great reputation in overseas countries, as does the university based in Logan, the Griffith University. The important thing is that those universities are offering high quality courses. We have to ensure that those courses run their duration so that there is a degree at the end of it and that the courses on offer are high quality. If not, the greatest competition we face as a nation is from Canada and the United States. We are getting a very small percentage of overseas students, but they have to be convinced of the quality of our education system.

The other aspect of overseas students that I want to commend to honourable members is the importance of the university alumni. When students return home, it is essential that they be bonded to the Australian university system by grouping together former pupils who can, in turn, sell the message. We can never compete with the Americans on American marketing; it is simply too wealthy a country and we are too small. The alumni association will allow us to be able to do that in one of the best ways of advertising—informal networks. I commend that to honourable members.

There are two important aspects that I want to refer to before I close. One is this: when students graduate—and the universities are now awake to this—it is important to have the graduation ceremonies carried out in the countries where the students come from. It is not possible for the families to come over here and watch the graduation. What is important is that they be able to photograph it. Having the ceremony in the country of origin is very important to the students and very essential to the families who have turned out the thousands of dollars needed to ensure that that educational opportunity is available.

As a nation we should not boast about the fact that we are getting all this money from overseas students because something is lost in the translation in Asian eyes. It is very easy to cause insult. Whenever we get up and say that we are getting all this money from Asian students and we are not charging our own, it looks de facto like racism on our part. We should always emphasise high quality education, and that is what students will get here in Australia.

The disturbing aspect that I find with the federal government's policy at the moment is this: in some of the countries they are demanding fees up front. They are also demanding that a student shows that he or she can support their family before they come out here. The family could be up for several hundred thousand dollars and a delay, sometimes, in getting a visa. All of this can be done in the name of security, and I have no quibble with that. My quibble is this: if we are out of sync with every other nation—for example, the US—what is the point of it? We need to ensure that the Australian immigration system for overseas students is at least benchmarked with what is happening with the rest of the world. I cannot believe that a student coming from the Philippines is any greater threat of being a stay-over or a long-term stay, if that is what they are fearful of, than would be the case in the United States. All I ask is that we benchmark ourselves in the immigration department, our visa requirements and our up-front fees with the rest of the world.

As a nation, our universities have to be committed to excellence and first-class research. That is the way in which we will lift our own living standards and it is a way also in which we will maintain our credibility in the region and attract first-class students to our shores and help our export earnings.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.15 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2002. I understand that the vast majority of the bill deals with the filling of casual vacancies at a number of universities. In speaking to the bill, I commend the previous speaker, the member for Logan, on his discussion of his experiences overseas. I had the privilege of not going to the universities but to some exported TAFE education centres in Asia. It was a course that translated well into either community. I think it was hospitality. The

students were gaining very valuable experiences and education. They were modules that were simply lifted and transferred across. I thank the member for Logan for those insights into his trips into Asia.

The bill covers a number of issues upon which I want to touch. The intention is to allow schools to be assessed as they operate within a sector of schooling at a new site. I thank the minister for the very good briefing I received from a member of her staff. I appreciate the time that he made available in order to step through the legislation with me.

I understand that this ability to inspect a school that may have a campus at various sites came out of a situation where a school was registered as a single entity but had a number of campuses. The one that was cited in the briefing was the Agnew schools where they are registered as a single school but they have six different sites. I think it is very important, without being overly regimented or overly bureaucratic, that each of those sites be assessed for its suitability, not only in relation to the curriculum but also its suitability as far as buildings and other facilities are concerned.

Many of the smaller schools do not have all the facilities that state schools or the bigger private schools have. The parents choose to send their children to those schools knowing that there are limitations. My kids went to a very small school that did not have all the facilities of big high schools. We made that decision, knowing the limitations that the school site would have but also believing that there were other elements to the education that was provided that did not compensate but which we valued either equally or more highly. Some of these schools will not have all the facilities of the bigger schools but they will have other benefits, whether they be ideological, philosophical or whatever. These are the things that make the school beneficial to the family.

The bill also deals with modifications to accreditation. I believe a lot of these changes reflect the reality of demographics and the dynamic nature that some schools demonstrate. It allows for the various types of education—preschool, primary, secondary and special education—to be approved at any given site on a separate basis. If a school finds that, in cycling through any given time, perhaps the approval for the preschool has to be put aside or suspended for a period of time, that can be done without putting at risk the approval and accreditation for the other levels of education. As with the state schools, most private schools now cycle through and increase their educational availability from primary through to secondary. Then they add the other elements of preschool and special education as the need arises.

One of the growing elements in all schools, but particularly in the private sector, is the voc.ed., which is becoming an integral part of the curriculum with students in either years 11 and 12 or only in year 12. They do vocational education in preparation for their exiting the school. It is extremely valuable. A lot of young people are gaining some experience in areas of work in which they have demonstrated an interest or an ability. Over a 12-month period they are allowed to experience two things: firstly, their ability to be involved in that style of work and, secondly, to see if they like it. It gives them some time to change their stream.

It is slightly more academically based than work experience. The Toolooa State High School is very heavily involved in the vocational education program as is the Gladstone State High School and, to a lesser degree perhaps, Chanel College, and all those schools are doing it well. The Group Apprenticeship Scheme and another group called Sain have also established these kinds of programs. The changes in education recognising kids' strengths and weaknesses are very valuable. I also commend the minister for giving some relief to the 18 schools that had entitlements reduced inadvertently during the transition period for the last major change to the non-state school legislation. This legislation will remediate that disadvantage, and I certainly commend the minister for acting on that.

There are a couple of other areas I want to comment on. In relation to the transitional provisions for the compulsory education sector, the major concern expressed to me about that has not been so much in the philosophy of it but the resourcing of that additional educational requirement. One issue raised was the allocation of 15 hours per week for a teacher aide for the preschool period. It is felt very strongly that that is insufficient time given not only the number of students but also the high demand that younger students place on teaching resources. I draw the minister's attention to that. I believe that in great measure the success or failure of the trials—the additional year required at the preschool level and the higher grade level—will hinge on resourcing to a great extent.

I commend the minister for changes to the ability of the board to conduct inquiries about certain persons. This chamber has had to act in situations where people subject to a CJC and now a CMC investigation merely removed themselves from vulnerability by resigning from the government institution at which they were employed when the allegations were made. These amendments allow for an inquiry to be conducted on the basis of a public interest test whether or not the person has allowed their teacher registration to expire. Its purpose is not to persecute or harass an individual, but it is so easy to allow one's registration to expire in order to remove oneself from accountability and investigation. I believe that that is very sound.

I also commend the minister for clarification of the offences to be considered when considering a person for appointment to a statutory body. Previously a number of criminal history checks were carried out. However, the problem that was identified was that the law currently deems that, when a person has been convicted of an indictable offence that was tried summarily, the person has been convicted of only a simple offence and that simple offence was then not caught up in the investigation into the person's suitability for appointment to a statutory body. I asked the person who gave me the briefing on this bill to give me some examples of the types of offences that this change would cover. He very kindly provided me with a number of examples such as certain drug offences under the Drugs Misuse Act 1986, an offence of a sexual nature without circumstance of aggravation where the complainant was over 14 years and the defendant had pleaded guilty, and assaults that do not occasion bodily harm where the maximum penalty is no more than seven years.

This amendment will ensure that convictions for such offences can be taken into account when a person's suitability to hold office as an appointed member is being considered. I believe that most members would agree that it is entirely appropriate that the manner in which an offence is dealt with should not remove that offence and the commissioning of the offence from consideration as to the person's suitability to act in a responsible position. That does not mean that consideration of those offences will necessarily remove their eligibility but, rather, call them into account.

The other issue I want to raise follows on from the member for Nicklin's comments about the blue card. This is an issue I want to raise but with some caution. Like many members, I have had some reaction in my community about blue cards. Initially, the reaction has been positive. However, there have been some sectors that have expressed some frustration that even though they are upright, law-abiding citizens they are required to apply for the card. It was only fairly recently—the middle of this year—when I was asked by a service club to talk to it because some of its members were affronted by the fact that they were being asked to apply for a blue card. As it turned out, because of the functions that club carried out it meant that those people would not be required to apply for a blue card because it was a one-off yearly function with some children in the community and therefore they were not required to get a blue card.

After about an hour and a half of discussion—there was a small presentation and then questions and answers—I would say that all but one of the people in that group was comfortable with the reasoning behind the government's introduction of the blue card. They accepted the logic that the blue card was not intended in any way to imply that people were assumed to be potential child harmers but, rather, that it was intended to address incidents and situations in the past which have shown that people who have an intention to harm children will often offer their services in areas where children congregate and are present and that was part of the reason for introducing the blue card. I was very pleased with the accepting manner that this group demonstrated once it understood the government's basic philosophy for introducing the blue card. I would have to say that 99 per cent of people are in agreement.

However, an issue has been raised with me, and it is a contentious issue—that is, parents of children at schools who are exempted. This came to light in my electorate—it may have come up in other electorates; I do not know—because of an incident where a couple were charged with deprivation of liberty, rape, sodomy and a number of other quite grievous charges because they had held a small child against her will. This was something that nobody in my electorate ever expected to see. However, it brought to the fore the fact that the male person who had been charged had been a volunteer at one of the schools over a long period of time. A number of people in my community raised with me this apparent anomaly that parents are exempted from getting a blue card while they have children at the school, yet I understand that it would draw huge criticism from parents if they were required to go through the application process.

However, on the basis of that experience and whilst I certainly pray that it does not happen often, that would not be the only such offence in the entire state of Queensland. Therefore, I ask

the minister whether there has been any consideration given to parents, even in a modified form, being required to get a blue card or some other criminal history check if they have children at the school. This bill, as I said, changes a number of processes with regard to universities and also touches on some very important issues in relation to children, particularly in relation to child safety. I certainly commend the minister for introducing the bill.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (3.28 p.m.): I am delighted to rise in the House today in support of the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. The bill amends 11 acts, seven of which relate to public universities in Queensland and another four acts—that is, the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989, the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996, the Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988 and the Education (Accreditation of Non-state Schools) Act 2001. This is a very fine bill, and as we approach Christmas and the end of the school year it is an appropriate time to discuss some of the achievements and also some of the concerns of parents, students and teachers in the local schools within the electorate of Indooroopilly.

During tonight's dinner break I will be attending the graduation of year 7 students at the Holy Family Primary School in Indooroopilly. It is a wonderful little Catholic primary school. The principal, Margaret Gallen, does a marvellous job. I have spoken of her in the House before. I have also spoken of their excellent art teacher, Mr John Fitz-Walter. About two weeks ago I attended the Holy Family art evening. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would be blown away by the standard of art that these primary students are producing. I think in large part credit for that has to go to the fine teaching of 'Mr Fitz'. 'Mr Fitz' is quite an accomplished artist in his own right. I understand that he was short-listed in last year's Moran portraiture awards. We are looking forward to big things from him in the future as well as to big things from his students.

Nudgee Junior College, which happens to be a neighbour of mine, last year was successful in winning the national community and future problem solving competition held in Melbourne. This year a team from Nudgee Junior—I guess they were Nudgee Junior old boys; they were in year 7 when they were successful in winning the Australian leg of the competition, so by this year they had all moved on to year 8 and were variously at, I think, St Lawrence's and Gregory Terrace—

Mr Mickel: Good school.

Mr LEE: They are both great schools. These young boys went to Connecticut in the United States and competed against approximately 3,000 other teams from around the world. Some of the schools from the United States that were attending had dedicated staff who would coach the students for 12 months to compete in this competition. I am happy to say that our boys from Nudgee Junior in Indooroopilly went to Connecticut and came back world champion future problem solvers. I think it is a great sign of how innovative this little school is. I think it is a great sign also for the future of Queensland as a Smart State that we can send a bunch of young men to compete in the US against the best that the States and the rest of the world has to offer and they can come back as world champions.

It gets better. In October of this year Dylan Nagle, William Sullivan, Jak Einicke, Dominic Fanning, Xavier Goffinet, Hugh Norton, James Woodward, Joe Mitchell and Jack Coughlan went to Melbourne to compete in the national titles. I congratulate coach Anne Butler and her assistants Ros Peters and Mirella Pascolo. Hopefully next year, funds permitting, there will be another team of Nudgee Junior students heading to the United States to defend their crown. They were successful again in becoming Australian champions in their area of the community and future problem solving competition.

It would not be appropriate to speak of Nudgee Junior and not mention the wonderful work that Barbara McGeever does at the school. She is a wonderful music teacher at Nudgee Junior. She brings out the best in the boys. The boys at that school are, for I think two years running, the best Catholic primary school choir in Queensland. This is a choir of boys at an all boys school. These young men are falling over themselves to get into the choir. Selection to the choir is not based on talent or anything like that. Barbara has the view that any boy can sing and sing well given the right opportunity. They do a wonderful job.

Last week I attended the awards night at Nudgee Junior. The tradition is that the year 6s at that school put on a musical for the awards night. As this year is the Year of the Outback, the theme of the musical was Year of the Outback. They put on a wonderful performance for the parents. I know that everyone went away very impressed. I commend the Nudgee Junior school captains for this year, Tom Pyke and Damien Moulton. I think they did a great job this year. They have left some very big shoes to fill for the 2003 captain, Patrick Smith, and the 2003 vice-captain, Dominic Gallagher.

I refer to Indooroopilly State High School. This year the year 12s at Indooroopilly were absolutely wonderful. I have to talk about their debating team.

Mr Terry Sullivan: Especially Jack.

Mr LEE: I will talk about Jack in glowing terms in a minute. Aimee Gust, Zach Lurje and Jack Fuller competed, and for the first time; for the first time ever, a state school made the finals of the Queensland Debating Union Senior A. They were unfortunately defeated in a very close split decision, 3-2. Jack Fuller was successful in receiving the Noel Wilson Memorial Trophy for the best speaker of the semifinals. It is a wonderful achievement. It would not be right to say that good debaters are just born; I think they are made. The wonderful work Fiona Lang does in coaching that team could never be underestimated. She does an absolutely wonderful job.

Mr Terry Sullivan: They should be very proud of what they did.

Mr LEE: They should be exceptionally proud. I know that the member for Stafford is entirely sincere when he says that, because he was there on the night. His young fellow actually MCed the evening. It was a delight to introduce Fiona Lang to the Premier last week when she attended a function at the parliament. Indooroopilly State High School does a wonderful job in debating. The team members have left huge shoes for next year's year 12s to fill. I know that the leadership team at Indooroopilly next year will do a wonderful job.

Indeed, it was a pleasure to be able to present the students with their captains badges about a month ago. Clare Boerma will be the general captain, as will Patrick Chen. Jodi Gardner is next year's academic captain, Mia Storey will be the arts captain, Tanzih Ahmed will be the socio-cultural captain, Samantha Payne will be the sports captain and Grace Moss will be next year's student representative council president. I am looking forward to great things from them. I will read an excerpt from their leader's pledge. It states—

I accept the leadership office conferred upon me this day by our school community.

...

I promise to ensure that my behaviours demonstrate my commitment to our school values. As a student leader, I give a commitment to value:

- Each person's dignity
- Our community's diversity
- Open communication, and
- Quality learning

I am very confident that that is something they will achieve next year.

I raise some issues related to Fig Tree Pocket State School. Last night I attended a Neighbourhood Watch meeting chaired by Ken Graham, who does a wonderful job in running Fig Tree Pocket Neighbourhood Watch. It would have to be the largest Neighbourhood Watch meeting I have ever attended. That group is working very hard. It is important that the Fig Tree Pocket Neighbourhood Watch works hard, because the school has had a couple of issues recently with break-ins. I am as concerned about this as anyone.

I have spoken with parents and teachers at the school and also with the Department of Education. I believe that we need to re-examine the school's risk assessment and look towards putting in place some systems so that people stop nicking our computers. If members had attended the Neighbourhood Watch meeting last night they would have seen how active that group was. Had thieves seen that, I think they would think twice about getting up to any shenanigans at Fig Tree Pocket. The message I give to anyone thinking about getting up to any sort of silly buggers around that school is: watch out because we are watching you and we will catch you.

I would like to close by referring to a concern that I have about the Fig Tree Pocket State School and the Indooroopilly State School. As there has been a lot of development in the area around those schools, I understand that there is a difficulty for the residents of Jay Park. Jay Park has always technically been in the catchment area for Indooroopilly State School. However, as the crow flies, it is dramatically closer to the Fig Tree Pocket area. I understand the concerns that the residents—and my neighbours—in Jay Park have. We are working to ensure that we get an acceptable, long-term solution for everyone. I am delighted to say that for the schools in the Indooroopilly electorate this year we have had a great year.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.40 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. This legislation that we are considering is an omnibus bill that amends 11 acts that are administered by the Minister for Education. The

bill contains a number of mechanical amendments, but I want to concentrate upon the primary policy objectives of this legislation.

The first of those relates to the filling of casual vacancies on the governing bodies of Queensland universities. Another amendment amends the Education (Overseas Students) Act to introduce national uniformity to regulate the education and training industry for overseas students. I heard what the member for Logan had to say in his contribution. I commend the member for that. I think that it was a very positive address in relation to this issue.

Another amendment extends the powers of the Board of Teacher Registration to ensure the protection of children by ensuring the integrity of the Queensland teacher register. This bill also proposes changes to the structure and organisation of Griffith University by rationalising into one entity the various entities that operate at a number of campuses in a number of locations in south-east Queensland. Some provisions are also included in the bill to account for the trial of the 2003 preparatory year proposal and ensure the accreditation and funding regime for non-state schools. I think that this is a very important aspect of our education system and one that I will be watching very closely to see how it is accepted by the wider community. My colleague the shadow minister and the member for Beaudesert has raised a number of issues in relation to some of those provisions and, in that regard, I look forward to the minister's comments. Finally, this bill removes restrictions upon competition that apply to current education legislation to ensure that Queensland preserves its entitlements under the national competition policy agreement.

I would like to take this opportunity to raise some significant issues in relation to difficulties that I am presently encountering in my electorate of Gregory. These issues are applicable to the state school system. I believe that, regardless of what education system it is, it is the most important thing that we have in society today next to our health system. It is absolutely paramount that, regardless of where that educational system is located in the state, it functions in a viable and acceptable way.

I want to draw the attention of the House to the Emerald North Special Education Development Centre. The Special Education Development Centre, which is located at the Emerald North State School, is the only one available on the Central Highlands. That school has parents and children attending it from Capella, which is a 104-kilometre return trip; Clermont, which is a 208-kilometre return trip; Tieri, which is a 164-kilometre return trip; Dysart, which is a 326-kilometre return trip; Alpha, which is a 334-kilometre return trip; Blackwater, which is a 144-kilometre return trip; Bluff, which is a 184-kilometre return trip; and Springsure, which is a 128-kilometre return trip. They attend sessions either biweekly, weekly, fortnightly or monthly at that special education unit. At present, 30 children are enrolled at the Special Education Development Centre. Outreach sessions are held at the special education units at Dysart and Blackwater to increase the services that are available to children and reduce the amount of travel that is required. The Special Education Development Unit is staffed by a teacher in charge and one or more teachers, and the Special Education Development Centre is staffed by one teacher.

The real issue relates to the review of the precompulsory service and policies for children with identified additional needs. Is this service being cut back? I hope that the minister might make mention of this matter in her reply, because this is a very important part of the education for those children with special needs on the Central Highlands. I have been to that centre at Emerald and I can say that the teachers and the staff there, with the support of the parents, are absolutely fantastic. They teach these children who have difficulties that are certainly going to cause them great stress in their life ahead. It is at this time in their educational life that we need to make absolutely certain that these children are getting the best available education.

Research indicates that early diagnosis and intervention is crucial if a child is to make the most of their abilities in a formal education setting. The SEDC role is critical if the government's goal of total inclusion is to be more than rhetoric. The impact of the SEDC goes beyond the children who the teachers work with; it is vital for the entire family of the children of that centre. The staff at the SEDC help parents to accept that their child has a disability. They also provide them with informal contact with other parents in similar situations, which shows the parents that they are not alone.

Teachers at the Emerald Special Education Development Centre also liaise with teachers in other educational settings such as kindergartens and preschools. Strategies of intervention and the management of the children going into those centres is discussed between the teachers. That not only helps the child but all the children who attend the kindergarten or preschool involved. However, funding for children with a disability in a school environment is already inadequate and full integration will not help. Some of these children will never be able to make

the transition into primary school and be integrated with other children because their disability is too great.

This is an unfortunate situation. We cannot have this unit close down, or any other unit like it. I plead with the minister to make absolutely certain that we see the full retention of this Special Education Development Centre in Emerald. There has been a suggestion that services from Rockhampton replace this Special Education Development Centre. It is unrealistic to think that that may even be in the minds of some people. Infrequent visits will not give those children the continuous support that is essential for their sustained development and their families. As I said, the parents and children involved have to travel great distances to attend the centre at Emerald.

These are very special children. To expect parents to use mainstream services such as playgroups instead of the Special Education Development Centre shows a complete lack of understanding of children with a disability. At the Special Education Development Centre children have the opportunity to make friends, to be made welcome and to be part of a group. These may be small steps, but they are vital in everyone's life. If these children are to be contributing members of our community, it is absolutely paramount that we recognise not only the needs of these children but also what their parents are endeavouring to do for them at this time of their early childhood development.

As I just said, I have been to that centre. I saw those wonderful staff and the compassion, the love and the care that they have for those children. It is absolutely paramount that we have the full retention of this centre. Emerald is a growing metropolis and its catchment area is the Central Highlands. It is very, very important that this facility is retained in its entirety.

I refer to the issue of acting principals and selection criteria. The number of acting principals in country schools and one-teacher schools is creating an environment of destabilisation. I know of a couple of instances in my electorate where teachers who have transferred from other schools to act in a higher position want to stay, but the selection criteria shuts them out and the process does not allow them to stay. While they can apply for those positions and while they fit in well with the local community, the next thing we know they are shunted off somewhere else. This has a destabilising influence on many of our country schools, one that I hope the minister and her department pay particular attention to. It is absolutely paramount that schools small and large have some stability. At the end of the day, a stable staffing environment allows people some security of tenure and allows them to put in place criteria that will be part of their teaching strategy at the schools in question.

At Barcaldine this year there were about three or four science and maths teachers. It has been brought to my attention this afternoon—and I hope the minister does address it before the start of the 2003 school year—that at Blackall one teacher has been transferred at this late stage. This teacher was the swimming coach, swimming being an important part of the teaching curriculum at the middle school and the primary school. The other teacher at the school is the senior maths/science teacher. We know the drama, angst and upset caused with there not being any science and maths teacher at Barcaldine. I hope that these two staff members will be retained, because the P&C at Blackall does not want to lose these two teachers. If there is a reason behind this, I ask the minister to ensure that there will not be a problem with these two teachers in question because we certainly want to retain them. I understand that they want to stay. If they want to stay, that is a plus in anyone's language. I know there have been a few other issues at schools in my electorate over the past 12 months.

I know there is one very pressing issue at this very point in time at the Quilpie State School. I know that that has probably been brought to the minister's attention, but it is an issue that cannot go on unaddressed. I will make absolutely certain that it is addressed so that in 2003 all the staff, students and parents work together collectively in a happy school environment. This is absolutely paramount in terms of the ongoing benefits to children, but we must regard the professionalism of teachers and the other staff so that we have an environment advantageous to all and sundry.

Overall, I am more than happy with the way Education Queensland has looked after the education needs of the Gregory electorate this year. It is very important that we start the 2003 school year with as many principals as possible in permanent roles. If we are to have a stable environment for our schools at the start of a year, it is paramount that those teachers are fully placed and that if they are in acting positions such positions are short term.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (3.55 p.m.): I shall touch on a couple of aspects in respect of this bill. The first is overseas students and the bill's relationship to the University of Southern Queensland; secondly, the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act with

reference to the new Catholic school at Highfields; and, finally, some comment with respect to clause 36 that amends the criminal history provisions of the principal act.

As the member for Logan indicated so eloquently, the importance of overseas students to the Queensland universities is immense. Of course, of most importance in that regard is the University of Southern Queensland. Might I say what an honour it was to be appointed by the Minister for Education to the council of that university. Since my time as a councillor I have been able to contribute to some extent—and I am particularly proud to say that I had some influence—in the granting of \$10 million to that institution via the Department of Innovation and Information Economy for the establishment of the Fibre Composites Centre of Excellence. I am sure that, whilst I am not able to attend some of the meetings because of parliamentary commitments, that has in some way made up for my absence from time to time.

This year the University of Southern Queensland has had some remarkable successes, particularly as it relates to international students. This has in fact been the best year for USQ in terms of international students. There has been a record enrolment on campus and in studying by distance and online by international students. The total number of international students for 2002 is 5,577 all up, of whom 4,471 are studying off campus via either distance education or online. This number of off campus students is an increase of 17 per cent on the previous year. A total of 1,106 international students are studying on campus. That is a massive increase of 41 per cent on the previous year. Clearly, the USQ is being recognised in international markets as a leader in distance and e-learning education.

What are they doing right? A recent audit conducted by the Australian University Quality Agencies heaped praise on the university as a whole but made particular mention of USQ meeting international students' needs. The audit made particular mention and praise of USQ striving to market to more than just its traditional markets. In the past the USQ has attracted masses of students from Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. Now, thanks to the work being undertaken by the university, it has also caught the interest of students from China, Europe, Germany and many other areas.

The partnership the university is building with other education institutions around the world is another major factor in this success. In particular, it is involved with Edexcel, a partnership widely recognised. Edexcel is a network of learning organisations around the world providing distance education opportunities to students regardless of where they live in the world. The Premier would be particularly aware of USQ's outstanding achievements in this regard having officially launched the partnership between Edexcel and the University of Southern Queensland in London recently in the presence of the vice-chancellor, Professor Peter Swannell.

Another innovative approach USQ is using to attract students involves the partnerships it has with other Queensland institutions such as TAFE and learning colleges within Australia. This new program is about providing pathways in the Australian education system for international students. Now, through USQ, international students can further their education. For example, a student may come to Australia and begin their studies either at a high school or, for example, interstate at Perth in a TAFE college. They then may look to upgrade and further their education opportunities by looking to a university that recognises their studies and offers support for international students. In this case, USQ is proving to be a very popular option for these students.

I wish also to place on record the valuable work done by Paul Braddy on the Premier's committee set to attract overseas students to Queensland. Clearly, USQ is not only offering flexibility to Australian students but to all students around the world. Through USQ international students can study via distance education or online overseas in their home country, in another country, in Australia, in another city, in Toowoomba or on campus in Toowoomba. In addition, international students can also mix and match between these options, providing flexibility during their stay in our state. USQ really upholds the ideals of the Smart State. Not only is it providing opportunities to international students; it is also supporting the Queensland economy and creating local job opportunities. Clearly, it is at the forefront of the international student education system in Queensland and it should be widely praised for its endeavours.

In my remaining time I wish to touch on the establishment of the new Catholic school at Highfields, relevant as it is to the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act. Construction of the Highfields Catholic primary school was commenced recently. It was recently named the Mary MacKillop School after Australia's first Catholic saint. Next year's enrolments currently stand at around 60 students for preschool to year 3. The total establishment of the school will cost about \$2.224 million, and the majority of those funds will be coming through capital assistance and state infrastructure subsidy via this government. I congratulate the minister on giving approval

for this school and, therefore, arranging for those funds to be made available. The building is to be completed by mid-January, with students to start at the school at the beginning of the school year on 28 January 2003. The school will officially open on 8 August, the feast day of Mary MacKillop.

Something unique about the school and for the Toowoomba Catholic Education Office is that the school will not be a parish primary school. Instead, it will be a diocesan primary school. The parish in which Highfields is situated, St Matthew's Parish at Crows Nest, will play the role of pastoral support for the school under the parish priest, Father Terry Hickling. Essentially the school will have a close relationship with the parish, but it will work independently. The foundation principal of Mary MacKillop School, Donaugh Shirley, is to be commended for the unique community approach she is taking to the formation of the school. She has been heavily consulting with the Highfields community to put together a school that meets the community's expectations and needs. Several committees have been formed to achieve this, including the school resources committee, the uniform committee and the building committee.

I must say, as the local member, that there is support for the establishment of the school from all sections of the community, including the local state school. There is evidence of a great deal of goodwill between that school, the Christian college situated nearby and the new Catholic school as well. The Crows Nest Shire Council should also be commended for the role it has played in providing liaison with the Catholic Education Office and the school community. The Catholic Education Office says that it has been a tremendous help.

The Toowoomba Catholic School generally has been well known for the close-knit community it has built over the years. Yesterday in Toowoomba we saw that firm relationship reinforced, when students and staff of the Toowoomba diocese's second oldest Catholic primary school, Holy Name, led by the dynamic Mr Phil Cash, provided Mrs Shirley with gifts for the diocese's newest school. Those gifts included a Mary MacKillop bottle brush tree, a cross and some soil from Holy Name School symbolising the passing on of the Holy Name heritage. I wish to place on record my congratulations to that community on what it has achieved and offer it our best wishes for success in the future.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (4.04 p.m.): The Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002 amends 11 acts relating to different areas of the Queensland Education portfolio. We must acknowledge that in amending the university legislation in the past there were somewhat impractical and at times costly arrangements in the processes for filling casual vacancies on various governing bodies of Queensland universities. We will see these amended and this will enable more efficient and cost-effective appointment processes that will maintain consistent representation on governing bodies through swifter processes.

The Queensland University of Technology Act 1998 and the University of the Sunshine Coast Act 1998 are also being amended to clarify that part-time and full-time academic and general staff are eligible for election to the relevant university council and to vote for the election of staff to the council. The Education (Overseas Students Act) 1996 is being amended, which will see recognition of Queensland's commitment to the coordinated regulation of the education and training industry for overseas students through the interaction of complementary state and Commonwealth law to ensure that the education and training export industry continues to bring benefits to Australia.

Previously members have spoken about the positive aspects of utilising education as an export industry. Although they might not seem complementary, this is a win for the Australian people involved and the Queensland education industry and also those who travel from overseas. I take on board the concerns of the member for Logan, who said that sometimes it might seem as though they are merely exporting dollars to an education system overseas. But they are importing a great wealth of knowledge. Those of us who met with scientists and others recently through Science Week and similar will acknowledge that many of the scientists and tertiary educated people we met with also have to travel overseas to gain tertiary qualifications and experience. Not only do they benefit from education; they experience other cultures, their delivery processes and so on.

As a child of five years old I was lucky that my father was in the Royal Australian Air Force and we travelled to Malaysia. I started my schooling in Penang. I benefited through learning of other cultures, which has stood me in good stead throughout my life. On the Sunshine Coast we have numerous schools that take on board students from overseas. The critics should look at the facts. To my knowledge, they never take on board overseas students at the expense of

Queensland or Australian students. For example, if 2,000 people can be catered for in a school and if there are only 1,800 local enrolments, the school might take on 200 overseas students.

The Kawana Waters State High School is involved with the Shandong Province. It has been marvellous for the community that I represent on the Sunshine Coast. Kawana Waters State High School is a very well respected high school. The Chinese students lift the standard and also provide an opportunity for local Sunshine Coast residents who attend the school to interact with people from overseas and learn about and benefit from other cultures. I commend Jo House and all her staff, who work very hard. I know the minister is in regular contact with Kawana Waters State High School in making sure that it is of benefit. The small amount of money made through these overseas students benefits not only the Education Department but also the community, because they live within our community. The money goes back into the education system and improves the school. That is one of the benefits, which I am very proud to mention.

Mountain Creek State High School is also in my electorate of Kawana. I am quoting now from 'The Creeker' which is the school's booklet. In part it says—

'Multiculturalism' isn't just a concept at Mountain Creek State High School in 2002. It's a way of life. With 15 fee-paying international students on campus in semester 1 this year, the school has created its own melting pot of cultures.

Students from Japan, Germany, Brazil, Bolivia and Nepal, plus our own multicultural mix of school families, help create new challenges in understanding, acceptance, tolerance, and friendship that only serve to enrich us all.

They are very good words. A lot of Sunshine Coast people would never have the ability to travel the world, and here they are meeting people from half a dozen different cultures from all around the world.

The education and training export industry brings great benefits both to this state and to the nation. In 2000, the Commonwealth Parliament passed a new act setting out the Commonwealth's requirements for education services for overseas students. The amendment to the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 is being progressed in the interests of maintaining the harmony of state and Commonwealth law. The successful interplay of these regimes is intended to foster the continuing success of the industry by ensuring that education and training services for overseas students are world class and to protect the investment of overseas students pursuing Australian educational qualifications.

The state electorate of Kawana is somewhat of an educational node. Not only do I have numerous great high schools, both private and public; I also have primary schools, a TAFE college and a university. They are all getting together to make sure that they utilise this area as an education node. I know that the minister is aware of this. I commend her and her department for bringing forward this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.12 p.m.): The Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002 amends 11 acts relating to different areas of the Queensland Education portfolio. It does not create a new legislative regime; however, it brings together a number of policy objectives.

Consultation on the bill has been undertaken with a number of key stakeholders, including the Queensland University of Technology, the University of Queensland, the James Cook University, Griffith University, the University of the Sunshine Coast, Central Queensland University, the University of Southern Queensland and the Board of Teacher Registration.

The first primary objective of the bill is to remedy costly and impractical arrangements in the current processes for filling casual vacancies on the governing bodies of Queensland universities. This bill will enable more efficient and cost-effective appointment processes that will maintain consistent representation on the governing bodies. Generally the amendments allow for the filling of casual vacancies by providing for the university council to appoint the candidate who came second in the most recent ballot for the vacant office.

Amendments will be made to the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 to enable the Department of Education to meet certain obligations prescribed at a federal level as part of a nationally consistent scheme to regulate the education and training industry for overseas students. The Governor in Council will retain the power to set further conditions on an international educational institution's approval where an application to operate indicates that further conditions may be necessary for the efficient and sustained operation of the institution.

