TUESDAY, 25 MARCH 2003

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

PRIVILEGE

Directors-General Bonuses, *Courier-Mail* Article

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.31 a.m.): On Thursday, 20 March the *Courier-Mail* published a story headlined 'Beattie backs off phasing out public service bonus'. The story alleged that I had backed away from phasing out the bonus system for departmental heads. The headline is completely wrong. The allegation in the introduction is also completely wrong. I immediately issued a correction, which pointed out the truth, and it read—

Clarification—bonuses going.

Premier Peter Beattie said today that he remains committed to phasing out the system of bonuses which were offered to directors-general of his government, with bonuses not being included in new contracts.

'A report in today's Courier-Mail is correct when it says that we are "moving away from bonuses",' said Mr Beattie. 'But the headline which says: "Beattie backs off phasing out public services bonus" is completely wrong.'

As on many occasions, the *Courier-Mail* did not print any sort of retraction, clarification or apology. Readers of this story were misled to the point that they have written letters to the editor in the belief that I have reneged on a commitment. Worse, the *Courier-Mail*, knowing that I am phasing out bonuses for directors-general, has now printed two of these letters, thus compounding the mischief. That is the matter of privilege.

Today at lunchtime I am addressing the first Queensland Press Forum. I have with me some early drafts of comments that I intended to make at the forum relating to truth in media. Time does not allow me to go through those points in the House, or indeed at the lunch today, but I seek leave to have them incorporated in *Hansard* and maybe we can start a debate about truth in the media.

Leave granted.

Truth In Media

Today I want to talk about a difficult problem—one that all politicians seek to avoid, since it brings them into direct conflict with the media. I want to talk about making the media more accountable.

And since I am a state politician, I want principally to discuss that area of the media the state can influence—newspapers and other publications. While Commonwealth law makes Canberra the decision maker on radio and television, the state retains extensive powers to regulate newspapers. Should it use these, and how?

Someone once observed that we all walk backwards into the future—that is, we create institutions and policies that make sense for the world we have experienced rather than the world as it will be.

There is no greater example than parliamentary democracy. The nineteenth century saw the rise of parliamentary democracy without political parties. Parliament could keep government accountable because no government could be sure of its majority. Governments had to work closely with individual MPs or risk defeat on legislation.

By the 1890s this was all changing. Disciplined political parties were arising—not just in Australia, though we were an early adopter—but in the UK and European countries such as Germany.

Yet when Australia's founding fathers came to write a national constitution in the last decade of the nineteenth century, they ignored the evidence around them of emerging political parties, and instead created a Commonwealth parliament based on the assumption that independent MPs would hold governments accountable, as they had in the colonies.

It didn't work out that way. By 1910 the Commonwealth parliament was dominated by political parties and, since then, Parliament has lost its pre-eminent position as the place where the executive is kept accountable.

Instead, it has been necessary to create a whole set of mechanisms outside parliament to keep governments accountable—freedom of information laws, judicial review of ministerial decisions, auditors-general, organisations such as the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Crime and Misconduct Commission.

Such instruments of accountability are a tacit admission that Parliament alone no longer has the authority to keep governments on the straight and narrow.

The national Parliament was designed for a world that was slipping away even as the constitution was being written.

But now let me talk about another institution that is long out of date and needs similar reform: the notion of a free press.

Just as nineteenth century democracy relied on independent members of parliament to keep the executive accountable, so it placed great value on a free press to ask the hard questions, to keep a spotlight on ministers and their actions.

But who would guard the guardians? Who would keep the media in turn honest? For early advocates of a free press the answer was simple: competition. Because there would be many newspapers vying for public attention, the media could be counted to preserve overall balance. If one newspaper told a lie, other papers would gleefully point that out. Competition amongst journalists might produce sensationalist stories, but it would also keep everyone honest—ministers, governments and journalists themselves.

This enthusiasm for a free press is perhaps most famously described by Alexis de Tocqueville in his Democracy in America, originally published in 1848. De Tocqueville provided a brilliant survey of this new type of society—a democracy in which censorship was all but unknown, in which even defamation laws could seem an unreasonable restriction on the vital role of a free press.

Just 26 years old when he arrived in America in May 1831, and used to strict government controls on newspapers in his native France, De Tocqueville discovered an 'incredibly large' range of American newspapers and newsletters, journals and periodicals, with no licence fees, securities, taxes or regulations to constrain the competition for an audience. Indeed he could find 'scarcely a hamlet which has not its newspaper'. Yet the number of publications, and the diffusion of opinion through a multiplicity of sources, ensured no single editor or journal could shape public opinion.

The pluralist pattern of the media became for De Tocqueville a metaphor for the organisation and operation of American democracy; here no elite or metropolis prevailed, but rather 'the intelligence and power of the people are disseminated through all the parts of this vast country, and instead of radiating from a common point they cross each other in every direction' (1990:185-186)

De Tocqueville concluded that a free press was an essential underpinning to a stable and successful democracy. That view has become part of our political world, an assumption rarely questioned. Of course democracy relies on a free media, and our laws and political practices reflect a shared belief that the media is a legitimate part of the political system, with a right to probe and criticise.

Just like parliamentary democracy, the idea of a free press has been made part of our institutional fabric even though it no longer exists in the way De Tocqueville understood.

For the cut and thrust of a thousand competing voices is long gone. Many Queenslanders live in communities in which there is only a single local daily newspaper deciding what will be news, supplemented by radio and television stations. That constant, restless interrogation of policy that De Tocqueville described is long gone in this age of budget-conscious, demographic-driven media organisations.

Which is not to criticise individual journalists or the organisations they work for. It is simply to say that to be an effective check on government, a free press requires intensive competition, and that such competition is no longer a feature of our society. Cities like Brisbane that once hosted a dozen different newspapers, owned by competing proprietors with different political agendas and a sharp eye to each others failings, are now served by a single newspaper.

The same story can be told for much of Australia. In newspapers, the economics of publishing outside the largest cities such as Sydney and Melbourne have all but ended competition. In the electronic media, budgets do not stretch to the level of scrutiny the Americans studied by De Tocqueville could take for granted.

No matter how talented individual journalists are, no matter how hard they work, the industry has changed fundamentally.

A near monopoly is not a free press, at least in the traditional political sense of the term. Sure it remains free from government censorship, but there is no mechanism left to expose and correct bias within the media. Journalists do not write stories criticising each other. The Courier-Mail does not analyse mistaken reports in the ABC, or the ABC hold to account sloppy reporting in some commercial television report.

For the public, the media is the sole source of apparently authoritative comment about politics. But in the absence of meaningful competition, how can the public know whether it is getting the truth? What is it not being told?

When thousands of protestors marched in Sydney a few years ago to demand the reinstatement of South Sydney rugby league club to the NRL, readers looked in vain for detailed coverage of the issue in newspapers owned by NRL shareholders News Limited.

Only the presence of competition, in the form of the Sydney Morning Herald, alerted Sydneysiders not only to the issue, but to the extraordinarily modest coverage of the issue in the largest selling newspaper in the city, the News Limited-owned Daily Telegraph.

Sydney retains some competing voices in its print media. But would happen if the same events unfolded in a Queensland city? Who would expose bias, make sure the whole story was being told?

Can democracy flourish amid such little competition within the media? Or is there a risk the media will demand accountability of others but itself stay above scrutiny?

In contemporary Queensland, who now guards the guardians? With apologies to the Press Council and Mediawatch, I fear the answer is no one.

What is to be done?

I sketched earlier how parliament has invented new forms of accountability to keep it honest—freedom of information laws and the many other forms of external review. These make modern an institution designed for a different era.

Our current approach to the media is likewise a hang-over from other times, no longer appropriate for contemporary circumstances. Because we all embrace the value of a free press, we act as though we still live in nineteenth century America and not twenty-first century Australia.

I do not for one moment suggest the time has come for government control over the media. That would be wrong. It would undermine democracy.

But I do believe it is time for the media to embrace an accountability regime similar to that imposed on government, on parliament, on other public institutions.

That is, I believe members of the public should be able to ask of newspapers and electronic media the same answers they can demand of their representatives: why was this decision taken? Who was involved? What did it cost? What alternatives were considered?

I appreciate the need for journalists to protect their sources.

However, I believe it is time to consider a form of freedom of information to apply to the Queensland media. Some journalists are public figures, and all journalists enjoy extraordinary access to information and public esteem. They are able to publish their opinions without fear of contradiction and, all too often, without supporting evidence.

I do not believe journalists should be responsible to government. But I do argue they should be responsible to the public, in the same way ministers are responsible—through public scrutiny of their actions.

And so today I'm calling for a public debate about truth in media laws—how can we make the media more accountable? How, given the realities of limited competition, can we use legislative means to ensure effective public scrutiny of the media?

Should the principles of freedom of information be extended to journalists, so that the media can be held to the same tests of honesty as other public institutions?

I believe this is a debate long overdue. In our society, no institution should be above scrutiny. For a long time the media has enjoyed that unique privilege. Why? Parliament has accepted reform in the interests of a better democracy. Perhaps the media should follow its example.

Reference

Tocqueville, A. de, 1990. Democracy in America, the Henry Reeve text, revised by Francis Bowen, further corrected by Phillips Bradley, with a new introduction by Daniel J. Boorstin, 2 volumes, New York: Vintage.

PRIVILEGE

Sleepover Club

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts) (9.33 a.m.): I would like to correct a statement that I made in parliament during question time on 11 March 2002 in which I said that there were no TV series or telemovies shooting in Queensland. We have, in fact, one TV series, the *Sleepover Club*, currently shooting on the Gold Coast.

ASSENT TO BILLS

18 March 2003

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

Dear Mr Speaker

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bill, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, was assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on 18 March 2003:

"A Bill for an Act to regulate certain activities involving the use of human embryos, to prohibit human cloning and other unacceptable practices associated with reproductive technology, and for related purposes".

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

Yours sincerely

(signed)

Governor

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF MARYBOROUGH

Resignation of Member

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that yesterday I received a letter from Dr John Alan Kingston, the member for the electoral district of Maryborough, resigning as a member of the Legislative Assembly because of continuing ill health. I table that letter.

PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

Caloundra Hospital

Mrs Sheldon from 160 petitioners requesting the House to ensure that the Caloundra City Hospital receives financial resources to function to its fullest capacity to: ensure both hospital theatres are fully operational; all hospital beds are fully functional; the new quick recovery wards are fully staffed and equipped; that there is sufficient specialists, GP and medical staff permanently employed to allow this hospital to make available to patients a seven day, twenty-four hour, out-patients and emergency service; reinstate the out-patients physiotherapy clinic; place in position additional financial resources into the Caloundra City Hospital Dental Clinic; and employ more dentists so as to reduce the extended waiting time that patients must endure waiting for dental treatment.

Poultry Farm, Aratula

Mr Lingard from 57 petitioners requesting the House to urgently intervene to prevent the Boonah Shire Council from approving the proposed 200,000 bird poultry farm development in Sawmill Road, Aratula without community consultation.

Somerset Drive, Mudgeeraba: Proposed School

Mrs Reilly from 90 petitioners requesting the House to build a new school for Bonogin/Reedy Creek families in Somerset Drive, next to Somerset College, at the earliest possible opportunity at its currently proposed location.

Ambulance Levy

Ms Lee Long from 1,167 petitioners requesting the House to ensure that whatever legislation is put in place for Ambulance subscriptions is equitable, so that no one who presently pays an Ambulance subscription is worse off as a result of the new legislation.

The following honourable members have sponsored e-petitions which are now closed and presented—

Victims of Crime

Miss Simpson from 142 petitioners requesting the House to refuse to pass the proportionate liability bill which will result in victims of crime being forced to embark on litigation which will be more costly, time consuming and risky.

Refundable Container Deposit

Mr Johnson from 444 petitioners requesting the House to introduce container deposit legislation using the guidelines of that of South Australia and overseas examples and that a refundable deposit of ten cents be implemented, as recommended by the recent review of container deposit legislation in New south Wales.

PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

14 March 2003—

National Environment Protection Council—Annual Report 2001-02

17 March 2003—

Letter, dated 13 March 2003, from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to the Clerk of the Parliament referring to correspondence received by the Premier from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties regarding proposed international treaty actions tabled in both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament on 4 March 2003 including National Interest Analyses for each of the proposed treaty actions listed in the letter

Response from the Minister for State Development (Mr Barton) to an e-petition presented by Mr Briskey from 250 petitioners regarding Sun Aqua's proposed sea cage aquaculture development in Moreton Bay

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4002

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 28 February 2003 enclosing a copy of an e-petition regarding Sun Aqua's proposed sea cage aquaculture development in Moreton Bay.

The Queensland Government has a firm commitment to the principles of ecologically sustainable development and seeks to integrate both short and long-term economic, social and environmental effects into the decision making process. Queensland's regulatory environment embraces measures to ensure developments are environmentally sound and to protect the rights of the public.

The Coordinator-General has declared this proposal a "significant project" under the provisions of the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971. The Act provides the Coordinator-General with the head of power to coordinate government departments and agencies to ensure proper account is taken of environmental effects associated with proposed developments. The Coordinator-General may call for information on the environmental, social and economic effects of a proposed development through provision of a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The proponent is currently preparing the EIS which will include a detailed description of the proposal, a description of the existing environment, assessment of impacts of the project on the environment including social and economic impacts, health and safety issues and proposed safeguards, mitigation measures, environmental management and monitoring. This will allow the Government to make an informed and balanced assessment of the proposed development.

On completion, the EIS will be made publicly available for a period of at least 28 days and submissions will be invited.

The Coordinator-General will evaluate the EIS, considering all properly made submissions and prepare a report on the proposed action in accordance with s.35 of the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971. A copy of the Coordinator-General's report will be provided to the proponent and to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, and will also be made publicly available. The Commonwealth Environment Minister is required to make a decision following the completion of the State EIS assessment process.

All relevant state government agencies are involved in the assessment process as required by the Integrated Planning Act 1997. The Coordinator-General will manage the public review process and coordinate agency submissions to provide a streamlined assessment process.

The Department of State Development does not issue any licenses or permits for proposed developments. On completion of the EIS, all applications for licenses and permits will be assessed and issued under their respective Acts. This development requires approval under the Marine Parks Act 1982 for use and operation of the facility in a marine park, Environmental Protection Act 1994 for operating an aquaculture facility and an aquaculture license under the Fisheries Act 1994.

I trust this information has addressed your concerns.

Yours sincerely

TOM BARTON MP

Minister for State Development

21 March 2003—

Queensland code of practice for the welfare of animals in circuses, published by the Department of Primary Industries, 2003

Model code of practice for the welfare of animals—Domestic poultry, 4th edition prepared for the Primary Industries Standing Committee, published by CSIRO 2002, SCARM Report No. 83

Model code of practice for the welfare of animals—The farming of ostriches, prepared for the Primary Industries Standing Committee

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

Workplace Health and Safety (Diving) Ministerial Notice 2003, No. 37

Education (General Provisions) Act 1989—

Education (General Provisions) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2003, No. 38

Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991—

Queensland Building Services Authority Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2003, No. 39

Local Government Act 1993—

Local Government Finance Amendment Standard (No. 1) 2003, No. 40

Medical Radiation Technologists Registration Act 2001—

Medical Radiation Technologists Registration Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2003, No. 41

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991—

Criminal Practice Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2003, No. 42

Child Protection Act 1999—

Child Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2003, No. 43

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment Act 2002-

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 44

City of Brisbane Act 1924—

City of Brisbane Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2003, No. 45

Local Government Act 1993—

Local Government Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2003, No. 46

MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following ministerial paper was tabled—

Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mrs J Cunningham)—

In accordance with section 78 of the Local Government Act 1993—References of reviewable local government matters to the Electoral Commissioner of Queensland, regarding proposed electoral arrangements by 27 local governments for the 2004 local government elections.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mr E. K. Abraham

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.37 a.m.): I wish to advise members that a state funeral is being organised for a great Australian, Eric Kingsley Abraham, on Thursday, 27 March at 2 p.m. at St John's Cathedral in Ann Street, Brisbane. I decided to exercise the power I have as Premier to offer Mr Abraham's family a state funeral because of his lifetime of service to Australia and the wonderful example he set for others. I am pleased to announce that his family have accepted.

Mr Abraham was the last survivor of the Dungaree Diggers. He died on 20 March aged 104 after a life spanning three centuries. Born on 20 April 1898 at Hemmant, Mr Abraham was a 17-year-old post office worker in Boonah when he answered a recruitment campaign for the Great War and joined the march of the dungarees from Warwick to Brisbane. He enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force, as it was then known, at Ipswich in November 1915. Private Abraham trained at Enoggera until March 1916, when he left aboard the *Star of Victoria*, arriving in Suez in May 1916. He was posted to France in October that year and transferred to the 5th Division Signals Company, having been familiar with morse code as a telegraphist. During his service with the 5th Division, QX4355 Sapper Abraham took part in operations at Villers-Bretonneux and Morlancourt, the battle of Amiens and the advance to Péronne.

On his return to Australia in October 1919, Mr Abraham returned to work in the postal service. After becoming a qualified accountant in 1929, Mr Abraham continued to serve his country in a distinguished career in the Public Service spanning 47 years. Mr Abraham's career included working for the Taxation Office, the Prices Commission and the National Insurance Commission. He retired as the Executive Officer of the Commonwealth Department of Health, Canberra.

For a special investigation of the Commonwealth Transport Service, Mr Abraham received a special commendation from Prime Minister Chifley. Then in France in July 1998, Mr Abraham became one of the first foreign servicemen to be awarded the Legion of Honour by the French government in honour of all those who fought in France during World War I.

His memoirs were published in 1999 entitled *A Dungaree Digger*. In an interview in 2000 Mr Abraham said—

Every time I talk about Anzac Day I tell people never to let us fade away.

Throughout his life Mr Abraham served this country and continued as a role model for young Australians, representing the honour of Australia's diggers and the outstanding contributions made by our older citizens. Despite his distinguished career in the Public Service, he listed his occupation in *Who's Who* as 'World War I veteran'. He epitomised the Australian spirit, enjoying life, a laugh and of course his sport. I was fortunate enough, along with other members, to get to know Mr Abraham as a charming, intelligent man with a great zest for life. I had the honour in fact to attend his last birthday celebration. He will be remembered, as will his brothers and those with whom he served. I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to his family, to his partner, Beryl, and to his children Elaine and Helen and their families.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Iraq War

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 a.m.): I now make a ministerial statement of support for our servicemen and women in Iraq and at the end of it I will move that it be noted to allow the Leader of the Opposition equal opportunity to make a contribution at this important time.

In these troubled times, our Australian troops—our servicemen and women—need and deserve our total support as they risk death in the war against Iraq. They have been sent to fight by the duly elected federal government. They are in fact carrying out orders. Many of them are Queenslanders and in turn the sons and daughters, wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, friends and of course lovers of Queenslanders. They are fighting in the name of Australia and are in the front line of the war. It is essential that all of us let them know that we support them, and we support them strongly. It is essential that when they return we thank them.

I remember vividly what happened when our troops returned from Vietnam. Many of them were traumatised. They had faced death and the other horrors of war and life would never be the same for them. But Australia did not welcome them home properly at that time. One veteran says on the World Wide Web—

We were the unmentionables of Australian society when we came home and we didn't understand it.

I table for the House the statement by Gary McMahon called 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Vietnam Veterans' and I would urge members to read it. It gives an understanding of how they felt. The bottom line is that this must not be allowed to happen again. It happened after Vietnam because there were huge divisions about the rights and wrongs of that war. No-one pointed out that it was the government that had made the decision and the armed forces had done their duty as directed by the government. It should have been a case of 'to the government blame, to the troops the praise and thanks'.

It is clear from the thousands of Australians who are demonstrating in our streets and indeed around the world that the federal government's declaration of war on Iraq has once again divided the country. I believe it is most important that all of us, whatever our views or feelings about the war, unite in support of the men and women who are serving in the armed services and are fighting, as their predecessors have done since World War I, under the Australian flag. I might say that they also fought for the freedom in a democracy for people to express their views, and in government we must strongly protect the right of people to protest and express their views either for or against the war. That is a very important part of our democracy and that is what separates Australia and other democracies from the Saddam Husseins and the dictatorships of the world.

I make it clear that I believe it was important not to take any action without the approval of the United Nations, which was making progress with its arms inspection program. I do not resile from that belief and nor do members of the government. But that does not alter my wholehearted support for our servicemen and women. I met some of them when I visited the 6RAR in East Timor. I was impressed by their professionalism and dedication. Many in this House will recall that in fact the 6RAR was invited to Parliament House. I promised them in East Timor that I would shout them a beer, and we did it here. They were living in East Timor in appalling conditions, facing not only the threat posed by guerrillas but also malaria, intense heat and powdery dust that turned to deep mud in the wet. They remained cheerful. They earned the respect and love of the local population and shrugged off stories of bravery and selfless behaviour. I am sure that the troops in Iraq will be displaying these same qualities—the same qualities exhibited by the Anzacs.

The danger of war—and I say this on behalf of everyone here—was highlighted by the tragic death of Paul Moran, an Australian freelance cameraman working for the ABC. Paul, as we all know, was killed by a suicide bomber in Iraq. I want to pay tribute to him and pass on my condolences and the condolences of everyone to his family.

On behalf of all members and all Queenslanders, I say to all the Australian troops involved in the conflict in Iraq: we salute you. We value your service. We want to see you come home safe and sound and our prayers are with you. At this time in world events, when there is division within our own country and, as I said, within the world, it is more important than ever that this parliament sends a very clear and strong message to our servicemen and women that they have our full support. They have the support of everyone not just in this parliament but also in the whole community.

When we see the pictures on the television programs every night—we see death, destruction and prisoners who have been taken—we can understand the anguish but we can also understand the pride that all Australians have in our servicemen and women. When we see the danger that they are in—they are in forward activities—they are putting their lives at risk every minute. They are doing the tough yards, but as is typical of the spirit of the Anzacs they are doing it well. They are not only deserving of our praise; they are in the true spirit of the Anzacs. I move—

That the statement be noted.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.46 a.m.): We all have our own views on the conflict in Iraq. In a democracy we are fortunate to be able to have

those views and it is fortunate that we are able to accept and to respect the views of others. However, there is one thing which we can all be united on, and that is our support for our service personnel in and around Iraq and their families back here in Australia. These brave men and women of the Australian armed services are there to do a job, and they are people of the highest capability and will do their job in an extraordinarily professional and exemplary way. We have already seen and heard the highest commendation for our elite SAS and Navy and our Air Force and the respect that they have gained for the job which they have done and are continuing to do.

It is hard to know how many service personnel who are involved in this conflict are from Queensland, our own state. But there must be at least several hundred and, dependent upon the duration of the conflict, there may be more. It is therefore totally appropriate and absolutely right and necessary that their state parliament, on behalf of their fellow Queenslanders, support them. To do otherwise would be disrespectful of their professionalism and their duty and their efforts on our own behalf. It is impossible to know what they or their families are feeling at this time—their fear for their personal safety, their fear for the unknown and their fear for their mother, father, sister, brother, son or daughter.

We all hope that this conflict is over sooner rather than later. We all hope that we suffer no casualties or injuries. We all hope that our servicemen and women are home soon. We all hope that the concern of their families is lessened and mitigated by a speedy end to this conflict. On behalf of the opposition, I simply say to our service personnel and their families: our thoughts, our prayers and our best wishes are with you and will be so until the last serviceman and woman returns home safely.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Police Service, Major Incident Room

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.48 a.m.): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the dignified way in which this was handled by the House. While I am talking about the war, I want to inform the House that the Queensland Police Service is operating a 24-hour-a-day major incident room which is focusing on being a contact point for the public in relation to security issues via a dedicated phone number—1800 451 399. It is responsible for command or control in response to any terrorism or politically motivated violence in Queensland such as attacks against buildings, churches or mosques and is a point of contact in relation to any matter of any antisocial behaviour targeted against people of specific ethnic groups, the peaceful management of protests and coordinating state crime operations command and operation support command. A total of 1,150 police throughout the state are positioned to respond to any relevant activity. I hope that none of this is necessary, but we need to be prepared, and we are as much as we humanly can be.

As well, the state will continue maintaining professional working relationships with all relevant federal government agencies. The Queensland government has upgraded security for its overseas officers and staff and would follow any travel advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, particularly for high-risk destinations. The security upgrade covers nine Queensland trade and investment offices, housing 52 trade and investment staff and 12 staff from Tourism Queensland.

I call on Queenslanders to continue demonstrating their acceptance of and goodwill towards each other following the outbreak of war. Now more than ever, Australians of all races and religions need to show goodwill to one another. There are two great strengths of Australian culture. One is our multiculturalism and the other is our commitment to a fair go. At the moment we need both of those principles to be operating very strongly. The last thing we want to see is one Australian turning against another because of race or religion. In this very ugly world, no government can give an absolute guarantee of certainty or safety. What we can do is be prepared, and we are.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Greek Independence Day

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.50 a.m.): Today is Greek Independence Day, a date of significance for Greek communities throughout Queensland. As we know, our own Jim Fouras is of Greek descent.

Mr Mackenroth: The first Greek-born member of parliament in Australia.

Mr BEATTIE: The first Greek-born member of parliament in Australia. It is fitting that we mark this day, considering that it was the Greeks who brought us democracy. The Greeks have also contributed much in terms of their architecture, philosophy and the arts and, of course, sport.

The history of Greeks in Queensland is long and full of courage and achievement. In fact, the early history of Greeks in Queensland goes back to the 1870s, when the first migrants arrived. This rich history has been created by each individual migrant through their enterprise and their willingness to come to Queensland and make a new life for themselves. This has helped make Queensland what it is today.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge Greek Independence Day and the many contributions Greek communities across the state have made and continue to make to Queensland's proud mix of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. My government is committed to building an inclusive and harmonious Queensland in which diversity is valued. We are committed to exploring innovative ways of promoting the significant role of multiculturalism and the role it has played in our past and will continue to play in our future. In particular I thank Darryl Briskey, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier (Multicultural Affairs), who in fact suggested that we should honour these days in this parliament. I thank him for the idea.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2001 census, 17.2 per cent of Queensland's population was born overseas. I am proud that so many people from other countries have chosen to call Queensland home. The world faces tough times, as we know. It is vital that now, more than ever, we celebrate this diversity and do all we can to promote openness and tolerance.

When I was first elected to this parliament I represented West End and South Brisbane, which Jim Fouras used to represent. Of course, it is now ably represented by the Leader of the House. I have to say that my love for the Greeks is not just about all the obvious things. They were very strong supporters of mine. Indeed, I can recall getting 70 per cent of the primary vote at West End State School. That is very difficult to get, so I have to say that I love the Greeks. I have a very soft spot in my heart for Greek Australians.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Supporting students in times of international conflict: Advice to schools

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.53 a.m.): Zito Ellas! The conflict in Iraq has touched the lives of people here and across the world in different ways. For some, their loved ones are fighting on the front lines. Queensland defence force personnel have been deployed as part of the coalition forces. Many of those officers have families back home, some with children in schools.