The third primary policy objective will be achieved by amending the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 to insert a power allowing the inspection of the premises of providers of education and training to overseas students and a power to charge a fee for the inspection. The

bill will extend the inquiry power of the Board of Teacher Registration to increase the board's power to inquire into events during a teacher's prior registration. The extension of this investigative power will enable the board to commence an inquiry irrespective of how many years have passed since the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002 registration ended to establish whether or not a person is fit for restoration to the register. This policy is in the interests of protecting children from harm and to protecting the integrity of the Queensland teacher registry.

However, it is recognised that relevant information about events during a teacher's registration may only become known to the BTR many years after the teacher's registration has ended. In recognition of this, the amendment extends indefinitely the time in which an inquiry may be commenced in excess of the two years recommended in the report. The benefits of employing a careful screening approach to people who will be in regular contact with children far outweighs the infringement of liberties.

The legislation will ensure that the new accreditation and funding regime applying to non-state schools in Queensland preserves in full the entitlements of non-state schools secured under previous legislative arrangements and that the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board can administer the regime in an efficient and responsive manner.

The Darra-Jindalee Catholic School which serves some of the children in my electorate was selected to take part in the preparatory year trial. This is a relatively small school with a reputation for providing an excellent primary education within a religious framework and teachers and staff are well thought of throughout my electorate. To ensure that the parents of the children participating in the 2003 year trial will not be in breach of the compulsory attendance provisions of the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989, the bill provides an amendment to allow for children who will turn six during the course of their participation in the trial.

The bill is about ensuring the quality of education in Queensland and ensuring that children in the schools within our electorates are protected. I congratulate the minister and commend the bill to the House.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (4.17 p.m.): The Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002 proposes a range of amendments to legislation within the Education portfolio. I want to take the opportunity to speak about some exciting developments in education in my electorate and specifically how they relate to the government's Education and Training Reforms for the Future.

The State Labor government has allocated \$6 million towards the relocation of the Australian Catholic University from Mitchelton to Banyo. ACU's new campus, McCauley at Banyo, together with the state government's new P-12 college, Earnshaw State College at Banyo, are both rejuvenating educational opportunities for young people in my electorate. Construction of the university is well on track with the move to the new campus expected to be completed in early January 2003.

I note some of the comments made by the member for Logan about international students and our need to encourage more of those to attend universities in this country. I agree wholeheartedly with his comments. ACU has a very strong international student body and is looking to expand that market in the near future. I look forward to supporting them in their endeavours to increase their market share of international students coming to this country.

Also in my electorate I have Nudgee International College which, in conjunction with the University of Southern Queensland, is also very strongly targeting international students. It is a market we need to be supporting. All members of this place should be supporting that endeavour as much as they possibly can.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to inspect the university site at Banyo along with the university's pro-vice-chancellor, Professor Muredach Dynan and Richard Clifford, the project manager for the new Banyo site. I have to say that the government's \$6 million has been well spent. I am sure that all students, staff and visitors to the new site will be impressed with the facilities that have been provided. Some of the significant features include two-tiered lecture theatres, one catering for 300 students and the other for 150. The university also has a magnificent library building which will host the largest theological collection in Queensland, along with an extensive collection of books, journals and computers to access its electronic database.

For the first time, the university will have a wide range of great sporting facilities, a pool and expansive cricket and football fields. Many acres are still yet to be developed. A host of new and refurbished buildings containing lecture and tutorial rooms, drama and music facilities, information

technology, teaching and nursing facilities, staff and student offices, canteens and a host of other student and community facilities are also being provided.

Situated on the site of the old Banyo Seminary, the university sits on the hill which overlooks the Boondall Wetlands and the suburbs of Banyo and Nudgee. It is a spectacular site which I know will be a great place of learning for many generations of students. I am particularly proud and pleased that the university is opening its doors in Banyo next year. One of the key elements of the government's education and training reforms is to establish stronger links with TAFE and the university sector. Having ACU located just across the road from the new P-12 Earnshaw State College will maximise opportunities for those students who wish to engage in further tertiary study. The P-12 campus will also provide a valuable training opportunity for the student teachers being prepared by ACU. I hope that we are able to put in place the necessary arrangements to achieve the many synergies that can flow from partnerships between the university and the college in that regard.

Earnshaw State College, as I have indicated, is the other jewel in the crown that has been created in the Banyo-Nudgee community. With the support of the state Labor government to the tune of around \$9 million, we are creating a unique educational precinct in this area. Next year in the suburbs of Banyo and Nudgee a child or a student will be able to attend everything from kindergarten through to university all within walking distance of their home. What a fantastic achievement that will be for this community! The development of Earnshaw State College will position our local students to make the most of the education and training reforms that have been proposed by the government.

Earnshaw State College will be comprised of three subschools—a junior school catering for students from preschool to year 5, a middle school catering for years 6 to 9 and a senior school for years 10, 11 and 12. The model fits perfectly with the government's reforms which also include substantial effort and resources being placed on the early and middle years of schooling. In that regard, I am very happy that Geebung State School in my electorate is one of the first 39 schools in Queensland to conduct a trial of a full-time preparatory year of schooling before year 1. Geebung State School has a wonderful reputation for providing first-class educational opportunities for its students. Under the leadership of principal Clyde Campbell and prep year teacher Julie Slingsby, Geebung is set to further enhance the educational opportunities for children in Geebung and surrounding districts.

Last week I took the opportunity to inspect the classroom and play area that is being upgraded to cater for the prep year class. I and the school community are very appreciative of the extra resources that Education Queensland is supplying to the school to ensure the success of the prep year trial. It is also pleasing to see that parents have given the trial their full support. The prep year program is already fully subscribed and parents and the staff are looking forward with anticipation to the benefits it will deliver to their children. It is an exciting time to be in government. These reforms are the most significant changes to our education and training system in a generation. I am pleased that the Nudgee electorate is well placed to make the most of them, and I thank the minister and her department for their support in that regard.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (4.21 p.m.): I rise to support the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. Firstly, I want to speak to the amendments to Queensland universities. This bill has identified a need for change in the structure and organisation of Griffith University. This has been addressed by amendments to the university authorising legislation. Currently several colleges of the university are in separate locations and these colleges are to be incorporated as part of the university structure. Griffith University has a very good campus in Logan. This campus represents a large investment in education, employment and business partnerships for the people of Logan. It also represents a community partnership. Members of the Loganholme-Daisy Hill Lions have their dinner meetings on the campus and as a member of the Lions Club I have enjoyed several dinners there. The reason the club meets there is that it is offered good value for money and good service, and this has also built a community partnership between the campus and Lions.

Another example of how Griffith University is helping Queensland is through the partnership with AstraZeneca. This partnership has seen the development of the Natural Product Discovery Centre. The centre employs 36 scientific staff and seven support staff. All of the scientists are highly qualified and would be working abroad if not for the project. The Natural Product Discovery Centre is part of the critical infrastructure being built through the three-way collaboration in Queensland in the biotechnology area: firstly, academia provides leading-edge research programs and skills; secondly, government facilitates the establishment of critical infrastructure;

and, thirdly, private enterprise takes discoveries to the marketplace. The Natural Product Discovery Centre is a state-of-the-art facility designed to test natural products from Queensland rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef to develop new pharmaceuticals and medicines. About 25 per cent of new medicines come from natural products. I congratulate Griffith University and AstraZeneca for coming together to help develop drugs for cancer, cardiovascular, central nervous system, gastrointestinal and respiratory disorders.

Ms Keech: It is a very innovative university.

Ms STONE: It is a very innovative university. All of this will improve the lives of Queenslanders, Australians and people all over the world.

Science is very important to the state government. There are many projects that I could talk about to show how the Beattie Labor government is fair dinkum in its commitment to science. However, it is not only the state government that is committed to science. The federal Labor leader, Simon Crean, and opposition science minister, Kim Carr, launched the ALP's science policy at the natural discovery centre. I congratulate Griffith University and AstraZeneca on this initiative and wish them success. Their venture is only one example of how important it is that the universities have the right structure to ensure these ventures keep going.

It is not only universities that are doing great things in education. I am very proud of all the schools in the Springwood electorate. Griffith University is also building relationships with local schools. It ran the Excellence Expo for Queensland schoolchildren. I am extremely pleased to inform honourable members that Kimberley Park State School rose to the challenge and won first place. A team of 11- and 12-year-old girls did a study on acoustic solutions for the home featuring gyprock sound check. To anyone looking at insulation products, I can thoroughly recommend that they talk to those students from Kimberley Park State School for excellent advice.

Ms Keech: Smart kids in a Smart State.

Ms STONE: There are smart kids at all my schools, not just Kimberley Park. Kimberley Park State School has also recently won the state award for the Comalco Green and Healthy Schools competition and won the Minister for Education's Young Legends award. The overall aim of the school is to make it a cleaner, greener and safer environment. A class of 30 students transformed an old greenhouse which was largely used as a dump for garden waste into a thriving vegetable garden. This is only one initiative the students, parents and staff are doing to provide the school with a better environment. Shailer Park State High School has an outstanding ICT teacher. Congratulations and thanks must go to Mrs Gurney who received the inaugural ICT for Learning Award for the district. The staff and students tell me that Mrs Gurney is continually researching for new ideas to improve student learning through the use of ICT. An example of this is Mrs Gurney's English class that works in groups to develop electronic magazines which they share with other students.

This year being the Year of the Outback, I asked students in the electorate to think about what the outback meant to them and to put that into verse. I am pleased to announce that Danya Rushton who is aged 11 and in grade 6 won the Springwood Year of the Outback Poetry Award for her poem entitled *Off the Beaten Track* and Sarah Halpin who is aged 12 and in grade 7 received a high distinction for her poem *Darkness in the Outback*. Both students attend Chatswood Hills State School and I will be presenting the students with their awards next week.

When driving past Springwood State High School one can notice a real difference with the front entrance and driveway looking spectacular. As a parting gesture, the student council of 2002 decided to purchase 20 trees for the school. The avenue of trees is its gift to the school and the community. It hopes that at the 50th anniversary in 25 years time the trees will have grown to make a beautiful archway over the entrance to the school. I take this opportunity to congratulate the winners of the Barbara Stone Awards in all the schools in the electorate.

Mr Mickel: Hear, hear! It would have been like the Academy Awards.

Ms STONE: That is exactly right; it is just like winning an Academy Award. Congratulations goes to Briony Dory of John Paul College who won the Subject Award for Multistrand Science.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms STONE: Very good school. Great teachers. The Barbara Stone MP Award for Most Outstanding Contribution to Instrumental Music Program went to Justine Bell from Shailer Park State High School. I can tell members that she is an up-and-coming star. She is just brilliant.

Mr Neil Roberts: Who won the Barbara Stone Sports Award?

Ms STONE: Well, I can tell the member that the junior dux at Springwood State High School was won by Lyn May Halili. I am afraid that I cannot tell members any more than that because I will be presenting the awards in the next couple of weeks to the other schools. I say to everybody, especially the grade 12, that I acknowledge the hard work done by all grade 12 students at each of the high schools in the Springwood electorate and wish them a successful and healthy future.

Recently I spoke in this place on the John Paul International College. This bill will enable the chief executive to conduct an inspection of the premises at which courses for overseas students are conducted or will be conducted. This will stipulate that an inspection can be conducted at any reasonable time and for a fee. It is extremely important that staffing and resources adequately meet the needs for educating our overseas students. International education is a huge industry for Queensland and it is vital that we keep the industry alive with excellence to ensure that we keep getting the benefits it gives to our local economy. I congratulate John Paul College for its international school of excellence and the work it does in ensuring opportunities are not missed and benefits are brought to Logan and Queensland through its diligence. Due to time constraints I am unable to continue with the many stories I have about the wonderful and exciting achievements of all the schools in the electorate. However, one thing I know is for certain: I will always be hearing of more fantastic results.

Finally, parents expect to be able to send their children to a school that fosters a safe environment. This bill will provide that the board is to conduct an inquiry that is in the public interest about a person who the board is reasonably satisfied requires an inquiry. Currently the provision is restricted to within one year of the registration ending. This bill will remove that constraint and an inquiry may be conducted into events that occur while a person is a registered teacher. As I said before, parents expect their children to be safe at school and have trust in their teachers. This bill will assist in achieving this. I congratulate the minister on bringing the bill to the House. It would be impossible to speak about the other parts of the bill in the time allotted, so I have only spoken on a few. I believe these changes are good for the future of education in this state and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (4.29 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise to speak to the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill. It does give me an opportunity to speak briefly on some of the issues in my electorate. I congratulate all of the teachers who work and live in my electorate and all of those who work hard and achieve great things with our students throughout the Mirani electorate and indeed throughout Queensland. It is not an easy job and they are the caretakers of our future generation.

Pinnacle State School is a small school about 50 kilometres to the west of Mackay. It has had ongoing issues for some time in relation to accommodation. As early as March 1999 I was contacted by the school as it was urgently in need of an extra room. The Pinnacle State School is a fairly typical country school—high blocked with three rooms, a toilet block, a great oval and so on. At the time I was contacted the school had three classes. As members would be aware, most schools have a dedicated library and a withdrawal area or some sort of area that children can use as a quiet area during school hours. The powers that be indicated that, as the three rooms would be used by the three classes, the library would be spread throughout the school. So there was no dedicated area for LOTE teaching, withdrawal or special education requirements that might arise from time to time. Any thinking member of this House would say that that is an unrealistic way in which to teach our children.

I made representation to the department and it was indicated to me that the warrant of children in the school did not merit extra space. I kept on the issue for quite some time and was advised by the P&C in November 1999 that no additional teaching area would be available for the 2000 school year. On 1 December 1999 I wrote to the minister seeking an additional building—a demountable perhaps—to be placed in the school grounds. I wrote again in April 2000 in response to a letter from the minister's office of 14 December. On 2 May 2000 I received a response from the minister, agreeing to provide temporary accommodation as a means of overcoming the problem for the remainder of 2000. There was quite a bit of toing-and-froing. The building did arrive and it was a great advance for the school. This great school has utilised that potential to a great extent.

Only a couple of weeks ago I was advised that the Education Department has confirmed that it will take away that temporary classroom and the school will have to revert to the previous situation. Quite frankly, I think that is unacceptable in this day and age. I know that the temporary building was there only until enrolments settled down. The indications on enrolments for next year

are that there will be three classes in the school. They will go back to the previous situation of the library being dispersed throughout the three rooms in the school. I think that is unacceptable.

I have made contact with the minister's office in regard to the matter. I am hoping we can reach some sort of conclusion—to either retain the temporary building or eventually build a permanent building on site that the students can use for the betterment of their education. I would like the minister to respond to that matter in her speech in reply to the second reading debate. I think the school community, for all the battles it has had over a period of time, should be given some consideration in terms of having a decent library, having a place where the children can be taught additional languages and having a withdrawal area where students can do some study and so on outside of the classrooms they are currently occupying.

The other situation I have is at Glenden, a not so small mining community attached to Newlands mine. The school community in Newlands and Glenden had gone through some fairly tough times over recent years. When the Newlands MIM mine reduced staff numbers, quite a number of children left the school and travelled elsewhere. Quite a number of wives moved to Mackay and their children attended school in the Mackay district while their menfolk worked at the Newlands mine.

The preschool at Glenden will have 31 new recruits and two repeats next year. That makes a preschool enrolment of around 33. The class size for preschool is 25. Currently there is a single class that does a half week or five-day fortnight. There is an opportunity to run two classes with the existing teachers there. The department has been very strong in advocating that there will be no additional class there next year and that those extra students—about eight children—will miss out on preschool.

Glenden is quite isolated. It is 180 kilometres from Mackay and an extreme distance from any other school. Indeed, the parents I spoke to are so adamant that they want their children to attend preschool that they would be willing to disengage from the community and move to Mackay, which of course means a loss to the school community in the longer term. I would imagine that those children who attend preschool will eventually go on to be students at Glenden, so I view the issue rather seriously.

I received an email from one of the parents just the other day. I believe it was also sent to the Minister for Education, to other people in the department and also to the Premier. It states—

Dear ministers

I am sending you this email to ask for your help in a very important matter. I live in a mining community 2 hours west of Mackay in rural Queensland. We have a major problem with education of our children. Our pre-school currently only takes 25 children and we have a list of 31 children for next years intake and we also have 2 children who are repeating so they have to be placed first, so that leaves 8 children who will not be able to attend. I understand that pre-school is not compulsory but I feel that it is an important step for the children to make. I feel that it is the right of every child to get a good education and we as taxpayers (in the highest of tax brackets) should be able to get our children into a public school. It is not as easy as finding another school as our nearest school is 1 hours drive and they are facing the same problems.

Our pre-school currently only has one group doing a five day fortnight. Why can't we have two groups?

I am hoping that you can help me in this matter as this is going to split families up. Mums and kids will move to Mackay leaving dads out there to make the money. It is not what we want to do but the education of our children comes first.

I am only one of a large group of parents who are all up in arms over this and we will not take this matter laying down. If we can not get our children in to this pre-school we intend to make a lot of noise. Can you please help us as we don't want to split our families up.

Thank you for your time

Milissa Payne

It is an important issue, particularly for a community that is so isolated. Even though, as indicated by the email, preschool is not compulsory, sometimes in those smaller isolated communities it is one of the only opportunities younger children have to participate with other children and get a decent education.

I am very proud to represent the schools in my electorate. I have 34 primary schools in my electorate and I try to visit them as much as I possibly can. Indeed, this coming Thursday night, I have an invitation to attend the graduation of the year 7 students at Koumala. The invitation was written by my grandson. So I want to take up that opportunity, if I can possibly get there on Thursday night, to be with him.

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (4.39 p.m.): It is my great pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. This bill contains amendments to 11 acts relating to different areas of the Queensland Education portfolio. One of these acts is

the Griffith University Amendment Act 1998. For over 25 years, Griffith University has developed and continued its reputation of being one of the nation's leading universities. Griffith University has grown out of its origin of the Nathan campus to include a further five campuses that are conveniently located in the south-eastern corridor region of Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

I first attended Griffith University's Gold Coast campus in 1990 when I began my arts degree majoring in Japanese. At that time, the Gold Coast campus was made up of three major teaching blocks, a few lecture theatres, a small library and a computer room. I returned to Griffith University to work on a three-month contract as a translator for a visiting Japanese professor in early 2002 and later I joined the administration team as a timetabling officer. In my position as the timetabling officer, it was my job to allocate times and a lecturer to space, as in teaching rooms. It was here that I discovered how much Griffith University had grown.

I also had the privilege of working with a number of faculty administrators, in particular with the staff of the nursing, health science, environment, engineering and physiotherapy faculties. So over the past decade, I have had the opportunity to see first-hand how Griffith University has continued to provide excellent degrees that are relevant to the industry and the field that they cover and that meet the needs not only of today but also of the future.

One section of the university that I would like to mention in particular is the School of Tourism and Hotel Management. This school has recently been recognised with the prestigious Queensland Tourism Award. That school received the award in the tourism, education and training category. Over the years, Griffith University's tourism and hotel management courses have gone a long way towards increasing the standards within the tourism industry. It is great to see them receive the recognition that they deserve. The staff members all deserve congratulations, and I would like to single out Ray Leggo for a very special mention.

I would also like to echo the comments made this morning by the Minister for Health. The announcement that Griffith University plans to establish a new dental school on the Gold Coast is indeed good news. With a rapidly growing demand for services in the region, the school plans to have 55 full-time students across five programs.

In light of the growth that Griffith University has experienced and will continue to experience in the future, it is easy to see the sense behind the amendments to the act. There is a need for a change in the structure and organisation of Griffith University to reflect its growth in various campuses. Currently, the university has several colleges in separate locations. Under the amendments, these colleges will be incorporated as part of the overarching university structure. In addition, the unequal representation that is currently experienced by staff and students of the Griffith University colleges in respect of the university council and by students in respect of the university student council will be resolved. This will mean equal representation for staff and students on peak unit bodies regardless of their location. Recently, I attended the changeover dinner for the board of the Griffith University Gold Coast Student Guild. I am sure that the incoming board will be pleased with these amendments.

One of the other 11 acts that are amended by this bill is the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989. Earlier this year, the government released the Education and Training Reforms for the Future green paper for widespread public consultation. During this period, I visited all the schools in my electorate to meet with the principals and to discuss the proposed reforms with them. While I was at the Labrador State School, I met with Principal Carmel Ryan. Carmel used this opportunity to show me the excellent program that is under way at the school, which is very much in the spirit of the Smart State. Labrador State School has been offering a transition class to provide extra support for preschoolers to prepare for school. I was most impressed with the class and the efforts of the teacher, Cassandra Bruggy.

This visit was also very interesting in light of the government's proposal to trial a full-time preparatory year as part of the Education and Training Reforms for the Future initiative. Labrador State School applied to be one of the 39 schools from across the state to be selected to trial the full-time preparatory year in 2003. The school deserves congratulations on its success in being selected. Two hundred and thirty-one schools applied to be part of the trial and, in doing so, to become part of Queensland Education history. The 780-student school, with a full-time equivalent teaching team of 40, will receive an extra teacher, an allocation of teaching aide time and extra funding through the school grant to support the running of the preparatory year.

Labrador State School is really a fantastic school. Indeed, only last week one of the year 4 students, Sheridan Lewerissa, organised a free dress day to raise money for the Farmhand appeal. This day raised an extraordinary \$531. I congratulate Sheridan and her schoolmates on their effort.

I wish Labrador State School all the best for 2003 as they trial the full-time prep year. The amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 relate to the trial of a full-time preparatory year. The act as it stands requires that parents of children between the ages of six and 15 must cause their children to enrol in a school unless a dispensation is provided by the minister. The proposed prep year does not fall within the definition of a school and as a result, as some of the children will turn six during the trial year, their parents may inadvertently contravene the act. To address this issue, these amendments will introduce transitional provisions relating to attendance for the purposes of the trial. Schools participating in the trial will be included within a schedule to the Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2000 to ensure that schools that are not part of the trial will not be given legitimacy by the amendment.

In all, the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002 contains a number of sensible provisions. It is of great importance that our legislation remains effective and relevant. This bill delivers on that. It cements this government's commitment to making Queensland the Smart State. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (4.46 p.m.): I, too, rise to speak in support of the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. As a former teacher, guidance officer, a mother of too many children and a member of the James Cook University Council, I will always be very interested in anything to do with education.

The filling of casual vacancies in university governing bodies is costly and time consuming. So the new process that is contained in the amendments in this bill will better serve our higher institutions. Through the Education and Training Reforms for the Future initiative, a trial preparatory year will be conducted. There are three successful applicants in the Townsville region. I believe that the early years of schooling are critical to the ongoing learning and development of children, because they form the firm foundations for progression throughout school. A good progression through school can make all the difference to a child's education.

Before entering secondary school teaching, I had been trained in primary school teaching. I had always been of the view—

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: Just like myself.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Just like the member. Not only is early intervention critical to a child's long-term education; it is also that child's right. Learning has to prepare children for the world, and a rapidly changing world at that. To compete in this world, our children need exciting and flexible pathways from school to work and for training and further education. Tomorrow I will be travelling with the Minister for Employment and Training, the Hon. Matt Foley, to Townsville where we will showcase the flexible and innovative education and training pathways under changes proposed in Queensland's education and training system. The government wants young people to be engaged in education and training in a range of settings until they achieve at least a senior school certificate or a certificate III vocational qualification. That will give young people greater flexibility.

State schools are great schools. I congratulate the Minister for Education, Anna Bligh, the Minister for Employment and Training, Matt Foley, and, of course, Peter Beattie, the Premier, on once again delivering true Labor reforms. My children have all attended state schools and they have excelled. It never ceases to amaze me that there is a perception that non-state schools have better kids and better teachers. I used to lecture in education at James Cook University, which has made me feel extremely defensive. All the teacher trainees whom I taught received the same training. I would get a smattering of all sorts of people—the good, the bad and the ugly; I believe it is called life—and I could never complain about the education that my children received.

Pimlico State High School has teachers who perform above and beyond the call of duty. My children received help any time they needed it, including after school and on weekends. They were able to ring up teachers during school holidays. They were picked up at home for debating. They were trained during lunch times. They had sporting opportunities that were magnificent and they enjoyed music of the highest standard. In fact, at Pimlico and Mundingburra Primary School my children were taken on magical experiences involving competitions, tournament of the minds and YAA, to name but a few. Of course, it was free. Then there is my old stomping ground, Town High, which offers innovation and technology excellence, basketball excellence and alternative programs to cater for the needs of all children, including very innovative indigenous programs and programs for refugees including LOTE. A more dedicated group of teachers and staff would be hard to find. Heatley Secondary College is another one with after hours secondary education and a commitment to VET pathways. There are so many wonderful stories coming out of our state

schools and I once again congratulate the minister on her commitment to bring together a number of policy objectives in order to serve the interests of students at all levels and across all sectors of education. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (4.51 p.m.): I support the amendments proposed in this bill and shall specifically refer to two areas: the introduction of the prep year and the amendments to the Griffith University allowing legislation to enable the staff and students of the former three colleges to vote in university elections and to nominate for positions in those elections. Firstly, I want to talk about what I think is one of the most exciting policy and funding initiatives of our government, that is, the education and training reforms the Minister for Education, Anna Bligh, the Minister for Employment and Training, Matt Foley, and other ministers within our cabinet have been instrumental in delivering to Queenslanders. It is one of the most challenging and I think important reforms that we will be implementing over the next few years and into the future.

I know that in my own local area, Watson Road State School will be trialing a prep year. Watson Road State School is a small school in a suburban area of high socioeconomic disadvantage. It is doing a lot of work with its early years students to give the support many of them do not get at home. The prep trial is a very important and welcome initiative for them and I know that the principal, Greg Burns, would like me to publicly thank the minister and her departmental officers for the opportunity to be part of that prep trial.

Forest Lake State School is at the other end of the spectrum. It is a big school of 1,200 students. It is in an area where there is a lot of growth. There are a lot of resources within that school both in terms of parent support and within the school. It will be a different trial and will show up different things but they, too, are very excited. Its principal, Mark Campling, gets very excited about such matters and has been jumping for joy ever since he heard about the prep trial. He is a great advocate of the education and training reform package broadly and is particularly keen to ensure that the prep trial within his school is successful and is a model for other schools to follow.

In relation to the debate about whether it means children are getting more formal education too early, that they are not having enough time at home with parents and are being formalised into a system too early, Mark has simple answers. Mark says that we are doing a lot of things already in the part-time preschool. This prep year will extend that to full time. It might give a greater focus to literacy and numeracy, which is very important, and help identify kids and their learning capacities at an earlier stage to help them into the first year of school. I agree with Mark that these are very important initiatives.

In relation to the prep year, I know that the member for Mundingburra spoke very proudly about her public school days. I, too, want to return to those good old days and mention that I was the product of a prep year in Adelaide. I went to school when I was four and it has not hurt me! I actually dug out some photos the other day and saw myself in my little prep jumper. It was a home-made woollen jumper that my mother made for me.

Government members interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: It was certainly a very important year for me. Children throughout Queensland will benefit enormously from this extra year. In relation to the amendments to enable students and staff from former colleges within the Griffith University structure to vote, it is a very important change. It has been something that, as a member of the council of Griffith University, members of that council have asked me to try to hurry along. They certainly are keen to see the legislation before the House today.

I put on record, too, some of the great achievements of Griffith University. I was around when Griffith University was first built. It used to be our motocross riding track up through the bush there in Toohey Forest. It was a very welcome new facility in our area. I know that when I was studying at my undergraduate course at Queensland University it was the library at Griffith University that many of us used to go to because there was a very good and welcome environment. That whole environmental sustainability message has been retained with Griffith University. It certainly has been fostering a lot of both research and important study in the area of environmental sustainability. That is the important thing about Griffith—its value base. It has fostered inclusiveness, equity and environmental sustainability. Whilst these are very important messages and very important areas of study, at the same time they prepare students for the global economy. It has had a very good balance of those two areas.

I commend the achievements of Griffith University over the years. From a campus of, say, several thousand students 20 years ago, it now has grown to a multicampus university with some 26,000 students, 3,000 staff and an annual income of \$300 million. Griffith is now an international

leader in flexible learning and is a strong partner with industry, especially in leading-edge research.

The Queensland College of Art has a new \$33 million purpose-built facility that we can see across the river at Southbank. The Premier officially opened the \$13 million Centre for Biomolecular Science and Drug Discovery on the Gold Coast campus. A \$10 million state-of-the-art multimedia building opened at the Gold Coast campus. That is where the action is—at the Gold Coast. It has been well supported by the local members there as well.

I have been very pleased to see the growth and change at the Griffith University. It is an important educational facility in the south-east corner and it is growing and prospering. I am very concerned, though, about the direction in which higher education funding is going. The federal government has significantly cut back its percentage of higher education funding in relation to GDP. That is not a direction it ought to be going if we are to be an economy that really mixes well in the global economy. It has certainly been the case that public investment peaked around 1996 but that since then it has decreased each year. In 2000 the funding was about \$546 million less than in 1996, with further reductions estimated in future years. That is not the direction we want to go. All the vice-chancellors of universities across Australia have expressed that sentiment to the federal government. The federal government seems to be following this elite path of having one world-class university and 'forget the rest'.

Griffith University's submission to the higher education policy paper was certainly about reinforcing the importance of regional and metropolitan based campuses around Australia and not having this focus on an elite campus. I support those directions and I congratulate Griffith University on the great work it is doing.

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (4.58 p.m.): I am pleased to rise in support of the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill. Essentially the bill amends 11 acts, seven of which relate to public universities in Queensland. I will be restricting my comments to that area and in particular to the changes proposed for Griffith University and its governance. One of the main objectives of this bill is to make a number of amendments to the Griffith University Act 1998 whereby all campuses and colleges will be officially recognised as campuses. This bill amends the Griffith University authorising legislation to enable Griffith University Gold Coast students and staff to vote on Griffith University council elections. That is a very important amendment. This situation represents a long existing anomaly which needed to be fixed in order to provide equity to members of the Gold Coast facility, the university's second largest and fastest growing campus.

I have a close association with Griffith University, having been a student at the Nathan campus for the first two years of my Arts degree. I only left there to attend Queensland University in the last year of my Arts degree to pursue journalism. Journalism was not then offered at Griffith University's Nathan campus or at any of its campuses.

Mr Lucas: You had the best of both worlds.

Mrs REILLY: Yes. I have been to every university, minister. I have been to them all. I have been to Queensland University, the Queensland University of Technology, where I did my post-graduate diploma, and Griffith University. I shall go out on a limb and say that my best and most formative years were at Griffith University. I was later public relations and communication manager at Griffith University's Gold Coast campus for 18 months in 1994 and 1995. I still remained an active executive member on the Griffith University Gold Coast campus alumni for over a year after I moved on to other employment. I know from my experience of Griffith University's Gold Coast campus through the widespread network of contact I had with colleagues, academic staff and students and through the many representations I made on behalf of the campus to the wider community and business sector, as was a necessary and integral part of my position in PR, that the one thing the Gold Coast campus craved and lacked the most was national recognition of its position as the Gold Coast's only public university. Sadly, it could be argued that it is still fighting for that recognition within the federal government arena.

I have lobbied, and continue to lobby, for the Gold Coast's fair share of university places. In a city of 400,000 people, the fastest growing city in Australia, it is simply unacceptable that school leavers and other potential students face the prospect of leaving the Gold Coast and their families to pursue higher education simply because the places do not exist. The Gold Coast has a population about the same size as Newcastle, much larger than Townsville, Cairns or Wollongong, but the Commonwealth funds less than half the number of places per thousand head of population on the Gold Coast. We need on the Gold Coast an extra 3,500 places to bring us up to the national average of places per head of population and an extra 7,000 places

would be needed to give the Gold Coast the same proportion of places as cities such as Newcastle and Wollongong. Newcastle and Wollongong, with populations of just over 486,000 and just under 270,000 respectively, enjoy Commonwealth funded places of 24 and 29 per 1,000, while the Gold Coast languishes at 12 places per 1,000. That is almost half the national average, which is about 20.

The Gold Coast is not a suburb of Brisbane; it is a dynamic, innovative and expanding city and, I would argue, the very hub of the Smart State. But many of its finest young minds are being lost to Brisbane and other cities and even overseas because, having been forced to study away, they tend to stay away, at least for the very early part of their graduate careers.

I am calling on the federal members for Moncrieff and McPherson, Steven Ciobo and Margaret May, to fight for the places which their local public university and community deserve, but particularly I am calling on Steven Ciobo, the member for Moncrieff, who seems to be a tad confused about his position as a federal member, because he prefers to campaign on state issues than take up the fight to the federal government, which I thought was the job he was elected to do. Even if the Commonwealth does not recognise the importance of our regional universities, the Beattie Labor government certainly does.

The amendments proposed in this bill will also enhance the corporate governance fabric of Queensland universities by providing equal voting rights to part-time staff at QUT and the University of the Sunshine Coast. Griffith University's Gold Coast campus has been historically disfranchised, being specifically excluded from voting in elections for the university council. This bill will provide students and staff at all of the university campuses with equal rights to fully participate in elections for the university council. They will be able to vote and to stand in those elections. This is symbolic recognition in many ways, but it is an important one. It recognises the important position Griffith University's Gold Coast campus holds on the Gold Coast and in south-east Queensland as an internationally recognised and world-class public university, as the member for Algester has already said.

It is also good to see that the Griffith University Act will be amended to reflect the university's special interest in and commitment to the cities of Brisbane, Logan and the Gold Coast. I know that the Gold Coast is proud of its public university. These are great amendments, and I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. P. T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Innovation and Information Economy) (5.03 p.m.): One of the most important things that one can do in the short time we have on earth is to employ our talents for the betterment of society. In that respect there are few undertakings more noble than that of teaching our youth. Father Tom Mescall of the Order of St Augustine was a man who devoted an enormous part of his life to the formation and education of young men at Villanova College, Coorparoo. I am pleased to count myself as one of the thousands who have benefited from being taught by Father Tom, as have also my Villanova old boy colleagues in this House, Minister for Industrial Relations Gordon Nuttall and member for Toowoomba North Kerry Shine, who is in the chamber today.