The war and the saturated media coverage of it are having an impact on many of our young people, either directly or indirectly. It is a scary and confusing time for students. Some are unsettled by what they are seeing and hearing. Some are confused about what is happening and are asking questions of their families and their teachers. It is important that students and staff in our schools are supported during these uncertain times.

In recognition of this, Education Queensland is today providing a resource kit to all state schools and regional executive directors to help students and staff respond to this international conflict. The resource, entitled *Supporting students in times of international conflict: Advice to schools*, was adapted for Queensland schools from a New South Wales Department of Education and Training resource.

The resource contains advice to principals and practical suggestions about how to approach and handle the subject of war in classroom discussions and provides information on what support is available to students and staff. Schools can draw on the network of more than 400 guidance officers across the state to provide specialist counselling support to students.

The resource will help students grapple with what they are hearing, not only in the media but also from their friends and family. It recognises that students may be experiencing feelings of fear, anxiety, anger, confusion, helplessness and insecurity. While our teachers and principals are well attuned to identifying students who are in distress, the resource provides some timely reminders about signs to watch out for. Teachers are encouraged to reassure students of their safety in schools and to maintain normal school routines.

The material will complement existing school based antiharassment, antibullying and antiracism policies and programs. Racial intolerance or harassment of any sort is not tolerated in our schools, but we recognise that at this time there are heightened feelings within the community which may boil over into the playground. Students are encouraged to treat others with respect, fairness and tolerance. Our schools are safe places for our students and staff. We want to ensure that in these uncertain times they remain this way.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Western Downs Skills Development Project

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts) (9.56 a.m.): A new government funded project on the western downs will help drought affected rural workers get back to work. Once again, this Labor government is giving top priority to assisting Queensland job seekers.

The government has committed $10,000 to the Western Downs Skills Development Project, to be run by the Western Downs Regional Organisation of Councils. This project will determine the skills needs of the western downs, looking at future employment options in Chinchilla shire, Dalby and portions of the Tara, Murilla and Wambo shires. It will research the skills that western downs workers need to secure jobs on future major developments such as the Kogan Creek power station and coal mine. This is very important, because the western downs community is experiencing the worst drought in living memory.

It should be pointed out that the National and Liberal parties when in government have had policies to abolish employment programs such as these. For instance, they abolished jobs training and placement projects and local employment and enterprise facilitation projects, along with the Public Sector Traineeship Program. They even abolished the portfolio position of minister for employment.

The commitment of this Labor government is to support working people wherever they are. In the western downs, jobs in rural enterprises are being lost and many workers are leaving the district. There is a real danger that they will permanently settle in other places, leaving a skill vacuum that will stay even after the drought ends and local job prospects improve. This study is about determining what skills the local workforce has and deciding what skills it needs.

This worthwhile project has been funded by the state government's Community Training Partnerships program, which helps communities to identify their current and future employment needs aligned to economic and social development. Since the program began it has funded 48 projects in communities across Queensland. The government has backed these studies, which are often the precursor to the more exciting stage of actually buying the training that communities need, with $424,479 in funding. To date a total of $10.9 million has funded 56 Community Training Partnerships training delivery projects. These 56 projects have helped more than 9,845 people across the state. The state government's Community Training Partnerships program and the enthusiastic communities that have been involved are working together to keep jobs and communities viable.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Dengue Fever

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy) (9.58 a.m.): Cairns is currently suffering from an outbreak of dengue fever, with more than 144 confirmed cases as of this morning. Outbreaks of dengue fever have been occurring more frequently worldwide since the late 1980s, probably as a result of increased international travel and increased urbanisation and development of tropical areas. Dengue is not endemic in Australia. It needs to be imported by a traveller infected in a dengue endemic country elsewhere in the tropical world. However, the mosquito that carries dengue fever lives in urban environments in north Queensland. Past efforts to eradicate this mosquito have failed and are considered unlikely to succeed even with the best knowledge and technology available in the world.

North Queensland has suffered two major outbreaks in recent years as well as a number of smaller outbreaks. Sequential outbreaks of different types of dengue fever can increase the severity of the disease. In 1992-93 about 1,000 people were infected in Townsville and Charters Towers while from 1997-99, 500 people were infected in the Cairns-Port Douglas area. It was

during the Cairns-Port Douglas outbreak that this government allocated funding of $185,000 for a special response team to be established to help contain the epidemic.

I had the pleasure of officially launching the Dengue Action Response Team, or DART as it was known in the north, in November 1998. This three-person team, which is managed by Tropical Public Health Unit entomologist Dr Scott Ritchie, is rapidly deployed in dengue outbreaks to curtail the spread of this disease. I met last week with the Tropical Public Health Unit to be updated on the current outbreak, along with the member for Cairns, Ms Boyle. Between outbreaks the team undertakes most surveillance and control in high-risk areas throughout north Queensland.

The DART is ably assisted by environmental staff from Queensland Health and from local councils, especially during outbreaks. The DART is an integral component of the dengue fever management plan for north Queensland and was updated in 2000. This plan represents world best practice in the management of dengue fever and was compiled with the assistance of local, national and international experts in the field.

Mosquito control is the single most effective way of controlling dengue outbreaks, but with the dengue mosquito breeding only around the house and yard, close to its human food source, it is important that north Queensland residents take responsibility for eradicating mosquito breeding sites whether they are in plants, pots or rubbish. The DART and other health staff have put in long hours to control this outbreak and get rid of mosquito breeding sites, but without the cooperation of local residents the outbreaks will be difficult to contain.

I would like to thank the *Cairns Post* for its double-page spread on the dengue issue last week, which will aid greatly in giving the public factual information. I urge all Cairns residents to fully cooperate with the DART and wish them every success in combating this outbreak. I know that all honourable members share my wish for a swift end to this current outbreak.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Police Resources

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province of Queensland) (10.02 a.m.): I rise to discuss the issue of police funding and to reiterate this government's commitment to providing the best possible policing services for the Queensland community. I have outlined on many occasions the fact that we are putting more police on the beat than any government before us. Indeed, in the two years I have been minister, the actual number of police has increased by more than 660 officers and the approved strength has increased by more than 640 officers. This year we will again increase police numbers by more than 300 extra officers, a total increase of more than 1,400 police officers since the Beattie government came to office.

We will back this up with an increase to civilians by about 48 positions in this financial year. As I have outlined to this House on a number of occasions, we will continue to look for opportunities to maximise the use of civilians so that our experienced and highly trained police officers can concentrate on fighting crime.

The Queensland government is also outstripping all other states when it comes to the issue of increased funding for police services. The Commonwealth report on government services released early this year found that the Queensland government had increased real recurrent spending on police by more than any other jurisdiction in Australia during the past five years. The report found that during this period real expenditure on police increased by an average of 6.6 per cent annually in our state. During the same period, New South Wales annual real recurrent expenditure on police increased by 2.1 per cent, Victoria by 0.2 per cent, South Australia by 3.8 per cent and Western Australia by 5.6 per cent.

We are also giving police the tools they need to get the job done. We have introduced new DNA testing, which is helping to solve old crimes. We have bolstered information technology in every budget. We have extended move-on powers to various areas in regional Queensland. We have built new police beats, stations and shopfronts, and we have legislated to allow police to confiscate the cars of hoons who were posing a danger to our residential communities.

As I have told this parliament before, our efforts to improve policing services have yielded positive results, with recent crime statistics showing that the rate of unlawful entries dropped by 11 per cent last year. The rate of armed robbery dropped by 18 per cent and motor vehicle theft dropped by 16 per cent. The fact remains that policing services are a top priority of this

government. Our record speaks for itself and compares more than favourably with that of the National or Liberal parties, which promised Queensland 695 extra police when they were last in government but delivered only 437.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Brisbane-Cairns Tilt Train

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (10.05 a.m.): The Beattie government's $139 million Maryborough built Brisbane to Cairns diesel tilt train will commence operations on 15 June 2003. The new train will provide state-of-the-art luxury travel for Queenslanders and visitors from interstate and overseas, and it will make the journey between Cairns and Brisbane in less than 25 hours.

When bookings opened for the Cairns tilt train on Monday of last week, tickets for the first northbound service sold out within seven minutes. Almost 1,000 calls were received within the first three hours. Bookings opened at 9 a.m. and by 9.07 a.m. no tickets remained for the first northbound service. By noon 3,650 tickets had been sold, enough to fill over 20 tilt trains. Abba would have been proud of those kinds of sales. People are voting with their feet.

Based on our experience with the Brisbane to Rockhampton tilt train, we knew this service would be popular. Even so, these results are very encouraging and are testament to the government's determination to extend this type of service right along the coast of Queensland. The tilt train will provide a strong boost for local economies between Brisbane and Cairns, as tourists visit and stay in those communities.

Services on the Cairns tilt train have been organised to provide the maximum benefit possible to the north Queensland communities through which the tilt train will pass. The timetable has been specifically designed to allow passengers to see north Queensland between Mackay and Cairns during daylight hours in both directions. Stopover packages have been developed, aimed at encouraging passengers to spend more time at more places along the Queensland coast. The benefits of the Cairns tilt train will flow beyond the tourism industry as suppliers to the tourism industry also find that the need for their services has grown in all of the communities between Brisbane and Cairns, including Townsville.

On 15 June, when the first tilt train service departs Cairns railway station, another Beattie government election promise will have been delivered, and as a government minister living in Cairns and representing a large far-northern constituency I have been passionate in my pursuit of delivering this election commitment.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drought

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.07 a.m.): Recent welcome rain has replenished dams and water storages in some parts of the state, and indeed caused some flooding in other parts of the state. With these falls in mind and forecasts of further rain this week, it may be tempting to say that the drought has broken. It is far too early and it remains far too dry to even entertain such thoughts. The El Nino's grip has weakened but it has not given in.

The latest advice from the government's Centre for Climate Applications is that sea surface temperatures in the eastern Pacific Ocean have cooled and there is increasing optimism of the El Nino breaking down. However, the El Nino pattern remains active in the central Pacific and it may continue to linger through to mid or late autumn. There also remains a small risk that the El Nino will not fully dissipate and could regenerate in some form during autumn or winter this year, as was the case in 1992, 1993 and 1994. In order to ensure that our primary producers have the clearest and most accurate assessment of the El Nino and the drought, I would urge forecasters and commentators to be patient. The fate of this El Nino will be determined over the coming days and weeks.

I would hate to see hopes of the drought breaking raised prematurely, only to be shattered as they were in the early 1990s. In terms of the on-going drought, the government has undertaken a number of measures to provide assistance for drought affected farming families. Late last month, I announced the government's Drought Carry-on Finance Scheme and Drought

Recovery Scheme. I appreciate the bipartisan support for this initiative. The member for Darling Downs in a column to the Crow's Nest *Advertiser* said—

I was pleased to see the state government launch the Drought Crop Loan Scheme.

I thank the honourable member for his support and the awareness he is providing for drought affected producers in his own electorate of the assistance measures available. It is important as members that we inform producers what assistance is available and how our producers can best access that assistance.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drought

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (10.10 a.m.): I rise to inform the House about the current situation regarding urban water supplies in Queensland communities affected by the drought and outline the government's response to this situation. One of the worst droughts in Australian history continues to impact upon Queensland, where rainfall has been at critically low levels for much of the last 12 to 15 months. This lack of rainfall has not only affected primary producers, but also severely depleted urban water supplies available to Queensland towns and cities to the point where supplies are still threatened in a number of communities. Recent rains, including that from Cyclone Beni, have alleviated the situation in some areas. However, these rains have not been sufficiently widespread or heavy enough to remove the threat of failure of a number of urban water supplies.

Currently, there are three urban communities which have water supplies that are expected to be depleted by June 2003 unless the drought breaks soon. These communities are Jandowae, Capella and Wallangarra. A further 24 urban communities around the state may experience severe shortages or failed water supplies prior to June 2004 if the drought continues beyond the 2003 and 2004 wet seasons. In December, the Premier instructed the Minister for Local Government and Planning and myself to co-chair a drought urban water supply task force to address all possible options to help communities that have limited or no town water supplies as a result of the drought.

The task force has already initiated a number of actions to assist local governments in managing this and future droughts. These actions include maintaining up-to-date reports on the water supply situation; assisting councils to implement acceptable drought management practices for the existing Drought Stricken Local Government Urban Water Supply Assistance Scheme; and undertaking a number of reviews dealing with possible alternative water supply options. NRM and DLGP officers are helping local communities plan for alternative supplies using existing assistance programs. High priority is given to those alternatives that will provide permanent solutions to overcome current water shortages immediately and also during future droughts. For example, approval has been given for drought subsidy payments to help establish permanent new bores for Finch Hatton and Yaraka in Mirani and Isisford shire councils.

The government is also helping shires to assess the potential of using desalination technology where appropriate. For example, Dalby Town Council is providing a desalination treatment plant for the Dalby town bore to provide a permanent additional supply to its existing surface supply. Murilla Shire Council is also considering implementing similar desalination technology to an existing salty bore. Peak Downs Shire Council, with the assistance of state drought assistance funding, is also conducting a trial of the use of thin film technology to reduce evaporation from Capella's town water storage. Because many councils are unaware of such techniques, the task force has also commissioned a consultancy to review available methods to minimise evaporation from urban water storages. As the Minister for Primary Industries said, no-one should make the mistake of thinking the drought has broken. Until the situation eases, the Beattie government will continue to work closely with local governments to develop permanent solutions to overcome current water shortages and those during future droughts.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Meeting Challenges, Making Choices Strategy

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) (10.14 a.m.): I would like to congratulate indigenous communities in Queensland on the success of a number of initiatives that they are working on with the Beattie government under the Meeting

Challenges, Making Choices strategy. Partnerships are the way forward and are in keeping with the recommendations of Tony Fitzgerald's Cape York Justice Study. The Aurukun community showed strong leadership in implementing a hard hitting alcohol management plan on 30 December last year. Already Aurukun's plan has brought about some significant improvements and other communities are already starting to develop similar plans. However, alcohol control is only one area where progress is being made.