Thomas Joseph Mescall was born in the village of Hollymount, County Mayo, Ireland on 30 June 1929. Educated by the Christian Brothers in his village, he was an enthusiastic sportsman, particularly in athletics. Sport was a passion, like his love for music, that was to remain with him all his life. Uncommon for the many Irishmen who sought a vocation to the priesthood at the time, Tom's was a late vocation, entering the seminary at 26 years of age. He was ordained in Rome on 16 July 1961. What a culture shock it must have been when he left his family in Ireland for good in November 1962 for a life devoted to the education of young men and support of Catholic parishioners in far off Australia.

From December 1962 to 1971 he taught at Villanova and again from 1973 to 1991. Augustinians have been great contributors to the development of our state, particularly in far-north Queensland—the naming of the cathedral in Cairns, St Monica's, after the Mother of St Augustine, is testimony to their presence there. Tom served for three years as priest at St Joseph's, Cairns from 1971 to 1973, as he did again in Echuca, Victoria, between 1991 and 1995. Tragically, ill health forced his retirement from the ministry in 1997. The last few years of his life he spent at Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit, Wynnum West, in my electorate, in the loving care of the nurses and staff from Lowanna Unit.

One of the great things about an Augustinian education is that they instil in you a love of learning but also, just as importantly, to think for yourself. Being taught by Tom, particularly in his English classes, was no exception to that. At one moment, he would regale us with classics, the

next he would have us singing C. J. Dennis's *Australaise* as written with the word 'bloody' inserted. One cannot encourage students to think and have opinions without being a person of strong conviction oneself. With appropriate prompting, particularly in a double English period, Tom would be pleased to spout forth with his views on topics as diverse as how much other boys' schools owed—Marists Ashgrove were 'half a million bucks in debt'; we all had 'league minds'; or about any rearrangements of those old wooden form desks, 'You're not shunting trains.' He was a great religion teacher and delighted in telling us of the history of the church. His faith was robust and forthright. I can recall him despairing at our inability to remember the *Memorare* but at least *Hail Holy Queen* was a little easier. He was a proud Augustinian and told us that his order was one of the four great mendicant orders that along with the Carmelites, Dominicans and Franciscans allowed the monks to beg.

Father Tom was an incredibly keen sportsman and was school sports master for six years. He coached the under 14As and Bs Rugby teams with flair and dedication. He was earlier on a football referee, though I suspect his passion for Villanova would sometimes have got in the way of the objectivity as the holder of the whistle. He must have made a lasting impression on the Christian Brothers community in Brisbane. A few years ago as a member of parliament I can remember speaking to a Christian Brother at St Patrick's College, Shorncliffe—another great school—and telling him of my proud status as a Villanova old boy. He put on an Irish accent, 'Oh, Villanova!' and then provided me with a critique of refereeing in St Pat's versus Villanova matches.

The Government Whip and member for Chermside, Terry Sullivan, was in the early 1970s a Christian Brother at St Laurence's. He tells me of a particular story about an Irish Villanovan priest referee, perhaps apocryphal, perhaps Father Tom. One of the Christian Brothers yelled out, 'No wonder Luther left your mob,' in response to a decision where the ref for the umpteenth time in a match gave Villanova the benefit of the doubt.

Father Tom was a man of tremendous loyalty and often spoke very fondly both of his mother and father. His father was a policeman, who he had told us had escaped a death order by the English. My parliamentary colleague Kerry Shine, as I said who is here with me today, tells me that Father Tom gave him a copy of the words to the Republican song *Kevin Barry*. I recall asking him once what political party he supported in Ireland. He said firmly, 'Fianna Fail—Soldiers of Destiny.'

Father Tom was a generous man. I would often see him prepared to shout a student who did not have the money for lunch for a pie or a mince roll. If a group of boys was helping set up for the fete, for a mass or for some other occasion he would be happy to shout them a drink and an ice-cream from the tuckshop. He was always happy to chat with old boys and formed lasting relationships with many of us. He performed the marriage ceremony for many old boys, myself and my wife Sharon included, and also presided over a number of funerals for old boys or their parents.

Tom was indeed a keen sportsman and was a proud member of Brisbane Golf Club for many years. Ever one with an eye for a dollar, he pointed out that they were most generous in allowing him a 'clergy rate' whenever a group of us was having a round with him. Regardless of whether it was a social game or not, Tom took no prisoners. Invariably he would suggest we have one or two warm-up holes in order that he could assess which of the group of us was playing better on the day. He would then pick that person to be his partner in the fours and woe betide the partner whose game deteriorated during the round.

In the great tradition of many priests in Brisbane, Tom was a great builder. He proudly raised money for the school and for the betterment of its facilities. He was a driving force behind the college art show, which he started in the 1970s. No doubt he would have been flattered that the art show was copied by many other schools in subsequent years, but there was something about the Villanova art show in our unique library which still made it the best. So many of us were profoundly and positively influenced by Father Tom Mescall, as we were by many of his Augustinian brethren as well. He devoted his life and his 40 years of priesthood to the service of humanity. He was prepared to give up his old country and come to an alien place to educate young men with respect and encouragement regardless of their ability, academic, sporting or otherwise.

Father Tom died on the 22 October 2002 and was seen off in grand Catholic style at St James Church, Coorparoo with Archbishop Bathurst and 25 priests concelebrating. His body lies now in the red earth at Nudgee cemetery with so many of his Irish countrymen and women who came as priests, brothers and nuns to this country to serve God and educate so many of us. He

was a larger-than-life figure and a great man, but most of all he was a faithful, diligent and committed priest. He loved the Lord and, in particular, Our Lady. While we will all miss him, what is more important is how he touched us and educated us in many ways that hopefully will not only stay with us for the rest of our lives but will also be passed on to our children.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (5.10 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to support the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. It also gives me an opportunity to inform the House of what is happening in education in the Mansfield electorate. I would like to congratulate the minister on the great work she is doing. I would like to thank her and the department for assisting the schools in the electorate of Mansfield.

Whilst I will focus this speech on the great government schools in my electorate, I would like to state that we have great non-government schools in the electorate of Mansfield, namely the Christian Outreach College, the Brisbane Adventist College, Redeemer College, St Peter's Catholic Primary School and Clairvaux McKillop, which is just over the border. I am a past student of that college. Another college of which I am a past student and which is in my electorate is St Catherine's Primary School, Wishart.

I might mention that I attended St Catherine's Year 7 graduation on Friday night at which I presented my mother's memorial shield to Harry Penkeyman, a young guy in grade 7. It was a unique night. I often say to the Year 7s at St Catherine's that those guys and girls have achieved something that I did not, in that I did not graduate from St Catherine's. The last year of my primary school education was in year 7 at Clairvaux College, as it was called at that stage—now Clairvaux McKillop. That was the last Year 7 at Clairvaux College. Unbeknown to me, the authorities at St Catherine's school arranged for me to receive a graduation certificate. I can now say that I graduated from St Catherine's Primary School. It was a great honour to receive that graduation certificate.

Mr Hayward: Did you graduate at the top of the class?

Mr REEVES: I think I was the only one who received it so I think I might have topped the class. Being one of the first students who ever enrolled at that school, it was a great honour to receive that certificate.

I wish to focus on the government schools in my electorate and refer to the great things that are happening. I recently asked a question on notice of the minister regarding government funding for schools. We often forget the amount of money that it costs to run the schools in our electorates. Often people do not realise where the taxpayer's money is going to. I would like to refer to that this afternoon.

A notional total of \$26.8 million in funding has been allocated to the nine government schools in the Mansfield electorate in the last financial year. Obviously there will be a lot more this year with the increase of about 5.8 per cent. This amount comprises \$22.1 million in salaries and wages, \$2.4 million in capital and maintenance and \$2.3 million in grants to the schools to meet operational expenditure. I will refer to the specific amounts as I go through my remarks.

I would like to refer to some of the great wins in my electorate. In particular, I would like to congratulate the Mount Gravatt East State School on winning a Government Excellence Award in the National Literacy and Numeracy Week awards. This school was one of 13 across Queensland to win a national or state award. More importantly, this was one of three Queensland schools which won that specific award, and it was the only Queensland school to win the Government Literacy Excellence Award. Mount Gravatt East State School caters for students with hearing, speech language and intellectual impairments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students who have English as their second language. It was a great achievement and the teachers and students were delighted and they have been recognised for their dedication and hard work. Queensland's excellent performance in the awards highlighted the strong emphasis placed on numeracy and literacy skills in our Queensland schools. We may live in a knowledge economy but literacy and numeracy skills are still the key to any child's success.

If we are to succeed and prosper as a state of high technology and globalisation, our children must have the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Queensland's performance in these awards demonstrates that teachers and schools around the state are making significant gains in improving students' literacy and numeracy skills. The National Literacy and Numeracy Week Awards are a joint project between the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training and all Australian states and territories. The awards are held to recognise schools delivering improved learning outcomes for their students in literacy and numeracy.

I would like to congratulate Lorraine Collins, the principal of Mount Gravatt East State School, together with her staff on the excellence of their achievement. What Lorraine has done in the last three years, firstly as acting principal and then as principal, is remarkable. I congratulate her. The community thanks her for what she has done for that school.

I want to refer to another very important award. A teacher from Mansfield State High School was awarded an inaugural Premier's Smart State Teacher Excellence scholarship. Vinesh Chandra was presented with a \$25,000 scholarship on World Teachers Day. Mr Chandra, a Wishart resident, was one of five inaugural winners to be awarded the scholarships which were part of the professionalism initiative that recognises the exemplary work of classroom teachers. The scholarship money is to be used to undertake professional development related to their field and further their specified learning.

Mr Chandra is at the cutting edge of virtual leading technologies, mostly centred on the areas of junior science and senior physics. Mr Chandra had developed 'Getsmart', a fully interactive and comprehensive web site with email, testing facilities and links to other web sites around the world, including a link to Education Queensland's Learning Place web site. Mr Chandra is currently writing a doctorate thesis on the impact of an e-learning environment on the perceptions, attitudes and performance of boys and girls in senior physics and junior science, which he hopes to finish this year. This scholarship will help Mr Chandra achieve that. I applaud him for his efforts and congratulate him on the excellent work he does at Mansfield High.

Many Brisbane state schools have run open house Internet training courses under an innovative initiative with the Brisbane City Council. There are 37 participating metropolitan schools, and I am pleased to say that three of them are in my electorate. They are taking part in the community Internet program and skills training this semester. Those schools are Mount Gravatt East State School, Mansfield State School and Rochedale State High School. Those schools should be applauded for getting involved in the community. This project came about as a result of a pilot project last year. It was successfully adopted by the government and the council. Services from private and government organisations are increasingly being provided online and community access to technology is an important priority of the Queensland the Smart State Education and Training Reforms for the Future initiative. Schools are ideally placed to offer that access, and I am delighted that Brisbane City Council shares our vision. Local schools provide an excellent venue for community based training. I congratulate the schools for getting involved.

Every state school in the seat of Mansfield received a share of more than \$18 million of state government funding to boost their ICT resources. The Mansfield electorate received a total of \$194,777 in funding for nine local schools. The grants are the first instalments of the state government's ICT for Learning initiative which is part of the Queensland Smart State Education and Training Reforms for the Future. These funds will go towards boosting ICT resources in the schools and enhancing the skills of students and teachers. The state government is committed to ensuring that education keeps pace with technological advances occurring outside the school gate. The amounts given to the schools included: Mansfield State School, about \$21,000; Mount Petrie State School, about \$3,000; Wishart State School, about \$20,000; Mount Gravatt East State School, about \$10,000; Rochedale State School, about \$19,000; Rochedale South State School, about \$16,000; Mansfield State High School, about \$65,000; Rochedale State High School, about \$37,000; and Mount Gravatt Special School, about \$3,000.

I congratulate the minister for putting this emphasis on information and communication technology. It is important for us to back up our claim of being the Smart State. In this case we have backed that up in droves.

I would now like to refer to specific schools and to what is occurring in those schools and how the Beattie Labor government is committed to improving services. Mount Petrie State School is a very small school. It has been lifted in the last few years by the development of an early childhood class in conjunction with the year 1 class. It has dramatically lifted the numbers at that school. Not only were parents sending their children to the early childhood class and the year 1 class but also to year 3 and year 4. It has lifted the numbers.

Major road works will be done near the school due to the road widening that Main Roads is doing on the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and this will result in a safer environment for young students and their families to get to and from the school. Earlier I spoke about the amount of money it costs to run schools. With regard to the Mount Petrie State School, last financial year it cost \$564,293. Even though it is a very small school, that is how much it costs to run—that is, over half a million dollars. It cost \$2.5 million to run the Rochedale State School. Some \$2.5 million is big business. I congratulate the Rochedale State School because it is a high

achieving school which is increasing in number because of the excellent work by the teachers, the principal, the deputy principal and the administration staff. They are all doing terrific jobs. That school is very interested in getting funding for a preschool. Unfortunately, it did not apply for funding under the preschool trial but I would encourage it to look at that in the future. Gaining a preschool will mean a further increase in its numbers.

As many members would be aware because I have mentioned it before, in August this year Rochedale State High School celebrated the official opening of the new administration block to replace the building destroyed by fire around Christmas last year. I thank the minister for coming to Rochedale State High School to open the new administration block. The minister would also say that we were greatly entertained by the students at that school and a great rock band made up of students, because the minister has mentioned that a few times to me personally. The school community rallied together after the December fire to ensure a smooth start to the beginning of the school year.

Unfortunately, all the special treasures kept in the admin block such as trophies, photographs of special achievements and special mementoes cannot be replaced, but the school is trying to replace them. I am confident that Rochedale State High School's history of achievement will see it filling its new trophy cases very quickly. I thank the school, district staff, officers of Q-Build and Project Services for taking time out of their holidays to help in the clean-up. Fires are distressing events for school communities, but thanks to the efforts of the school and the building staff Rochedale State High School was able to begin the 2002 year with minimal disruption. The government spent \$650,000 to replace the building and a further \$63,000 on new furnishings.

I thank the minister for her efforts at the time of the fire and in ensuring that the school was able to get back to its job as quickly as possible. The school also received \$20,000 to install a sprinkler system as part of the gaming fund to ensure that the ovals were of a quality to enable the students to use them. Under the SafeST Program between the Brisbane City Council and the Main Roads Department, \$80,000 was allocated to fix the car park. Rochedale High costs \$5.5 million a year to run and this financial year it will probably be closer to \$6 million.

Rochedale South State School, which the minister visited only a couple of weeks ago after the Carina community cabinet, received \$125,000 towards funding for the construction of an all-weather activity centre. The minister and I announced the funding under the state government's School Improvement Assistance Scheme. The facility will comfortably accommodate whole school assemblies and provide a suitable venue for awards nights and art performance. Just last night I presented art awards at the school's art performance but it had to be held at the Rochedale State High School. Next year it will be able to hold it in its own facility, which obviously makes it better for the school community.

Not only will this be a great facility for the school, it will provide a venue for other community groups. The grant submission was made by the school P&C after strong representations I made on its behalf. The school community has been focusing on this project for a number of years and its funding approval means that this project is much closer to becoming a reality. I congratulate the school for its persistence and efforts. The minister saw the delight on their faces when people from that school heard about the funding. It will be a great facility for that school to use. The school also recently received \$10,570 from the gaming fund to upgrade the tuckshop, an extra \$8,000 from Q-Build to help to provide for urgent works and \$54,000 for repainting under the Triple R program.

About this time last year the minister opened the \$400,000 student activities centre at the Wishart State School named the Ron Hall Activity Centre. Ron Hall was a teacher at the school and a valued contributor to the school for nearly 20 years. The construction of the centre fulfilled an election promise made by me and I was able to secure funding for the centre through the strong representations I made to then minister Dean Wells. The centre is part of our Beattie Labor government's \$16 million commitment to the community which emphasises job creation, road improvements and community initiatives. Prior to the construction of this centre, the students did not have a covered area where the whole school could assemble. The new facility will be a great addition to the school and will be used for performances and assemblies as well as sporting and music activities. Mr Hall, whom the centre has been named after, was a life member of the Wishart State School Swimming Club and worked tirelessly for that organisation, the P&C and a number of other organisations. It cost \$2.9 million to run the Wishart State School last financial year. People's taxes go to fund Wishart State School and others for all operational and salary needs.

The Mansfield State High School has just completed the Secondary Schools Renewal extension of a hall worth in the vicinity of \$750,000. It is a great centre for its music program. It has the best music program in the state bar none. Its awards signify that and now it has a first-class facility. So members should look out for what it can do now. Its music program is second to none. Last financial year it cost \$7.2 million to run Mansfield High. That is a major investment by the Education Department, but that investment comes back twofold: the quality of education and the outcomes for students at that school is excellent. I commend the principal, Murray Kay, and all his staff for the excellent work they do.

There is also \$110,000 to upgrade the admin block, which will happen within the next six to seven months. That was also an election promise and I am glad that we will follow through with that commitment. Mansfield State High School was one of the state winners of the Showcase Awards, and I congratulate it on that. It won the award for its Language Other Than English program which encouraged students to participate in cultural exchange. The Mansfield State School recently received \$80,000 under the SafeST program to finish its car park. Its preschool needs a number of works to be done. I arranged a meeting for members to meet with the minister at the Stretton community cabinet. The minister listened to their concerns and acted upon their concerns. The result is that there is now an excellent surrounding around the preschool which provides a very safe environment for both students and staff alike, who are overwhelmed by the excellent work done over the September holidays.

The school received a major upgrade for its swimming pool worth over \$150,000. Recently there has been a problem with regard to a new classroom for next year. That has been sorted out by working with the community and the education facilities section. I thank Brian Reeve for that and the executive director, Tom Robertson, for assisting me on that issue. Mansfield State School is part of the Museum Magnet program which is an excellent collaboration between our government and the Smithsonian Institute. Mansfield State School is very proud to be part of that. It cost \$3.2 million last financial year for Mansfield State School to operate, which is a massive amount but money well spent.

In relation to Mount Gravatt East State School, today we announced that the contract to build the new covered multipurpose area which was an election commitment has been awarded to Kenbar Constructions. We will fund the project to the tune of nearly \$300,000. This will replace the old F block. The facility will provide an excellent venue for a variety of activities including school assemblies, presentations, arts and music performances. We are focused on providing support to the schools and will continue to create better environments for students and staff. We also believe that schools are community assets and hope that local families and other groups will make the most of the social and cultural opportunities offered by the development. A quality environment that inspires learning for students and the wider community is important to meeting the goals of the Smart State.

There was recently an announcement that the Brisbane City Council and Education Queensland would jointly fund the upgrade of the tennis courts at Mt Gravatt East State School, which is greatly needed. This is another community result. I have listed some prime examples of listening to the community and their concerns, acting upon those concerns and getting results for education. They back up our claim that state schools are smart schools and great schools. We are backing up the statement that Queensland is the Smart State by putting money into schools. We will get the benefit of outcomes in the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms PHILLIPS (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.29 p.m.): One of my favourite official outings occurs reasonably early each year and involves lots of noise, some name calling, some speaking out of turn and general pandemonium. And no, I am not referring to our first sittings of parliament after Christmas. I am actually thinking of my annual visit to the year 1 classrooms in my electorate. I enjoy these visits immensely because what I see are hundreds of children excited by the experience of learning and taking their places in a fully operational community in miniature. Usually, though, there are at least one or two occasions on which a teacher sighs and points out a small child who is having trouble adjusting to the long days and the new rules and regulations. There is so much to learn in year 1, and if you are not up to speed with the basics it can be hell. Or alternatively, you can make it hell for others around you.

Back in the 1930s and 1940s, our smallest Queenslanders had the opportunity to prepare for the tough slog by taking part in a formal prep year. Of course, in those days year 7 represented the limit of education for most people, so when the public demanded further education and year 8 was introduced this formal prep year was abolished. Imagine how those kids would have felt had they known many of their great-grandchildren would be putting in 15

years of formal schooling as a matter of course! The point is that, perhaps with more years of education in front of them, children nowadays need a better head start. And that is one of the issues at the very heart of this education bill presented for approval today—a bill which proves once and for all that the Beattie government is serious about Queensland becoming the Smart State.

The amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 are to provide a specific transitional provision in relation to compulsory education so that a parent of a child of the age of compulsory attendance whose child is participating in the preparatory year trial is taken to be compliant with their compulsory attendance obligation. The amendment will ensure the legitimacy of the preparatory year trial and will not be administratively onerous for parents and schools participating in the trial.

At the heart of this government's decision to trial a preparatory year of schooling is the understanding that smart kids are those who are given the best possible start. Research indicates that a preparatory year of school prior to year 1 provides children with the skills they need to make a smooth transition into formal learning. Benefits include enhanced thinking and communication skills, better physical development and easier social and emotional adjustment. And the community seems to agree. Consultation since the introduction of the green paper and market research by ACNielsen indicates that parents are in favour of early education programs that are full time and run five days a week. So come January 2003, the Beattie government's Preparing for School trials will be conducted in 39 schools across the state.

To ensure the trials provide us with as accurate and complete a picture as possible, it was essential that the selected schools provide a good mix of models and cover both metropolitan and rural locations. I am particularly delighted to say that three of the schools chosen to take part in the trials are in my own electorate. The schools are the Bohlevale State School, St Anthony's Catholic School—both of these schools are in the northern beaches area of my electorate—and Rasmussen State School, which is in the upper Ross River area. Both of these areas are rapidly growing outer suburbs of Thuringowa, where there is a large population of young families.

My electorate has one of the youngest profiles of any in Queensland, with 40 per cent of the population being under 19 years. It is in these outer suburbs that most of these children live with their families. Therefore, the location of three schools in the pilot trials in these areas reflects not only this government's good sense but also its caring for and commitment to the needs of these young families.

I take this opportunity on behalf of the member for Noosa to record her delight at trials also being conducted at Noosaville Primary School and the Good Shepherd Lutheran School in her electorate. The member herself is not here in the House to participate in this debate as she is presently hosting a conference with the Sunshine Coast University. The theme of the conference is 'Pacific Island Security: Old Challenges, New Threats', and it is being conducted by the Pacific Islands Political Studies Association.

On the evening of Thursday, 5 December Dr Ivan Molloy of the University of the Sunshine Coast will be inviting the public to engage in a public forum, the subject of which is terrorism and security issues in the Pacific. The keynote speaker will be Graham Fletcher of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and other contributions will be from Henry Albinski, John McFarlane and Dr Molloy. It is wonderful to see such commitment to the Smart State by local members and their families at the other end of the age range—from the preschoolers, who will be involved in these trials.

In addition, I have spoken to dozens of teachers, parents and prospective students, and all of them are incredibly excited by the idea that they will be making a small place for themselves in the history books. From the government's perspective, these trials will provide us with valuable information about the best way to deliver a full-time non-compulsory preparatory year to Queensland students. Of course, we already have some ideas and the curriculum for the trials is currently being developed by the Queensland Studies Authority. I am told that it will build on the play based preschool curriculum currently offered in Queensland preschools, a system which is very highly regarded.

Ultimately, however, those who will have the last word on the trials will not be the people from the QSA and they will not be those of us local members in the Beattie government working in our communities towards Smart State initiatives. The success of the trials for the new full-time preparatory year will be in the hands of a group of very small Queenslanders, very early in their lives, being part of this state government's democratic process.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (5.37 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to support the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. As a former primary school teacher, I have a very strong interest in education, particularly at a primary school level. I appreciate being able to talk about the amendments today that are relevant to different areas of the Queensland Education portfolio. The bill amends 11 acts relating to these areas but does not create a new legislative regime. As a consequence there are seven unrelated primary policy objectives of the bill. I will list these, but I will concentrate my remarks on the last one.

The first objective is to remedy costly and impractical arrangements in the current processes for filling casual vacancies on the governing bodies of this state's universities. The second objective is for the Education Department to assist this government in meeting its commitments to the National Competition Principles Agreement. The third objective is to amend the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 to enable the Education Department to meet a number of obligations prescribed at a federal level as part of a nationally consistent scheme to regulate the education and training industry for overseas students.

The fourth objective is to extend the inquiry power of the Board of Teacher Registration to investigate events during a teacher's prior registration. This is in the interests of children's safety and protecting the integrity of the state's teacher registration. The fifth objective is to address the need for change in the structure and organisation of the Griffith University. I note that here today a number of backbenchers have spoken of their fondness for this facility and about how it has grown and prospered over the years.

I attended the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education for my teaching diploma in Toowoomba.

Mr Shine: A top university.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: It was not a top university then, but it was a top institute. Now it has become a university. At present, Griffith University has a number of colleges in separate areas and these are now to be incorporated as part of the overarching university structure.

The sixth objective is to ensure that the new accreditation and funding regime applying to non-state schools in Queensland preserves in full the entitlements of those schools secured under previous legislative arrangements. The seventh objective is to ensure that the parents or caregivers of children participating in the 2003 preparatory year trial will not be in breach of the compulsory attendance provisions of the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 in those cases where children will turn six during the course of their participation in the trial. To overcome this, the bill will provide a new part 12 to provide transitional provisions relating to attendance for the purposes of the 2003 trial.

I am excited by the fact that one of the schools in the electorate of Pumicestone, which I represent, has been chosen to participate in these 2003 preparatory trials.

Mr Shine: You look excited.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: I am very excited. The Caboolture East State School is a remarkable school in my electorate. Its leadership and staff have been committed to improving outcomes for its students for many years. Its student population is notable in that it has the highest percentage of students with disabilities in the state. The diversity within the student population extends beyond this to include issues such as transience and its complex socioeconomic profile.

To address the unique needs of the school, the community decided to apply to be involved in the preparatory year trial. They were successful, providing, according to the selection panel, one of the most educational and comprehensive applications from any of the schools. They applied to be involved in this trial because they had experimented very successfully with a similar concept in 2000 with significant outcomes for the students involved. Community interest has been high with almost double the number of parents expressing interest in attending the school because of its successful application. The school community has high expectations for the children who will be involved and have confidence in the teacher, Mrs Caithe Cameron, who will be taking the class. The school council has written into its partnership agreement a commitment to follow particularly the educational experiences of those children lucky enough to be part of the first year.

Having the preparatory year at the school fits neatly into another innovation that the school is undergoing in preparation for the 2003 school year. This is called the diversity for diversity initiative. Under this initiative, the whole school is being reconstructed using all the available

human resources. This means the Special Education Unit will be absorbed into the whole school, and when parents visit the school all children will have their own class as opposed to being shared between a regular classroom and a special education classroom. This initiative means that the Principal, Mr Mark Hunter, will be able to reduce the average class size down to 20 students.

Each student in the school has been profiled using those variables which impact on the teaching and learning process and which are relevant to the local school community. This gives each student what the school has called a diversity index. These indexes are used to construct the most appropriate classes. Classes with high indexes will have fewer numbers in the room. Teachers were then asked to apply for the class that best matched their skills and the students' needs. This process matches the school's work force diversity with student diversity.

The school is excited about this innovation and is looking forward to reviewing the progression in improving the outcomes for the students under the banner of the diversity for diversity initiative and in the context of the preparatory year. I would like to place on record my congratulations to the commendable and very courageous effort of the initiatives, developed by the Principal, Mr Mark Hunter, and his dedicated staff at the Caboolture East Primary School. For those other schools in my area that may have applied for the trial and missed out, I would certainly like to encourage them to reapply for the second round in 2004. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (5.44 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002, which amends 11 acts that relate to public universities in Queensland and four acts that relate to other areas of the Education portfolio. One of the amendments relates to the education and training export industry, which brings great benefits to this state. It has been targeted as a particular growth area within the government's overall export strategy because of its potential to earn export dollars. In fact, this industry is Australia's third largest export industry and is growing fast. IDP Education Australia, which is owned by Australia's 39 universities, has recently released research showing that there will be a ninefold increase in the number of international students seeking education and training in Australia between now and 2025. This increase is going to bring further wealth into the Queensland and Australian economies and create significant numbers of jobs in our cities and regions. That is why this government is making a real commitment to growing this sustainable, long-term service industry as a core component of the Smart State. This industry employs more than 5,000 people throughout Queensland and brings in more than \$600 million to the Queensland economy. More importantly, the sector is long-term and sustainable. In the past 12 months, the return to Queensland from this sector has grown by an estimated \$104 million.

The government's goal of doubling the industry's export earnings by 2006 is being driven by QETI—Queensland Education and Training International—a unit that is located within the Premier's Department and directed by Mr Scott Sheppard, and by the high-level Queensland Education and Training Export Board, which is chaired by the former Education and Training Minister, Paul Braddy.

QETI has in its first year of operation worked with regional groups across the state, providing them with access to support and resources to grow. QETEB has actively supported far-north Queensland's international education and training industry this year, and Cairns was the first region to be visited by the QETEB chair, Paul Braddy, who came at my request to let the industry know about the initiatives that it had in place to double the export of international education and training and to identify the kind of support that is needed in our region.

QETI has coordinated a number of seminars in Cairns to provide the industry with practical advice on exporting to markets such as China and Japan through its workshops and professional development programs. QETI also coordinated the Queensland education and training regional roadshow to Japan in November this year, which was specifically organised to coincide with the launch of the Australian Airlines flights from Cairns to Nagoya, Osaka and Fukuoka. Representatives from Cairns and Port Douglas participated in the highly successful roadshow and expect to welcome a new influx of students from regional Japan as a result.

Education Minister, Anna Bligh, was in China last month heading a delegation that included Bernard Moulden, Vice-Chancellor of James Cook University, which has recently embarked on a \$1.5 million marketing strategy that is targeting Asia. China is the fastest-growing market for international students in Queensland and Australia-wide. However, the university also targeted Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam in addition to China. JCU has traditionally drawn its overseas students from Europe and North America and this marketing strategy is intended to capitalise on the enormous and rapidly expanding Asian market.

Currently, there are about only 120 international students at JCU Cairns campus, but the campus is aiming to double this number during 2003 and the university is actively directing new overseas students to the Cairns campus. If JCU's future marketing missions are as successful as was its recent trip to China with Anna Bligh, then I am certain that it will easily meet this target.

During the China trip, the JCU delegation was successful in establishing three MOUs and has two further MOUs under development with five universities throughout China to provide mutually beneficial institutional links with key Chinese universities in Beijing and Shanghai. There has been some criticism of JCU by the Cairns Chamber of Commerce in regard to its performance in the area of overseas student numbers. So I hope that the success of the Chinese trade mission will be acknowledged by the chamber.

Cairns is particularly well placed to benefit from the increased focus of the government on the education and training export industry. As well as having lifestyle advantages and an international airport, it has a wide range of excellent educational products. In addition to the Cairns campus of JCU, which now has in excess of 200 postgraduate and undergraduate courses available, we have a number of excellent English language colleges, TAFEs and other private training providers as well as state and private schools that have together formed a consortium called Study Cairns, which has developed a joint marketing strategy to grow the industry.

In addition to its participation in the successful QETI to Japan, recent activities of Study Cairns include the development of a strategic plan, the launch of a new web site and the development of a home host guideline to establish an accepted industry standard for home stay providers for international students. At present, the main task of Study Cairns is the compilation of an audit and profile of members' services which will allow it to more accurately target existing and emerging export markets against the region's services strengths. The success of our export industry depends on many factors, but the quality of the courses and the premises in which they are provided can make or break our reputation. It is also necessary to ensure consistency between state and federal legislation in this field.

In 2000, the Commonwealth parliament passed a new act setting out the Commonwealth requirements for education services for overseas students. The amendment to the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1999 provided for in this bill is being progressed in the interests of maintaining the harmony of state and Commonwealth law. The successful interplay of these regimes is intended to foster the continuing success of the industry by ensuring that education and training services for overseas students are world class and protect the investment of overseas students pursuing Australian educational qualifications. The Commonwealth act, entitled the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000, prescribed the development of a national code for registration authorities and providers for education and training to overseas students. The national code requires that state registering authorities responsible for approving providers for registration must inspect the premises in which a provider delivers or intends to deliver its courses. The national code requires that inspections are to include both scheduled and unscheduled visits.

There is currently no head of power in the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 providing for the education registering authority, namely the Department of Education, to conduct such inspections of providers' premises. The bill provides for the power to conduct such inspections and to set a fee for the cost of the inspection in the Education (Overseas Students) Regulation 1998. The fee will be aimed at cost recovery only. This amendment is a positive reinforcement of Queensland's commitment to ensuring the continuing benefits that the industry brings to Queensland and Australia. While the primary focus of this legislation is tertiary education, it encompasses all overseas students.

I take this opportunity to commend Minister Bligh for her support of the development of international education in the schools sector as well as the tertiary level. At present there are just over 1,000 full fee paying overseas students in Queensland secondary schools, so clearly there is scope for this area to grow, with China, Korea, Taiwan, Brazil and Germany the current market focus. The biggest growth, however, is in the area of group study tours, with 6,400 students participating in over 300 tours this year. Cairns will benefit from these initiatives with the appointment just last month of Education Queensland international project officer Linda Forbes, who will coordinate the development of international education products in the Cairns region. The areas currently under consideration include full-time study at years 11 and 12, short-term study tours and professional visits by teachers.

There is potential to expand this area which to date has been exploited mainly by the private schools sector in Cairns, namely, by Trinity Anglican School, Peace Lutheran College and St Francis Xavier School. Linda Forbes serves as a guidance officer at Smithfield State High School

and also has a small business background. She is very well regarded in education circles for her knowledge, ability, drive and enthusiasm, and knowing her as well as I do I am sure she will make a very significant contribution to the growth of the education export industry in the schooling sector.

Whilst the growth of overseas student numbers in Cairns has been only moderate to date, I believe that the new low-cost Australian Airlines service providing desired links between Cairns and a number of cities in Japan, Korea and China as well as Singapore will drive the growth of this market in Cairns as part of the Department of State Development's strategy to leverage maximum benefit from these additional flights. The TAFE sector has also been very proactive with a focus on Asia, while the Cairns Tropical Institute of TAFE is the only Queensland TAFE to gain study tour accreditation from the People's Republic of China. I am pleased to have been able to play a role in fostering links between Cairns TAFE hospitality school and Ha Long Plaza, a major hotel in Ha Long Bay, during my visit to Vietnam in September by clarifying the training needs of this hotel in discussion with the owner, Mr Viet.