A proposal by the Cape York Land Council for an indigenous owned and operated Cape York fishing company is progressing well. Discussions are under way with the Department of Primary Industries about the purchase of commercial fishing licences for the company. Roll-out of the Cape York digital network continues. Traditional owners are involved in discussions with government on the establishment of a commercial timber mill at Napranum near Weipa. The proposed mill would use stringy bark logs recovered from the nearby Comalco mining lease. At present, trees which are cleared are immediately burnt, but with a mill this timber could be used for construction and other purposes.

More indigenous justices of the peace are being trained to enable remote communities to establish magistrate courts, constituted by two indigenous JPs sitting together. At Mossman, a community order review panel has met with great success. The panel operates as a lower cost alternative to a court and comprises representatives from the local community, police and community corrections. Discussions are under way with a view to establishing similar panels at Atherton, Kuranda, Cairns and Innisfail.

Eleven new positions have been created at a cost of more than $646,000 to improve the health of indigenous people in and around the Cape. A public health nutritionist has been employed at Cairns, community nutritionists and indigenous nutrition workers will be employed at Cooktown and Weipa, and an indigenous health worker has begun at Mount Isa. Five additional health workers are being employed at Cairns, Wujal Wujal, Pormpuraaw and Lockhart River and in the northern peninsula area. This government is working with communities to improve the lives of indigenous Queenslanders. I will continue to report to the parliament on these achievements.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Research House, Rockhampton

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10.17 a.m.): Once again, Queensland has been recognised as the Smart State, this time for our smart housing. One of the key elements in building the smart state is knowledge sharing. Today, I will meet with built environment scientific experts from New Zealand who are here learning about our Research House. This smart house is, of course, in the smartest city in the smart state, Rockhampton. The delegates, from BRANZ, the Building Research Association of New Zealand, will visit Research House tomorrow. This project was built as part of the state government's push for smart home building and design. The house was constructed by the Department of Public Works to showcase the Department of Housing's smart housing principles.

BRANZ is in the process of building what it will call the NOW Home. It will be one of three houses to be built as part of a 10-year program run by a consortium of research providers and users. They have come to Queensland to see how it is done in the smart state. As I have advised members before, Research House is a real home with a family living in it, but it doubles as a research centre trialling, validating and applying sustainable designs, contemporary technologies, as well as energy and water smart building products and practices. Research House has won a swag of awards ranging from the Housing Industry Association's Greensmart Special Judges Award to the Queensland Master Builders' Regional Award for Excellence in Energy Aware Homes. Through the Research House project, the state government is encouraging Queensland home owners and builders to make a difference to the environment by using products and designs that make homes comfortable, safe and energy efficient.

These smart building practices are now being used in private and public construction throughout the state. The latest Endeavour Prize Home in Samford Valley, in the electorate of Ferny Grove, incorporates the Department of Housing's smart housing principles in its design. And only last week, I was very pleased to open the Joe and Rita St Ledger complex at Red Hill, in the Minister for Health's electorate, which is energy, water, waste and cost efficiently designed public housing. But Rockhampton's Research House remains our showpiece. Obviously, the New Zealanders cannot just lift what we have done and replicate it somewhere outside Wellington.

They are not blessed with our climate for that. But the BRANZ delegates can learn how to make the links with industry and community that are needed to propel change.

Construction on the New Zealand NOW Home is scheduled to start in July and incorporate state-of-the-art materials and techniques to maximise energy efficiency. I welcome the New Zealanders to Queensland and congratulate them on their smart move to visit the Smart State—and the smart city of course—and not waste time and energy reinventing the wheel. I trust they will enjoy their stay in the smart city.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.19 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 3 of 2003*.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMITTEE

Report

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (10.19 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House a report of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee entitled *A report on an investigation by the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner into the performance of the Crime and Misconduct Commission in dealing with four matters*. In September 2002, concerns were expressed both in this House and elsewhere in relation to the CMC's handling of allegations in four specific matters—the Arthur Beattie and Berri matter, the Cutting Edge matter, the Cleveland Palms matter and the Volkers matter.

This committee referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commissioner, Mr Robert Needham, issues relating to the performance of the CMC in handling the four matters. The report of the commissioner speaks for itself. Mr Needham has found the allegations regarding the CMC's performance to be unsubstantiated in three of the four matters. The committee draws the attention of the House to the committee's opinion in relation to the fourth matter, the Cleveland Palms matter. In that matter the parliamentary commissioner has found that the CMC ought to have commenced an investigation into certain bribery allegations at an earlier stage, although the investigations actually carried out at a much later time disclosed that the bribery allegations were unfounded. The committee agrees with this conclusion by Mr Needham.

In any CMC investigation avoidable delay is unacceptable delay. In some cases, such delay has considerable adverse impacts on the person or organisation under investigation. Such delay also undermines the public's confidence in the CMC. Furthermore, as the parliamentary commissioner states at page 26 of his report, political corruption is viewed seriously within the community and allegations of such corruption must be treated seriously. There is an added imperative for the commission to ensure that it undertakes expeditious assessment and, if necessary, investigation of matters which raise allegations of corruption by public officials.

The committee also endorses the observations of the parliamentary commissioner at page 43 of his report. Mr Needham says—

My review of these matters has confirmed my opinion that politicians, both on the government side and in Opposition, and the media all have an important role to perform in public oversight of the commission. However, such oversight must be exercised with care. When issues are raised appropriately, it will enhance public confidence in the Commission. When raised inappropriately or prematurely, however, public confidence may be unnecessarily or erroneously shaken.

A second consideration concerns the individual, organisation or company under investigation by the Commission. If inappropriate publicity occurs during the course of an investigation, there is the potential for damage to the individual's, the organisation's or the company's reputation and economic bottom line. If the allegations under investigation are later found to be baseless, such damage often cannot be fully repaired.

The committee has sought from the CMC a response to the issues raised by Mr Needham's report. That response has recently been received and will be considered by the committee. I commend the report to the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ambulance Levy

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (10.23 a.m.): The Beattie government is punishing small business in Queensland for the financial mismanagement of this state through the

imposition of the ambulance tax on small businesses throughout Queensland. Three years of massive budget deficits and a huge financial blunder in underestimating the cost of the free ambulance service to the seniors of Queensland have meant that this ambulance tax has to be imposed, and the people who will bear the pain of it are the small business operators of Queensland. These are the people who provide the economic growth of our state. These are the people who provide the jobs, opportunities, sponsorships and donations throughout Queensland.

This tax on small business operators is unfair. A highly paid salary earner pays the tax once on their home. A struggling small business operator, say, the operator of a hairdressing salon, pays the levy on their home and on the hairdressing salon. A panel beater will pay it on the home, the workshop and the storage shed. Case after case is now arising of small business operators who are going to pay this tax two, three, four, five and up to 10 times. For example, builders will pay it on their workshop and on the pole on the property where they are building a new house or commercial business. They will pay it many times over. It will have to be paid on security lights for commercial operations from rented premises.

This is unfair on small business. The government has turned its back on small business operators in Queensland. I urge all small business operators to tell their customers that this tax is unfair. It is the result of a government that is broke and which has financially mismanaged the state. The financial blunders of this government are being handed down to small business operators. Thank goodness the member for Charters Towers could recognise what is happening. It is a pity a few more of them did not have the courage to stand up and speak out on behalf of small business, particularly the minister responsible, who has done—

Time expired.

Child Care; Commonwealth Broadband Funding Program

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): Last November the Howard government announced that it is looking closely at all aspects of the Commonwealth's child care broadband funding program. Today, full-time workers are working longer hours, casualisation of the work force is increasing, and many industries are working shift work over seven days. All of this creates demands for flexible child care. Family day care delivers a flexible child care service throughout Australia. In fact, 34 per cent of its services are to rural and remote areas. It provides small business opportunities for approximately 17,000 individuals, 3,000 of whom are in Queensland. This will continue only if broadband funding maintains core infrastructure funding through operational subsidies.

The national Family Day Care Council of Australia had discussions with Minister Larry Anthony, who informed it that a guarantee of historical funding patterns cannot be assured to family day care. In December 2002 training funds for family day care schemes in Queensland were removed by the Howard government. Is it any wonder that family day care is concerned about the broadband redevelopment review? It is concerned about the lack of transparency for the processes that are continuing in parallel to the broadband redevelopment, such as the withdrawal of Queensland's training funding. I have heard that some parents could face a 100 per cent increase in fees if the Commonwealth government does not maintain core funding. This clearly shows the Howard government's agenda to reduce opportunities for women. It will also increase the incidence of latchkey kids. Parents who have no choice but to return to work will think twice about child care and go back to tying keys in handkerchiefs for their kids' pockets.

Carers and administration staff of family day care tell me that they feel like public servants. They are made to administer child care benefits, yet they cannot be assured that they will be receiving the funding they will need to continue providing quality child care. Income tax is at its highest level as a percentage of GDP, yet we have a federal government minister who cannot guarantee funding for child care. Cutting funds to child care will not provide the standard that the community demands. I urge residents to contact their federal member and make sure that they support funding for child care. Qualified professionals and safe environments are what people want for their children in child care.

Time expired.

Queensland Health

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (10.27 a.m.): I speak once again on the state of Queensland's hospitals. According to media reports, while the Health Minister was busy last

sittings trying desperately to convince Queensland that everything was fine in her department she already had a secret report under way. That report by a Queensland Health task force apparently identifies serious flaws in operating theatre management, a lack of accountability when surgery is cancelled or postponed, and calls for a major shake-up of the public hospital system. But just two weeks ago, the minister moved a motion congratulating herself on her department's performance. It appears that would be the same performance that the department's 'squirrel' report now says needs a major shake-up so far as hospitals go. What else did the minister say two weeks ago? She said that Queensland Health was a world-class system that was the envy of the rest of the world. But how can this be when it needs a world-class shake-up?

The media report indicates that many operating theatres cannot keep up with the number of new patients referred from outpatient clinics. Can this be true? The minister's world-class system is not coping? It just gets worse. This government is apparently going to align outpatient sessions with operating theatres, because some hospitals have too many outpatient sessions. Instead of increasing its ability to provide that surgery, it talks about identifying alternatives. The fact that surgery was the proper course of action as identified by a doctor does not seem to matter to this government.

Last sittings, the minister claimed that this government was committed to a public health system built on the principles of universality and equity of access according to need. Now it appears that a need for surgery as identified by a referral from one of Queensland Health's own outpatient clinics is not need enough. So much for equity of access.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for private members' statements has expired. I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from Strathpine West State School in the electorate of Kurwongbah.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Health Budget

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.30 a.m.): I direct a question to the Minister for Health. Given that the Royal Brisbane Hospital is running $18.8 million over budget for the year to date and is headed for its full year overrun of $17 million—and I table a memo from the district manager to Queensland Health outlining this fact—I ask: will the minister seek further funding from Treasury to cover this shortfall or does she intend to claw back services to balance this budget by the year's end?

Mrs EDMOND: The Royal Brisbane Hospital, I understand, at this time of the year has forecast overruns since the 1800s—as someone has pointed out to me. We have a new management team looking at the Royal Brisbane Hospital as part of the change management process of moving into a new hospital, which was built in the expectation that merging the two hospitals would get some efficiencies in a whole range of areas. For instance, previously theatres were located all over the hospital, meaning staff had to be in several places in the hospital at any given time.

We will work through those issues with the Royal Brisbane Hospital. I have to say that, under this government, the Royal Brisbane Hospital has had increased and record budgets each year that I have been the minister. These matters will be handled internally.

As for other budget decisions, I will work with Treasury to work through the funding for Queensland Health in the future. But I fully expect that, as I have delivered a record budget every year since I have been the minister, I will deliver another record budget in Health this year.

Nurses Salaries; Health Budget

Mr SPRINGBORG: I direct a further question to the Minister for Health. I ask: can the minister confirm that Treasury intends to fund only a three per cent rise in salaries for Queensland nurses and the remaining amount—somewhere between 0.8 per cent and 3.5 per cent, depending on the outcome of arbitration—must be found from within the existing Health budget? Can the minister also confirm that this could mean that Queensland hospitals will have to find somewhere between $7.5 million and $33 million from within their resources in order to be able to pay their nurses?

Mrs EDMOND: We have an indicative figure that has been given to Queensland Health in their budget estimates, as was announced last year at the estimates hearing, consistent with

what was planned for the future roll-out of health funding and pay negotiations. Of course, none of us knows what the pay outcome will be for the nurses; it is currently in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. We are expecting that we will get the outcome of that decision in the near future. When we do, I have been asked to go back to the CBRC to discuss it.

Regional Parliament

Ms PHILLIPS: I direct a question to the Premier. The hugely successful north Queensland sitting of parliament in Townsville last September won the support of all. This inaugural three-day regional sitting attracted many thousands of people from the north and from many varied community groups. I ask the Premier: can he today detail more specific final numbers for this history making event?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Thuringowa for her question and her enthusiastic support, along with other members in the Townsville region and far-north Queensland, for the sitting of that parliament. One of the high points of 2002 was the regional sitting of parliament in north Queensland. Queensland made history by being the first Australian parliament to hold a normal sitting week in a regional centre at the Townsville Entertainment and Convention Centre on 3, 4 and 5 September.