I understand that TAFE will be putting forward a training proposal submission to Mr Viet and I hope that this will lead to a successful outcome for both parties. While the tourism industry in Cairns is faring well, it is important that we continue to grow other industries that are compatible with tourism which will help to diversify our economic base. The export of education and training is one such industry and will, I am sure, make significant contributions to our future economic wellbeing. That is why the Premier's exciting announcement in the House this morning regarding the further progress of the establishment of a private university for Cairns was so important.

My congratulations go to the directors of CIH Pty Ltd, particularly Cairns International House's David Will, whose leadership has been critical to getting this project back on track with the involvement of Swinburne University. I also commend the member for Cairns, Desley Boyle, for her persistent advocacy for this project. While my loyalty to JCU as an ex-lecturer and council member is well known, I too welcome the prospect of another university in our region. I think this will further raise the profile of our destination for overseas students and lead to greater growth in this area. I can only but quote the words of the Premier this morning when he said—

No longer will Cairns be known as the gateway to the reef. The university will also make it the gateway to greater knowledge.

Not only will this university, JCU and other education providers reinforce that message; so too will new initiatives such as the Australian Tropical Forest Institute, proposed to be established in Cairns, build on our reputation. I look forward to being part of these exciting developments in the export of the education industry in Cairns. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (5.55 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill brought to the House by the Education Minister, Anna Bligh. The bill, as the minister has outlined, makes a number of changes to streamline university governance, to facilitate the prep school trial, to align education legislation with NCP requirements, to regulate private training for overseas students and to extend the inquiry power of the Board of Teacher Registration.

In speaking to the bill today I want to focus on higher education and the enormous impact that the advent of higher education through UQ Ipswich has had on our community. Ipswich is well known for having always had a fantastic tradition of education. Ipswich Grammar School, established in 1863, is the oldest high school in Queensland. St Mary's and St Edmond's Catholic colleges, Ipswich Girls Grammar School, Bremer TAFE, Ipswich West, Ipswich Central, Raceview and Silkstone primary schools are all over 100 years old. It really has been largely because Ipswich was traditionally a hinterland for a significant rural area that we have as such developed a significant education centre, along much the same lines as Toowoomba. Our community is well known throughout the state and indeed Australia for its tradition of education excellence.

A number of these institutions to which I have just referred met recently to extend the knowledge of that excellence throughout Australia and the world. They met to establish an education cluster which will allow our region to market itself widely as a centre of excellence in education. It could, I guess, develop Ipswich's somewhat infant education export sector into quite a big industry for us in the future.

Despite this tradition of education, until only four years ago Ipswich was the only provincial city in Queensland without its own university. This changed those four years ago when, with the intake of just 500 students, the University of Queensland Ipswich campus was opened. The process of securing UQ Ipswich for our community was a long and very difficult task. The

University of Queensland began looking to establish a regional campus in the early 1990s. However, there were many in the university who did not think to even consider Ipswich or who looked somewhat down their noses at establishing such a western suburbs icon all the way out at Ipswich. Through the excellent work of David Hamill in particular—with good support from the member for Ipswich West, Don Livingstone, and others—a tremendous campaign was mounted to have UQ come to Ipswich. When the campus opened in 1998 those long-held dreams of Ipswich's fantastic primary school, high school and TAFE cluster finally having a university were realised.

UQ Ipswich now has almost 3,000 students receiving the quality education for which UQ Ipswich is renowned in the beautiful environment of the restored Challinor Centre. Since its sad past as a mental institution, Challinor has been completely transformed, its buildings restored and its grounds manicured. Teaching at UQ Ipswich is innovative, with cutting-edge courses in communication, behavioural sciences and e-commerce as well as some excellent social research being done through the community service and research centre.

The worth of the Community Service and Research Centre's work is well understood throughout the Ipswich community, where through programs such as the Goodna Service Integration Project some really innovative work on how community and government can better work together to deliver services has been done. The work is also being recognised with the Graduate Certificate in Social Science, a course that I am currently studying, currently being one of just two finalists in its category in the Australian Awards for University Teaching. Those awards are by far the most prestigious awards for teaching in Australia. If UQ Ipswich, such a young and developing campus, can secure an Australian award for university teaching, it will very much reinforce the education standards of UQ Ipswich and reinforce the belief that excellent education can be provided in new and in regional campuses.

While I believe the process will inevitably take some time, UQ Ipswich is gradually being integrated into the Ipswich community. Its presence gives local people, young and old, a meaningful opportunity to be educated in their own community—something that is absolutely central to building a smart city. The regional dispersal of education if done well is one of the most effective ways of ensuring equitable access to education. It is also one of the most effective ways of ensuring that in smart economies the regions do not get left behind. While there remains more to be done, we are doing well in Ipswich at connecting the university and the community. These are the opportunities that UQ Ipswich has given us. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (6.01 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to speak to the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. This bill will amend 11 acts relating to various areas of the Queensland Education portfolio. In reality, it does not create a new legislative regime but improves on the existing one.

Education is a fundamental part of everyday life and one of the most important influences on the lives of our young people. Anything that can be done to make education more accessible, successful and enjoyable is a plus. I congratulate the minister and her staff, who have worked very hard on this over the years, commencing with the white paper. There will be a mark in the sand from this point on in Education Queensland, which will move ahead in leaps and bounds. The teachers and parents are probably not quite as excited as they will be in future, but excitement is building about the future changes.

I wish to take the opportunity to speak about a few of the schools in my area. Balmoral High School is the only state high school in my electorate. The principal, Noel Humphrys, has two deputies, Allan Kuskie and Gail Bruce. The school offers students the opportunity to undertake school based apprenticeships. Honourable members would know how keen I am to see those continuing. In about a week's time, a number of businesspeople will come together to see how we can continue to make that school the centre for educating students. The theme will be live and work locally. The local businesses will be looking to the schools to supply them with labour. We will be looking to educate those young men and women to make them job ready.

I congratulate the manual arts teacher, Ben Cribb, who has eight carpentry students this year who will get an opportunity when they leave school to go into the building industry as carpenters. This industry is hungry for young entrants. I am sure that the students from Balmoral High will lift the standards of the building industry upon entering it.

As I have mentioned in this House before, I wish to speak about the Arts Academy, Centre for Visual Arts, director Christine Kirkegard and her qualified and dedicated staff. I cannot say enough about this arts academy, which teaches drawings, paintings and photography and offers

a degree program in fine arts. It is the best kept secret in Brisbane. As much as I tell people about it, there are still people who do not know about it. I cannot commend it highly enough to anybody who wants to study fine arts at high school. They should attend Balmoral High, because they can obtain a university degree in addition to a high school education. I think there were about 50-odd students there this year.

Also, the Brisbane Regional Youth Orchestra has now moved into the grounds of Balmoral High and, for first the time in its history, has a home. This outstanding orchestra is available for a fee to perform at official functions. The very talented members of the orchestra also perform in smaller groups to provide chamber music for cocktail parties and small official functions. I can highly recommend it for any personal functions that members may have coming up, and I will be pleased to pass on contact details. They are very professional young men and women. These are the people who will be in the Queensland Youth Orchestra in the years to come.

One of the 'highest' schools in my area is the Bulimba State School, which is perched high on Balmoral Hill. Michael Zeuschner is the principal of Bulimba State School. This year it was named Queensland's greenest and healthiest school for 2002. The school outperformed 366 other contenders from throughout Queensland to win the title. The Chief Executive Officer of the Keep Australia Beautiful Council said that the school was 'buzzing with student initiated and school community activities and had a list of environmentally sustainable activities which was exhausting'. The Bulimba State School thrives on student initiated and school community activities that cover a wide range of issues, including worm farming, gardening, recycling, water and energy use. One of the many ongoing projects at the school is the construction of a toilet block on the lower oval that will use sustainable technology, solar energy and rainwater. Doug Hammond, one of the teachers at Bulimba State School, has been the driving force in seeing this project become a reality. Doug has devoted many hours of personal time to research, investigation and lobbying the government and me on the benefits of this project. To Doug this is a way of life and it is about teaching our young children that a sustainable environment is the way of the future. Doug is a very dedicated teacher who loves to impart his knowledge to the students at Bulimba State School.

Another school in my electorate is Cannon Hill State School. The principal, Chris Ling, has been a breath of fresh air since she has arrived there. She is currently transforming the junior part of the school into a virtual wonderland for children in years 1 to 3. The junior school in Cannon Hill is a very exciting place to be at the moment. It will have water features. They have brought the school out of the classroom and onto lovely verandas built beneath trees. For a young child this will be a great school to be at; it will be an exciting place.

Members may recall that earlier this year I mentioned that Joy Pohlner, a teacher at Cannon Hill State School, was named in October this year as one of the five winners of the Premier's Smart State Teacher Excellence Scholarships. Joy was instrumental in establishing the Primary Art Network at the school. Honourable members may recall last year seeing the art exhibition that Cannon Hill and Greenslopes State School students held in the parliamentary annexe. Walter Vecchio, also from the Cannon Hill State School, was the driving force behind the outstanding exhibition. The students have recently exhibited their art work at the Hands On Art complex at the Boardwalk, South Bank, with resounding success.

As honourable members can see, the teachers we have at these state schools are really doing a magnificent job for our young students and making it an adventure to go to school. The principal of Morningside State School is Pam Singleton. Since she has come to the school it has continued to grow. I thank the minister for coming out last year and spending some time with us at the school. Pam was instrumental in getting another kindy at the school. This has attracted more students. I am pleased to tell the minister that we will probably have to have a building program at the school shortly because the numbers are continuing to grow. We are looking at having a special school because we have the grounds and facilities for it at Morningside.

Pam has also revamped the courts at Morningside State School. The oval is looking spic and span and better than it has ever looked. The pool is used for the district championships. It is a great facility and people come from all over Brisbane to use the pool. The championships were held there last weekend. All in all, it is a very vital school which is going flat out.

I want to mention Camp Hill State School in passing. It is just outside my electorate. A lot of my constituents send their children to Camp Hill State School. Michael Campbell is the principal of the primary school. I affectionately know him as Nipper. I played football with Nipper when I played in the Warwick and District League. I played for Texas and Nipper played for Warwick. We used to love going over and giving Warwick a bit of a touch-up. Warwick Collegians always

seemed to win the premiership but we used to keep them honest from time to time. Nipper and I were fortunate enough to be in the Warwick and District side and played together.

Nipper is a great principal. He is always looking at ways to improve the school. The school has continued to grow since Nipper became principal. I congratulate Nipper on the hard work he is doing. He has a unit for 46 special needs children. He is very proud of the way that that unit operates. It is a way of life for the people who work in that unit. They put their whole being into what they can do for those special needs children. I was at the graduation last year and was able to observe how absolutely delighted those children were with the awards they received. They worked hard with their teachers in order to improve their education. It was marvellous to see.

The principal of Murarrie State School is Col Moynihan. This is one of the smaller schools in my area and is one of the two schools in the Bulimba electorate which has a teaching principal. Col is not only the principal of the school; he also teaches. I must say to the minister that it is a very tough job for the principal to be teaching as well as running the school. The school is situated about 15 kilometres east of the Brisbane central business district. There are seven classes at the school, including a large preschool. The school caters for a wide range of abilities and fosters the multicultural aspects of Australia.

In November I attended a multicultural day at the school where the children from Murarrie were encouraged to celebrate the different cultures from all around the world. It is like a small United Nations. The day started with indigenous Australia which featured didgeridoo players and story telling. Scotland and Ireland were then featured with their traditional dances, followed by the cultures of Mexico, El Salvador, Greece, Fiji, Kenya and Italy. They all featured their traditional food and music. All the children dressed in native costume. All up, it was a fantastic day. I congratulate the teachers, the parents and the school committee for putting on such a marvellous day. We are looking in the future to probably making it a cultural week. The seven small primary schools in my area are looking to get together. I must warn the minister for the Arts, Matt Foley, that we will be looking for some funding for this in the year 2003.

The principal of Norman Park State School is Val Thompson. Her mission statement says it all: 'By working together in a happy, industrious and relaxed school environment, we aim to develop positive attitudes towards lifelong learning and skills with which to meet future challenges.' Since Val has been at the school she has certainly done that. The school has grown enormously. We have had to put a cap on the numbers attending the school so that it will not outgrow the buildings and the facilities. I have to again warn the minister that we will be looking for more buildings there because the school continues to grow.

In 2001 the school started a mini-farm, which I thought was a great idea. This was an initiative of Val Thompson's. It allows students to experience another aspect of education. It focuses on hands-on activities. The farm has hens, ducks, quail, guinea pigs and cockatiels. The children are given a chance to see what animals there are around the place. The students have created a herb nursery. The proceeds from the sale of herbs will maintain the area and help with the expansion of the farm. A rainforest area is being established on the oval and this will provide a home for the ducks and teach the students to recycle the waste as a nutrient rich fertiliser for the oval. The school continues to grow and expand. I wish Val and her teachers all the best.

Probably the largest school in area in my electorate is the Seven Hills State School. The principal is Edward Danielewski. It is like a country school in the city. It is situated on 12 acres of land. The space and natural setting of the school promotes the opportunity for children to be involved in environmental studies. It also allows for integrated sporting activities. Seven Hills school is the host school for all the neighbouring schools for under-8s week. It has an environment which is accommodating and natural and which contributes to the children having self-worth and social development. Leadership skills are taught by the older children in an effort to organise and manage the playtime activities of the younger students.

I have been at the school many times on Anzac Day. The students run the Anzac Day service. I must congratulate them on that. The school has a great ethos.

I cannot finish without mentioning some of the Catholic schools in my electorate. I would like to mention Sts Peter and Paul which has a special place in my heart. It is where I educated all my children. My five children went to that school. John Power is the principal of the school. John, in the true Catholic tradition, is a builder. He is rebuilding the school and he is now in the second stage of rebuilding. It is coming along very well. The school has been transformed. We made do for years and years with buildings that were inadequate, but everybody was quite happy to do that. John has changed the landscape. The school is going to three streams next year with three

kindies and a 1-5 or a 1-4—I am not sure. It is probably 1-4 these days. The school continues to grow and prosper.

St Oliver Plunkett School has finished its rebuilding project. The principal of the school is Patricia McMahon. Patricia has ideas to undertake further building, including toilet blocks. She has been a marvellous principal. Patricia has engendered an ethos at the school that is something to see. The school has a very strong swimming club. I will be attending the school's award night later on this evening. The school has one of the largest swimming clubs for a school on the south side of Brisbane.

I recently attended St Thomas's Catholic School for its 75th anniversary. The school principal is David Cashman. He has a vibrant spiritual, academic, cultural and sporting co-educational committee that aspires to provide opportunities for each child to develop their individual gifts and abilities. The school has been in existence for 75 years and I think it will be there for another 75 years with the community that has been built around it.

My time is running out, but I would like to mention the other two high schools in my electorate. At Cannon Hill Anglican College the principal is Greg Wain. He has taken the school from a small co-educational school to a large college that has some of the best music facilities I have ever seen. Elton John could record there because the facilities are so good.

I cannot finish without mentioning Lourdes Hill College. After 11 years as principal of Lourdes Hill College, Kay Herse has made the momentous decision to retire from the school next year. She will be sadly missed not only by the thousands of students that she has educated through the college, including my own three daughters, but also her peers, students and parents. Kay has been a wonderful principal and has set a very high standard for her successor, Narelle Mullens, to follow. Narelle recently got involved with the school and moved into the area. Narelle spent 12 months out of education last year with St Vinnies but she comes with very good credentials. I know that the high standards at Lourdes Hill will continue. I support the bill.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.20 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to speak to the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. There are a number of issues that affect my electorate of Warrego and during the debate many members have been able to talk about issues affecting their electorates. Education is a very important area and it is terribly important that we get it right. One big issue in my electorate is the airconditioning of schools that are currently not airconditioned, and I hope that in the forthcoming budget the government looks to provide funding for airconditioning schools in those areas. There have been extremely hot conditions in the last few days particularly. Today has been an absolute stinker in the area and there is no doubt that children cannot learn in those conditions. One school that has been very active in this campaign to try to improve its lot is the St George Primary School. It has to raise about \$300,000 in order to aircondition the school, particularly C and B blocks. At this stage it has raised about \$130,000, so it has actually done extremely well. The Balonne Shire Council based at St George has been very helpful as well and provided funding to help the school, so that is a great effort by that council. It is interesting to note that it will cost the school \$100,000 to aircondition C block and it will have about \$30,000 to start on the next stage of introducing airconditioning.

With the government's scheme at the present moment, a subsidy is available for schools in north Queensland for airconditioning—the government pays \$4 for every \$1 raised. In other words, if it costs a school in north Queensland \$300,000 to aircondition the school that school only has to raise \$75,000 whereas the St George Primary School has had to raise \$100,000 and only a third of the school will be airconditioned. It has a long way to go and I do not think that is fair—that is, it has to raise all of the money to get airconditioning and then it is very hard to start the next stage of airconditioning. For example, if the school spent all the money airconditioning C block, it then has to raise the full quarter again should the government decide that it will come to the party. So it is a great cost to the school.

There has been great support from many people in the community, particularly various companies and many locals, in terms of fundraising. Chrissy Higgins from Higgins Manufacturing in Toowoomba and Brisbane has been very supportive and has provided a very competitive quote for C block. It might have been B block; it is either one of those blocks. We really appreciate that effort from that great company. I would recommend it to anyone if they need good work done. Great work was also done by the P&C, particularly Scott McWilliam and the head of the airconditioning committee, Helena McDonald. They have been a tower of strength in trying to raise the money.

I have to say that there are various ways and means to raise money. Two gentlemen in the area, Councillor Robert Buchan and Dr John Stone—Dr Stone was a councillor; he is now the mayor of the shire—while not giants of men, certainly cast a fair shadow. They decided to lose some weight and proposed that they would pay the school airconditioning committee \$100 for every kilogram that they lost. In fact, they lost 66 kilograms and therefore paid \$6,600 towards the fund. I was very supportive of their cause and offered to pay \$10 for every kilogram they lost. So that cost me \$660 as well. That was money well spent. Those gentlemen certainly slimmed down. While they still cast a shadow, it is certainly a little less than what it was before. It was great to see the community spirit urging those people to lose the weight and the great contribution that they made to the airconditioning fund.

I also want to mention an issue which is very important, and that is the position of executive director of schools in the Roma district office. There have been four acting district officers within the last couple of years, and that is not satisfactory. In an area as large as Roma, surely we can find a permanent person for that position. It is important for continuity of the region. I must say that the acting district executive directors have been very good, and I want to put that on the record. I think that they themselves would also recommend that the position be filled permanently so that there is more continuity in the region.

I also want to mention the Balonne Further Education and Training Group which has put together a skill centre which will be a great boost for the Balonne youth, particularly around the St George region. Those youths will now not have to leave home to further their education and training. Facilities and opportunities for vocational training are currently limited in the Balonne region and the Balonne Skill Centre will help fill the gap in the education and training area. The region is experiencing growth with new and successful industries now established in the region such as aviation, table grapes, vineyards, rockmelons and other fruit as well as the traditional industries of cotton, beef, sheep and grain. The drought has set the centre back at the moment, but down the track when it does rain again, which it will, these industries will be back in full swing. We certainly need to have the people skilled up to be able to work in those industries.

Due to the diversity of the region's industries, the Balonne Skill Centre will be able to offer training to students in a range of areas such as catering, gardening, administration, small business issues, tourism and hospitality related skills and various short courses. School based traineeships, apprenticeships, individual competency units or competencies for students at St George and Dirranbandi secondary schools and literacy and numeracy programs will also be on offer. The centre will also work cooperatively with other training providers to access courses outside those areas of registration. Roma TAFE has indicated it will use the facilities at the centre on a regular basis to deliver training to local students and also the Open Learning Institute.

It is expected that seasonal casual workers will also access the skill centre for specific training such as grapevine pruning skills, and that is a large industry developing in the St George region and a great product. I congratulate the Balonne Further Education and Training Group Management Committee which has done a tremendous job on the submissions, gathering needs analysis information to support the submission and for all the work done. It has been an enormous effort over a long time. The committee members include Barnaby Joyce, Rosie Jones, Paul Atkinson, Ron and Jennie Waters, Jeff Baker, Robert Buchan, Cassandra Taylor, Christine Himstedt-Anderson, Justin Washinton, Tracey Campbell and Jeff Fox. We certainly appreciate the support they have given. The government also appreciates the funding that has been provided at this stage. We were advised on 12 November that a further \$200,000 has been approved by the minister. That is great news for education in the St George region.

There is another important issue in the Miles area. The Miles preschool is a great preschool, but it has a waiting list. It has had one for years. There is too much demand for one unit. We really need two smaller preschool units rather than one oversubscribed unit. If we could run two classes of 15, that would certainly suffice. We probably need to get some up-to-date figures, but every year some children miss out. They cannot go to preschool because there is a waiting list. It is just not satisfactory in a town such as Miles, which has a population of probably 900 people. There is no transport to other centres. That just means that some of those young students miss out. We have the facility. All we need is the teaching staff and maybe some administrative staff. The facilities are there. All we need is a bit of help to make sure the rest of those students can get a proper start to school life.

The speech nights we have all been to represent a great opportunity to catch up with a lot of principals, students and teachers. I thank all of the teachers who have transferred out of the Warrego area. I will no doubt catch up with them in different areas around the state. I thank them

for their contribution to the schools in the district. I wish them well for their futures. Most importantly, I thank those teachers who are staying. It is always very difficult when there is a lack of continuity in teaching staff. We see this on numerous occasions when there is a big turnover. It sometimes happens at various schools that there is quite a large turnover. That has happened in a few schools this year. That does create a bit of uncertainty for the parents. They wonder how things will turn out next year. Certainly, I thank all of those principals, teachers, parents and P&Cs who have worked so hard.

I will be attending the St George Primary School and Mungallala speech nights next week. I have been very fortunate to be able to get to a few. It is very difficult when parliament is sitting. We just cannot get to as many of those speech nights as we would like. I think it is very important that local members get out to see those people—to talk to them about the issues that are important. Education is one of the most important issues. We have to make sure we can provide that service. We have to make sure that education is the very best for the students in our electorates.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (6.33 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. I will touch briefly on a few of the major policy objectives of this bill. The first relates to the universities, and in particular to Griffith University. The first policy objective relates to filling casual vacancies on the governing bodies of Queensland universities. The second objective is an initiative which seeks to deal with the structure and organisation of Griffith University. Currently that university has several colleges in separate locations. These colleges are part of the overarching university structure.

Having served for about six years on the Griffith University council as a Governor in Council appointee, I am very pleased to see these amendments come before the parliament. It is important to see these amendments in the context of what occurred through the 1990s. I was able to witness those changes and be part of them at first-hand. I am very grateful to have been there to contribute to those times. It was an era that marked major change in the university system. To use a word that the students of those universities would be quick to use, the changes that occurred were simply awesome.

The amount of restructuring that happened through those years could not have been envisaged from perhaps the late 1980s and early 1990s. We saw many campuses, many CAEs and small tertiary institutions. One of the smallest was the School of Divinity, which eventually came under the auspice of Griffith University. It must have had about 20 students at the time. It was a very small institution. I know that Roy Webb, who was chancellor at that time, had great vision. The council worked very hard to expand the parameters of the university over many campuses. We see today the results of the vision with the development, especially near to here on the South Bank, of the College of Art and the Conservatorium of Music, which fall under the umbrella of that university.

Governance of that university indeed can be streamlined under this structure. It is appropriate now, after this amount of time has elapsed, that it be streamlined in this way and that those other campuses feel very much a part of the overall university structure. This legislation provides for voting rights right across that domain. I wish those involved in the future implementation of this initiative well, and I congratulate the many people who have done so much over the past decade to bring this university to its current great status. I am very confident that it will go from strength to strength.

Mrs Reilly: Hear, hear.

Mr FENLON: I hear another former great student supporting the bill.

I refer to the initiatives to change the Board of Teacher Registration to increase the board's power. This is fundamental to our society. Nothing is more important than this. When we send our children to schools we put great reliance on our teachers. We assume so much, and society has to be guaranteed the highest levels of accountability and scrutiny of our teachers. We cannot be firm enough or hard enough in terms of ensuring that this is the case. This legislation will certainly increase that accountability and firmness to ensure teachers are well checked out and are able to provide the highest standards of behaviour and performance for our children.

I refer to the preparatory year trial across Queensland in 2003. I am very pleased that one school on my electorate border—many parents in my electorate have children attending it; it is on the border of the electorate of Chatsworth—that is, the Camp Hill State Infants School, is included in the trial. That is one of the first of the 39 schools across the state to be involved in that full-time preparatory year for education in 2003. It is a great school. I think it is the last in the state with a

separate infants school. It is something that is still very popular in the area with parents. There is a geographical separation at that school which is working well. There are separate principals. I am sure in the future there will be even greater cooperation between the junior primary school and the primary school. The schools have great principals and great parent bodies. I look forward to the results of the trial in that area.

Across the Greenslopes electorate, at the moment education is going through a revolution with the amount of money being put through our high schools and our primary schools, particularly through the Secondary School Renewal Program. I look forward to detailing that further in this place at another time. I congratulate the minister on bringing these initiatives to the House. I am sure that they will improve even greater the initiatives and funding that has been put in place by Education Queensland in recent times.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): This bill implements practical, sensible, workable amendments to a number of education acts that will allow for the smoother day-to-day operation of our schools and universities. While rising to support all provisions of the bill, I will focus on two areas: accreditation of non-state schools and changes to teacher registration provisions. I do so because I had the privilege of teaching in non-state schools for two decades and because I served for six years on the Board of Teacher Education, the forerunner of the current Board of Teacher Registration.

Firstly, I recognise the achievement of former Education Minister Wells of passing the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001. It is appropriate that the House recognise the work of people such as Professor Roy Webb and Alan Druery who worked for many years to bring about acceptance within the non-state school sector of the accreditation procedures. Because the accreditation process acts as a guarantee of quality control, legitimate non-state schools have seen the benefit of the process and have willingly adopted the new procedures. In general, the accreditation process is working very well and is strongly supported by the non-state school sector. The annual report from the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board provides a concise picture of the success of the new accreditation procedures.

However, as with all systems, there are some aspects that can be managed more effectively. This legislation achieves a better outcome for schools through amendments that are largely technical and procedural. They allow for changes and minor variations to be addressed by the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board in a way that upholds the original intent of the bill, but in a manner that is practicable and reasonable.

I turn to changes to the Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988. When I was a member of the Board of Teacher Education from 1981 to 1985, the only unpleasant aspect of the work was the holding of disciplinary hearings against a registered teacher. For the most part, the charges against a registered teacher were at the lower end of the criminal scale. But one of the frustrations that the board faced was that teachers under investigation could escape scrutiny simply by removing their names from the official register. Although subsequent amendments have extended the time frame within which the board could conduct an inquiry, a teacher who seriously offended against a student some years ago could escape scrutiny. This legislation closes that loophole.

Information about events that occurred during a teacher's registration may become known only many years after the teacher's registration has ended. This legislation will permit the BTR to extend its powers to inquire into any action that occurred when a teacher was on the register. Such an inquiry would be important to determine if the person was a fit and proper person to teach should they wish to be restored to the register.

I would like to take this opportunity to place on the record the thanks of the House to all who have contributed to the Board of Teacher Education and the Board of Teacher Registration over many years. The community in general, and parents in particular, owe a great deal to the many paid staff and honorary board members who have overseen the best teacher registration scheme in Australia. I am aware that, over the years, other states have looked to the Queensland scheme in establishing or refining their registration procedures. Year after year, the board, together with its various committees, has established and preserved the quality of the teaching profession in Queensland.

To everyone who has been involved with the Board of Teacher Education and the Board of Teacher Registration, I pass on the warmest gratitude of the parliament and the Queensland community. I thank the minister, her ministerial staff and her departmental staff for their professionalism and advice on bringing about these practical, sensible amendments. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (6.43 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contribution to the debate on this bill. It is a bill that is designed to improve and streamline the operations of the Education portfolio. I will take a moment to address some of the issues that were specifically raised during the debate and questions that I was asked to address.

Firstly, in relation to comments by the member for Beaudesert, can I say how pleased I was to hear him echoing my comments in relation to the need for university places in Queensland and the need for the Commonwealth's allocations of university places to recognise the dramatic growth in Queensland generally, but particularly in the youth cohort, and the legitimate aspirations to higher education that young Queenslanders have. If they have the marks and the capacity to access university places, their opportunities should be the same as those of young people in other states. That is increasingly not the case.

However, I take one point of disagreement with the member for Beaudesert. He claimed that no government has ever addressed this issue. I dispute that. In fact, after a great deal of negotiation and argument with the then federal Labor government, the Goss government reached an agreement to put in place a five-year plan that would see Queensland's participation rate in higher education reach the same as the national average. That five-year plan actually worked. It saw a very large investment of public funds in the capital of our universities from the state government matched with an investment in places by the federal government. The national average of participation was actually reached in Queensland in 2000. Since becoming Education Minister, I have been warning that it is seriously at risk of going back into decline. The announcement last week by the federal Education Minister that people should not be expecting further funding or any further places next year as a result of his higher education white paper, I have to say, leaves state ministers, particularly those such as I who represent high-growth states, despairing that we can reasonably aspire to see those aspirations met. I trust that the shadow minister will be joining with me when I knock on the Commonwealth's door in relation to this over the next couple of years.

The member asked a question specifically about whether overseas schools, which operate using overseas curriculum, could receive government funding. I clarify that there is a regulation-making power in the Education (General Provisions) Act which provides that a regulation can be made that will provide for government funding to those schools. That regulation-making power was inserted in the act under the previous National Party government in 1989, but no government since has actually made such a regulation. So at this time there is no provision that would allow government funding to be provided to an international school offering an overseas curriculum.

In relation to the situation at Kooralbyn, I share the member's concern about the way in which that school wound itself up. I think that it did not treat its students or the clients as well as it could have and should have. I reassure the member that the records of students are, in fact, safe. I understand that negotiations are occurring with the new operators to make sure that those records can be handed over by the new operators—who technically own them—to the students and assure him that those records are intact and safe except for that material that was appropriately provided to the then Board of Senior Secondary Studies to allow these students to continue with their year 11 and 12 work.

In relation to criminal history checks, the bill provides a power for criminal history checks to be made on teachers in international schools, because those teachers would not be subject to the Board of Teacher Registration process because they would be teaching an international curriculum. Such checks would allow checks to be made that go beyond the rehabilitation periods outlined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, that is, that act would not apply in terms of any restriction on time. They will include a check on both charges and convictions.

In relation to the proposal from the government to put in place a preparatory year of schooling, I clarify again for the member for Beaudesert that this is actually a new year of schooling; it is not simply a matter of doubling preschool. The reason why it requires trialling is that it requires careful planning to implement properly. Curriculum will be developed that will be appropriate for this different age cohort of children to be on a full-time basis. We also need to allow certain planning to occur to make sure that we have the teachers available for such an extensive new year of school. It also provides us with an opportunity to consult widely with the community. It goes hand in hand with a proposal from the government to consider raising the entry age of schooling, which we believe requires plenty of notice to families and extensive discussion.

The member for Nicklin raised some concerns about acting positions. Can I say that, although I understand his concerns, Education Queensland does its best to make sure that people are not in those acting positions for too long, but I am happy to discuss any particular details of any particular case with him. The member also raised concerns in relation to the need for blue cards in regard to school bus drivers. The Department of Transport is, as I understand it, currently reviewing the circumstances of checks that might be necessary for drivers responsible for driving schoolchildren and I would be happy to keep the member informed of that.

The member for Gladstone asked why parents who are volunteers at schools are not subject to the need for a blue card under the Children's Commission legislation. While that has nothing to do with this bill, I assure the member that the Children's Commission legislation provides for a review of that legislation to commence in May next year. I suggest to the member that that is the appropriate time for her to make sure that that issue is picked up if she has concerns about it. I also assure her that the government is committed to appropriately funding and resourcing the preparatory school trials. We will be looking very closely at making sure that the resource levels are appropriate.

I thank those members who raised in the debate the need for us to be very enthusiastic and welcoming of international students. Those members, such as the members for Logan, Nudgee and Barron River, raised in some detail the role of international education in our economy and the growing role that it will have in the years to come. I implore members to realise that, no matter where these students come from, they are just like any other young people who have left home to come to another country. They are a long way from home in a very foreign environment and it is important for us to extend a welcoming hand to make them feel welcome and to let them know that we positively endorse their presence in our institutions of education. All of those comments were a far cry from some of the ill-informed criticisms we unfortunately hear from the other side from time to time, particularly from some of the Independents.

The members for Gregory, Mirani and Warrego talked about some of the issues affecting rural schools. I understand their concerns. They will appreciate that this is a very difficult system to staff as routinely as we would like, but I believe that the department has made a great effort in recent times to put in place flexible mechanisms that recognise the special needs of rural and remote communities.

In relation to some of the member for Gregory's questions, I confirm that the Emerald North Special Education Centre will not be suffering any cutbacks in funding and will be expected and able to provide services as usual. The member for Mirani raised some issues of specific interest to schools in his electorate. These were unrelated to the bill and I am happy to reply to him directly at another time. I thank those people who have worked so hard to make this bill a reality. On the face of it these are many minor amendments, but in some ways that requires a lot more detailed drafting work to pull it all together into a coherent bill.

I thank those officers from my department who have worked hard on this bill, including the director of the portfolio program, Leigh Tabrett, her staff—Laurie Vogler, Lorna Keast and Emily Wilson—and the cabinet legislation and liaison officer, Cathy O'Malley. I also thank Roy Webb, chair of the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board, and his members for their work on that board in the first 12 months and their work to make sure that these amendments will improve the operation of that legislation. I also thank senior officers of our universities who have worked with officers of my department to ensure that the bill enhances the operations of their institutions. I also thank staff of my own office, particularly Don Wilson, who have steered this bill throughout its development. This bill will enhance the operations of the Education portfolio from preschool to university. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) in charge of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr LINGARD (6.53 p.m.): The minister spoke about international education institutions approved to deliver a curriculum of a foreign country and that in Queensland at this stage there are none.

Ms Bligh: There is one, but it does not receive government funding.

Mr LINGARD: What about an institution like Hills where it may be that there is an Australian curriculum operating side by side? Is it that a Japanese curriculum can still be provided to students and government funding be provided to the school for those students?

Ms BLIGH: To clarify, there is in fact one such school in Queensland. It is actually in the electorate of Beaudesert, as I understand it—the International South Queensland Academy. It provides a Japanese curriculum. It is not eligible to receive government funding, regardless of who attends there, because the only way it could do so is if a regulation were made under the act to allow that to happen and no such regulation exists.

Mr LINGARD: I know that we approved that school on the understanding that it provide a Queensland curriculum. I understand that it is now more a Japanese curriculum and I was wondering whether those students were receiving funding.

Ms BLIGH: There are two schools on the one campus and one of the schools provides a Japanese curriculum. The other provides a Queensland curriculum. The one I am talking about, which is specifically an international school offering an international curriculum, is not in receipt of any government funding.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

Mr LINGARD (6.55 p.m.): I notice that clause 8 states that unless a school provides primary education the school cannot provide preschool education. What is the understanding when a school decides to provide preschool education in a facility separate to the primary school?

Ms BLIGH: The facilities do not determine whether it is part of a school. The provision really provides that there cannot be just a preschool. It has to be part of a bigger school. It could be across the road or down the road, as is often the case in both the state and non-state sectors, but it has to be part of that school in an operational sense. It cannot be just a preschool and nothing else.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mr LINGARD (6.56 p.m.): We are saying here that the new section makes it clear that a school may be provisionally accredited to provide more than one type of education. Might a school just start with a preschool and be accredited to continue into the primary school and secondary school areas, or do they have to start with those two facilities?

Ms BLIGH: In order to be accredited to start, if a school has a preschool it must have at least a preschool and years 1, 2 and 3.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 10 to 22, as read, agreed to.

Clause 23—

Ms BLIGH (6.57 p.m.): I move—

1. Clause 23—

At page 18, lines 19 to 21, from 'substantially similar'—
omit, insert—

'substantially similar to—

- (a) another application for which a person has complied with the notice requirement within 3 years before the exempt application was made; or
- (b) an application—
 - (i) made under the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989, section 134B, as in force from time to time before 1 January 2002, within 3 years before the exempt application was made; and
 - (ii) for which a person has complied with the requirements under that Act about giving notice of the application.'.

This amendment will ensure that the bill gives the non-state schools eligibility for government funding committee discretion to waive the public notification requirements when these requirements have recently been met for an application which is substantially similar. It is necessary to cover adequately all of the approvals for schools affected by the transition from the Education (General Provisions) Act to the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act of 2002. I table for the information of the House the explanatory notes to that amendment.

Mr LUCAS: I thank the minister for her cooperation and courtesy in this amendment. It will be of great assistance to Moreton Bay College, a school just outside my electorate, establishing Moreton Bay College Boys School within my electorate. They cannot start their new campus straightaway. I do thank the minister and her department for their consideration in relation to this matter.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 23, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 24 to 35, as read, agreed to.

Clause 36—

Mr LINGARD (6.58 p.m.): I spoke before about Kooralbyn and said that some students who had paid their whole year's fees before the school fell apart in June still could not recover any of those fees and that to continue in another school they had then to repay fees again. I wonder whether in looking at the financial viability some understanding could be arrived at between those institutions and the Education Department?

Ms BLIGH: As I said earlier, I understand the member's concerns. When the accreditation board looks at the financial viability of a school, it does so on the basis of what is currently available to it. If in the operation of that school somewhere down the track the school becomes financially not viable and falls over, it does so like any other private organisation. While it is regrettable, when parents decide to go out of the state system and into the private education system, to some extent that is a risk they take. If they pay their fees and the organisation falls over, it is not the role of the state to come in and underwrite that. They go through the same financial winding up as any other corporation.

Clause 36, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 37 to 39, as read, agreed to.

Clause 40—

Mr LINGARD (7.00 p.m.): I would have thought that in seeking approval a school would have had to have its accreditation approved and that there would be an inspection generally each year or every second year from the Education Department. What is the general understanding at present of the inspections that are carried out with all of those non-state schools and why is it necessary, therefore, to charge a fee if it is necessary for an inspector to look at a school?

Ms BLIGH: Clause 40 of the bill refers to the approval of international educational institutions. There are currently no inspection powers. This is something that is required to meet new national guidelines. This is an inspection power that does not currently exist but which, in my view, is necessary and will improve the investigations that lead up to the approval or otherwise of an international education institution. Currently we do not have any applying, but with more and more international students seeking to come here we could reasonably predict that there may be some into the future.

Mr LINGARD: I appreciate the minister's comment, but proposed section 17A(3) probably was.

Clause 40, as read, agreed to.

Clause 41, as read, agreed to.

Clause 42—

Mr LINGARD (7.02 p.m.): We are talking about the amendment of teacher registration and how far back we can go in terms of the Board of Teacher Registration to check on people. How much is that relevant to the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act?

Ms BLIGH: This provision in fact has no relevance to the criminal checking provisions. This simply provides that if a teacher has resigned and then in five years time seeks to reregister, the board can look at any activities or any circumstances that occurred during the time the teacher was registered so that it can make a judgment about the reregistration of a teacher. Up until this provision, it could look at only one year. As we all know, that probably does not satisfy the need for some rigour. There is no limitation on the time, but it is not about criminal history checking; it is simply about the amount of time that it can go back and do an investigation.

Clause 42, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 43 to 74, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Ms Bligh, by leave, read a third time.

Sitting suspended from 7.04 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 8 November (see p. 4685).

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (8.30 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. In doing so, I acknowledge that the minister has the call and it is through his indulgence that he is allowing the members of the opposition and also Independents to make a brief but important contribution to the consideration of the bill before the House.

In participating in this debate on the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment Bill, I note the object of this bill is to amend two primary industries acts which deal with the control of the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. In short, this bill is about more regulation of the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals to prevent, where possible in Queensland, contamination of agricultural produce, livestock or animal products. While I support this bill, I ask the minister: what guarantees can he give that agricultural or animal products imported from overseas meet the same very high standard that our primary producers are now required to meet in Queensland? In making this comment and asking this question, I note that the minister's advice to the House is that all other Australian states and territories have agreed to implement the recommendations noted in the NCP review. Yet it appears to me, again, that there is no level playing field between the high standards Australian farmers have to meet in comparison with the standards overseas farming enterprises are required to meet. All I ask is that, if our farmers have to meet these high standards, surely all imports should have to meet exactly the same standards and Australia should not simply be the dumping ground for cheap second-rate food produced in overseas countries that do not require the high standards that we do in Queensland.

Can the minister please advise in his summing up what his view is on the topic of maintaining an appropriate standard of quality for all imported food products into this great country of Australia, and will he pursue this issue of quality assurance for all imported food products at his next meeting with other state and territory Ministers for Primary Industries? I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (8.32 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment Bill. My electorate of Mulgrave is in far-north Queensland. There has been a fair bit of debate in recent years over the use of chemicals in the sugar industry. My area is one of the key sugar growing areas in Queensland. The sugar industry has been blamed to a large extent for the difficulties we are experiencing right now with agricultural run-off and potential damage to the reef. We cannot completely lay the blame with one particular industry. My view is that not only are the primary industries along our coastal belt potentially partly responsible for any damage; I believe a huge problem stems from the urban areas of Queensland and the run-off of waste materials from our cities and towns, which is contributing dramatically to any increase in chemical run-off into the pristine waters of far-north Queensland.

Over the years I have been in parliament a number of important pieces of legislation have been passed to enhance on-farm safety regarding the use of chemicals. A number of important pieces of legislation have enabled farmers to come to grips with some of the difficulties they face with the use of chemicals on their properties.

Ms Nelson-Carr: And they face extreme difficulties, don't they?

Mr PITT: They do. A lot of the legislation in the past has not been tight enough. Many people in the farming industry have been victims of their own ignorance—ignorance in that no-one knew about the effects of these chemicals. Over the years, things such as 245T, 24D and other products have copped a hammering. I believe a lot of farmers have used these products and other similar products without being fully aware of the potential impact on their own health and safety and that of their loved ones and also the environment.

The main purpose of this bill is to give effect to recommendations made by the independent national competition policy review of agricultural and veterinary chemical legislation on behalf of

the Australian Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The current legislation is a direct result of a Council of Australian Governments meeting where the states and Commonwealth got together, as we tend to do nowadays, to try to make uniform legislation across the country. As a product of one of those meetings there was a determination to come to grips with this issue. They have agreed to implement recommendations made in that NCP review. The recommendations were arrived at after careful consideration, taking on board a lot of scientific advice and the practicalities of farming in a modern era.

The bill also makes a number of minor consequential amendments to the ACDC Act and the Chemical Use Act as well as increasing penalties—

Mr Lawlor: That's a band, AC/DC.

Mr PITT: It may be a band, but in this case it is a very important aspect of farm and off-farm safety. The penalties will be increased. It is probably long overdue that we took this matter more seriously than has been the case in the past. Those penalties will give people cause to take stock of their situation. The introduction of such strong penalties may encourage people to do the right thing when handling these chemicals.

Ms Nelson-Carr: Penalties are a good thing, don't you think?

Mr PITT: Sometimes the stick is needed as much as the carrot. Over the years we have done a lot to ensure that people are encouraged to do the right thing. However, quite often we have to resort to penalties to bring people back into line. In my part of the world there are a number of companies that provide chemicals by way of fertilisers and chemicals to keep pests and weeds under control. In my view, most of those people take their responsibilities very seriously and I commend them. In so doing, I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (8.38 p.m.), in reply: In reference to this bill, I thank all honourable members for their contributions. However, I will now deal with the specific issues that have been embraced by members. First, I would like to put this bill in the context of the Queensland government's efforts in relation to the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. The government, through the Department of Primary Industries, has been committed to supporting the appropriate use of chemicals and the development of non-chemical pest solutions. The department's Agency for Food and Fibre Sciences is regarded as a leader in integrated pest management. Not only does integrated pest management reduce the use of chemicals and enhance our reputation for producing clean and safe food, it also reduces the costs for our primary producers.

The DPI's research work into integrated pest management is largely focused on field crops and horticulture but has also led to chemical reduction in the livestock and forestry industries. The Queensland farming sector has embraced this research. May I say that I have been with some scientists from South Korea with whom I have had a pretty good dinner and we have certainly discussed issues of mutual importance to both South Korea and Queensland. I can announce to the House that we will be exchanging ideas and we will also be exchanging scientists between both countries to further foster some of our very important bilateral relations that we have with South Korea.

I can also report that the number of Queensland producers involved in IPM is increasing each year, and the use of chemicals is certainly reducing. Last financial year, 2000-01, there were 6,000 producers using sustainable methods as a direct result of the Agency for Food and Fibre Sciences. The target for this financial year is up 1,200 producers, and in the first quarter alone there were 1,900 producers involved, so we are well on target to having 7,200 producers involved this financial year.

In the current state budget \$7.4 million has been allocated for DPI research and education to promote smart chemical use that enhances product quality, reduces production costs and also protects the environment. Some of the technologies that the agency is researching as part of integrated pest management for Queensland's food and fibre industries include biopesticides, beneficial insects and natural parasites, exclusion netting, trap crops and pest and disease resistant varieties. The government and industry have shown a strong commitment to responsible chemical use. This bill, I believe, strengthens the requirements on chemical use and I believe it is an important part of our commitment to a sustainable food and fibre sector and also the environment.

Perhaps I could touch on the various issues that have been raised by members. I have tried to ensure that issues raised by the opposition are dealt with. The opposition spokesperson spoke about maximum penalties and promotion of this by overzealous inspectors. Could I inform the

House that the proposed penalties reflect the seriousness of the offences. Penalties need to be set at levels that will have a significant deterrent effect because of the potentially high risks to Australia's trade—not only the trade but also the environment and the health and safety of human beings from the misuse of chemicals. Government and industry actively promote responsible chemical use. However, despite this some individuals are still prepared to misuse chemicals.

Existing penalties for breaching the legislation are often significantly less than the potential reward to the individual of engaging in the misuse of chemicals. Breaches of the current and proposed provisions under the act have the potential to result in loss of markets not only to Queensland but also to Australia. Queensland must be in a position to demonstrate to its trading partners that effective chemical controls over the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals exists.

More than half of the offences under the act attract a maximum penalty of 300 penalty units or less. For more serious offences, a maximum penalty of 600 penalty units applies. Examples relate to, firstly, the use of unregistered chemical products without authorisation and, secondly, failing to observe a withholding period following the treatment of a trade species animal. The highest maximum penalty imposed is 800 penalty units, and that applies only to the three most serious offences. For example, the possession and/or use of a prescribed chemical without permission attracts this high penalty because the detection of these chemicals in animals or animal products would be devastating to our reputation. Organochlorines, such as DDT, are prescribed chemicals and have been banned for use since the mid-1990s.

In the administration of the legislation the department takes a staged approach to the enforcement of the regulatory requirements. Animal and Plant Health Service inspectors are required to administer the legislation in accordance with a regulated and supervised framework when enforcing any of the legislation administered by the department. Enforcement activities are normally in accordance with planned and targeted high-risk activities or offences. The primary response in low-risk situations is education and also persuasion. However, when misuse of chemicals has the potential to cause residual violations, placing at risk Queensland's reputation for safe and ethically produced food and fibre products, it is necessary for inspectors to initiate a regulatory response which could result in prosecution of the offender.

The second issue that has been raised by the honourable member for Hinchinbrook is the full rewrite of legislation, which is a review of all veterinary chemical use legislation. The government is committed to a review of all veterinary chemical use legislation, and that is being progressed in two stages. We are currently in the first stage of implementing the agreed reforms to meet NCP requirements. Could I say that this piece of legislation is based on our government's response to national competition policy concerns. In relation to the full review of the legislation, we are strongly committed to progressing it as quickly as possible. The Department of Primary Industries is conducting a review of all agricultural and veterinary chemicals control of use legislation within its portfolio. This review is expected to result in integration of all control of use issues into one single piece of legislation.

The third issue that was raised by the honourable member for Hinchinbrook is practical examples of how notices relating to faulty and defective equipment apply to aerial contractors. Seventy-five per cent of aerial contractors are members of the Aerial Agriculture Association of Australia—the 4As. An initiative of the 4As is Operation Spray Safe that recognises the need for continuous improvement and professionalism in the application of agricultural chemicals by aircraft. Operation Spray Safe, as the code of practice for the industry, has been responsible for the promotion of a positive and responsible image for this industry.

However, accidents do occur and some irresponsible operators do not always comply with industry guidelines in maintaining application equipment. These people will be dealt with. For example, operators have continued to operate with cut-off valves malfunctioning or individual nozzles working ineffectively. A malfunction with a cut-off valve can result in the discharge of the chemical on non-target areas, including residential premises. Ineffective distribution of the chemical may result in failure of the chemical treatment controlling the pest or disease. It is important that inspectors are empowered to take action to ensure that operators take action to rectify these problems.

The fourth issue that was raised by the honourable member for Hinchinbrook related to endosulfan and licensing. Use of the pesticide endosulfan has been of concern to the primary industry sector for a number of years. Reviews of this chemical by the NRA have concluded that it is essential that users of this product must have a high level of skill to ensure that adequate

precautions are taken to minimise the risks of spray drift and potential contamination of fodder crops. The National Registration Authority for agricultural chemicals—which of course we all know as the NRA—determined that persons using endosulfan would be required to hold either a spray operator licence or a valid farm care chemical user certificate.

In Queensland this means that a person holding a commercial operator's licence or a pilot chemical rating licence under the ACDC Act can use endosulfan. Alternatively, the holder of a ChemCert accreditation is also able to use endosulfan. There is already scope within the ACDC Act for an accreditation to be accepted as an alternative qualification for a licence in lieu of the existing examination. For example, the ACDC control board is in the process of approving the holding of spray safe agricultural pilot accreditation as an alternative qualification for a pilot chemical rating licence. It is likely that chemical user accreditations based on endorsed national competency—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I beg your pardon?

Honourable members interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: What are members talking about? It is likely that chemical user accreditations based on endorsed national competency standards will be approved as an alternative qualification to the examination for the chemical operator's licence. That word certainly rolls off the tongue very easily.

Mr Rowell: They're having a shot at you, Henry.

Mr PALASZCZUK: No, they are not. At least they are listening. That is the main point. Another minor issue is the removal of approval of aerial and ground equipment. This requirement to approve individual equipment for the distribution of agricultural chemicals has been removed. However, operators have an obligation to ensure that equipment used is not expected to cause damage and inspectors are able to give directions preventing the continued use of faulty or defective equipment.

The fifth issue the honourable member raised is use of unregistered chemical products by veterinary surgeons and clarification on who issues the permit. The NRA is responsible for the approval and registration of agricultural and veterinary chemical products. The NRA also bears responsibility for the issue of permits to enable the use of unregistered chemical products. The state chemical use legislation only regulates the use of chemical products. Veterinary surgeons are not permitted to use, prescribe, supply or recommend any unregistered veterinary chemical for use to treat an animal unless authorised by a permit obtained by the NRA or prescribed under a regulation. These controls are required as unregistered products have not been subjected to the rigorous evaluation required by the NRA. As part of the process of registration, the NRA evaluates the effectiveness and safety of a product and then ensures that approved labels contain adequate instructions about the use of a product. Before the NRA issues permits, there is an evaluation of the proposed use to ensure that adequate use instructions are established under the conditions of the permit. However, veterinary surgeons may still treat a single trade species animal and animals other than trade species with unregistered veterinary chemicals without the need to obtain an NRA permit.

The sixth issue raised by the honourable member is why there is a two-year record-keeping requirement for veterinary surgeons. Veterinary surgeons will only be required to keep records only when they treat trade species animals and when they use any of the following types of chemicals: registered veterinary chemical products used contrary to label instructions; prescription animal remedies—that is, chemicals scheduled as S4 poisons; unregistered veterinary chemical products; or products they make up themselves which of course are compounded veterinary chemical products. All of the controls over veterinary surgeons that are being introduced are drawn from the recommended control principles governing the use of veterinary chemicals which were developed in line with NCP review recommendations.

All states and territories agreed via the then Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management in 1999 to implement those control principles in order to harmonise the controls over veterinary surgeons across Australia. Veterinary surgeons are required to keep records for two years due to the higher risks posed by the use of the types of products mentioned earlier. Maintaining adequate records of treatment is necessary to enable the trace back and investigation of problems that may occur relating to unacceptable residues in food and fibre products. Our international trading partners, in particular the European Union, insist that effective record-keeping and trace-back systems are maintained under export protocols applicable to

Australia. The record-keeping requirements do not apply to the treatment of non-trade species animals.

The seventh issue raised by the honourable member for Hinchinbrook is what is the impact of revised licensing procedures when new legislation is enacted. The amendments to the licensing requirements provided for in this bill ensure the uniformity of licensing provisions for the use of agricultural chemicals by commercial applicators and businesses with other states and territories. These changes are in accordance with the reforms recommended by the NCP review. Consequently, when the provisions of the ACDC Act and the chemical usage act are integrated into a single chemical control of use legislative instrument, the core licensing provisions will continue to reflect the agreed national principles. Therefore, there should be absolutely no negative impact on existing licence holders.

I now turn to the issues raised by the member for Toowoomba North, and of course he raised the issue of consultation with the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland. Key stakeholders were identified and consulted with during the development stage of cabinet submissions. Where there are issues that may impact on an individual's legal rights, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General would be consulted as it is the lead agency responsible for these issues. Where the Queensland Law Society and Bar Association of Queensland are identified as stakeholders, then these agencies would also continue to be consulted. During the drafting stage of the bill, departments also consider any advice provided by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in relation to matters that may impact on an individual's legal rights and fundamental legal principles generally. Consultation with the Queensland Law Society and Bar Association of Queensland is not required on drafting issues.

Another issue raised by the honourable member for Toowoomba North related to why schools were consulted, and that is a relevant issue. Schools were consulted because they are considered important stakeholders and there are a large number of educational institutions throughout the state. School ground staff who are responsible for ground maintenance on ovals where children play may use herbicides as part of their job. Accordingly, these persons may be subject to the licensing requirements of the ACDC Act.

The honourable member for Keppel raised another issue—that is, in sections 16(1) and (2) what is meant by a 'reasonable excuse'? The only change to this section has been the increase in penalty units. The term 'reasonable excuse' is a commonly used and well accepted drafting term that gives the court discretion to deem a range of legitimate possible reasons to justify why an offence has occurred. What constitutes a reasonable excuse is not determined by the person who contravened the notice or the inspector, director-general or minister. It is really a matter for the court to determine objectively what is a reasonable excuse circumstance.

The honourable member for Tablelands asked an interesting question in her contribution—that is, why does Australia have higher standards of chemical control than other countries? Our economy is export oriented and Queensland is one of the biggest export earners within that economy. Accordingly, we must be able to demonstrate that our export food products are fit for consumer use and consumption. Likewise, this legislation gives our own domestic consumers protection and confidence in the safety of the food they eat and of course the fibres they use.

Australia's trading partners seek continued reassurance on the safe and ethical production of food and fibre commodities. The amendments to the legislation will demonstrate to our trading partners, particularly the European Union, that effective controls over the use of veterinary chemicals, particularly antibiotics, are in place to address concerns about residues in food and fibre producing animals. Maintaining records of treatment for trade species animals is an essential part of the traceability of animals and treatments administered to these animals. This enables effective audits to be undertaken of food and fibre production systems and gives Australian producers a competitive advantage in continued market access and the consumer demands in European and Asian markets.

Another issue raised by the honourable member for Tablelands was the increased administrative burden on vets and pharmacists. Veterinary surgeons and pharmacists are already required to keep substantial records in relation to veterinary chemicals prescribed or issued to clients. There is expected to be only a minimal increase in the administrative burden imposed on veterinary surgeons or pharmacists compared to existing legislative and professional obligations.

Finally, the honourable member for Nicklin asked about the safety of imported foods. From 1 July this year Food Standards Australia and New Zealand was established to develop new food

standards that will apply to both domestic and imported foods equally. Queensland is therefore working actively with other states and the Commonwealth to enhance the food safety of both domestic and imported foods.

I recognise the valuable contribution of all other members to this debate. I thank them all for their participation. I do not have the time to go through the contributions of all honourable members, as I would like to have done. However, I appreciate the fact that the opposition is supporting the legislation. That is very, very good news. It is always good when one brings in legislation such as this on which there is bipartisan support.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) in charge of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr ROWELL (9.03 p.m.): We have been very supportive of the legislation. We have raised a few issues. They were not raised in a negative spirit but simply in order to point out a few issues. The level of activity involved in getting accreditation is sometimes quite high, particularly around country Queensland. Training courses are not always held at regular times and certainly they are some distance away from communities. This causes some dislocation in terms of time spent getting the training. I understand that it is important.

When handling spray equipment people have to make sure that they protect themselves. In the past some people have not used protective clothing. They have not worn gloves or washed their hands. That can lead to all sorts of workplace health and safety issues. We can give people all the information under the sun, but some people will simply ignore it. Very often it is necessary for those who work in primary industries to take courses to make them aware of the risks involved in their own personal use of chemicals and to make them aware that it is important to ensure the equipment they are actually using is up to scratch.

We talked about the planes. Generally, aerial agriculture is very good. The minister mentioned the AAAA. It is right on the ball with equipment. It probably uses some of the most up-to-date equipment imaginable—micronaires and so on. It brought them in ages ago. Because of the professionalism of agricultural aviation, I think that group is right up to scratch.

When there is a need for a change in the types of application being used, very often there is no equipment available. Sometimes people have to manufacture the equipment or improvise. More time needs to be put in by the DPI on a whole range of issues to do with spraying—droplet sizes, drift, types of chemicals being used and so on. Drift retardant chemicals can be quite beneficial in reducing drift. All of these sorts of things are quite important.

At the end of the day, if we are sincere about running these courses and making them available to people, then instruction on these chemicals needs to be given in areas to which people can get reasonably easy access. Another big issue is the actual cost of running these courses. It is becoming even more prohibitive. We are finding that one or two people in a family are being educated, as opposed to everybody going and getting some training. Training is fine, but if it is too costly then people will limit the extent to which they get training and carry out the initiatives presented in the courses.

The DPI is now doing very little of this and private enterprise is doing more. It is okay to say, 'We do not want to be involved in that anymore,' and legislation that imposes fairly heavy fines can be introduced. But there is no longer any hands-on training on a non-payment basis, which to some degree was provided by DPI in the past. I think that is a great pity because, as I said, in many cases improvisation is essential in order to apply chemicals.

In the animal industry, the horticultural industry, the sugar industry and so on we are using more spray equipment than ever before. Minimum till is one of the classic examples. Nowadays, rather than use excessive amounts of fuel and soil engaging equipment there are some very good chemicals around and they are being applied very frugally by those involved in primary industries. In my experience, DPI is getting out of the application of chemicals area and leaving it purely to people who are doing training. I think that is a great shame.

The government can talk about us being smart and so on, but at the same time we have to make sure we spread knowledge around. Very often, knowledge is spread by those in the DPI who go from farm to farm and see particular equipment. They will transfer knowledge to other people. Very often, without doing a lot of experimental work farmers—graziers or people in the horticultural industry, the sugar industry or the broadacre industry—can get immense benefit.

Basically, while I am saying that it is great to have these training courses, at the end of the day we are missing from DPI—and the minister has some very good people in that department and I have used them; I have even flown them up from Brisbane to look at equipment—people who are readily available to consult. Certainly, not enough attention is being given to this matter. I think that it is a great shame that we have gone down the track of just palming off any responsibility in relation to chemicals to organisations that are going to do training. They are there for a specific purpose and I would say that is to make money as much as anything. So while ever they provide the training, they tend to then do that particular part of it and there is no great involvement with a range of other things that are so critical in terms of using spray equipment and chemicals.

The application of chemicals is growing. I know what the minister is saying about integrated pest management and so on. We try to do that as much as we can. Nobody wants to use chemicals. But at the end of the day there are wise applications of chemicals that can be very beneficial to many of the horticultural industries and primary industries in general—the stock industries and so on. I firmly believe that while we tend to be just palming a lot of this responsibility off onto people who do training courses, it is a great pity that the department itself is not engaging in more up-to-date technology.

What has happened in terms of spraying over the past 10 years is quite remarkable, and it will be even more so in the future as we try to target species through chemical sprays—whether it is insecticides or herbicides. I think that it is quite critical that the DPI does more work in this area. It is all right to say, 'The farmers have to get a bit smarter and do this and that,' but the technology needs to be provided by DPI to make sure that we are getting the best out of the chemicals that are available.

I would like to raise the issue of where training is going to occur, how the minister sees it happening in the future, and what happens when there are great distances involved. If a course is being conducted 100 kilometres away from some people and there will not be another course conducted in the area that those people live in for four, five or six months, will those people have to travel to where that course is being held? Are we going to make it financially attractive for those people so that more people get the training? I think DPI has to really consider this matter and not abrogate the responsibility for training people to those who are involved in accreditation courses.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The honourable member has raised a number of rather important areas in relation to training. The government does not treat this legislation lightly. Although it revolves around national competition policy issues, when we undertake the full rewrite of the act many of the issues that the honourable member raised in relation to training, such as distance and the importance of training, will certainly be addressed.

Currently the main emphasis in training within the Queensland government and other governments around Australia is based on a partnership with the federal government in the FarmBis area. I take on board what the honourable member has said in relation to the DPI's role in relation to this very, very important issue. When we frame the new act I will certainly make sure that the honourable member's concerns are addressed because I agree with much of what he has said in his contribution just now.

Mr ROWELL: I would like to raise the future cost of training. I know that in recent times FarmBis has been particularly supportive. I think that the minister has been able to get up to 75 per cent and so on—

Mr Palaszczuk: Eighty-five.

Mr ROWELL: It is getting better all the time. That is great. At the end of the day we do not want to have money to provide a business for those who are going to do the accreditation. I get back to the fact that if we can make the cost of the courses more reasonable, we will see more and more people coming on board. Unless people have an accreditation, they cannot buy endosulfans and some of those other chemicals. So people get the name of the person who is accredited to sign the invoices and that is it. Then we have really defeated the purpose of what we have set out to do. I think that the cost and the availability of the courses are going to be particularly important in the future.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I agree with the honourable member. When we talk about training, cost is always a quite a substantial contributing factor. That is why, in relation to the situation that we have in Queensland currently with the drought, FarmBis has increased our subsidy for training for our primary producers on droughted areas up to 85 per cent. We recognise that if the subsidy is too low it is very difficult to get people to take up the very important issues of training. In that regard I will certainly make sure that that issue that has been raised again by the honourable member is addressed.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

Mr ROWELL (9.16 p.m.): Clause 8 deals with the renewal of the licence and inserts new sections 18 and 19. I note that this clause states—

The board may issue, or renew, a licence for up to 3 years.

Three years is probably too short. Surely to goodness, if a person can get a drivers licence for five years then that same person should have the capacity to hold a licence to operate this spraying equipment—which can be very complex—for longer than three years. I think that the licence should be for at least five years.

It is a little bit disappointing that every three years people have to rock up and get further accreditation. Who knows what that is going to involve. As I said, sometimes there is a change of emphasis in terms of agricultural spraying. But if a person has the basic knowledge of how to operate this spraying equipment and the different categories of chemicals and how important it is to recognise the withholding periods—and all this is written on the tin—there is nothing new about recognising what needs to be done. If the NRA makes the decision to make any change, it really is up to whoever manufactures that chemical to identify on the container what the change would be.

I really believe that the three years time for the licence is too short; it should be for a minimum of five years. I think that all we are doing is getting more people running around retraining and for no good purpose. If the minister can give me any reason why he believes that the duration of the licence should be for three years, I would be very interested to hear it because I think that is a particularly short time for people who are involved in an industry of which they generally have a fair knowledge, anyway. The training involved would be only a top-up on that knowledge. I would like a response to that.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The three-year term was introduced because, basically, we thought that three years was a reasonable length of time. The member mentions five years. We believe that the term we have introduced, an increase from one year to three years, quite honestly is a suitable period of time for a renewal of licence.

Mr ROWELL: But people can get a drivers licence to drive very complex vehicles and be a threat to other people, yet when applying chemicals the greatest threat in the immediate area is to themselves in terms of not having the right type of clothing or making sure that there is no drift. They are very basic principles. It is not the sort of issue that Einstein would be too worried about. I honestly believe that a five-year period is reasonable and should be adopted. We are just tying ourselves up in unnecessary approvals—

Mr Lawlor: Why didn't you change the one year when you were in government?

Mr ROWELL: Why doesn't the member get up and speak on the bill if he is that enthusiastic about it? He has got sawdust up top. But it is quite important that we look at a longer period, because the training that goes into it is quite simplistic. There is not a great deal of additional knowledge that will be gained by renewing it after only three years. We could go at least five years and probably even beyond that. If commonsense prevails, that is what we would be looking at.

Mr PALASZCZUK: My advice is that this amendment is consistent with other Queensland government licensing initiatives and that it improves administrative efficiency. But, more importantly, once a person renews a licence it does not mean that that person has to be retrained again. My advice is that that is not the case and that their accreditation is all the proof they need for the renewal of their licence. I think the member's concerns are ill founded.

Mr ROWELL: What is the point if it is that simplistic? A person on the land has a plethora of matters to attend to and—

Mr Lawlor: What's the answer? Why didn't you change it from one year?

Mr ROWELL: I think the member is a bit of a dud; I think that is the answer. This matter is quite important. There are many other more complex licences that go for a longer period of time than three years.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The government believes that the three-year period is the best. It increases the renewal from the one year period to three years, but also brings us into line with other states in Australia. Basically, we are looking at consistency amongst all the states in Australia and we are just falling into line with the other states.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 25, as read, agreed to.

Clause 26—

Mr ROWELL (9.24 p.m.): This is not a major issue. It is dealing with section 12E in clause 26. When talking about the use of unregistered veterinary chemical products, very often in the animal industries in particular, there are a lot of old remedies that prove to be particularly successful. I am not sure that all those old remedies have really had NRA accreditation. If they are being used in a manner not harmful to an animal and it has not been proved that there are any major residue problems, but they may not have been registered under NRA, what do we do about a person who might use some unregistered liniment on a horse or something of that nature? Will we simply say to them that they are flouting the law and will be penalised if found to be using something not under NRA registration, or is it something that the minister believes would not come under the auspices and jurisdiction of this act because it may not necessarily be a harmful chemical? If that is the case, who decides whether or not it is harmful? Does everything we use on animals need an NRA accreditation?

Mr PALASZCZUK: Yes, it has to be registered by the NRA.

Clause 26, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 27 to 33, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Palaszczuk, read a third time.

PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 29 October (see p. 4145).

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (9.30 p.m.): It is my pleasure tonight to support the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. The National Party opposition will be supporting this bill. The bill provides for the introduction of a new Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002, which establishes a legislative framework for plumbing and drainage and on-site sewerage facilities in Queensland and repeals the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949. It also implements the outcomes of the national competition policy review of the act, contains amendments to the Building Act 1975 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to improve the performance of the private building certification system and implements the outcomes of the NCP review of the Building Act. It also makes amendments to the Local Government Act 1993 relating to the transfer of controls over stormwater drainage from the Sewerage and Water Supply Act to the Local Government Act and implements a competitive neutrality complaints process for selected local governments to apply building approval services. The bill also provides for a number of minor amendments to these pieces of legislation as well as the Water Act 2000.