The final cost came in under budget. The actual additional cost of the sitting was $432,144, GST exclusive—well shy of the $500,000 budget. On 17 September 2002, I told the House that, as at 13 September, the cost was $437,500. This figure—about $5,000 more than the actual final cost—was based on quotes and invoices available at the time. Earlier during the regional sitting I had offered the figure of $445,000. So the price has slipped downwards.

Our regional sitting was closely watched by other jurisdictions. There were some in-kind costs, as there normally is, in the running of this parliament. In-kind support and sponsorship by departments was estimated at $105,532, excluding GST. That covered things like travel and accommodation costs of departmental staff, building security at the parliamentary precinct, the sponsorship of student activities, the administration of the Regional Visits School Subsidy Scheme, the operation of the ministerial computer network, and the government active citizenship display.

As I said, the regional sitting was closely monitored by other jurisdictions. Officers from the parliaments of Victoria, the Northern Territory, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia travelled to Townsville to observe it. I am advised that the Northern Territory parliament plans to hold its first regional sitting in Alice Springs from 29 April to 1 May 2003. So it is catching on, and so it should.

The north Queensland regional sitting demonstrated clearly that parliament is the people's forum. The final estimate is that 8,428 people attended the sitting; an estimated 1,020 people were at the evening question time on Wednesday, 4 September; students made up more than half of the number of visitors—4,665, and that those students constituted 15.5 per cent of all the students who visited parliament last year; and that 643 of the students who joined us in Townsville—13.78 per cent—were year 7 students assisted by the Regional Visits School Subsidy Scheme. Those children came from 18 state and non-state schools.

I am delighted to provide more details of the outstanding community involvement in the regional parliament and events linked to the sitting. I table that for the information of the House. That is what it was all about: young people and adults from different parts of Queensland visiting parliament and joining in related activities. The community's enthusiasm for our first regional parliament proves that democracy is alive and well in the Smart state. It showed that Queenslanders keenly embrace opportunities to participate in their state's governance. That is why our community cabinet program has been such a success. I remind the House that the community cabinet will be back in Townsville on 6 and 7 April. I table those details.

Health Budget

Mr SEENEY: I direct a question to the Minister for Health. Notwithstanding the $18.8 million budget overrun facing the Royal Brisbane Hospital and also the $1 million budget overrun facing the Royal Women's Hospital, which is also contained in the memo that was tabled by the Leader of the Opposition, I ask the minister: will she ensure that increases in the new visiting medical officers agreement will be fully funded by Treasury for both hospitals, or does the minister intend to decrease patient activity and, ultimately, elective surgery in order to fund those increases?

Mrs EDMOND: It is quite amusing that there seems to have been a change in who is going to be the opposition health spokesperson, possibly because the shadow health minister is overseas, yet again, doing something that I refused. I said that parliament was far too important and parliament was sitting. I am actually paid by the citizens of Queensland to do this job, not by Taiwan. It is very nice to have trips overseas.

This government is actually performing more elective surgery than was ever performed by the opposition when it was in government. We have put extra funding into elective surgery. I am glad that the member asked me about the Royal Brisbane Hospital, because there was a problem with ophthalmology at that hospital. We have a shortage of ophthalmologists in the public sector and we were getting undue waits at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. We have just announced $500,000 to boost ophthalmology services at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, which is elective surgery. So we are boosting elective surgery, not cutting it.

Construction Industry

Mr PURCELL: I direct a question to the Premier. I ask: while it seems obvious that there is a significant amount of construction under way in Queensland at present, can the Premier inform the House of the measures, both detailed and anecdotal? Do they indeed reflect that at present there is a job-creating construction boom?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Bulimba for his question because I know that, with his history, he knows the importance of the building and construction industry and what it means for the economy. We truly are in a golden era. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics national accounts—state details, investment in what is described as 'other buildings and structures in the state, including non-residential building and engineering construction' rose by 23.7 per cent in 2002 compared with 2001. That is not bad—up by 23.7 per cent.

According to the Access Investment Monitor, as at December 2002 the total value of investment projects currently under construction in Queensland was $14.3 billion. A range of industries recorded a significant increase in the value of projects under construction over the course of 2002, including manufacturing with $2.8 billion as at December 2002, communications with $1.6 billion, mining with $1.4 billion, and accommodation with $0.7 billion. More importantly, the strength in investment over the past year is expected to continue with a range of significant private sector investment projects expected to drive investment in Queensland over the next several years. While we recently witnessed the completion of the $1.5 billion Millmerran Power Station, which I had the honour of opening, construction continues to progress on the $1.5 billion Comalco alumina refinery at Yarwun and the $1.3 billion AMC magnesium metal plant at Stanwell. In fact, Queensland has a total of $43.3 billion of committed or possible projects in the pipeline as at December 2002, not the least of which is the possible $3.8 billion Aldoga aluminium smelter.

In my travels I detected this anecdotally by observing the number of cranes in the sky. I know one of my predecessors used this index as a guide. It is a guide, not one that is very scientific, but it does indicate this activity. He would be very proud indeed. The best recorded in his time as Premier was a total in the south-east of 45 cranes. He would be thrilled knowing that today there are 59 tower cranes in the south-east with another six expected to be up in the coming month or so.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: At present, there are 37 in Brisbane and a stunning 17 on the Gold Coast, including at the next stage of the Raptis development at Surfers Paradise which I officially opened on 17 March. As well, there are seven on the Sunshine Coast. It would seem that this figure should hold up with the major retail and development projects under way. I take the earlier interjection from the Deputy Premier.

Mr Mackenroth: We've got no cranes left at Suncorp Stadium now, and we're really happy about it.

Mr BEATTIE: Absolutely. Whether one looks at the formal index or the informal crane index, development is happening in this state. We are driving this economy. It is not just about the Smart State. It is about doing things smarter, and that is what we are delivering.

Hardwoods Queensland, Research Project

Miss ELISA ROBERTS: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to the fact that the Hardwoods Queensland research project, which was set up by the QFRI as part of the south-east Queensland forest agreement, has now run out of funding. Unless further funding is approved, more than 20 staff will lose their jobs, and I ask: will the minister be providing the QFRI with the necessary funding to continue its hardwood research?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I thank the honourable member for the question. It certainly is a similar question that was asked by the honourable member for Nanango, and I have just corresponded with the honourable member for Nanango in relation to her question. If I could be quite blunt with the honourable member, there were two different programs. The first program is the 5,000 hectare hardwood plantation program, which is going extremely well. I have announced in this House that it has been completed. I am very pleased with that and very pleased with its success and the cooperation between our primary producers and our Queensland forestry people in relation to that program. There was a second program which was an experimental program of about 400 hectares. That was the program under question. That program was to last for three years. However, QFRI through the forestry section of the Department of Primary Industries will continue monitoring that program. It will be accessing the plots that have been planted. Not only will it be accessing the plots, it will be holding forums and seminars. There will be staff assigned to that program to ensure that its work is carried out to the expected level. In other words, the answer to the honourable member's question is yes.

Fax Scams

Mr REEVES: I ask the Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading: can the minister inform the House of the latest scam from overseas, this time focusing on Australians' emotions in a time of war?

Ms ROSE: I thank the honourable member for the question. Queenslanders should be aware of a high-cost fax-back scheme cashing in on the public's emotions about the war in Iraq. The latest fax asks people to vote on whether Australia should be involved in the war against Iraq. It provides a 1900 fax number for voters to send in their response which is charged at a rate of $5.50 per minute. The fax says that calls will last approximately two minutes. However, it could be longer, meaning it will cost a minimum of $11 and possibly much more to reply. The fax claims that results will be presented to John Howard at the end of the month. Those behind the fax are more interested in receiving their $11 fee from as many Queenslanders as possible than passing on public opinion to the Prime Minister.

This is a callous attempt to cash in on the public's strong opinions about the war. Queenslanders should not be duped. National Enquiries, the organisation behind the fax, is a UK based company well known to Fair Trading. It has been associated with a number of dubious fax-back schemes charging huge fees, including the business directory at a cost of $16.50, the government and police disposal sales at a cost of up to $44, get paid to shop at a cost of $38.50, and the memory guide at a cost of up to $121. Its MO is simple: it obtains a 1900 facility from a telecommunications company which allows it to charge a very high per minute fee and then pockets the vast majority of the cost of the fax response. It cares little about the issue. It just wants people's money.

This fax, while not illegal, relies on people's emotions. The sting is in the small print, which few people tend to read so they are oblivious of the actual cost of what they are doing. That is where they play right into the scammer's hands. While the offers vary slightly, they are all based on the same premise: that it is easier to get 200,000 people to part with $20 than to get 20 people to part with $200,000. Scams such as these are outside Fair Trading control or jurisdiction. The best way to protect oneself and one's money from scammers is to learn how to recognise common scams and high pressure sales tactics. I recommend Queenslanders get their hands on a free copy of *The Hard Sell* from their nearest Office of Fair Trading for more tips and advice on how to recognise and avoid scams in the marketplace. These booklets have also been sent to the electorate offices of all members of parliament.

Teacher Career Change Program

Mr COPELAND: I refer the Minister for Education to the controversial Teacher Career Change Program. The National Party opposition is still getting calls about teachers using the

package as early retirement packages or simply moving to another teaching job in a different sector. However, there are a number of other examples like a teacher at a central Queensland school suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome with a good teaching record who was told that she would never be allowed a VER because she was too valuable. There have been numerous examples of the wrong people receiving these packages, and I ask: in the second round of this package, what has the minister done to ensure that this process is not abused further and that only those teachers who are genuine receive the packages?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am very pleased with the success of the Teacher Career Change Program. It has met its desired goals, and that is to give those teachers who are best to move out of a teaching career the opportunity to do so and the opportunity for the department to recruit significant numbers of new enthusiastic graduates to be at the front of our classrooms. There were two rounds last year. The second round was conducted in exactly the same way as the first, and that is by an independent organisation outside of Education Queensland. Having it conducted by an organisation outside of the department was critical to the success of the program because it gave an opportunity to those people who wanted to explore the option of whether to take it up or not the chance to do so free of knowledge within their own school or within the department. The department, in the end, only received information about those people who were eligible and the most suitable people to receive the package.

I applaud the conduct of the career change program. As I said, it was conducted entirely at arm's length from the department, so there are no records on file about teachers who might have made inquiries and so on. It was not an opportunity for the department to record information about teachers who might at least want to inquire about their ongoing career in the department or at least discuss it with somebody outside of Education Queensland.

It is clear that there was a great deal of confidence in the process because significantly higher numbers applied in the second round than in the first round. My own view is that that is because those teachers did feel that there was confidentiality around the process and there would not be any repercussions for those who wanted to make inquiries or pursue it at least part way down the track.

I am very confident in the way the program was conducted in both the first and the second rounds. I understand that the National Party has always opposed this program. I do not believe that the National Party has any alternative program to ensure that we renew the teaching work force. Teachers are the most important and critical factor to a successful education. We make no apologies for making sure that we have continually renewed our teaching work force. The career change program is only one aspect of it, but it has been a highly successful one.

Oil Spill, Lytton

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Could the Minister for Environment advise the House of the progress of the clean-up of the Lytton oil spill?

Mr WELLS: The honourable member's electorate is one of those that would have been affected if the clean-up of the Lytton oil spill had not been as successful as it was. I thank her for her interest in this matter. Early on the morning of 18 March I was advised that 1.5 million litres of oil had been spilt from the Moonie pipeline to Santos. Since then, 1.4 million litres have been retrieved. I think that indicates that probably the original estimate was a bit low. It was probably more like two million litres.

My department, the Environmental Protection Agency, led a swift multi-agency response with the Department of Natural Resources, Police, the Fire and Rescue Service, the CHEM Unit, the Ambulance Service, the Transport Department, the Primary Industries Department, the Port of Brisbane Authority and the Brisbane City Council to achieve the successful result that we have achieved.

The member for Lytton, the Minister for Natural Resources and I visited the site on that first day. We saw that the response was rapid and effective. The bunds were put in place very quickly. These contained the oil that would have otherwise spilled into the creeks and drains. Booms were put in place to capture the oil, and skimmers were used to collect the oil. The result was that the spill was contained and it stayed contained. It did not get into the Brisbane River. It did not get into Moreton Bay. There were no confirmed reports of injury to land based wildlife.

The clean-up was expensive, but taxpayers will not have to pay for it. Santos is a good corporate citizen, and I am extremely confident that the government agencies will be indemnified

for their efforts. The Environmental Protection Agency will conduct an investigation related to the causes. That will take weeks rather than days, but I will further advise honourable members. I would like to be very frank with the House.

The departments of government and private industry worked together very effectively and very efficiently, and they did it well. However, there was a bit of luck involved here as well. If there had been a high tide at exactly the wrong moment, then all of that oil would have gone into the Brisbane River and out into the bay and it would have done untold damage. I do not think the damage would have extended as far as Moreton Downs—I take the opportunity to welcome Moreton Downs State School to the gallery—but it would have damaged a considerable area of Brisbane. It is a matter for which we would all like to pay tribute to the departmental officers and others who worked on the site—

Mr Lucas: And Major Les Shaw from the Salvation Army, who did a great job of feeding and watering everyone as well.

Mr WELLS: I take the honourable minister's interjection. On behalf of the House, I thank those involved in the clean-up.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Robina, I welcome a second group of students and teachers from Strathpine West State School in the electorate of Kurwongbah. I also welcome students and teachers from St Patrick's College, Shorncliffe, in the electorate of Sandgate.

Health Budget

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Why is the total budget allocated to hospitals across Queensland predicted to blow out by approximately $100 million this financial year? How does the minister plan to bring hospital expenditure in on budget? In particular, what hospital services will the government be forced to cut to meet that target?

Mrs EDMOND: I am glad the member for Robina has asked me that question, because it allows me to put on record some of the issues that are facing the Health budget. Some people in this chamber may have heard, but those opposite have not, that one of the problems we are facing is that, despite the $2.5 billion that the Commonwealth is providing each year, $500 million of which would be Queensland's share—it would be coming to the public sector if it was not going to the private health insurance subsidy—we are seeing increased demand on our public hospitals.

For example, the Royal Brisbane Hospital has had a 9.2 per cent increase in category 4 and 5 patients, which are GP type patients, in two years. Cairns had a 5.3 per cent increase from 2001 to 2002. Cairns had a 12 per cent increase between 2000 and 2002. The Gold Coast had a 42.8 per cent increase between 2000 and 2002. That is one of the many pressures we are seeing in the health system. It is costing us $40 million to $50 million a year to provide emergency department services that the Commonwealth is avoiding by not providing GP services. That is part of the problem we are having.

Secondly, the Health budget has increased on average by about six per cent a year—the state's share. In 2000-01 the Health budget was $3.81 billion, in 2001-02 it was $4.06 billion and this year it is $4.33 billion. It has been going up by six per cent each year. In 1998 the coalition budget included $2 million for growth across Queensland, $30 million of unfunded EB that we inherited, to be met by savings, and a commitment to take out $25 million as the Horan health tax. Who remembers the Horan health tax to pay for all of the capital works? The Horan health tax was to increase to $81 million a year, out of recurrent expenditure. We also inherited $200 million of unfunded promises. We had a Health Minister who wandered around the state saying, 'If you want it, we will give it to you. Don't worry about funding it.' We have actually wiped—

An opposition member: You've had it for six years!

Mrs EDMOND: And in those six budgets we have wiped those debts. We have also provided new funding for Noosa and Robina hospitals, instead of taking it out of the Gold Coast district health budget and the Sunshine Coast district health budget, which was the plan. We found new money for that. Honourable members should think what those budgets would be like with $47 million going out each year to fund those hospitals.

Time expired.

Public Housing

Mr STRONG: I refer the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to recent comments made by the federal member for Hinkler that the Howard government has boosted funding for housing in Queensland, and I ask: is this really the case?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I can confirm that that is what Paul Neville had to say. I thank the honourable member for the question. The reality is that, as is the case with all good Tories, his figures are about as reliable as a second-hand TV set.

The truth of the matter is that everybody in this chamber knows that, in the last Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, Queensland was short-changed. Where the member got this $40 million from is beyond me, quite frankly. The figure that I have for the next five years of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement is a $174 million loss. If he can find us $40 million extra, I will be the happiest man in Queensland and so will the 167,000 families who are living in after-housing poverty in this state. Do not take my word for it. I have been a member of this place for the last five years, and the fact is that it has been ignored by the Commonwealth and it has been ignored by those opposite who do not care a tinker's curse for people who live in poverty.

The reality is that Anglicare just last week released a report which confirmed what I have been saying. It was scathing in its criticism of the Commonwealth government. Unlike the Tories who sit opposite, Anglicare has to deal with poverty first-hand and it is dealing with it on an increasing basis. It cannot close its doors like the Tories here and the Tories in Canberra do. It cannot close its doors, eyes and minds like the members opposite do—even though they have not got much of the latter to close. The truth is that Anglicare has to deal with this up-front. So it was heartening, to some extent, to find Anglicare coming out and stepping on the toes of the federal government.

I notice that Mr Neville was talking about rent assistance. He of all people should know, as should the member for Gladstone, that rent assistance is no good whatsoever unless you have a house to rent. That is the problem in Gladstone at the moment, right at his back door. Yet he is telling us that rent assistance is the answer to a maiden's prayer in terms of housing. That is ridiculous. We all know that.

As I say, Anglicare is spot on the money, and that is what we need in Queensland. We need that money back. If we are going to do anything about poverty in Queensland, we must first do something about homelessness. Homelessness is gradually slipping right into the hands of the poor in this state. It is pleasing that Anglicare is joining the chorus of people in this state who do care and who are trying to do something about it. If we do not reverse this trend, if we do not get that $174 million back into this budget, 167,000 Queensland families will continue to live in poverty.

Racing Industry

Mr HORAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Racing. Queensland Racing has now cancelled 161 country race meetings, leaving 32 clubs with no races at all and others with race dates decimated. These meetings were funded at $15,000 and more per meeting for prize money. The loss to country centres will be around $3 million plus economic loss. The minister's government has offered a paltry $200,000 to these clubs for administration support only, not prize money, and up to $5,000 per club. How does the minister expect these clubs to survive when they are required to provide safe, licensed tracks, stewards, insurance cover and now all the prize money to attract participants, licensees and patrons? Why has the Beattie government turned its back so callously on these country clubs?

Ms ROSE: The shadow minister for racing was given a full briefing the week before last by Queensland Racing. Queensland Racing, as he is well aware, makes the day-to-day decisions in regard to the running of racing in this state and for—

Mr Johnson: You have sold out a $100 million industry. That is what you have done.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory.

Ms ROSE:—and for the allocation of prize money and race dates. The member is also aware that his predecessor, the shadow minister and member for Warrego, went on a talkback radio show in Toowoomba saying that there was too much racing in Queensland and there were too many race dates—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Ms ROSE: The member had a full briefing two weeks ago.

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

Ms ROSE: A couple of weeks ago—

Honourable members interjected.

Queensland Police Union Journal, Cartoons

Mr MICKEL: I direct my question to the Minister for Police. I refer to a cartoon in a recent article of the Queensland Police Union Journal, and I ask: is the minister aware of a public outcry as a result of the publication of these cartoons and has he anything to add to the public debate on this matter?

Mr McGRADY: I have seen the cartoon and I fully support the comments made this morning by the Queensland Police Commissioner. I also note the remarks reported in the media by the president of the Police Union, which I totally agree with and indeed congratulate him on. Mr Gary Wilkinson says the material is insensitive and in poor taste. He said—

> The sad part about it, it's not even funny—you can't argue humour because it isn't funny.
>
> ...
>
> It is under the circumstances insensitive and ill-advised and the employee responsible for doing it has been spoken to about it, but there's not much else we can do about that.

I fully appreciate the difficult position in which the president now finds himself. In any large organisation, whether it be the Queensland Police Service or the Queensland Police Union, the leader cannot always be held responsible for every action or every comment made by individuals in that organisation. However, I also note that the president has not yet said sorry.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Nicklin, could I welcome to the public gallery the Balmoral Ladies Bowls Club in the electorate of Bulimba.

Entry, Search and Seizure Powers

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is directed to the Premier because it covers a range of ministers' areas of responsibility. Not many years ago police officers were almost the only Queensland public servants with powers of entry, search and seizure. Today it appears that hundreds or even thousands of other Queensland public servants across many ministers' areas of responsibility have similar powers of entry, search and seizure. What checks and balances does this government have in place to ensure that these non-police officers are vetted to a standard similar to that of police recruits to ensure their suitability, to ensure that their level of skills is appropriate when they are exercising their police-like search and entry powers?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a very important one. Before authorising any group of government employees to have rights of entry, cabinet goes through a very agonising and detailed process. We ensure that there is accountability. In some cases, for example, there needs to be police checks on the people who have the power, there needs to be access to the courts, there needs to be access to this parliament and accountability mechanisms in place. We are very cautious before any additional power is given.

At the end of the day, the decision is made on the basis of what is in the public interest. What should be done—but done in such a way—is that the people concerned have their rights protected and that there is also an accountability mechanism. As we know, the Brisbane City Council and other councils have certain rights of entry in particular circumstances and they govern a range of issues. The government has access in cases of animal cruelty. There were matters that were raised about access to properties to ensure that animals are properly protected. I do not believe anyone, including the honourable member, would argue that there should not be sufficient and suitable powers in existence to ensure that animals are looked after appropriately and properly. If we do not give people certain powers to do that, then people can simply thumb their nose at the law and animals could suffer as a result. Stock inspectors and so on are very important. We have to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place.

Let us take building inspections, for example. What about safety issues?

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I take the interjection from the Minister for Public Works. There is the BSA. Unless we have appropriate powers to ensure that a building is constructed properly, that the base is done properly, that everything is done appropriately, then—

Mr Schwarten: We changed the laws the other day.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right. We did. Otherwise we could end up with a situation where, for example, a building could collapse, people could lose their lives and there could be an appropriate injury—sorry, consequent injury. I used the word 'appropriate' because I was thinking one step ahead there. It is indeed appropriate; it is indeed a last resort. We endeavour to get compliance and we are very guarded about how we give these powers. I know there are people who have reservations about access, but it is done only in those cases where it is needed, where there is a public interest reason for it being done. And there are accountability mechanisms available to anyone against whom those powers are used.

This is a very serious issue that the member has raised. I thank the member for doing so. I want to assure the member that when this or any matter goes to cabinet it is vigorously debated and discussed. There are appropriate checks and balances before it even gets there. We take this issue very seriously.

Reparation Offer to Indigenous Workers

Mr PITT: My question without notice is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. How many indigenous Queenslanders have so far lodged claims for the Beattie government's reparation offer for past control of wages and savings? Will the minister explain the process for paying these claims?

Ms SPENCE: I am pleased to report that the wages and savings reparation offer process is well under way. Last month, information sheets and claim forms were distributed in the community. To date, the department has received 800 completed claim forms from indigenous Queenslanders. Despite the level of criticism of this offer, indigenous people are expressing a keenness to go through with the process and receive payment. They, like most Queenslanders, acknowledge the genuine efforts of this government to make reparations for past injustices, and that is reflected in the speedy rate with which these claim forms are being received by the department. One letter that I received last year from an elder in the Townsville region not only expresses the writer's happiness to accept the offer but states—

I appreciate what a big job you have and you can't always please people, but what has to be done has got to be done.

Many other letters express a similar sentiment and applaud this government for undertaking a process to address this issue. I shall take a couple of minutes to explain the process we are undertaking. Firstly, officers from the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy are going around Queensland holding information sessions, explaining to people how they might fill out a claim form, how the government will assess those claim forms, and making it very clear to them that they do not have to make a decision, that they do not have to take up the government's offer. Certainly, filling out a claim form in the first instance does not even commit them to taking up the offer of the final payment. Once these claim forms are received by the department, we go through an assessment process. People are asked, if possible, to supply some evidence that they worked under one of the various acts. They might have a savings bank ledger, a wages card or some other document to prove that they worked under the acts.

People are informed that there is a review process if they are deemed ineligible to receive the payment. People are informed that we are prioritising these claims, because in fact it is going to take us a couple of years to pay all the claims. We are prioritising it so that the elderly and the seriously ill will be assessed first. Finally, people will receive independent legal advice, independent of the department and the government. People will have a 24-hour cooling-off period after they receive the legal advice and then they will be asked to sign a deed of agreement. It will be explained to them what the deed of agreement means before they accept this final offer. I believe that this process is taking place in a fair, transparent manner and shows this government's good faith.

Keppel Park Race Club

Mr LESTER: I refer the Minister for Tourism and Racing to the decision of Queensland Racing to slash non-TAB race meetings for the Rockhampton Jockey Club from 28 to nine,

placing it in an invidious situation. This decision, minister, will mean that the Keppel Park race track, one of the most picturesque, best run country race tracks in one of the fastest growing areas within Queensland—extremely popular with tourists, attracting between 600 and 800 people on race days—will close permanently, impacting upon our local economy and employment. How does the minister propose to save this great track from certain closure, and what action will the minister take to ensure that a full complement of races is reinstated to Keppel Park Race Club?

Ms ROSE: As the member quite rightly stated, it was a Queensland Racing decision. But what I was quite prepared to talk about before was the Queensland community racing scheme, but unfortunately the opposition was so loud and so rude that nobody could even—

Opposition members interjected

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms ROSE: Do the opposition want to listen or not? The member has raised a very serious issue and because this government did recognise that there are communities that are going to be affected by the decisions that have been taken—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego will cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Ms ROSE: A couple of weeks ago the Premier did announce that the Queensland Events Corporation would extend its regional events development program to include local community based racing events. The $200,000 Queensland community racing scheme will provide up to $5,000 in grant funding for communities to hold—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keppel has asked this question and is entitled to the answer.

Ms ROSE:—and grant funding for communities to hold their annual race meetings. These are important social events and reinforce the government's commitment to regional Queensland. This is not about putting on professional race meetings. This is not about TAB and non-TAB race meetings. These form the professional side of the Queensland racing industry. The scheme is targeted at supporting community events that include race meetings. When the final information about how to apply to the scheme is made available, I would encourage the member for Keppel, along with his local race club, to do so. If any race club or community wants to participate in the professional racing industry, they need to make their case to Queensland Racing and have their proposals assessed against the selection criteria. It is important that meetings that may be supported under this scheme do not cannibalise Queensland Racing's non-TAB calendar, as the aim is to put on important community events and not destroy meetings being put on within the professional industry.

The Queensland community racing scheme is an initiative of Queensland Events and will allow communities greater input into the conduct of their meetings. The community racing scheme will help small rural areas ensure the annual bush cup meetings that in most cases have been held for many decades continue to be part of the community's calendar. The government has in no way changed its policy of not putting on prize money for race meetings. The $5,000 which can be accessed by clubs as a sponsorship can be used by clubs in the running and marketing of their events.

Senior Certificate, Queensland Studies Authority

Mr ENGLISH: Will the Minister for Education inform members how the senior certificate process went in its first year under the administration of the Queensland Studies Authority?