The minister has noted in her second reading speech that the bill intends to modernise the regulation of plumbing and drainage in the state. While this is a function of local government that we may not always give too much thought to, it is an important one that, hopefully, protects the environment and public health and safety as part of the development process in Queensland. The proposed Plumbing and Drainage Bill will replace the existing Sewerage and Water Supply Act. The purpose of the bill will be achieved through the licensing of plumbers and drainers, the approval and inspection of plumbing and drainage works by local government and providing for regulations containing the technical standards for plumbing and drainage.

In summary, these provisions contain the update of existing provisions about the licensing and regulation of plumbing and drainage practitioners. As the minister noted when introducing the bill, local governments will continue to be able to determine which work requires the prior approval of plans before work commences and which work can be approved on site. This will allow local governments to offer the plumbing industry a highly efficient approval service, particularly for straightforward work. The new Plumbers and Drainers Board replaces the existing Plumbers and Drainers Examination and Licensing Board, with this new board being given the powers and funds to be more proactive in disciplining and prosecuting in the industry. The National Party does not consider these changes to have any implications on local government so we are in favour of the amendments that have been proposed by the minister.

Part 5 of the bill relocates the statewide regulatory provisions about on-site sewerage facilities from a regulation where they presently reside—under the Standard Sewerage Law—to legislation. The regulation of these installations is important and has been of concern to local councils. We support this being made part of the legislation. However, there is an issue that I would like to raise that has come to the attention of the LGAQ—the Local Government Association of Queensland—and this relates to the fact that a number of councils have had a process in place where they impose or purport to impose conditions of approval on private sewage treatment plants by which the council, firstly, either itself inspects the plants on an annual basis to ensure compliance with the approval and required standards or, secondly, charges the owner an annual fee to cover the cost of that inspection.

There is some doubt under the existing laws as to whether the provisions permit the imposition of those conditions. Under the existing legislation there is no provision for any renewal process which will enable the councils to take this type of enforcement action in the event that these annual fees are not paid. Perhaps the minister could in her summing up give us some indication as to her thinking on this. Does the legislation expressly recognise this existing practice of many councils to undertake an annual inspection of on-site sewerage installations and impose an annual fee in that regard?

One of the key intentions of the bill is also to amend a number of problems with the system of private certification. The Integrated Planning Act and the Building Act introduced the private certification of building work in 1998, allowing applicants the choice of obtaining building approvals and inspections from either local government or accredited private certifiers. The key changes proposed in the system of private certification in the bill include improving compliance with planning schemes by ensuring that private certifiers have the necessary regulatory skills; improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the disciplinary system by having the Queensland Building Tribunal hear complaints of professional misconduct, and allowing local government to lodge complaints directly with the QBT rather than through the Building Services Authority; addressing concerns regarding the potential conflict of interest between certifiers and builders by ensuring owners are aware of who is doing the certification work for their building; ensuring that consumers are protected from faulty work by providing the BSA and QBT with increased powers to make orders requiring a certifier to bring work into compliance with the legislation; and improving the safety of young children by introducing more stringent requirements for inspecting swimming pool fencing.

Given the significance of the amendments made in the bill, I wish to briefly address a couple of these issues. Firstly, it is disappointing but worth noting that the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors had to go to the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to seek assurances on important parts of the bill, because the minister apparently was not available to meet with it. I am not sure why. Perhaps the minister has some explanation for that. But given that this bill has been led by the Minister for Local Government and Planning, I would not have thought it unreasonable to meet with the integral body that is listed in the explanatory notes as having been consulted. There seems to be a breakdown in the system somewhere.

The Local Government Association of Queensland, the peak representative body for local government in Queensland, has not been consulted on occasions in the past. This is very important. We have had a few bills go through this House in recent times where less and less consultation seems to have been undertaken. It is important that we make sure we consult with broader community groups. We do not want to get into a practice where bills are going through this place like a sausage machine and the community is not brought up to speed with what is being proposed for an industry.

The Australian Institute of Building Surveyors will take on the job as the new accreditation standards body for building certifiers, replacing the Building Certifiers and Allied Professionals

Accreditation Board, which was to be wound up in July. Given that we are now into December, it is vital that this replacement body is in place as soon as possible to ensure that it does not affect the reaccreditation or any legislation licensing building certifiers.

Part 6 of the proposed bill relates to investigations, enforcement and offences that can be applied by local councils. Clause 115 of this part of the bill refers to show cause notices. This new provision will require local government to invite a person to show cause through a written notice as to why an enforcement should not be given to the person, with the exception of where a defect constitutes a danger or health risk. There is a view that these matters are for the most part small and technical and it might not be necessary or appropriate for councils to go through the administrative costs to issue a show cause notice on any occasion on which they wish to issue an enforcement notice. Perhaps there could be an adjustment down the track in relation to this issue. We believe that in some cases it is a fairly small issue and we might not need to go through the whole process. This process is an important part of procedural fairness in relation to enforcement notices under the IPA and the Building Act, but may also place financial implications on both local councils and a person who is required to undertake significant building or development work. I also hope the minister during her summing up on the debate will take some time to discuss this clause and any concerns she has received.

Part 5A of the bill deals with complaints investigations and disciplinary proceedings relating to building certifiers. Under this proposed legislation, local councils will have express power to start their own disciplinary proceedings about private certifiers' misconduct before the Queensland Building Tribunal. I think there is a legitimate question here as to whether these changes may result in the BSA being more reluctant to expand its own resources in pursuing local government complaints which may require these councils to spend more of their own resources than is presently the case. In other words, does the minister think that the BSA might let the local governments carry the burden? I hope the minister will address these issues in her summing up to the debate.

Before concluding, I wish to mention a further issue which has been brought to my attention by both private certifiers as well as builders regarding this legislation. Under this legislation I believe private certifiers will be required to receive confirmation from a local council before they can move on to and lodge the relevant approval documents for their respective client.

The concern being expressed here is that, given the time and workload constraints that already exist for local councils, a certifier may not receive confirmation for a lengthy period of time. This will disadvantage the private certifier's business and, importantly, the building industry. The inability of councils to give confirmation expeditiously will have a substantial impact on the work able to be undertaken by builders. Growth in the building industry is often used as a measure of how our economy is progressing, and on this basis it is important that this legislation does not act as an impediment to these processes.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has also raised a few issues about this bill and I wish to briefly comment on those. Part 4 of the bill deals with compliance assessment, which basically refers to a plan of the proposed regulated work to be assessed for compliance with the standard plumbing and drainage regulations and for a compliance plan and certificate to be issued. Clause 83 of the bill refers to the fact that a person must not carry out regulated work unless the person has a compliance permit to do the work. There is a maximum penalty imposed of 1,665 penalty units, or \$124,875, for carrying out regulated work without a compliance permit.

Clause 226 and clause 248 of the bill also impose maximum penalties for discharging a prohibited substance or trade waste into stormwater drainage and for polluting water in a service provider's water service or for taking such water without approval.

The issues that have been highlighted here could have some serious repercussions for a consumer of local government services, as well as ensuring that all proposed work is complying with the regulation in place for plumbing and drainage works. We have to have these maximum penalties in place to deter irresponsible workers and people who do not want to comply with procedures that are in place. However, I also believe that these penalties should not be used as a standard practice which could see an overzealous person impose this type of penalty on someone who has not actually broken the law. That is the point. There could have been just a misunderstanding. It is important that we place a value on these penalties and recognise that they should be applied only when the law has been definitely broken.

Part 8 of the bill refers to the way in which legal proceedings are undertaken. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has alluded to clause 140 in regard to the conduct of representatives. In

this legislation, 'representative' of a corporation means an agent, an employee or executive officer of the corporation or an individual, agent or employee of the individual. This clause provides that in a proceeding for an offence against the bill the state of mind of a person's representative, acting within the scope of their actual or apparent authority, is deemed to be that of the person. The state of mind of a person includes the person's belief, intentions, knowledge, opinion or purpose and the reasons for the belief, intentions, opinion or purpose. Further, conduct engaged in by a person's representative within the scope of the authority is taken to have been engaged in also by the person. It is going around in circles and it becomes a little bit complicated. We have to make sure that people are not penalised when in fact there has just been a misunderstanding.

In relation to provisions of this type, the committee considers that this creates a reversal of the onus of proof. This is explained on page 5 of the explanatory notes as follows—

To ensure there is effective accountability at a corporate level, it is appropriate that a corporation be required to oversee the conduct of their representatives and, in doing so, make reasonable efforts to ensure that their employees and agents comply with the requirements of the legislation.

With regard to the reversal of the onus of proof, the committee goes on to note that, while it is appreciative of the difficulties surrounding this issue, particularly in relation to corporations, it does not generally support the use of such provisions. I think this clause does have the potential to create a dangerous precedent for prosecuting an offence. We really need some clear indications from the minister in the summing up as to how this process should occur.

I can well understand the intention, which is obviously to ensure that at a corporate level the appropriate people are doing their job in ensuring that their employees are in compliance with the legislation. But again it concerns me as to how far this law may be taken insofar as good managers being prosecuted for an employee's deliberate misconduct. That is an issue that needs to be taken into consideration. If somebody is trying to do somebody over, or do over a corporation, they may well succeed in having an offence brought against them, but the person who is officially breaking the law is the employer.

In circumstances where this is deliberate, how can the manager have taken reasonable steps to prevent, or have some influence over, the person's conduct. That is the point. In this position, the onus of establishing this defence could be nearly impossible for a manager.

I think it is important for the minister to clarify, firstly, why this clause has been included within the bill in its current form, given the concerns expressed by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and, secondly, to explain how it would work in practice—with an example. Overall, the amendments in the bill to a number of acts will improve delivery and management of these local government services that we have been referring to. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (9.47 p.m.): I am pleased to support the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002, which includes new plumbing and drainage legislation and makes changes to the private building certification system. There were previously a number of categories of licences for plumbers and drainers, or for other tradesmen who have limited licences to carry out work such as installing hot water systems or fire protection systems. This bill rationalises the system into three types of licences: a full plumbers and drainers licence, a restricted plumbers and drainers licence or an interim licence. This bill also provides for better protection of individual rights. It provides clearer and more user-friendly disciplinary procedures and introduces show-cause procedures before disciplinary action can be taken.

I am, however, particularly interested in the amendments to the swimming pool legislation. I think there must be more swimming pools on the Gold Coast per head of population than anywhere else in the state. One only has to walk along the Gold Coast Highway between Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach to see how many resorts/motels have unfenced pools just metres from the common footpath. Pools seem to be a magnet for young children. I have seen my own three-year-old grandchild try everything possible to open a childproof gate or climb a safety fence around a swimming pool.

Under this bill, no further tourist resorts will be exempted from complying with local laws requiring fencing around swimming pools. The decision as to whether a tourist resort's pool fencing complies with local laws will be decided by the relevant local government. It will also make it an offence if a person fills a pool with water to a depth of 300 millimetres or more before compliant fencing has been installed and inspected by a building certifier and the owner of the pool has been issued with a certificate stating that the pool and pool fence complies.

The bill also clarifies that an owner must at all times ensure that swimming pool fencing complies with the standards prescribed under a regulation. I take this opportunity to encourage the Gold Coast City Council to increase its inspection rate of swimming pools. From what I have

seen, too many are not fenced or do not comply with the regulations. The loss of even one child's life in a drowning incident is one too many. I commend the bill to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jarratt): Order! Before calling the member for Kurwongbah, I welcome to the public gallery the electorate staff and partners of the Glass House electorate office.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (9.49 p.m.): This bill repeals the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949 and replaces it with an up-to-date legislative framework for the plumbing and drainage industry and for the management of on-site sewerage facilities. In retaining much of the subject matter previously dealt with under the Sewerage and Water Supply Act and its subordinate legislation, it pursues the same objective of protecting the environment, public health and safety. Tonight I want to concentrate on one aspect of the bill, and that is in relation to the matters of safety and in particular swimming pool fencing inspections. The bill proposes to toughen the pool fencing laws to further protect young Queensland children from drowning in backyard swimming pools. The issue of the installation and maintenance of swimming pool fences has been a matter of concern for some of the constituents of Kurwongbah and they have made representations to me in relation to the local council's ability to undertake inspections. I will talk more about that issue later in my contribution to this debate.

Several local governments have advised the Department of Local Government and Planning that many swimming pools do not have the required final inspection to ensure that a swimming pool fence has been installed. This appears to be due to the failure of pool builders and owners to notify building certifiers that the swimming pool and fencing are ready for inspection as required by their building permit. As a result, the local council has no idea whether the pool has been fenced or not. Accordingly, the bill makes it an offence for anyone, including the pool builder, to fill a new pool without ensuring that a complying fence is constructed around the pool. The proposed changes will also make it an offence for any person to fill a new pool before the pool and fencing have been inspected by a building certifier. In addition, the bill requires that the building certifier must issue the pool owner with a certificate stating that the pool and fencing comply with the specified standards. A penalty of up to \$12,000 can be imposed if people do not comply with these new, tougher requirements. The new requirements and the tougher penalties will go a long way to improve the level of compliance of pool fencing and to ensure pool fences are constructed as soon as pools are filled, not weeks or months later.

Drowning in a domestic swimming pool is one of the most common causes of death due to injury for children under the age of five in Queensland and is responsible for about 20 per cent of all injury deaths in this age group. It has also been estimated that for every child drowning death there are about 10 toddlers presented at hospital emergency departments and about 100 toddlers suffering immersion who are rapidly rescued. Prior to the introduction of pool fencing legislation in 1991, 55 of the then 134 local councils had no pool fencing by-laws. The original state pool fencing laws, which came into effect in February 1991, were located in the Local Government Act. The laws required all existing and new pools to be fenced to the standards prescribed by the standard building by-laws under the Building Act 1975. The pool fencing laws were directed to ensuring that all outdoor pools on residential land in Queensland were fenced to inhibit access by young children. The provisions applied to existing pools as well as to new pools.

A report undertaken by Queensland Health in 1997 found that after the fencing legislation was introduced in 1991 drownings dropped dramatically from around 15 per year between 1988 to 1990 to nine in 1991, seven in 1992 and only one in 1993. This was attributed to both the new fencing laws and the high level of public awareness due to intense media coverage and promotional safety campaigns by the government. From 1993 there were 10 drownings in 1994, 12 in 1995, 10 in 1996, eight in 1997, four in 1998, nine in 1999 and six in the year 2000. The current toddler pool drowning numbers appear to have stabilised to around six to eight deaths per year.

During 2001 six children less than five years old drowned despite pool numbers doubling since 1991, indicating that the legislation has been effective in reducing the level of toddler drownings. The new requirements and the tougher penalties should reduce the number of drownings and near drownings still further. However, given that for every drowning death there are about 100 near misses, this means that there are around 600 to 800 near-drowning incidents involving Queensland toddlers per year or about two per day. There is still a need therefore to review the legislation and the standards to further reduce this very sad statistic. I look forward to working with the minister to ensure that local councils have sufficient powers to enforce the swimming pool fence laws. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (9.55 p.m.): It is my great pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. The new Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002 replaces the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949 but pursues the same objectives of protecting the environment, public health and safety. The amendments proposed in this bill go a long way to addressing many issues that have been raised directly with me by the residents of the Broadwater electorate. The Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949 previously contained considerable material detailing infrastructure of water and sewerage service providers. This has been moved to the Water Act 2000. The remaining subject matter in the Sewerage and Water Supply Act dealt with the licensing of plumbers and drainers, the approval process for plumbing and drainage works, relevant appeal processes and enables the making of subordinate legislation containing the technical standards for plumbing and draining works. It also provides for controls over stormwater and smaller on-site sewerage treatment facilities.

This bill retains the content of the Sewerage and Water Supply Act but has updated it to provide a more modern legislative framework for the plumbing and draining industry that increases accountability for decisions by state government, local government and the licensing body for plumbers and drainers. This bill also provides for better protection for individual rights. The bill also implements the outcomes of the national competition policy review of the Sewerage and Water Supply Act. The bill provides for the creation of the Plumbers and Drainers Board to replace the existing Plumbers and Drainers Licensing and Examining Board. It adds a new member to represent consumer interests along with members representing relevant government departments, the plumbing industry, the plumbing union and the Local Government Association of Queensland. The new board has the power to issue plumbers and drainers with occupational licences, to discipline licensees and to prosecute unlicensed persons carrying out work requiring a licence. Unsatisfied persons can seek a review of the board's decision by the Queensland Building Tribunal.

There were previously a considerable number of categories of licences for different categories of plumbers and drainers or for other trades that had limited licences to carry out such works as installing hot-water systems or fire protection systems. These categories of licence have been rationalised into three types of licences: a full plumbers and drainers licence, a restricted plumbers and drainers licence or an interim licence. During the recent national competition policy review of the Sewerage and Water Supply Act, industry representatives raised concerns that the board needed to take a more active role in disciplining plumbers and drainers and unlicensed persons to maintain standards in the industry. This bill provides clearer and more user-friendly disciplinary processes while protecting individual rights by introducing show cause procedures before disciplinary action can be taken.

The bill also provides that licence fees will be retained by the department and applied to administering funds to the board that can be applied to increasing disciplinary actions to deal with the cowboys in the industry who do not comply with the necessary standards and are bringing the industry into disrepute. The bill also amends the Building Act 1975 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to improve the performance of the private building certification system. The primary source of complaint by local governments is private certifiers issuing building approvals that do not comply with town planning requirements. Residents in my electorate have also become increasingly aware of this problem, too, and the issue has been raised directly by them with me. The Integrated Planning Act requires private certifiers to ensure all approvals except approvals for plumbing and draining in sewered areas are in place before issuing a building approval.

In addition, the building approval must be consistent with any earlier approval. Failure to do this is negligence and considered to be professional misconduct. It is an offence under the Integrated Planning Act for a private certifier to issue an approval before other prescribed approvals are obtained.

This bill will require certifiers to obtain great competencies in the necessary regulatory skills in order to operate as a private certifier to issue approvals. This will address the concerns about the competency of some private certifiers who approve building work that does not comply with the town planning requirements. These regulatory competencies will be prescribed under a regulation. They will include regulatory skills in interpreting local planning instruments and integrated development assessment systems under the Integrated Planning Act. Consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders when developing the regulation to determine the appropriate planning competencies.

In addition to improved planning competencies, the bill amends the Integrated Planning Act in respect of how applications approved by private certifiers must be consistent with the planning

schemes. Under the current provisions, private certifiers must ensure that all other approvals except on-site plumbing and drainage are in place and that the application is consistent with earlier development approvals.

However, there is no requirement to take into account self-assessable provisions in planning schemes such as car parking. This has led to the situation where buildings have been approved without there being sufficient land remaining on the site to provide the car parking spaces required by the planning scheme. To clarify this, the bill amends the Integrated Planning Act to require that applications approved by private certifiers must be consistent with self-assessable provisions contained in planning schemes which affect the position, height or form of building work.

As a qualified swimming teacher, I am also keen to see improvements to by-laws and legislation that address concerns about the safety of young people around pools. I am pleased to see that as part of the review of the building certification scheme this bill makes three changes to provisions relating to pool fencing.

Firstly, several local governments have advised the department that many swimming pools do not have the required final inspection to ensure that swimming pool fencing has been properly installed. This appears to be due to the fact that pool builders do not commonly include fencing in the contract, thereby leaving owners to fence the pool. However, owners now have up to two years under the building approval to complete building work and to notify the building certifier that the swimming pool and fencing are ready for final inspection. Accordingly, the bill amends the current provision to not only make it an offence for an owner to fill a swimming pool before it is fenced but also make it an offence for any person to fill a pool before it has been inspected and approved. This will make it clear that the pool fence must not only be constructed before the pool is filled but also be inspected by a building certifier.

Secondly, the bill clarifies that pool fencing must be maintained in accordance with the standard building regulation. The current drafting of the maintenance provisions in section 14(3) require the owner to maintain the fencing in accordance with the standards applying at the time of construction. This was meant to apply standards prescribed under the standard building regulation applicable to when the pool was constructed, for example, before or after 1991.

The Gold Coast City Council has advised that some people have argued that there were lesser standards applying under the local law at the time of construction for pools built before 1991 and hence it is not necessary to upgrade pool fencing to the standard prescribed by the building by-laws for existing pools in 1991. This interpretation of section 14(3) is inconsistent with other pool fencing provisions, which clearly require all pools to be fenced.

The original state pool fencing laws, which came into effect in February 1991, required all existing and new pools to be fenced to the standards prescribed by the building by-laws and for the owner to maintain the fencing in accordance with these standards. The current Building Act continues to apply the fencing provisions to all existing and new pools. To avoid further disputes between pool owners and councils, this bill clarifies that pool fencing must be maintained in accordance with the standard building regulation. The bill will not impose more stringent requirements for existing pools than have applied since 1991. This bill is therefore not retrospective in its application.

Thirdly, the Building Act allows local governments to make local laws requiring fencing around swimming pools other than pools on residential properties. The act, however, exempts tourist resort complexes specified under the building regulation from complying with such local laws. This bill amends the Building Act so that no more tourist resorts can be exempt by the state government from complying with local laws requiring the construction of fencing around swimming pools. However, the 22 tourist resort complexes currently specified in the regulation will remain exempt from the application of local laws subject to a review being carried out by the department.

This bill addresses many concerns raised by the Local Government Association of Queensland and matters that I have raised on behalf of my constituents. The minister has been extremely helpful when I have contacted her in relation to these issues. I commend her for the work she has done. I also thank the minister's ministerial staff and departmental staff and in doing so commend the bill to the House.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.05 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. I wish to speak to the changes proposed in this bill which impact on the current private building certification system. I note that this bill amends the Building Act 1975 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to improve the performance of the private

building certification system by increasing minimum competency standards for private certifiers and providing for a more effective disciplinary system for dealing with complaints and increased powers to impose penalties and orders. I commend the minister on the initiatives contained in this bill which will make private certifiers more accountable for their actions.

I certainly have had a number of constituents raise with me their concerns about the accountability of some private certifiers for the building works some of the certifiers have approved. To date, when we have raised these issues of concern with the local council or the Building Services Authority, the usual response has been that the BSA had only limited powers and the local council's powers had been restricted.

While I will support the contents of the bill we are debating tonight, I conclude with the comment that I am still not convinced that the private certification system, even with the proposed amendments being debated tonight, is better than the previous system whereby all building works applications had to be submitted to the local council for approval. At least when the building works proposed had to be submitted to the local council for approval there was no conflict of interest, be it real or perceived, between the applicant or the council which approved or amended the application. Usually the most common complaint was that the council was too tough in relation to its compliance requirements. I certainly hope that the amendments will make private certifiers more accountable and give consumers more confidence in taking action against defective private certifiers. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (10.07 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. The new bill replaces the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949. It has been a long time between drinks. It continues the same objectives of protecting the environment and public health and safety. There are new provisions relating to the licensing of plumbers and drainers. It also contains approval of plumbing and drainage works, including on-site sewage treatment facilities. That gives the Bulimba State School the right to install an environmentally sustainable toilet, which it could not do before.

I think we have moved on and need to continue to move on in regard to sewerage and drainage matters. We also need to be looking some time in the future at making it compulsory for people to have water tanks on their houses, making it compulsory for people to have a filter system for the first treatment of sewage on site so that people can use it on their gardens and in and around their homes, and making it compulsory to have in-ground storage for water in wet years so that people can use it in houses. Water is a very scarce commodity and as much as we possibly can we should not let it go to waste.

I agree with the member for Nicklin in regard to private certifiers. It does not work at all. There is a lot of building work going on around my area at the moment. All sorts of people are running around doing drainage and plumbing work on sites. Plumbers who live next to some of these sites are horrified at the amount of bodgie work and work not done correctly.

Mr Seeney: Builders labourers.

Mr PURCELL: Builders labourers are certified and licensed drainers. The member for Callide should not go putting it on builders labourers. They know what they are about and they know how to do it. I am talking about bodgies who do not know how to do it. If the builder is paying his own certifier to do something, the certifier will not get paid unless he passes it for that builder. That then brings it down to the lowest possible denominator. The certifier will pass it in order to get paid. I think, as the member for Nicklin was saying, the responsibility should go back to the councils so that we have a body that is interested in the health and welfare of people in the community.

I would like to finish by saying that I think that a central body should be set up to look after disputes under this legislation, or things that manufacturers bring in from time to time. Councils and shires are not able to make decisions on those sorts of things. We need a central licensing body that can make decisions in regard to manufacturers, new gear that comes in, or innovations that architects and engineers may put up to a shire that they might not be able to make a decision on. They just refer back to the Australian standards and that really does not move us forward environmentally at all. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (10.10 p.m.): I rise to make a contribution to the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. In so doing, I certainly echo the sentiments that were expressed by the shadow minister, the member for Warrego, in lending support to this bill.

I would also like to give some guarded support to the comments that were made about private certifiers. Although I recognise that there certainly can be some issues involved with

private certifiers, I think that they are necessary, especially in the more remote parts of the state, such as the area that I represent, where the alternative is just too hard to find. So there are two sides to the argument about private certifiers. I think that the issues that were raised by the member for Nicklin and the member for Bulimba are certainly valid to some extent, but there is another side to the issue as well. It is a very different issue in small communities from that which exists in the larger centres such as the one that is represented by the member for Bulimba. I know that he is certainly sufficiently aware to appreciate that there is a significant difference in issues according to the part of the state people live in.

Mr Purcell: Can I make an interjection?

Mr SEENEY: I always take interjections from the member for Bulimba. I enjoy taking interjections from him.

Mr Purcell: The shires and the councils would increase employment in those areas if they employed the people.

Mr SEENEY: That is true, but unfortunately there is not enough work to keep one person employed full time. It just does not work. We cannot expect a council to keep on paying a certifier full time with the amount of work that is involved. Councils can address that in a number of ways. Certainly, the private certifiers can provide a valuable service if there is sufficient auditing and controls kept on their activities. I take the point that the member for Bulimba raised, but it is something that needs to be considered and every effort made to address those concerns.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: An area near and dear to your heart.

Mr SEENEY: It is an issue. I am just making the point that it is an issue that is different in different areas.

This bill deals with plumbing and drainage regulations. I do not intend to repeat the summation of the bill that was made quite adequately by the member for Warrego, the shadow minister. However, I would like to remind members that at present the problem for many communities throughout Queensland, especially for a lot of the communities that I represent, is accessing water in the first place rather than draining it away. There really is a looming problem in a lot of communities and that, unfortunately, has the potential to become quite extreme. A lot of communities that I represent are finding that their urban water supplies are very close to being exhausted. Some of those communities are in a very precarious situation. It is simply a fact that, given the long drought that we have and the absence of run-off rainfall events, for the first time that I can remember—to this extent at least—communities right across Queensland are going to face the problem of accessing water for basic domestic purposes.

Places such as Monto have less than a metre of water left in the bore that supplies the town. Already towns have had to cart water. I know the minister is aware that Blackbutt is one such town. Biloela has quite horrendous restrictions on the use of water. Once again, Biloela is located in my electorate. I hope that the government is making some effort to plan for the unfortunate event if we get to February or March next year and we do not have that rainfall event to provide a replenishment of those urban water supplies.

There needs to be contingency plans put in place now. I say that to the minister quite sincerely. As the Minister for Local Government, I think that she needs to take a leadership role in ensuring that the government puts in place some contingency plans to ensure that a whole range of communities are able to respond adequately to the situation if it continues to develop. Unfortunately, the outlook is not particularly good and the chances of it happening are certainly of a magnitude to warrant some contingency plans being put in place. I would be interested to hear the minister take the opportunity in this debate to advise the House as to what her department is doing in terms of contingency plans for these communities that are facing a very difficult time if we have a repetition of the last couple of so-called wet seasons and we do not have a rainfall event that produces run-off water to recharge the source of those urban supplies.

As the member for Bulimba and so many other members have said in this House over and over again, water is certainly a major issue for people throughout the state. It is becoming increasingly scarce and increasingly valuable. I think that there has to be a major change in mind-set about the way in which we use water.

Mr Purcell: Hear, hear!

Mr SEENEY: The member for Bulimba says 'Hear, hear!' I think that we have to do a lot more than just give vocal support. We really need to change the way in which we think about the whole water cycle. Traditionally, the plumbing and drainage part was considered to be the end of

the cycle. By the time the plumbers get to it and the drainage systems drain the water away, it is seen to be the end of the cycle. I believe that that cannot be allowed to continue. This situation has developed because, in the past, there was an oversupply of a resource that did not have a lot of value as there was plenty of it in urban areas.

The whole water treatment system was designed to treat large amounts of water, for that water to be used once and then disposed of. I have heard that of the water that is treated in Queensland's urban treatment plants, something like five per cent actually comes in contact with a human person, such as being used for washing or drinking. I know that that figure varies in some places, but overall a big percentage of the water—which is treated at considerable cost to local governments and, therefore, at considerable cost to ratepayers—is used for things such as flushing toilets, watering gardens and washing leaves off driveways—that type of thing. That puts a burden on the drainage system and on the plumbing system to deliver the water in the first place and on the obvious cost of the treatment.

The development of a drainage system that separates what we have come to term grey water and makes it accessible for that range of activities currently carried out with treated water is not just overdue but inevitable. It will take something of a mind-set change. It will mean a complete change in the way that individual houses are designed. To make it successful, it will mean a complete change in the way that entire drainage systems are designed on a whole-of-community basis. We really need to start to get our heads around that. We really need to start to think about how we will pay for and put in place the infrastructure to allow that sort of drainage system to effectively make it possible to recycle a big percentage of that water that is currently treated and used in a way that really does not justify the cost of the treatment and then disposed of.

It costs us as a community large amounts of money, firstly, to store and produce; secondly, to treat and deliver; and, thirdly, to drain away and dispose of. As a community we really need to change our mind-set. I think that sort of mind-set change has occurred in other areas in the community generally in terms of recycling other commodities. All of us now are familiar and comfortable with the idea of recycling plastic bottles, glass, rubber tyres, oil and all of those things, but the next big mind-set change—

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Plastic bags for sure. I appreciate that they are very difficult to recycle. If the member thinks back over the last 10 or 15 years, there has been a mind-set change right throughout the community in terms of recycling a range of commodities. That is the type of mind-set change we must now apply to the issue of recycling water. To make it possible, we need a drainage system focused on recycling rather than discharging water that has been used once or used only very marginally and then discharged.

The greatest example of that is the project talked about a lot in this parliament—and so it should be—the City to Soil project, the project that involves using the huge amounts of grey water produced in a city like Brisbane for agricultural purposes in the Lockyer Valley or even hopefully on the Darling Downs at Toowoomba. There we have a great example of where a drainage system is designed to take water from the Brisbane urban area and deliver it to Moreton Bay. We really need somehow to turn around that whole drainage system, because had we the mind-set to recycle water 100 or 150 years ago when the city was designed, the drainage system would have been designed completely differently; in fact, it would have been the complete reverse of what it is now. That, if you like, encompasses our difficulty. It is a lot easier to recycle glass, plastic, paper and cardboard even though we have had to redesign a lot of systems to make that possible. It would not have been that many years ago when the idea of having two rubbish bins with different coloured lids—

Mr Cummins: Three bins on the Sunshine Coast.

Mr SEENEY: That's right. It would not have been that long ago when that sort of concept would have been very difficult for people to accept. Back in the days when we all just had a little round rubbish bin—

Mr Cummins interjected.

Mr SEENEY: I think that is good. It will be the same with recycling water. It will take a forward-thinking community to put in place the infrastructure needed.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Absolutely. That is the problem. It is a lot easier to introduce a change in the rubbish bin type arrangement than it is to turn around the drainage system of a city. Of course it will be a lot more difficult. As I said, the City to Soil project is probably the biggest example. The same philosophy can be applied, though, to individual households. If we look at the drainage system that is an accepted part of our mind-set for individual households, it is designed exactly the same as the drainage system for a huge metropolitan city like Brisbane. It is designed to take away the water used once, or hardly at all in many instances, and discharge it. It stems from a mind-set that once we use the water we throw it away. It is a lot easier to turn it around in an individual household situation. It is probably something that I think that individual householders who take responsibility for their own services are leading the field in, because in urban areas where we have sewerage systems that are the single dwelling systems—and I note, Minister, that this legislation does deal with clarifying some regulations about those single dwelling systems—the potential to recycle and reuse that grey water is probably realised a lot more by householders than it is in the big urban areas.

The people leading in this field are the people who have bought into the semi-urban developments in my electorate, the real residential type blocks where people buy five acres or 10 acres and water supply is always a problem because they have to rely on house water tanks, unless they are lucky to get a bore on their five acres. They are not in a situation where the local council will provide them with a water scheme, so water supplies are always a problem for them. As the member said, they are leading the way in developing systems that allow them to use the grey water that they themselves produce. In that sort of isolated single house system there are some great developments in terms of simple technology that allows that to happen.

This is an important subject and it is something that really will require some changes. This legislation also makes some amendments to the Water Act. Part 15 of the legislation sets out the amendments to the Water Act. I did intend to go through them, but I have spoken at length about recycling water. Suffice it to say, those amendments to the Water Act do not contain any controversial issues that I can see. Obviously, the Water Act comes within the field of responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. Some of these amendments transfer responsibility to the minister or the chief executive of that department. All of them, as I said, do not particularly present any problems that I can foresee in terms of the transfer of those responsibilities.

There is one section, though, that I wanted to make some comments on, section 956F. Section 956F refers to the interference with the path of stormwater. This section prohibits a person from restricting or redirecting stormwater flow across land where this may cause the water to collect and become stagnant. However, according to the explanatory notes, the section permits a person to collect stormwater in dams, wetlands, tanks and ponds provided no offensive material is allowed to accumulate.

This whole area of interfering with water flow and impounding water or causing a problem by interfering with the flow of water causes a large amount of problems for local authorities right throughout the state. Those problems are no less severe when the amount of water impounded is small. It causes huge conflicts between neighbours, as I am sure the minister knows from her days in local governments, whether it is on urban blocks when someone builds a garden bed on the top side or on agricultural land when someone builds a levee bank across a flat which floods their neighbour or does not let the water run down to their neighbour, in some cases.