Ms BLIGH: It is an enormous process to ensure that every young Queenslander eligible for a senior certificate gets one on time as expected. I am sure that everybody here is aware of what an anxious time it can be while young people wait for those results. I am pleased to advise the House that the issuing of senior certificates last year for the first time under the new administration of the Queensland Studies Authority went off without a hitch. That was no mean feat. There were 39,314 certificates issued, 28,172 of which contained an OP score. Queenslanders can have confidence in the system that is operated by the Queensland Studies Authority.

I am pleased to say that the smooth running of the operation last year proves the QSA cynics and doubters wrong. The former shadow minister for education made a great deal of undermining this new authority. I am very pleased to advise the House that his concerns were, as usual, misplaced. I hope that we can now look forward to some sensible support and consideration of the work of this authority.

This authority will play a major part in our government's reforms in the senior years of education. It has already been tasked, under the provisions of our education white paper, with developing work this year to review the quantum of learning that might be required to satisfy inclusion in a senior certificate to allow us to add more flexible options onto that certificate. It has also been tasked with developing a register process so that by 2006 every year 10 student will have an individualised education and training plan that can be registered with the authority, so that for the first time we will see students as young as 15 and 16 with a clear career plan for their future. In addition to running the senior certificate process the authority will now have these new responsibilities. I have every confidence that it will meet those responsibilities.

The changes that are happening in senior schooling as a result of our government's reforms are building on changes that have already been occurring for some time. Those changes are clearly reflected in the data from last year's senior certificates. Interestingly, 22,889 students undertook some form of vocational education or training subjects in year 12 last year, representing 58.2 per cent of all year 12s. This figure has almost doubled since 1998, from 11,952 students. Since the Beattie government came into being we have seen a doubling of the number of young people in years 11 and 12 who are seeking out vocational or training-type subjects, reflecting the confidence that they and their families have in an increasingly flexible senior certificate process. I look forward to the work of the QSA in developing that further this year.

Drivers Licence Renewal Fees

Mr FLYNN: I refer the Minister for Transport to the fact that the Labor government has always prided itself on the statement 'no new taxes'. Until October 2002, drivers licence fees were structured to allow drivers to re-licence for one year at a time, presumably to allow leeway for those unable to pay the full five-year fee at once, now currently around $58 per annum. In October 2002, Queensland Transport, under the pretext of increased costs, raised the fee for one-year licences from $11 to $22.95—a rise of more than 100 per cent—to cover, it claimed, administration costs. They claim that it is about consumer choice. However, I ask: why is it that the Queensland government is penalising senior/pensioner drivers, who have no choice other than to renew annually and pay twice the price for the privilege of driving on our roads?

Mr BREDHAUER: I thank the honourable member for the question. Unfortunately, the basis of his question is factually incorrect. It is not necessary for pensioners to renew their licences annually. It is not necessary for people over 70 years to renew their licences on an annual basis. There was an increase in the fees charged for the issuing of licences and a range of other issues late last year. It was the subject of a full debate in the parliament. The charge increases were approved by the parliament as a result of that debate last year. But there has been a misunderstanding amongst some older citizens, and particularly a misunderstanding among some medical practitioners, about the need for older people to renew their licences on an annual basis. That is simply not true. Any person can secure a five-year licence in Queensland. However, it is necessary for some people to get medical certification on an annual basis to indicate that they are still medically fit to continue to drive.

Most people who are over 70 years of age would visit the doctor on average at least once a year, some more often—some many times more often—than that. It is simply a matter of their asking their medical practitioner on those occasions to indicate that they are still regarded as medically fit to drive, and that will be taken as evidence by Queensland Transport that they can have their licence renewed. They can still secure a five-year licence, as any member of the parliament can, without incurring any additional costs. All they need to do is, on an annual basis, get an advice from their medical practitioner to the effect that they are still medically fit to drive.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BREDHAUER: Yes, over 70. Some medical practitioners are incorrectly advising people that they need to apply only for a one-year licence and that they have to come back every year and renew their licence. That is not the case. Many members have written to me about this. Many people over 70 have written to me about this. I have been clear—in fact, I put out a statement at

one stage publicly indicating this—that the advice suggesting that people over 70 years of age are able to secure only an annual licence is incorrect. They can secure a five-year licence. They can do that without incurring additional cost. All they need to do is provide medical certification on an annual basis of their continuing fitness to drive.

Biotechnology

Mr LAWLOR: I refer the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy to the fact that we hear a lot in parliament about the financial support that the government provides to the biotechnology research institutes as they are a key part of the Smart State. However, with respect to the many small privately run biotechnology companies in Queensland, I ask: is the government providing any financial assistance to them to promote the good work they are doing?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member. He is a great supporter of science, and why would he not be when he has the Gold Coast campus of Griffith University in his electorate, where people such as Mark Von Itzstein are doing wonderful work at the Centre for Biomolecular Science and Drug Discovery? Mark Von Itzstein is probably one of the world's foremost carbohydrate scientists, a Queensland great and a former Federation fellow. This government was delighted to put $8 million into its centre, opened by the Premier a little over a year ago. The Minister for Natural Resources is a proud graduate of Griffith University, which is doing brilliant science.

The member is right; the nature of the Queensland biotech sector is that we have many small biotech firms. They are firms that come out of the great research that we are doing at our institutions. Ultimately, what we want to see are jobs, better technology and a better quality of life for people in the Queensland community and in the rest of the world. When we create these spin-offs we need to service them.

Some of the spin-offs we have had include Xenome, from the Institute of Molecular Bioscience at the University of Queensland, which is utilising cone shells in pain relief; Coridon, from the University of Queensland with Professor Ian Frazer and a team from Queensland Health doing cancer research and plant molecular biology; Nanomics BioSystems, from the University of Queensland, with a young Queensland great, Professor Matt Trau, leading a team doing rapid DNA sequencing; TropBio from JCU; and number of other institutions.

Start-ups such as these need assistance to help them flourish, expand and export. They are doing the top science. We are not seeking to teach them science. We could never do that. But they do need support when it comes to business systems and helping them sell their great message. That is why today I am delighted to announce that one of my department's very successful programs for the IT industry, also a power house on the Gold Coast—and I know the member for Southport is a big supporter—will now be applying to the biotechnology and science side of things as well. I refer to the International Trade Show Assistance Program, where $5,000 is allowed per grant on a co-payment basis, with a half a million dollars on offer. As I said, it was originally for the IT industry. Now it is open to biotechnology.

We are a biotechnology hub. We want to give Queensland companies an unfair advantage at trade shows. We want Queensland spin-off companies to be able to sell their message overseas and talk about the great things they are doing. There is no substitute for speaking to people personally—no substitute at all. The member for Robina, the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier and I were at BIO 2002 selling Queensland's message. I have no doubt they would take on board this great idea of extending the IT program to biotechnology companies as well.

ITSAP has helped 38 Queensland ICT companies since it began three years ago. A Gold Coast software company, FABS, used its dollars to attend the Vartech 2002 trade show in Cincinnati and it is now pursuing business opportunities in Queensland. The member for Burleigh would be delighted about Poly Optics. We held an event with it at the recent community cabinet meeting. It is also an innovation start-up scheme recipient.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Organised Crime

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): Nobody should have been surprised to open the *Courier-Mail* this morning to discover a story titled 'Huge

increase in illegal drug labs'. There was a similar story last year, and this has been an issue that the police and our law enforcement agencies and our courts have been dealing with in Queensland over a long period.

The government is the only one that seems to be surprised about this problem and seems to have taken very little proactive or reasonable action to overcome it. The article states—

Of Queensland's role in the nation's amphetamine trade, the report said some motorcycle gangs continued to dominate illicit drug production and distribution networks across the state.

That was identified by the Crime Commission in Queensland and the Queensland Police Service some four years ago. What has happened in that time? Absolutely nothing! The government has done little more than provide a token response to this and has not put in place the proactive responses that are needed to make sure that our law enforcement authorities have the tools that they need to be able to respond effectively to this issue and break down those outlaw motorcycle gangs and break down the insidious growth in amphetamine production in this state which is causing so much misery and, in some cases, death for people in this state.

We know that drugs are an ongoing problem. We know that drugs are not just a problem in Queensland; they are a problem in every state and territory in this country. However, I think we need to be concerned about the fact that Queensland is being recognised as the capital in Australia for amphetamine production. We also need to recognise the fact that our Police Service is doing a very good job with limited legislative tools in cracking down on that amphetamine production and tracking down those people who are involved in this. So many of the other states and territories in Australia are way out in front of what we are doing in Queensland. I think we need to be aware of that.

Outlaw motorcycle gangs have been a problem in this state for a long time. I refer to the Project Krystal report, which details a few very, very relevant things in relation to outlaw motorcycle gangs. It states—

The involvement of OMCG—

outlaw motorcycle gang—

members in criminal activities is beyond doubt or dispute. Many of the senior members of—

the gangs—

currently active in Queensland are aged in their forties and fifties and have been previously convicted of serious criminal offences. There is significant evidence to substantiate the involvement of individual—

gang—

members in the production and distribution of amphetamine, cannabis production and distribution, cocaine distribution, heroin distribution, and the distribution of lysergic acid.

A range of other illicit drugs is also mentioned in this report. The report states further—

... members have been known to sub-contract activities that form part of a core criminal activity to non-—

gang—

members, for example, the purchasing of precursor chemicals used in the production of amphetamine, amphetamine "cooking" and cannabis crop sitting.

The report states further that gang members—

... are organised and violent, despite their more recent attempts to establish a more positive public image. While the promotion of this new image through the media has softened the public perception of—

outlaw motorcycle gangs—

and their members, the community will continue to suffer the consequences of their criminal activities and potential involvement in sporadic violence arising from inter—

gang—

clashes over territory.

The report states further—

There can be little doubt that individual gangs have knowledge of the criminal activities of their members and, at times, profit directly or indirectly from them.

Outlaw motorcycle gangs are not only involved in drug production and distribution; they are also involved in illegal prostitution activities. I had it put to me some time ago by a member of the media in Mackay—and we know what happened with that shoot-out up there a couple of years ago—that these gang members are going down the street, sitting down and sipping caffelattes, going on toy drives for the hospitals and those sorts of things, but when it comes down to it, a lot

of these people are actively and proactively involved in illegal and illicit activities. There has not been a proactive response on the part of the government in taking up the recommendations that were made as a consequence of Project Krystal in dealing with this problem. Other states around Australia have taken the lead. Why has this government not followed the lead? I will refer to a couple of potential solutions in a moment.

What was the Premier's response on radio this morning? He said that this drug issue is a problem Australia wide and world wide. That is true. We know that. It is not just a problem confined to Queensland. The Premier talked about the need for education as being the only real way that we are going to overcome this problem. Certainly, education and information is an important way of addressing the issue. But we cannot subjugate in order of importance the need for detection, surveillance and enforcement that needs to complement education and information, because there will always be people, regardless of the amount of education and information that they receive, who fall prey to drugs. Not all of those people are down on their luck; a lot of people take drugs as a recreational activity. It is a lifestyle that they choose. We only need to be aware of what is happening in our nightclubs, which was exposed recently in a report on *A Current Affair.* The person who seemed most surprised by that report was the Police Minister. We all know from the information that is given to us that many people go to nightclubs. They do not even drink; they pop a pill, usually speed, have a glass of water and carry on all night. That is the reality. Education is not going to fix that circumstance, because those people choose to do that. There is only one way of dealing with the problem and that is to get to the real core of the problem, that is, the production and the distribution of drugs.

If these outlaw motorcycle gangs and the criminals involved with them continue to be involved in drug production, then we need to be targeting them. What can we do in a practical sense? A couple of years ago Western Australia brought in anti-gang fortification laws. Some of these gangs have fortifications, including in Queensland, that are as good as any other secure facility. They have surveillance and they often booby-trap them. Western Australia, like other jurisdictions, has the power to go in and break down these fortifications. That needs to be done. The intelligence that these people have on individual police officers and other people is extraordinary. They use that information to intimidate law enforcement officers who target these criminals.

We also need phone tapping powers. Under this government, Queensland has left our law enforcement agencies—our Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission—without the tools to do its job of cracking down on illegal criminal activity and outlaw motorcycle gangs. New South Wales, under its state jurisdiction, has brought in phone tapping powers. That is absolutely necessary and essential. It is not good enough to say that we could go under the jurisdiction of the National Crime Authority, its successor or the Federal Police and work with them to get the consent that is necessary to tap telephones, because that is a turgid and lethargic process. We need to be able to respond—

Mr Copeland: They can't do it for state matters.

Mr SPRINGBORG: They cannot do it for state matters. So we have to have that power in Queensland. New South Wales has done that. That state has a Labor Party government. Why is it that Queensland cannot do that? It is good to have the Internet interception powers, but if people want to be really high-tech criminals in Queensland and avoid detection, what do they do? If they are in New South Wales, they step across the Tweed and use their mobile phones and there is absolutely nothing that the police in this state can do about intercepting those calls. That is not good enough.

The government was terribly lethargic—they were dragged kicking and screaming—in introducing legislation dealing with the civil confiscation of the proceeds of crime. They did that only after the opposition introduced similar legislation. Four years ago that step had been recommended as a consequence of Project Krystal. The government needed to be dragged to that conclusion. We also need to be looking at a range of other matters. Project Krystal recommended phone tapping. The government has not responded. There has been some response with regard to covert operations. That has been important, but the government needs to go further.