My concern is that there needs to be a coordinated approach to this problem across a range of departments and legislation that deals with it. I would be interested to hear the minister's comments about the coordination in this case before this legislation was drafted with the Department of Natural Resources and the minister's colleague. This is an issue that has to be dealt with in the same way by a number of departments. The angst and conflict between neighbours is just as great in a local government situation over a garden bed as it is with a levee bank. I commend the bill to the House.

Time expired.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (10.30 p.m.): I rise to support the new Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002, which replaces the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949, or SWSA, but takes into account the same objectives of protecting the environment, public health and safety. The bill retains the overall content of the SWSA but it has been upgraded to provide a new legislative framework for the plumbing and drainage industry that increases accountability for decisions by state government, local government and the licensing body for plumbers and drainers.

I am pleased that this bill will provide for the establishment of a Plumbers and Drainers Board which will take over from the existing Plumbers and Drainers Licensing and Examination Board. Consumer interests will be represented on the new board through an additional member along with other members representing relevant government departments, the plumbing industry and associated union and the LGAQ. The board will have the ability to issue plumbers and drainers with occupational licences, discipline licensees and prosecute unlicensed persons carrying out work requiring a licence. This will promote and maintain standards in the industry while protecting individual rights and the public interest.

The efficiency and effectiveness of the disciplinary system will be improved through a range of measures. These include providing mediation by having the Queensland Building Tribunal hear complaints of professional misconduct and by expanding the type of disciplinary action that can be taken, such as the financial penalty. In addition, local governments will be able to lodge complaints about private certifiers directly with the tribunal rather than through the Building Services Authority. These measures will provide a very strong incentive for private certifiers to ensure town planning issues have been addressed before they issue an approval.

Ms Keech: That's good news.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: It is good news and it is about time. It appears that some private certifiers do not fully understand their legislative responsibilities in respect of having to ensure the council has issued all necessary planning approvals before issuing a building approval. These are complex matters which require a high level knowledge of the legislation and the way in which planning schemes actually work. Therefore, compliance with planning schemes will be improved by ensuring private certifiers who issue building approvals have the necessary regulatory skills. Private certifiers who do not have these competencies will not be able to issue development permits and will have to rely on the council or another private certifier.

Consumers will be protected from faulty work by providing the Building Services Authority and Queensland Building Tribunal with increased powers to make orders requiring a certifier to bring work into compliance with the legislation. This could include, for example, an order to pay someone to rectify faulty work. Concerns about the potential conflict of interest between certifiers and builders will be addressed by ensuring that owners are made aware that a private certifier is doing the certification work for their building. Private certifiers issuing building approvals that do not comply with town planning requirements has been a source of complaint by councils and the community at large. I am sure I am not the only local member here tonight who has had these sorts of complaints in their electorate.

Ms Keech: I've had some in Albert.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: I can understand that. But I am sure the member has worked through those problems with those people who have had those legitimate complaints.

The bill will enable certifiers to obtain greater competencies in the necessary regulatory skills in order to operate as a private certifier and issue approvals. This will address the concerns about the competency of some private certifiers who approve building work that does not comply with town planning requirements. These regulatory competencies will be prescribed under a regulation. They will include regulatory skills in interpreting local planning instruments and the integrated development assessment system under the Integrated Planning Act. Consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders when developing the regulation to determine the appropriate planning competencies. The review of private certification undertaken by the LGA highlighted the need for an adequate disciplinary system—one that ensures all certifiers carry out their obligations and punishes those who do not. Responsibility for disciplining certifiers lies with the Building Services Authority. The bill therefore provides the authority with greater powers to discipline certifiers who do not meet the required standards of practice. In addition, disciplinary processes will also extend to former building certifiers, who will also be able to have complaints brought against them. This will ensure certifiers are not able to abrogate their responsibilities by leaving the industry.

As I said before, I have had a number of complaints with regard to builders, fortunately not local ones, who employ handymen; that is, people without a licence, to carry out plumbing work.

Ms Keech: It is a problem.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: It is a problem. I trust that these changes to the building certification system will go a long way in preventing this type of behaviour in the future. I congratulate—

Ms Nelson-Carr: We can't have that sort of behaviour.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: We certainly cannot. I do not tolerate that sort of behaviour in Pumicestone. I congratulate the minister and staff on their efforts in bringing this bill forward and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (10.36 p.m.): This bill rationalises the licensing regime for plumbers and drainers. Under the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949 there was a multitude of different licences for plumbers and drainers licences for different levels and types of technical expertise. This regime provided for both different categories of plumbers and drainers as well as limited licences for other tradesmen who were licensed to carry out works with a plumbing element, such as installing hot-water systems or fire protection systems.

In addition to a licensed plumber who could carry out all of the plumbing work there were water plumbers who could only do hot and cold water plumbing; country plumbers who could do limited work in rural areas; and three categories of restricted plumbers who could either install water heaters, irrigation or fire protection systems. In addition to a licensed drainer who would carry out all work on sanitary drainage within a site that would connect to council sewers to carry away waste, there was also provision for a restricted drainer who could service on-site sewage treatment facilities. This array of occupational licences in addition to the contractors licence issued by the Building Services Authority for persons conducting a plumbing business was very confusing for the individual consumer. This bill provides for a much simpler licensing regime with three types of licences—a full plumbers licence or full drainers licence, a restricted plumbers licence or restricted drainers licence, or a provisional licence. Any licence may have conditions endorsed on it and such conditions can be renewed, altered or deleted where no longer appropriate. In addition, a plumber or drainer with a full licence empowering them to carry out all plumbing or draining work can also have additional expertise or competencies. In these cases, regulations will prescribe that additional competencies can be indicated on their licence where consumers can be aware of it. Competencies relevant to a plumbers licence would include, for example, installing backflow prevention devices to prevent material on a premises polluting the main water supply. Competencies relevant to a drainers licence could, for example, relate to maintaining small domestic sewage waste treatment plants.

Restricted plumbers or drainers licences provide for persons who are competent to perform certain types of work that is less than the need for a full plumbers or drainers licence. This allows other trades to undertake work with a plumbing component such as an electrician disconnecting and reconnecting a hot water system so that the hot water system can be replaced without requiring both an electrician and a plumber. Restricted licences can also allow for irrigation works, fire protection works and maintaining small domestic sewerage treatment plants.

Provisional licences provide for persons who do not yet have the full competency to work alone and require the supervision of a licensed person. This would apply to persons from other countries who need some training to meet Queensland's standards, or for apprentices who have completed their training but require a year's practical experience before gaining a full licence.

It is intended that there will be a format for licences that will make it easier for a householder to see what work a licensee is entitled to do and for which the householder is paying. These changes to the licensing system require provisions for transition from the old regime to the new. In essence, existing licences will be transitioned to the new category of licence as follows: full plumbers licences or full drainers licences under the current act will remain full licences under this bill; existing licences that are less than full licences—for example, water plumbers licences—will become restricted licences; existing restricted licences will remain restricted licences; and existing interim licences will become provisional licences under this bill. I commend the minister and her department on the work undertaken in preparing this bill. I believe it will make it much simpler for both tradesmen and consumers to understand. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (10.42 p.m.): The Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002 introduces new plumbing and drainage legislation that will make changes to the private building certification system. As we should realise, the national competition policy was one of the main initiators that saw private certifiers into this area. While some people will criticise it, I see the benefits that should see ratepayers right across the state no longer subsidising certifiers who were previously employed by councils. In this way ratepayers were cross-subsidising developments.

The bill repeals the outdated Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949 and replaces it with a modern legislative framework for plumbing and drainage. In doing so, the bill provides for increased accountability for the actions of local government and better protection of the rights of

individuals through more transparent decision making and improved appeal processes. The bill amends the Building Act 1975 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to improve the performance of the building certificate system. The changes will increase minimum competency standards for private certifiers.

I was a member of the Caloundra City Council when we allowed the council's building inspectors to look at a commercial enterprise which was called Country and Coastal Certifiers. There were some very capable and willing workers involved. I believe they are still very competitive in the industry. I am disappointed to hear that residents are complaining and are ringing the council only to be told that the certifiers sign off on buildings in areas such as Kings Beach which are facing redevelopment. The certifiers are working outside what was approved by council. If something is zoned to go to six storeys, or some other height, I find it hard to believe that it should be going over. I will be following this through. I hope it is not the case of the council trying to duckshove or put the blame onto someone else.

Earlier today we heard talk from other members with regard to the pros and cons of rainwater tanks and dual reticulation or the re-use of waste water. I fully support dual reticulation. I suggest to conservatives opposite that if the full sale of Telstra goes ahead they should be rattling the can with their federal colleagues to see that Queensland receives some money. We are a very arid state in one of the most arid nations in the world. In 20 to 50 years time I believe that rainwater tanks and dual reticulation will be quite common. If we look into the future and work our way back, when will we introduce dual reticulation? Everyone should remember that years ago there was no such thing as sewerage. It took some brave people, including the former mayor of Brisbane, to face up to this situation. It is about time that the federal government looked at funding for dual reticulation, and instead of pumping water into Moreton Bay we can put it on the grass and other areas.

Amendments to the Building Act and the Integrated Planning Act will improve the performance of the building certification system. While private certification has provided the public with faster building approvals, it has also brought with it a number of other problems that need to be resolved. Many of these have been raised already. The bill will ensure that the private building certification system operates to the highest possible standards and that public interests are properly protected. This is a must for Queensland residents.

I want to mention one other matter. The bill clarifies responsibilities where work takes place on land not under local government control. This is where the land is under control of another entity such as a port authority or is not part of any local government area. This applies to developments extending below the high water mark, such as piers or wharves. This is very relevant to the Sunshine Coast and my electorate of Kawana. In these cases, the entity responsible for the land is also responsible for ensuring that plumbing and drainage work complies with the relevant technical standards. These entities can ask the local government to undertake the assessment and inspection of plumbing and draining work on its behalf. Local governments will continue to be responsible for approving and inspecting plumbing work. The compliance assessment process introduced under the bill will provide greater certainty and consistency in decision making for the community and the plumbing industry. This is a win. I commend the minister and her department, and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (10.45 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. This bill is considered to be more a case of legislative and regulatory changes of a fairly minor nature, essentially being an appropriate update of the rump of the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949. Nonetheless, it is a bill which affects a large number of sections and subsections in several acts and, perhaps more significantly, the day-to-day operations of a large number of Queensland workers.

I am pleased to see, unlike another recent bill brought before this place by the government, that in this case there appears to have been reasonably extensive consultation. I also note that this bill implements the outcomes of the national competition policy review of the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949. I take this as a clear indication of the extent to which national competition policy is driving legislation. It is reaching into our gutters and our sewers. It is everywhere.

This amendment calls for more stringent inspections of swimming pool fencing. The annual number of deaths, especially of children in swimming pools, is a terrible measure of the need for not only appropriate safety regulations but adequate inspection to ensure that those requirements are being met.

Clause 189 of this bill allows for the Queensland Building Tribunal to exercise discretion as to what material relating to a disciplinary proceeding is recorded on a register and for how long. The very purpose of the register is to ensure that the public has access to information about people they may employ, yet this clause provides for information to be left out. We are being told, effectively, that here is a register to provide information to consumers about those holding licences, but possibly only some of that information. It appears to defeat the initial purpose of the register. Beyond that, however, it appears that there is a need for this amendment, essentially to bring the Water Act 2000 up to date. It is a function that this bill does appear to perform and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (10.49 p.m.): I would like to speak briefly on the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. There are five major elements, I suppose, or changes to the Building Act to ensure that the building certification system operates to the best possible standards and in the public interest. The matters covered are compliance, disciplinary systems, conflict resolution between certifiers and builders, consumer protection against faulty work and the safety of children. The first of these is compliance and here we are talking about compliance with planning systems which will be improved by ensuring that private certifiers who issue approvals have the necessary regulatory skills.

The next one is the disciplinary system. The efficiency and effectiveness of that system will be improved for a range of measures. Key amongst those will be the expansion of the type of disciplinary action that can be taken and the provision of mediation which, as you know, Mr Deputy Speaker McNamara, is a feature of most tribunals and courts and so on. Thirdly, there are concerns about the potential conflict of interest between certifiers and builders. These will be addressed by ensuring owners are made aware that a private certifier is doing the certification work for the building. Fourthly, consumers will be protected from faulty work by providing the Building Services Authority and the Queensland Building Tribunal with increased powers to make orders requiring a certifier to bring work into compliance with the legislation. Finally, the safety of young children will be improved by introducing more stringent requirements for inspecting swimming pool fencing. They are the aims of this fairly large bill, but they are the key elements of what is intended as I understand it to be achieved. I congratulate the minister and her department on those matters.

The only other point I want to raise is the issues raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. It pointed out three areas which it had some concerns about—that is, the extent of the penalties imposed under the act, the reliance in some sections on external documents and the reversal of the onus of proof provision with respect to one particular matter. Firstly, the committee pointed out that there were very substantial maximum penalties provided in the act. For example, clause 83 imposes a maximum penalty of 1,665 penalty units equivalent to \$124,875 for carrying out regulated work without a compliance permit. Clause 226 imposes maximum penalties of 1,000 penalty units, or \$75,000, for discharging a prohibited substance or trade waste into stormwater drainage. Clause 248 imposes a maximum penalty of \$75,000 for polluting water in a service provider's water service or for taking such water without approval.

One would hope that those charged with the responsibility of imposing penalties do so wisely and that those sorts of penalties, which of course are ruinous to most people, would be applied in relation to companies of some worth rather than to the individual suburban house owner. In relation to those matters, the committee simply draws the attention of the parliament to the level of those penalties because they are exceedingly harsh. No doubt the minister and the department deliberately want them to be like that so that they will have the required effect.

The second point raised by the committee relates to the question if the bill sufficiently subjects the exercise of delegated legislative power to the scrutiny of the Legislative Assembly. It refers to what is called the national accreditation framework and to external documents such as the Australia-New Zealand Standards Association standard and the on-site sewerage code. As I understand it, these are documents which the industry will rely on as guides and as benchmarks for various standards of construction. They will vary from time to time, but of course it is not envisaged that the legislation would perhaps vary as often as those documents. Hence, there is a reliance on documents outside the framework of the legislation itself. On this occasion, the committee noted—

... that the bill places significant reliance on external documents, and on government-generated documents which are not subordinate legislation.

The committee seeks confirmation from the Minister that she is satisfied the use of such provisions has been kept to the minimum reasonably achievable.

No doubt the minister will make some reference to that request from the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, which seems reasonable to me.

Finally, the committee points out the reversal of the onus of proof in criminal proceedings as it relates to clause 140. I think the honourable member for Warrego made reference to the representative situation being inclusive of agent or employee of an individual and so on. The effect of clause 140 is to enable the person to be charged with offences committed by their representative—in other words, a vicarious liability will be imposed. The clause provides a defence—namely, that the person took reasonable steps to prevent the representative's conduct or was not in a position to influence the representative in relation to the conduct. However, the clause thus places the onus of establishing this defence upon the person. This of course is what the committee in relation to reversal of the onus of proof is always concerned about. In this regard, the committee refers that matter to parliament to take notice of.

I simply draw those matters to the attention of honourable members because I always appreciate the valuable work done by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee for the assistance of members from both sides of this House. It is appropriate, therefore, that whatever it comes up with should be at least brought to the light of day in these debates. Overall, though, the bill is a very substantial one and a lot of work has gone into it. I commend the minister and her department for their efforts.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (10.56 p.m.): I want to make a few comments on that part of the bill which relates to the new Plumbing and Drainage Act which is going to replace the existing Sewerage and Water Supply Act. The purpose of that act is to contain provisions which protect the environment and also ensure the protection of public health and safety. There are a number of mechanisms in the act to achieve that—that is, the licensing system for plumbers and drainers, provisions for the approval and inspection of plumbing and drainage work by local government, and establishing regulations which are going to contain the technical standards for all plumbing and drainage work to be undertaken in Queensland.

Like a large number of pieces of legislation in this state, the existing Sewerage and Water Supply Act has been the subject of a national competition policy review. Despite much of the hysteria that has been created around the implementation of national competition policy—and I, like a number of others, have been critical of its implementation in the past—this element which requires governments to review all legislation and regulations to ensure that the benefits or the costs of that particular regulation do not outweigh the benefits is an important part of government work. Many examples have come before this parliament where the national competition review process has given rise to very sensible outcomes. Despite the fear that many have that national competition policy has a tendency to favour the contracting out or proposals which suggest that the private sector can do work better, in this instance there has been a sensible outcome of the review—that is, a recommendation that local government continue to be the authority which issues approvals and conducts inspections of plumbing and drainage work.

The public benefit test that is applied now under the national competition policy review is in place largely due to initiatives of the Beattie Labor government. The Beattie government did take proposals to the national scene and negotiations on national competition policy mean that appropriate changes were made to ensure that the public benefit test and the types of scrutiny which are undertaken during these reviews is undertaken in a way which does take account of community impacts much more than what happened in the past.

One of the additional improvements in this act will be the compliance assessment process, which will provide greater certainty and consistency in decision making for the community and the plumbing industry. A new Plumbers and Drainers Board will replace the existing Plumbers and Drainers Licensing and Examination Board. Importantly, it will retain its tripartite representation, with representatives from the industry, the union movement, local government and relevant state departments. Importantly, a new position has been created on the board for a consumer representative.

The tripartite nature of this board is an important factor. Those of us who were here can recall the short period of coalition government during 1996 and 1997, when the coalition made a regular habit of removing the tripartite structure of many of these boards and committees—in fact specifically to remove union representation from as many boards as it could. It has been the state Labor government which has ensured that the tripartite approach has been put back into legislative initiatives such as this. Also, it has been a Labor government that has recognised the constructive contribution that representative unions—that is unions of both employers and employees—can have on matters which are important to the industry in which they operate.

The new board being created has the power to issue occupational licences to plumbers and drainers and also to discipline those that breach standards that apply within the industry or, indeed, work without the appropriate endorsements. As has been indicated by a number of speakers, the number of licences has been rationalised from quite a large number to basically three. The new licence system enables those licences to be endorsed with additional competencies or be restricted to a particular kind of work.

In many respects the regulatory regime which covers the work of plumbers and drainers is very similar to that applying to electricians, my former occupation about 18 years ago. That is a system which has appropriate licensing backed up with clear regulatory standards for work undertaken within the industry and a disciplinary process which ensures that high standards of work are maintained and appropriate action can be taken and in fact is taken against licensees who breach the conditions of their licence or breach industry standards. This bill in respect of plumbers and drainers establishes a much clearer and more efficient system of governance in that section of the industry. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (11.02 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. A small number of private certifiers have spoken to me about small concerns in terms of this bill but significant issues for them. I wish to raise those with the minister.

Previous speakers have acknowledged that this legislation has been driven by the NCP. The changes in many areas of legislation have been positive. Certainly the claims from NCP are that open competition means there are more transparent costings for the consumer. It would be interesting to have an audit done right across government departments—not just this department—to see whether the promises of more efficient and effective costing to householders in Queensland have actually been met or whether it is a theory that has not been lived up to in practice.

One of the issues that arose in the local government arena when private certification first came in—that was with the building industry—related to what happens if the certifications are faulty, particularly in large drainage and plumbing programs that could be undertaken by private certifiers under this legislation. It is possible that local authorities could be left with a faulty project. In the end, they are responsible for long-term operation and maintenance.

I have not heard, especially in my electorate, of any really major problems in the building industry with the private certifiers, but it is an issue that has been raised with me over time and in relation to a number of pieces of legislation. Ultimately, in those areas of responsibility local governments have historically picked up if there are major problems. It could be left to the ratepayers to fix the problem at the end of the day. I just put that on the table as a concern that local government generically has expressed to me with this opening up of certification, which for many years was the sole purview of local authorities' inspectors, whether that be building inspectors or in this case plumbing and drainage inspectors.

The legislation also intends to allow the QBT and the BSA to look after things such as mediation and rectification or to be involved in the process where a dispute occurs. I bring to the attention of the minister a problem that has occurred in my electorate. It has been predominantly with one contractor. It is not only one, but certainly one has been the main culprit. It related to installing swimming pools. The swimming pools were put in. They were defective. They did not comply with either the building code or the safety code as far as fences are concerned. There was a dispute. The BSA was involved and subsequently the QBT became involved. The pool installer was actually fined for failing to comply with a building direction. In one case there were some significant breaches. He was fined \$800 for failing to comply with a direction. Then the QBT and the BSA sort of took their hands off the issue and said, 'We are finished with it now,' but the consumer was left with a faulty job and was told that they would have to pursue civil proceedings to get the work finalised. There was not just one person affected. Two or three people were involved with one particular pool installer.

The point I raise is whether that potential exists under this new legislation. The BSA and the QBT may get involved in a dispute. The BSA may institute mediation and the QBT may get involved in rectification orders, et cetera, but at the end of the day will it be possible for a significant project to remain in a non-complying state even though the certifier has been fined and the process has been gone through? Is it possible that a developer could end up with a standard job with nowhere to go but through the court process to actually get the money to rectify the plumbing and draining project? I assume it is the same process as these constituents went through, and it really was an unsatisfactory result both in a tangible sense, in terms of the built structure, and in an emotional sense for them as consumers.

The other issue the private certifiers have raised with me is the cost of a reasonable fee for the local government accepting the documentation. The bill refers to an obligation to fix a reasonable fee for accepting any document mentioned in subclause (6) or (7) and prescribe the period in which the fee must be paid. The issue they raised with me is a reasonable one, that is, the fees that local government charge them as private certifiers. Unless they are kept in relativity to the fees that local government certifiers employed by the councils actually charge for a job that goes through the council, the private certification process is superficial. What constraints could there be to ensure that councils, either intentionally or unintentionally, do not price the private certification industry out of the picture?

I, like many members, commend the minister for the pool fencing legislation. A number of local government ministers on both sides of the political fence have been involved in pool fencing. Whilst I have cited two or three constituents who have had difficulty with a pool installer, I think the vast majority, if not 99 per cent of people, support responsible pool fencing 100 per cent. Research has been put into determining what is a safe height and a safe style. I would like to say that there would be nobody who would ever do anything that would intentionally put a child's life at risk.

Pools are a wonderful social aspect of Australian life with our climate, in particular in Queensland. They are a great opportunity for families to spend time together, whether it is a public pool or, more importantly, a home pool. Families have a great deal of enjoyment and fellowship around these pools, but pools are also deadly. So while the pool fencing legislation for a short time created quite a challenge for home owners to comply with, I think almost everybody would say that the benefits far outweigh the pain at that time. I certainly commend the minister for the clarification that is in this legislation in terms of pool fencing.

The member for Kawana talked about the dual reticulation systems that are in place—rainwater tanks, et cetera. I endorse that. At the moment, my electorate, along with a number of others in Queensland, is in a quite serious situation with regard to reticulated water. Our dam is at its lowest capacity that it has been for some time. Although the dam wall has been increased to allow for greater storage, we need the rain before the storage can be used. The people of my electorate are on full restrictions—no garden hosing at all. They have been limited to 6 kilolitres a week. People who continually breach that limitation will have water restricters placed on their homes.

As other members have said, the water restrictions have meant that businesses and communities have reached the point where they are considering alternative water sources and alternative and responsible water use. It is a rather challenging situation to be in. The community and businesses are on a 15 per cent water restriction now. They are looking at a 25 per cent water restriction in another few months. There is some concern that it might go up even higher than that. QAL is now recycling the Gladstone City Council treated sewage effluent. It is going back into the QAL process. The Calliope shire has had the reuse of their grey water at both Calliope and Boyne-Tannum over an extended period. That has worked excellently. There are the usual warning signs on playing fields to say that the water is recycled water and for people to take reasonable health precautions in terms of contact with it. This prolonged dry weather has caused many people in the community—not only in my area but in others as well—to have a look at their water use. I think that there will be a residual benefit across Queensland in terms of responsible water use.

The other issue that I want to raise is something that I would like to believe will never be a problem because of the way in which the bill is drafted and it relates to the use of fees. The bill requires that revenue received by the board from fees fixed under the regulation must be deposited in an account of the department or an account used for depositing other amounts of the department. So the revenue has to go into a departmental account and it must be used for the implementation of this act. But it can also be applied only to objects and purposes appearing to the chief executive to advance the principles, standards or trades of plumbing and drainage.

The only reason I raise this matter is to telegraph a potential problem. A number of funds have been established for these types of purposes. We had one with the property agents legislation that is coming up for debate. A fund was established. The motive for establishing it was excellent. The parameters for the method of collection of moneys for that fund so that they accumulate and are applied to correct problems that occur in the future were sound. But at the end of the day, the money was used for other purposes to the point at which when it came time to apply the fund to the prescribed purpose for which it was set up, there was no money or insufficient money left. I do not believe that, under the minister's administration, that would

happen. But I raise this issue because it has happened over a period to probably half a dozen funds. Money is set aside for a certain purpose but it is eroded for other purposes. I hope that this money is always available to apply to this legislation so that the minister may be seen to be responsible and accountable to her community.

The use of water, the way in which it is reticulated throughout local government areas for new developments and older developments, is critical and intrinsic to our community. Whilst the duplication of reticulation systems for the use of grey water is attractive in its intent, it is a huge expense for local governments to implement. I think that many local governments would be doing it now except for the cost of placing the infrastructure in the ground. Most local authorities that I know have been very responsible in this area. I commend the minister for the bill.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (11.15 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. This bill will replace the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949. Whilst retaining the content of the SWSA, this bill has been updated to provide a modern legislative framework that protects the environment, public health and safety. The bill increases the accountability for decisions by state government, local government and the licensing body for plumbers and drainage.

I said that this bill will provide protection for the environment. I am pleased to say that the Logan Water Pollution Control Centre at Loganholme in my electorate is very mindful of protecting the environment. The centre's waste water treatment facility is leading the world in water waste treatment. The biological nutrient removal process featured in the plant ensures that harmful levels of the contaminants are prevented from being released into the environment through oxidation ditches that are now bioreactors. Logan is the epicentre of the fastest growing region in Australia. The problem of dealing with increased waste water flows without further impacting on the region's waterways has been a major challenge. A conventional but less cost-effective approach would have involved the building of a completely new plant. However, some smart engineering resulted in the existing plant being able to be expanded and adapted at a considerable saving to the city in capital costs. This centre will contribute to the enhancement of the local environment and, as such, to the sustainability and value of the Queensland environment. I congratulate the staff of the Logan Water Pollution Control Centre on the innovative work that they are all doing.

I am pleased to see that the bill will provide for the better protection of individual rights. A person to represent consumer interests will be introduced to the board. The new Plumbers and Drainers Board will have new powers to discipline those in the industry who are not doing the right thing and prosecute unlicensed persons carrying out work requiring a licence. Clearer disciplinary procedures are provided in the bill and show-cause procedures will be necessary before disciplinary action can be taken, protecting individual rights. If someone is not satisfied with the board's decision, they will be able to seek a review of the board's decision by the Queensland Building Tribunal.

The new board will also have the power to issue plumbers and drainers with occupational licences. Previously, there were a number of categories of licences. Those categories have been rationalised to three types: a full plumbers and drainers licence, a restricted plumbers and drainers licence, or an interim licence. That is certainly an improvement on what existed previously.

Lastly, I am very pleased to see that the safety of young children will be improved with changes to pool fencing which require pool fencing to be constructed and inspected before the pool is filled. I am sure that we would all agree that any legislation that can save a child's life is good legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (11.18 p.m.): I also rise to speak in support of the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. This bill establishes the legislative framework for plumbing and drainage and on-site sewage facilities in Queensland and repeals the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949. That act has served Queensland well for the past 50-odd years, but it is now time to update the legislative framework.

I still remember when I was going through university many moons ago that my lecturer in water supply design told me that the first principle in designing water and sewage supply is that water and sewage run downhill. I think that first principle still holds true today. It is important that we update our legislation so that it reflects the modern technologies involved in this industry. It also protects our environment and ensures that public health and safety is maintained.

The second objective of the bill is to amend the Building Act 1975 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to improve the performance of the private building certification system and to

implement the outcomes of the national competition policy review. The private certification of building work was introduced in 1998. At the time, I did express some concern regarding private certifications. I understand why it was introduced in 1998. In the old days where the local authority was the only statutory body to approve building works, sometimes the process could be longwinded and developers and home owners at times had to wait for a long time before approval was given.

However, at the time I also expressed concern regarding building certifiers certifying work that included town planning components. For example, I have seen town planning applications approved by some councils which have generic conditions on their town planning approvals that indicated a certain number of car parks must be incorporated into the building work and referred to the town plan. To my knowledge, most of the building certifiers are very familiar with the Building Code of Australia but perhaps not with town planning requirements. If the specific number of car parks is not being nominated in the town planning approval, at times the building certifiers are not able to check compliances in that regard. Therefore, some problem does exist among compliances.

This bill improves the compliance with planning schemes by ensuring that private certifiers have the necessary skills. It also improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the disciplinary system by having the QTB hear complaints of professional misconduct rather than getting the BSA involved. It also addresses concerns about the potential conflict of interest between certifiers and builders by ensuring owners are aware of who is doing the certification work for their building.

Another very important part of this bill addresses concerns about the safety of young children. The bill imposes more stringent requirements for inspecting swimming pool fencing. Under the changes, a pool cannot be filled until its fence has been inspected and approved. I have some personal experience with this issue as many years ago my younger daughter, Claudia, was in fact found drowned in a pool. She was found clinically dead when they fished her out of the pool, but fortunately we were able to revive her. That experience is not something that I would wish even on my worst enemy. I can certainly understand the importance of keeping our young children away from pools. The tragic thing is that six adults were around her when she drowned. Everybody thought somebody else was looking after her. It takes only a few seconds for a young child to drown in a pool. I commend the minister for making this important change and I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (11.23 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise tonight to speak on the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002. The Plumbing and Drainage Bill provides for a range of matters, one of which is controls over smaller on-site sewerage facilities. This is a matter that was dealt with under the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949, but the bill updates the processes for approvals and provides for improvements to the process for review of government decisions. The controls in the bill only apply to small sewage treatment plants with a peak design capacity to treat sewage of less than 21 equivalent persons. Such systems are typically used for single domestic dwellings, small commercial premises and small residential complexes. They are generally located in areas that cannot be served by normal sewerage system infrastructure, that is, they are not normally located in sewered areas. Often, part of the land surrounding the facility is used for the disposal of the treated effluent.

The largest sewage treatment facilities that are designed with the capacity to treat sewage of 21 or more equivalent persons are considered to be an environmentally relevant activity and are controlled under the Environmental Protection Act 1994. The Plumbing and Drainage Bill therefore provides in the one place for the controls over the smaller sewage treatment facilities as well as controls over the plumbing and drainage works that connect these facilities to premises such as the house served by the facility.

The bill continues the situation that applies under the current Sewerage and Water Supply Act and its subordinate legislation where the Department of Natural Resources and Mines gives generic approvals of on-site sewage treatment plants for use in Queensland including the materials and prefabricated parts of these facilities. This department will also set the performance based technical standards for the installation of facilities.

Under the bill, local governments will continue to inspect and approve the installation of on-site treatment facilities and the maintenance of the facilities. This is on the basis that local governments are better placed to take into account site specific issues for individual installations. Local governments can therefore ensure that an on-site sewerage facility once installed does not have an adverse effect on human health and safety or the environment. Local governments will

also inspect and approve the plumbing and drainage works connecting the treatment facilities to premises.

The bill clearly sets out the responsibilities of owners in relation to on-site facilities after they have been installed. It also provides for the responsibilities of persons who service on-site facilities and for those persons to have the relevant licence issued by the Plumbers and Drainers Board. Facilities must be serviced and maintained in accordance with relevant approvals given by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and the local government, and they must be kept in good working order.

Local governments will have powers under the bill to issue notices requiring on-site facilities to be installed, repaired and removed in appropriate circumstances to protect both public health and safety and the environment. Under the Sewerage and Water Supply Act there has been a right of appeal to the Magistrates Court. There have been only a small number of appeals instituted in relation to on-site sewerage facilities in the past few years. However, the bill provides for an improved process to contest decisions made by the department in respect of generic approvals or specifications and materials for on-site facilities.

A further change is that appeals will be heard by the Building and Development Tribunal established under the Integrated Planning Act 1997. This is a specialist tribunal where technical experts hear appeals about technical matters. This will provide for better quality decisions and is a speedy and inexpensive review mechanism for the public to access.

In summary, the bill retains the content matter of the Sewerage and Water Supply Act and its subordinate legislation in respect of controls over on-site sewerage facilities. However, it provides for an updated and more modern legislative framework for the approval and ongoing management of on-site sewerage facilities. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (11.26 p.m.): In rising to support the bill, I shall refer specifically to the changes to pool fencing requirements which I particularly applaud. We all have seen the television advertisements by Lawrie Lawrence about small children and the dangers posed by swimming pools. We know that each year throughout Queensland there are many entirely preventable drowning deaths. I remember the debates in this House shortly after being first elected in 1991 when the then Minister for Local Government and Planning, Tom Burns, introduced amendments to his initial pool fencing legislation introduced in about 1990. The debates of 22 August 1991 and 3 September 1991 are very enlightening. Some coalition members at the time made some irresponsible and irrational comments as they tried to water down the requirements of pool owners to provide adequate security for young children. It is my understanding that most drownings occur in pools at the home of the child or the home of a friend, that is, it is not a stranger's pool that poses the greatest danger to children. We do recognise, however, that some children do drown in the pool of a stranger so it is essential that the regulations cover all Queensland homes.

A major concern I have is that while adequate fencing may be in place when the pool is initially constructed, a variation or deterioration occurs which renders the fencing ineffective. There are two specific questions that I have for the minister in this regard. Firstly, what provision is there for regulation inspections to ensure that proper fencing remains in place? Is there any system of notification proposed or is it up to the local authority to put that regulatory framework in place? Secondly, I can recall that some councils in the early nineties openly refused to make pool owners comply with the regulations. I remember the Gold Coast City Council and the Albert Shire Council had some very vocal councillors who were opposing the pool fencing regulations. Specifically, does this legislation place any onus on a council to impose and check pool fencing or do councils still have discretionary powers as to how these regulations will apply?

I am certain that proper pool fencing properly maintained will save the lives of many children each year in Queensland. For 10 years when our own children were young we had a family pool—a pool that was properly fenced. In fact, the pool fence was the first job we did in a massive renovation of our home at Kalinga. I am only too aware of the potential dangers posed by suburban swimming pools and decorative ponds.

While supporting the legislation, I am aware that we still need to take other measures to keep our children safe. As well as teaching our children pool safety and how to swim we need to continue to promote pool safety as an ongoing campaign throughout our community where water based recreation is such an intimate part of our way of life. I commend the minister and her department for this legislation and I encourage her, in conjunction with colleagues such as the Minister for Health, to continue to monitor pool safety across the state. If she finds that further changes are required to improve water safety for our children, I encourage her to bring additional

amendments so that we can try to ensure improved safety for all of our children. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. N. I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) (11.33 p.m.), in reply: The Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002 provides a modern framework for plumbing and drainage in Queensland, makes major improvements to the building certification system and implements recommendations from the NCP reviews into the Building Act 1975 and the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949.

The bill replaces the outdated Sewerage and Water Supply Act with a modern legislative framework for state and local government in making decisions about the licensing of plumbers and drainers and the approval of plumbing and drainage works. The rights of individuals are provided for with modern protections. There is an increased focus on consumer protection and a continued emphasis on protecting public health and safety and the environment. The bill also takes up those recommendations of the NCP review of the Sewerage and Water Supply Act that require legislative action. This includes providing a Plumbers and Drainers Board with the funds and power to take a more active disciplinary stance to ensure that only licensed plumbers undertake plumbing work and that the integrity of our water supplies is protected.

At the same time, individual rights are protected by having appeals from board decisions heard by the independent Queensland Building Tribunal. Also, local governments must decide whether or not to approve plumbing and drainage works within set times. Dissatisfied persons can appeal against local government decisions to the Building and Development Tribunal, which provides for quick and inexpensive hearings.

The bill also amends the Building Act and the Integrated Planning Act to improve the private building certification system. While private building certification has brought about faster building approvals, it has also brought with it a number of problems, which have been raised by councils, certifiers, the public and speakers tonight. A key concern that is often raised is whether the responsibility for protecting the public interest, such as the integrity of council planning schemes which existed under the previous local government building approval system, is still there. The bill will ensure that the building certification system operates to the highest possible standards and that public interests are properly protected.

Key changes include increasing minimum competency standards for private certifiers, providing a more effective disciplinary system for dealing with complaints, providing additional powers for authorities to order certifiers to correct faulty certification, and addressing concerns about the conflict of interest between certifiers and builders. These changes resulted from an extensive review of the certification system by my department, the NCP review of the Building Act and the LGAQ's review of building certification.

An additional amendment to the Building Act will toughen the pool fencing laws to further protect young Queensland children from drowning in backyard swimming pools. The bill makes it an offence for anyone, including the pool builder, to fill a new pool without ensuring that a complying fence is constructed around the pool, and the proposed changes will also make it an offence for any person to fill a new pool before the pool and fencing have been inspected and approved by a building certifier.

The bill extends certain transitional arrangements and addresses minor consequential matters for the Integrated Planning Act and the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2001 and it transfers to the Local Government Act 1993 the controls over stormwater drainage. Lastly, the bill transfers to the Water Act 2000 provisions relevant to water and sewerage service providers that were previously dealt with under the Sewerage and Water Supply Act.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has noted that the bill is relatively technical in nature and therefore raised only a few issues within the committee's terms of reference. The first issue raised by the committee referred to the maximum penalties applicable to certain offences in the bill. As I have noted earlier, this bill takes the first step to integrating plumbing and drainage approvals into the Integrated Development Assessment System under IPA. Accordingly, the maximum penalty levels for undertaking plumbing and drainage works without the necessary permit are those applied under the Integrated Planning Act.

The maximum penalty levels and classification of offence levels for polluting the stormwater drainage system are the same as those set under the Standard Sewerage Law made under the Sewerage and Water Supply Act. This allows the courts sufficient ambit to set appropriate penalties for discharging dangerous substances which can damage infrastructure, seriously

pollute Queensland's waterways and endanger public health and safety. The maximum penalty for the offence of polluting the water supply system and endangering public health has been increased to that applicable to polluting the stormwater drainage system.

The second issue raised by the committee was the significant reliance by the bill on external documents and on government generated documents that are not subordinate legislation, such as the National Plumbing and Drainage Code published by Australian Standards and the On-site Sewerage Code published by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, which contain only technical standards. I do not believe it would aid public understanding and useability if these requirements were to be included in subordinate legislation.

The bill also calls up the National Accreditation Framework for Building Certifiers approved by the Australian Building Codes Board and the bill requires the chief executive of my department to implement a code of conduct by which the performance of building certifiers may be measured. However, the code has no effect until it is approved under a regulation, which will be subject to the tabling and disallowance provisions of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992.

The third issue raised by the committee was the effect of reversal of the onus of proof by making a person liable for an offence committed by their employee or representative. The person is liable unless they can show they took reasonable steps to prevent the offence or were not in a position to influence their employee or representative on that matter. This provision is necessary to deal with circumstances where plumbers and drainers are employed by or subcontracted to other persons or corporate entities and offences are committed in respect of work for which the employer or prime contractor is responsible. I will provide a formal response in writing to the committee about these issues by the due date of 29 January 2003.

I will now turn to the issues raised by members during the debate. The member for Warrego spoke about the LGAQ and the lack of consultation with it. The LGAQ was consulted extensively on this bill. It made almost 30 recommendations regarding private certification and all but two of those recommendations have been addressed.

Mr Hobbs: That wasn't the LGAQ. That was the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: No, that was another one. The shadow minister was also concerned about council's receipt of plans for confirmation of privately certified approvals. That is not in this bill.

Mr Hobbs: Sorry?

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: That issue is not in this bill. It is an issue that I have spoken to the LGAQ about confidentially and it has agreed to our proposal. However, there was not enough time to get its approval and to have the drafting done to include it in this bill. But it will be introduced early in the new year. The member for Warrego was also concerned, I think, about the plans for archiving. I am examining those problems right now. Another issue was the annual inspection of on-site sewage treatment facilities. The current Sewerage and Water Supply Act does not provide powers to set fees; neither does the Plumbing and Drainage Bill. However, there are powers under the Local Government Act to set fees and charges, and local governments have powers to set conditions on approvals for maintenance of on-site sewerage facilities under the current and the proposed legislation. Local governments ensure that maintenance is done and is left to their discretion.

I think the member also raised the issue of whether local governments should be obliged to use show cause procedures before issuing an enforcement notice in respect of plumbing work. The show cause process provides for the protection of individual rights and is a reasonable request in today's society. However, the show cause process does not apply before issuing an enforcement notice where the situation involves a danger of a health risk either within the premises or to the public at large.

Another issue raised by the shadow minister was also raised by the member for Toowoomba North, and that was the tough penalties for plumbing offences. I believe I have already addressed the level of penalties in the summary speech. These penalties are maximums only. It would be up to the courts to assess the circumstances and set a penalty if appropriate.

Another issue raised by the member for Warrego concerned the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's comments regarding how the process will work under clause 140, and that is to hold corporations responsible for work. I think I just answered that in my summing up speech. Another issue concerned whether the BSA will be reluctant to investigate plumbing complaints in respect of private certifiers. The bill requires the Building Services Authority to investigate any complaints

made to it. This will include complaints from local governments about planning non-compliance. They are required to do that.

There was a question asked about the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors who recently met with the Minister for Housing and Public Works. Representatives of that organisation have requested an appointment with me tomorrow. I have that in my diary. I will be speaking with them tomorrow and I will address their concerns at that meeting.

Another question concerned the changes to the accreditation process. I am currently preparing amendments to the regulations to call up the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors as the accrediting body. The member for Nicklin had concerns about private certification as well. He is still not convinced that private certification is superior to the previous council approval system and believes there is still a conflict of interest between builders and private certifiers. I think this is a fairly widespread belief. I will continue to monitor the private certification system to ensure that it does improve. The member for Nicklin also spoke about a conflict of interest between builders and private certifiers. The bill increases the disciplinary powers of the Building Services Authority to provide a greater deterrent. In addition, this bill will ensure that owners are notified when a private certifier is engaged. The certifier will be required to provide the owner with information outlining their responsibilities. This will improve owner awareness of what the certifier is meant to do.

The member for Callide was also concerned about private certification and he spoke about a number of issues that are not in the bill, such as the use of grey water, recycling water, housing standards and rubbish bins. I will not answer any of those. The member for Callide did say that water supply is always a problem in small rural subdivisions. I think it is appropriate to reply that that is exactly why successive governments have declined to allow rural subdivisions.

The member for Callide asked what coordination there was between the departments and the Minister for Local Government and Planning and the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines in relation to interference with the flow of stormwater across land and the problems caused to neighbours. Officers of my department and that of my colleague, the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, cooperated closely in the preparation of this bill on the issue of stormwater, as with many other issues. I understand the member for Callide's concern because, having been in local government myself, I know of the problems that are caused to neighbours.

Some members spoke about water supplies. The member for Callide asked what the Department of Local Government and Planning is doing to provide contingency plans for towns running out of urban water supply. I made a ministerial statement earlier this week about what my department is doing to help councils. I think it covered it fairly well. I refer the member to that.

The member for Gladstone spoke about the influence of the NCP. I think it should be clarified here that the NCP review agreed that councils should retain the inspection of plumbing work. So there will not be any extension of private certification into plumbing work at this stage.

With regard to private certification, there is a concern about archiving fees and that is an issue that we will be resolving early in the new year. The two main issues are obviously private certification and swimming pool fencing. Both of those issues have been addressed in the bill.

The member for Tablelands spoke of withholding orders from registers in respect of certifiers. The Queensland Building Tribunal can direct that certain details not be published where they are not in the public interest. For example, the name of the building owner could be retained.

The member for Gladstone raised the issue of the BSA not ensuring that problems with swimming pools are fixed. Even if a private certifier is responsible for faulty work, the local council can still issue an enforcement notice to require the work to be rectified. In addition, with the passing of this bill the matter could be brought before the Queensland Building Tribunal in which case it could order work to be brought up to standard. These orders are enforceable in the courts.

The member for Gladstone also spoke of clause 32 which provides for the retention of plumbers and drainers licence fees. She asked whether these funds will always be used for the benefit of plumbing and draining issues and not for other purposes. This clause in the bill has been carefully drafted to ensure that funds must be used to fund the operations of the Plumbers and Drainers Board and other actions to advance the principal standards of plumbing and drainage. The fund and the purposes for which the dollars are spent will be audited and the terms of the legislation will inform the audit process.

I thank the shadow minister and the opposition for their bipartisan support for this bill, and I thank all speakers for their contribution to the debate, and particularly for the complimentary comments regarding my department.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. N. I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1—

Mr HOBBS (11.47 p.m.): I wish to clarify a point. The minister mentioned a moment ago about non-consultation with the Local Government Association. The minister must have misheard me. I did not say that the Local Government Association was not consulted on this particular bill. I mentioned that they had not been consulted on another occasion. I think they are quite happy with the consultation on this particular bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 250, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mrs Nita Cunningham, by leave, read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. N. I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) (11.49 p.m.): I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Suncoast Social Dancers Association

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (11.50 p.m.): Tonight I rise to speak on the work of many volunteers in our community who make a positive difference to the lives of others in our local communities. I speak on this occasion of the contribution made by a small social dance committee on the Sunshine Coast who are making an incredible contribution to their community. On Monday night I was invited to attend a cheque presentation at one of the group's regular dance nights. To my astonishment, the Suncoast Social Dancers Association presented a cheque for \$12,000 to the Royal Brisbane Hospital Research Foundation Skin Bank. On speaking with the association's President and Secretary, Michael and Rita James, I was stunned to hear that this group of dance enthusiasts have contributed in the vicinity of \$100,000 to different worthy causes during the past four years. Other groups which have benefited from the group of social dancers have included the local Queensland Ambulance Service; Cittamani, a Sunshine Coast based organisation which assists families dealing with terminal illness; Sunshine Coast Independent Living Service for disabled people in our community; the Nambour Special School; and others.

Rita and Michael along with Pam and Lewis Menary and another five local committee members provide dance classes and social dances at Kawana Waters, Woombye, Bli Bli and Lindsay Gardens Retirement Village at Buderim. While providing tuition and good fun entertainment, every cent that is made through these dance classes and social events goes towards helping the local community. Not even petrol expenses are skimmed from the class or dance fees. Rita and Michael, both Nambour pensioners, admit that they gain a lot from their efforts. They gain the joy of sharing their love for dancing with other like-minded people and they gain the benefit of repaying those who have supported themselves or others like them in our community. Through their 2001 fundraising for the ambulance, Mrs James said that she felt she was able to give something in return to those who saved her life several years ago when she suffered a heart attack.

Next year the Prince Charles Hospital Heart Foundation will benefit from the Suncoast dancers. Several dancers have had treatment at the hospital and now the committee has decided to support research done at this hospital. Through the association's 2002 donations of close to \$20,000 to the Royal Brisbane Hospital Research Foundation Skin Bank, these dancers have been able to assist Bali bomb victims and many others. Michael and Rita and their committee do not just raise the funds and leave it at that. They have visited the burns unit at the Royal Brisbane Hospital and invited researchers to their meetings to update them on research programs. Rita and Michael James say that as pensioners they cannot afford to donate money, but by donating funds made through the local classes and social dances they can donate large amounts to many worthwhile causes.

While the dance association started from humble beginnings four years ago, the couple admit that the committee could not achieve what it does for the community without the many local dance enthusiasts. They told me that most of the individual dancers who attended the classes and dances could not afford to donate to charities but as a group they could. The dancers range in age from 45 to 96 and classes and social dances range in cost from \$4 to \$8. Up to 160 people attend social dances at Kawana while classes there average between 70 and 90 people. I want to personally congratulate Rita and Michael James—

Time expired.

Aspley Scouts 40th Anniversary

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (11.53 p.m.): I rise to inform the House of the recent celebration by Aspley Scouts of its 40th birthday—a proud 40 years of providing the youth of Aspley with experience of fun, shared responsibilities, skill building and teamwork. The Aspley Scout troop is one of the largest troops in the state and I recently had the pleasure of addressing a large gathering of past, present and future scout leaders, cubs, scouts, volunteers and scouting officials as well as the parents, family and friends of Aspley Scouts. The group gathered to celebrate the 40th birthday of Aspley Scouts and to pay special tribute to the group leaders over those 40 years. Chairman of the Aspley Scout group, Steve Jeffs, was MC of the event in which patrons of the Bramble Bay district, Earle Rawlings and Aspley Scouts patron Lois Roberts, were also acknowledged for their enduring service to Aspley Scouts. The group leaders who were honoured were Allan Middleton, Arthur Perry, David Provan and Noel Lollback. Those four gentlemen spanned 35 years as group leaders of the first 40 years of Aspley Scouts. Honoured also was Lynn Masters, a very good friend of mine who was there for eight years, Trevor O'Hara and Allan Hong Choy. They have all made amazing contributions to the scouting community in Aspley, and I thank them for that immensely.

The troop celebrated 40 years with a youth member display and a fantastic display of memorabilia that chartered the history of the group. The displays set up under the guidance of Lynn Masters was a real highlight for me. I followed dads and grandads who were proudly showing their sons and daughters photos of their time as Aspley Scouts 10, 20, 30 and 40 years ago. Generations were present to share the proud history of Aspley Scouts. It was an absolute pleasure to be part of it and I thank the Aspley Scout group for the invitation. Tonight I also want to welcome Cec Caterer who is the new Aspley Scout group leader and wish him and the young people that he has the privilege and the hard work to lead the very best. There is a line in the scout hymn that says, 'Help me to keep my honour shining bright.' For the past 40 years Aspley Scout's honour has shone bright and I for one, like the many members for Aspley before me, are very proud of them. I commend them for their 40 years and I thank them for letting me be part of that.

Drought

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (11.56 p.m.): The Beattie government's response to the current drought across much of Queensland is appalling. The task of compiling exceptional circumstances applications has fallen on producer groups such as Agforce for the Peak Downs application and the far south-west shires of Paroo, Bulloo, Quilpie, Barcoo, Diamantina and Balonne and local governments for the Burnett region. This starkly contrasts with New South Wales where the PP boards, or the rural lands protection boards, have produced four EC applications in the month of November which have been referred to the national advisory council for a full assessment. If the Queensland government would get off its hands and generate the EC applications, it would go a long way to easing the current drought burden on farmers and small businesses. There can be no argument that many primary producers are facing a drought which could, in my areas, meet the criteria of being a one-in-25-year or even a once-in-a-lifetime event.

Instead of offering solutions supporting and improving assistance schemes to ensure that the state government is responding to the needs of drought-stricken communities, the Beattie government has actually reduced its role and reduced its financial exposure. There are many people out there who I am sure would meet that criteria. For instance, in New South Wales Mr Truss put out a press release recently which said that he is satisfied that a prima facie case has been made for drought exceptional circumstances for the north-eastern section of the Northern New England Rural Lands Protection Board and the application has been referred to the national advisory council for a full assessment. So it can be done. However, I have some examples here

from Alva Downs, Bruce Leach and Lyn Tongue from a property at Dulacca who put some records together. For instance, so far this year they have received 358.5 millimetres of rain. When one goes through the records that they provide—and they go way back to about 1890—from Dulacca and their properties there are really only two equivalent events in the last 40 years. Some other events are fairly close to it, but it gives the House some idea of the situation. In fact, there have been eight equivalent events in the last 112 years. We have a situation where these people are outside the area but I am sure that they could put a good case for being eligible for EC applications.

The government really needs to do more to try to help put together these applications and to give assistance, even if they are in smaller regions. They do not necessarily have to be huge areas to get applications through, particularly when they are bordering on existing regions already eligible for EC funding. There is one in the Western Downs area and we could easily add to that. There are many people who are facing severe hardship at the present moment. There is not the ability for organisations such as Agforce in particular to process those applications, even though it is working as hard as it possibly can to try to get those applications completed.

Time expired.

Burnett Electorate

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (11.58 p.m.): I take this opportunity to give a brief summary of what is happening in the seat of Burnett. The year started off with a declaration of habitat A in Baffle Creek. Apart from Elliott River, Baffle Creek is one of only five rivers on the eastern seaboard that does not have infrastructure on it. It meant a hell of a lot not only to the community but also to the area to know that something has been happening in that regard.

The sugar industry has had probably its worst year. The member for Mirani would probably agree that the Bundaberg-Burnett region and the area around Mackay are the hardest hit areas of the whole state. The sugar industry started the year in not such a bad state, but by April and May there was a lot of fear on the part of farmers. There was trepidation about the future. Farmers were worried about planting, fertilising and so on.

In other areas things have picked up. A few options are now available to farmers, such as hemp—legislation passed a few months ago has enabled the industry to take off—although they do not have a commercial quantity of seed at the moment. But it will happen. It will take off. It has a lot of promise. Peanuts are also coming into the area. The peanut group around Childers has organised a few of the farmers to take it on. They are not looking to go big at this stage. They will pick their mark. It gives the farmers of our area another option.

One indicator of the health of the area is the port authority. It is looking into all sorts of things. It is campaigning very heavily for the scallop ranching, which will happen in our area. The port authority is diversifying. It is not relying on sugar for its sole source of income. It is looking 10, 12 or 15 years down the track. The port authority will take a different form from what we see today.

Real estate values in the electorate have gone berserk. The building industry is going very strongly from Woodgate to Elliott Heads and Bargara, and from Burnett Heads to Moore Park and Agnes Waters. We have heard increases in house prices of 30 per cent and 40 per cent. There is a tremendous amount of development on the coast. Everybody is moving to the coast. It is like a tide coming up the eastern seaboard, which is great.

The dam was another development. Money was allocated in the last budget to the purchase of land. There is a motion before the House to—

Time expired.

Mr I. Mossman

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.02 a.m.): Ian Mossman served a three-month teaching contract in 1996 at Gladstone State High School. Allegations were brought against him in 1998 by one male student. The allegations were passed on to the police and Ian was taken to the Miriam Vale Police Station for questioning. He has no complaint regarding his treatment by police. However, during the interview it was disclosed that the student had accused him of rape over the period of one month. The matter was referred rightly to the CJC. Education Queensland suspended Ian. The district director promptly brought the paperwork down to him.

Ian asked for the department to give him some support. The district director at the time said that he did not know of any help available. In desperation and at the point of self-harm, Ian rang Lifeline, who recommended a counsellor at Gladstone State High. Without her help Ian quite bluntly said to me that he would have suicided. The department endeavoured to advise this counsellor to distance herself from him. Fortunately, she has maintained her support.

Police advised Ian that they would be taking no further action and in August 1998 the CJC advised that he had nothing to answer. Education Queensland, after no contact during the investigation period, called Ian on the Friday and advised that he had to return to work on the Monday. He said that he did not feel that he could, and he was allowed to have one week non-contact and then required to do full classroom duties. The only other alternative given to him was to resign. He then had six weeks off work under workers compensation and a gradual return to work at the end of 1998 because of the stress. He taught until September 1999, when he had a complete breakdown.

The minister's department was contacted and replied that the department did give him support. They had a number of unsuccessful attempts at rehabilitation. An employee adviser worked closely with him over many months and in February 2002 QSuper deemed him entitled to total and permanent disability. He applied for ill health retirement and left EQ in 2002. The department said that every endeavour was made to rehabilitate Mr Mossman. However, the assistance that Ian was looking for was during that time of great stress.

Ian is looking to recoup his loss of income, but he is also looking for a more transparent support process for people in similar situations. I think of the principal at the high school at Aspley. He wants to know that people in similar situations, whilst it not being indicated by the Department of Education that they do not have anything to answer, have access to counselling and advisers who can get beside these teachers who have accusations made against them and give them some sort of emotional support during that time.

Ian acknowledges that when misconduct occurs the person responsible has to take the full force of the law. He is not saying that that should in any way be avoided, but he was not guilty, he received no support and now he is looking to the department for some recompense.

Townsville Fire, Women's National Basketball League

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (12.05 a.m.): I draw to the attention of the House the achievements of Churchill IGA's Townsville Fire women's national basketball team. This team is the only Queensland team in the Women's National Basketball League. This team, in only its second season in the league, is on top of the competition with a 9-2 win-loss record—a great achievement for the club.

The Fire usually play their home games at the Murray Basketball Stadium, which is located in my electorate of Burdekin, but last Saturday night my wife and I went to a different venue, along with about 4,000 other people who attended the first game the Fire have played at the Townsville entertainment centre, better known as the Swamp, the home of the Townsville Crocs basketball team. On Saturday night the Fire set the Swamp on fire with their devastating team performance against the Canberra Capitals, defeating them 69 to 65 and winning the inaugural Mick Churchill memorial match.

This team has the ability to keep the fire going on the court, and their flame seems to always keep going. It fires up strong when their opponents try to douse it. The team deserves all the accolades that are being bestowed on it by the public and others. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the team: captain Natalie Porter, who always leads by example, Claudia Brassard, Jodie Datson, Aneka Kerr, Julie Harris, Gina Stevens, Kylie Galloway, Rachel Byrne, Tania Heritage, Simone Page and Rebecca Miles. I also acknowledge the work done by head coach David Herbert, assistant coach Patric Brady, team manager Kaye Hilditch and the other staff involved with coaching this magnificent basketball team.

History was also made with a record crowd for a Women's National Basketball League regular season game with 4,110, which annihilated the previous record of 2,800 set back in 1994 at the Sydney Entertainment Centre. This shows what we are capable of in the north.

There are a lot of talented women basketballers in north Queensland and in other sports. I think it is time that women's sport was given recognition for the high standard of competition in Queensland, nationally and internationally that is displayed by our sportswomen. As I said, Churchill's IGA Townsville Fire is the only Queensland team in the Women's National Basketball League.

I along with other north Queenslanders am proud to be out there supporting this team. If Queenslanders get the opportunity, they should travel to Townsville to see this team in action, because whenever they take the court they are always on fire. The net proceeds of the night were donated to the Townsville and Thuringowa mayor's Christmas appeal, Foodbank and Ronald McDonald House. I congratulate the girls on a great win. I hope they all stay fired up for the rest of the season.

Electricity Supply

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (12.08 a.m.): Electricity is a very important part of life in Queensland. Unfortunately, in parts of my electorate, particularly south of Sarina, electricity and reliable supply are rare commodities. The people in that area are getting sick and tired of brownouts and blackouts of up to 12 or 24 hours. Almost three months ago they called a public meeting in Carmila to address the problem. Peter Billings from Ergon attended that meeting and gave some explanations. Unfortunately, the situation has not improved; in fact, it has become worse. As recently as last Sunday at 1 a.m. the power went out and was not restored until nearly 10 o'clock the following morning.

It appears that the issue of cross arms, the maintenance of the line and a lot of extraneous matters seem to be some of the problems that they are facing. Basically, it gets down to the issue of maintenance and ensuring that the line is in good repair. When the Electricity Board was disbanded in Mackay, we were promised that the maintenance of the network in the area would be maintained. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be the case. The MEB—the Mackay Electricity Board—was chaired by Col Meng, who was a local businessman who kept a very close eye indeed on the maintenance of the network. Unfortunately, now that the ownership and direction is coming from Rockhampton, there seems to be a lack of interest in the maintenance of the system.

This is a real concern to those people. As I said at the start of my speech, a reliable electricity supply to our communities is a must nowadays. The fact of the matter is that, in most rural communities, the supply of water and essential power is part and parcel of living in a rural community. The power must be ensured to maintain people's quality of life. This coming Friday morning there will another public meeting in Carmila. Hopefully, Peter Billings will again be there to explain what has happened since the previous meeting. I will be attending to ensure that I get the messages and, indeed, try to have something done in terms of getting a reliable supply of electricity.

As I said, the people of that area are very concerned about the issue. We have not had a cyclone season for quite a number of years. But in reasonably calm weather, we are finding that the lines are breaking down. In this last instance, three cross arms broke. The supply authority had a lot of difficulty in identifying where the problems were. I can just imagine what the situation would be if we had a cyclone. Unfortunately, the people in that area will again be disadvantaged.

Cerebral Palsy League

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (12.11 a.m.): On 29 November, I was invited to open a new kitchen facility at the Capalaba day service of the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland. It is without doubt a wonderful organisation serving Queenslanders. The Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland provides a range of specialised services, day programs, respite and accommodation support to approximately 1,800 children and 1,000 adults throughout Queensland. The support provided includes technology and equipment services, therapy and social work support, care support in the home, linking in the community and early intervention programs for children. Support is provided in rural areas, with outreach services that travel to remote and isolated areas.

The Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland was established in 1948 by a group of parents seeking appropriate services for their children. Since then, the organisation has grown in response to the expanding need for support services for people who have cerebral palsy and related disabilities. The focus of the services is to provide the necessary support for people with cerebral palsy and related disabilities to enable them to achieve their goals.

Cerebral palsy is the most common physical disability in childhood. It is estimated that two to three people out of every 1,000 will have cerebral palsy. This condition is not hereditary and there is no cure. Many causes of cerebral palsy are still not known or understood. Injury or changes to the developing brain are associated with cerebral palsy.

Through the 2002-03 state budget, Disability Services Queensland allocated an additional \$857,000 in recurrent funding to assist the league to continue to provide specialist disability services. The league has had a strong association with volunteers. I believe that that is a core issue of the league's success. Volunteers were, and are, instrumental in extending and enhancing the services provided by paid staff throughout all areas of the league.

The new kitchen facilities were generously funded by the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. A local business in the Redlands, Fisher and Paykel, also assisted with the donation of a new washing machine and kitchen equipment was donated by families and clients. The new kitchen will provide the facilities for clients to be more involved in cooking activities and programs as well as providing opportunities for joint activities involving local community members and agencies. I would like to commend the leadership of the chief executive officer, Mr Bruce Milligan; board member Des Orr; and all the volunteers who make life just that much easier for a lot of their clients.

Mr J. Bazant; John Tonge Centre

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (12.13 a.m.): I would like to bring to the attention of the parliament and the minister a situation that is having an extremely negative effect on people who were involved in a collision. That situation relates not only to the actual injuries they received but also to their ability to receive a payout from the insurance company so that they might buy another vehicle.

James Bazant owned an insured Toyota Corolla Seca, which was crashed by his brother-in-law. The accident occurred on 15 June this year and was attended by relieving staff of the local police who determined that the accident was due to driver fatigue. The driver was then taken to the Kingaroy Base Hospital where a blood sample was taken for analysis to ascertain the alcohol and drug content.

The insurance company, RACQ Insurance, took possession of the vehicle within two weeks of the accident and deemed that it was unrepairable. The owner was contacted by the valuer from the insurance company and was told that as soon as the tests came back he would receive \$4,900 less the applicable excess. It is almost six months since the accident and as yet the insurance company has not handed over the insurance. Why? It is not because the insurance company is not willing, but because, as the company stated, it needed to have the results of the test. As yet, the test to determine the drug content has not been done, although the test for alcohol has been done and was found to be clear.

Mr Bazant's solicitor, on inquiring about the status of the drug test, has apparently been told on every occasion that a result will be forthcoming within two weeks and that the test is still pending. One has to ask just how long it takes for the John Tonge Centre to conduct laboratory tests. The RACQ insurance company, the solicitor and Mr Bazant are all still waiting, but it is Mr Bazant and his family who are suffering due to their inability to be able to purchase another vehicle. As Mr Bazant stated—

I am still without a car and with two young children it's extremely difficult.

A lot of people who are at the mercy of this backlog in the testing process at the laboratory live in rural areas and it can be impossible to walk to town. Those people cannot just hop on a bus or catch the next train to do their shopping or visit a doctor, because those services are not available around the corner as they are in city areas.

Is it any wonder that people question the competency of government facilities when they are told that everyone is in the same boat as there is a backlog at the laboratory. The government's funding to staff this facility must be totally inadequate for this period to elapse before a test can be carried out. It must be a relatively daily requirement to get test results. If the workload has become so great that five to six months can pass before a result is forthcoming, then the situation needs to be addressed urgently. How many others are still waiting? Six months is a long time. One only has to look at the accident statistics alone to see that there must be thousands of people still waiting to find out the results of their blood tests.

We then must consider all the criminals and potential criminals who are awaiting prosecution through the court system and wonder how the delay affects them and their pending cases. Most importantly, what of the innocent people who are awaiting diagnostic results to find out if their conditions are to be ones that may affect their life or determine the length of their life? Many of these people might not have the time to waste. It would be logical to expect those medical tests

to take precedence over the criminal tests, but when it comes to the government's actions, logic does not always appear to apply.

I would seriously ask the government to review its funding of the John Tonge Centre with a view to the effects that the current lack of funding is having on those who are awaiting results. It is not only the negative emotional effect—

Time expired.

Mr A. D. Brooker

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (12.17 a.m.): I rise this evening to pay a final tribute to a great Malenyite and a great Queenslander, Albert Durwood Brooker, fondly known as Bert. I attended Bert's funeral last week along with hundreds of local residents who knew and loved Bert.

Bert Brooker was born on 17 April 1911 to William and Florence Brooker, who resided in the area which is now known as Witta. Bert and his brothers and sister attended Witta school until year 5 and then worked on the farm. One of his duties was to help with the milking of the herd, which was all done by hand in those days, and there were about 100 head all up. As any dairy farmer would know, that is a significant task.

Bert eventually went to work for his brother Arthur as a truck driver and later worked at Tesch's sawmill carting timber. Bert joined the war effort and afterwards returned to his work at the sawmill and eventually married Daphne Russell. Daphne and Bert built a life together with their son, Chris. We were told more about Bert's involvement in his community—his love of sport and enjoyment of a good dance, although I believe that he had an unusual dancing style.

During World War II, Bert answered the call for service and ended up in the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion. He saw service in the Middle East, particularly at the battle of El Alamein, and later in Brunei and Borneo. During the funeral service, the RSL paid a special tribute to Bert as one of their own, and the laying of a single red poppy by returned servicemen and women and the playing of the *Last Post* were a moving tribute of love and respect.

Bert was a man of many talents and he had a capacity to work hard. His son, Chris Brooker, told us of Bert's busy and varied working life and his entrepreneurial skills, especially in establishing the first Amoco fuel agency. Bert was an active member of the local RSL sub-branch, holding the presidency for many years, and had been appointed a life member of the RSL. Bert was often to be found doing the mowing and other jobs, and helping out in any way that he could at the RSL. He was also a charter member of the Rotary Club of Maleny, past president of the Maleny Bowls Club, a foundation member of the Probus Club of Maleny and had been involved with Neighbourhood Watch, Meals on Wheels and the Information Service.

Bert married Anne in 1990 and Chris spoke fondly of how lucky Bert was to have found Anne. He said they were very happy and deserved that joy. The booklet that I read at the funeral said—

We gather to remember, to give thanks and to celebrate the life of Bert Brooker—Loving Husband of Anne, Father of Chris, Father-in-Law of Jocelyn, Grandfather of Joanne, Susan and Katie, Great Grandfather of Stephanie, Anthea and Carmen.

It was indeed lovely to hear Bert's son, Chris, speak so well about the father he obviously loves. It was also especially wonderful to hear Bert's grand-daughters speak so lovingly about a man who had obviously been very involved in their lives. I felt great sadness at such a loss for a loving, close family as the Brooker family, but proud that the celebration of Bert's life and his achievements was so expansive.

I knew Bert Brooker for only a short time in my capacity as state member before his death, but knew him to be a lovely man.

We never lose the ones we love
For even though they're gone
Within the hearts of those who care
Their memory lingers on.

Bert will be missed by all, but never forgotten.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 12.20 a.m. (Wednesday)