Another thing that we need to have—which has been effective in other jurisdictions around the world—is anti-crime gang membership laws which make it illegal for a person to be involved in an outlaw motorcycle gang, which is a group that is made up of two or three people who have had criminal convictions in the past couple of years and who have served jail terms. It is a criminal offence for a person to be involved in such a group. Such a law allows the government to break

up that outlaw motorcycle gang and that racket. It is not good enough for the government to continue to wipe its hands of this problem, because many people in Queensland are continuing to be subjected to the negative activity of these gangs. Something needs to be done.

Time expired.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Liddy Clark): Order! Before calling the honourable member for Barron River, I welcome to the gallery teachers and students from Moreton Downs State School in the electorate of Murrumba.

Water

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): The year 2003 is the year of fresh water and last Saturday, 22 March, was World Water Day with the theme of water for the future. The sustainable use and management of our freshwater resources is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today and is of particular significance here in Australia, the driest inhabited continent on earth. The bottom line is that we cannot take our water supplies for granted, not even in far-north Queensland, the home of the Golden Gumboot in Tully where rainfall is measured in metres. Parts of the southern tableland were drought declared last year and their urban water supplies were severely restricted. Water levels in the Copperlode Dam that supplies Cairns dropped to 65 per cent, not low in comparison to some places but low enough to have Cairns City Council put restrictions on garden water use in place, which are still in force.

The provision of a water supply for our growing region to meet the needs of industry and growing urban areas has been a topic of hot debate in the Cairns area with the community polarised with respect to the need to build another dam to meet future demand. It was into this environment that Natural Resources Minister, Stephen Robertson, released the Barron River water resource plan, local authorities, December. The plan confirms that dam building is premature. Firstly, we must use the water that we have much more efficiently—a basic principle underpinning the plan. The Barron River water resource plan then takes an approach that recognises that for good, economic and environmental reasons we must find better ways of using existing supplies rather than building new infrastructure as a first resort. Only when we have used our existing supplies to their full potential should we consider the case for building new infrastructure. In taking this approach, the planning incorporates an important safeguard that will ensure that if demand trends change, a review of the plan can be triggered. This will ensure that the community's water needs are catered for in a timely fashion.

In reaching his decision, the minister evaluated numerous assessments, including appraisals of population growth expectations, the economic outlook for the irrigation and other sectors, and the condition of the plan area's ecological health. Significantly, this work indicated that the Cairns water allocations would be adequate to meet projected growth until at least 2022, well beyond the 10-year life of the plan. Even so, the plan makes available 4,000 megalitres per year of unallocated water from the Lower Barron River for the Cairns City Council. Supported by outcomes that establish environmental flow objectives to maintain healthy waterways in the plan area, these measures will provide for an exceptional level of water resource development that will serve the Cairns community's needs for the life of the plan and well beyond.

I acknowledge that increasing water efficiency is a challenge when we live in the wettest part of Queensland where some people still think that because rain falls from the sky in such large quantities it is limitless and should be free. But it is a challenge I have accepted because effective demand management and improved water efficiency and water recycling can defer or even avoid the need for large dam building projects. The current water usage for Cairns is approximately 515 litres per person per day. The council has set its target of holding consumption at the 2001 level, which was 475 litres until the year 2011. Using water more efficiently is just plain commonsense because it saves money in terms of deterring or avoiding capital costs for new water infrastructure, reduces operating costs associated with water plumbing and water treatment and saves ratepayers money in their water bills. Based on consumption rates elsewhere, including here in Brisbane where demand management techniques have been introduced, that 350 litres per person is achievable and would extend the life of the existing water supplies for Cairns to about 2045.

To that end, I initiated a series of three water forums which were held recently in Cairns for the Cairns City Council, industry and the general community. I thank the Environment Minister, Dean Wells, and the Natural Resources Minister, Stephen Robertson, and officers from their respective departments for their assistance. I particularly thank Mayor Kevin Byrne and other

sponsors of the forums such as the Cairns International Hotel, James Cook University and the Cairns and Far North Environment centre. Guest speakers at the forum included two internationally renowned experts, Tim Waldron, the CEO of Wide Bay Water, and Dr Stuart White, Director of the Institute of Sustainable Futures, a commercial arm of the University of Technology in Sydney which has produced many of these cost planning studies. Such studies provide a rigorous assessment of the relative cost of all of the options available to supply the water services people need in a particular area. The response to all three forums was excellent and I hope that the Cairns City Council responds positively to the offer from the Environment Minister to assist with the preparation of a least cost planning study for Cairns with a contribution of $15,000.

In the meantime, I will be working with all the stakeholders in Cairns to develop an education campaign based on the successful strategies being used by Brisbane City Council, which has already reduced consumption to 300 litres per person per day and aims for a further seven per cent reduction. I am also well aware that other councils, particularly those on the Sunshine Coast, are doing excellent work in terms of providing incentives for people to install water tanks. Indeed, I have recently installed my own.

Public Health System

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.45 a.m.): A day in the life of Queensland Health is a day worth congratulating—a day to be recognised, not one that is so often lambasted and condemned by the opposition. The degree of frustration experienced by staff and administration over sensational rubbish making its way via the opposition into the media is a disgraceful tactic that lowers morale and frightens the general public, and the public deserves to have faith and pride in their health system. This Labor government has spent more on health in the last two terms than any other Queensland government.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: $12 million a day.

Ms NELSON-CARR: That is right. The capital works program has produced state-of-the-art hospitals and medical infrastructure guaranteeing that Queenslanders will experience not just the best health care in Australia but in the world. It is worth making international comparisons and, with our heavy emphasis these days on prevention, Queenslanders can look forward to shorter hospital stays and healthier outcomes. It is always disappointing to have to spend so much time arguing with the opposition to put forward the truth, to allay the public fear and to still maintain excellent services whilst mopping up a useless tirade of sensationalism. The Minister for Health, Wendy Edmond, has guaranteed accountability in all levels of health care, even to the extent of having a complaints system throughout our hospitals. This ensures prompt action, should there be the need, within the confines of confidentiality and empathy.

I have to tell the House how fantastic it is to hear from the many health care clients who take the time to express their thanks and gratitude. I want to read to the House the recent correspondence received from one such grateful patient. It is addressed to the director of medical services at the Townsville Hospital and states—

I was a patient in your hospital recently. I came in without notice for the repair of a strangulated groin hernia. This being a minor intervention, albeit a very necessary one for me, I chose to conduct a 'service diagnostic'.

Why would anyone do such a bizarre thing? I am a services marketing consultant. I was expecting long waits and frustration (believing media hype on hospitals) so thought this may prevent boredom. Furthermore, despite a short career as a hospital pharmacist in my youth, I am dead scared of needles and surgeons and have managed to avoid them most my life. So this might just keep my mind off the impending pain and doom.

I did not have a series of pre-written 'service attributes', as one should do, so enabling me to conduct what is commonly called a 'mystery shopper'. A mystery shopper is someone hired by the service giver to evaluate the services as they are received. Instead, I took mental notes and wrote them up the next morning before exiting 24 hours after arriving at Emergency. So this was more like a 'customer experiential' than a traditional mystery shopper. The name matters little.

The attached pages show the results of the diagnostic. I do acknowledge that one experience does not represent an adequate sample to determine service quality. But I did meet with and rely upon the services of many of your people, some on several occasions, so had many 'moments of truth' to evaluate.

It takes years to achieve consistent service excellence day after day in every unit. The CEO invariably hears all the bad news and seldom the good. I am not a generous scorer of service quality. I have served as an Australian Quality Awards Evaluator and for three years as an independently appointed auditor of Australian Universities. I was one of the harder markers among external auditors, believing that people learn little from soft assessments.

My expectations of your hospital were exceeded at almost every service encounter. Service was of uniformly high quality at every turn from every service giver—reception, interns, emergency nursing, surgeon, anaesthetist and his wonderful, positive nurse anaesthetist; theatre staff, recovery unit (amazing), all ward nurses (also outstanding), kitchen staff, cleaners and orderly. I recall 22 people in all. Many others provided seamless services without my

meeting them. I was inspired by the special skills and efforts of your surgical registrar ... to go through with this crazy idea and write up the diagnostic during my recovery. He was in charge of the service attributes that were of utmost importance to me. He and several others were up there with the best I have met in my career in services marketing.

I hope that I have not offended you by doing this. And I hope you pass on my congratulations to your exceptional people for achieving amazingly consistent service in a world that seems so often to be bereft of such excellence.

My overwhelming feeling on leaving your hospital was 'lucky'. I was stranded in a town I know little of and was ever so lucky that the GP who referred me ... confidently predicted that I would get excellent treatment if I sought your help. Your emergency, theatre and surgical ward people have every right to feel proud of their achievements.

I am happy to table the perceptions. The customer expectation goes through the emergency department, theatre and wards. He rates them from one to seven and on every occasion, bar one, he gave a rating of seven and on the other one he gave a rating of six.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: I get figures like that out at Caboolture Hospital.

Ms NELSON-CARR: That is excellent. Queenslanders need to know the facts. Opposition members should begin to peddle the facts. They should call their federal colleagues into line and give them a serve. They should put their money where their mouths are and deliver to the states. We have to remember facts such as that every day in Queensland Health $11.39 million is spent on services, $1 million is spent on rebuilding, 479 women are screened for breast cancer and so on.

Time expired.

Public Liability Insurance

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Lib) (11.50 a.m.): I raise an issue still confronting many community groups, that is, public liability insurance. This problem has not gone away. More and more community groups are not performing their full functions, are not performing at all or have closed down. Still we see no solution in sight.

Of particular concern to me is a letter I received from the Sunshine Coast Environment Council. I know that a number of people have received this letter, but I think it is time the council's concerns were raised in this House. The letter the council received in response from the government was not adequate in answering its concerns and problems at all. The council has spoken about the prohibitive public liability insurance premiums for community based organisations and says that they still face a crisis. The letter states—

The Sunshine Coast Environment Council is greatly concerned about the crippling effects of excessive public liability insurance premiums on our activities and those of other community-based, not-for-profit organizations. Australia Day events were cancelled on the Sunshine Coast this year because of unaffordable insurance premiums.

We all know that that occurred. The letter continues—

Will other events like ANZAC Day that define and underpin the fabric of our society be cancelled next?

I know that the RSL has had to considerably beef up its insurance provisions for Anzac Day ceremonies, which undoubtedly most members will go to shortly. The environment council goes on to say—

We seek action from your Government to address the crisis facing community groups. It is apparent that the State's alternative scheme established in late 2002 has failed to deliver affordable public liability premiums for many if not most community groups, and that this scheme might not continue.

The positive role played by community-based organizations such as ours is in jeopardy because we are being forced by prohibitively expensive quotes for public liability insurance to abandon many of our regular public events, including essential annual fundraising events, that are pivotal to our operations.

We all know how important the operations of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council are. It acts in a watchdog capacity to help ensure our environment is protected. All of us who live and work on the Sunshine Coast know that is why we went to live there and why most people choose to do so. The letter goes on to state—

In past years the SCEC's public liability premium has been $1103 for our activities, including annual fundraising events, quarterly regional meetings etc.

Last year our insurer refused to include our main fundraising events in our public liability insurance policy and stated that we would have to obtain a separate quote for each event.

This is an absolute nonsense. The letter continues—

In August 2002 we had to cancel the Coolum Wildflower Show—

That is an amazing wildflower show. In Coolum we still have one of the rare stands of wildflowers in wallum country that used to be all over the Sunshine Coast. To have to cancel that I think was quite disastrous. Of course, that was one of the council's major fundraising and educational activities. The quote for public liability insurance for that event alone was $2,200. The letter continues—

The amount quoted for public liability cover was well in excess of the revenue normally raised from the event. Instead of making a modest profit, the cost for public liability cover would have turned it into a loss-making event.

The council has urged the government to look at the role insurance companies play. I have said before in this House that fingers have been pointed at a number of reasons for this problem—the collapse of HIH, the global situation with insurance and some lawyers offering no-win, no-fee arrangements and being dubbed as ambulance chasers; that is only, one should stress, some lawyers—but very little scrutiny has been given to insurance companies, per se. I have said before that insurance companies should have to take into consideration the risk profile of the community groups. Many of these groups have never made a claim and would not in anyone's estimation have a high risk profile. This is not really being taken into consideration by these companies.

Ms Nolan: You are a Liberal member!

Mrs SHELDON: I am quite surprised at the stupidity of the interjection by the member, saying that I am a Liberal member. We have a right to know these things, too.

Time expired.

Fraser Coast Health Service District Council; Bayhaven Nursing Home

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (11.55 a.m.): The Fraser Coast Health Service District Council is a body of community representatives who very generously give their time and expertise in providing advice to Queensland Health regarding the health needs of Hervey Bay, Maryborough and the surrounding districts. It has a legislative function to identify and assess the health service needs of people living in the council's district or who may use public sector services delivered in its district.

In carrying out that charter, the district health council resolved earlier this year to consider establishing a new stroke and post-operative rehabilitation unit and extend renal services at the Hervey Bay Hospital, to be funded from the transfer of ownership of the Bayhaven Nursing Home at Point Vernon to the not-for-profit non-government aged care sector. The proposal was put out to a wide public consultation process to determine whether it represented a clear community advantage. I congratulate the health service chairman, Dr Paul Cotton, and the district health manager, Mike Allsopp, for the very sensitive way in which they have consulted particularly with the people who are most likely to be concerned about this proposal—the existing residents of Bayhaven and their families.

This proposal is not a political one which has come from the top down, from the minister. It is a community proposal which has come from the ground up, with the aim of significantly improving health services on the Fraser Coast, particularly for the elderly. It is therefore a matter of deep regret that the National Party opposition, through the actions of its health spokesperson, Miss Simpson, has chosen to shamelessly politicise this issue and also needlessly cause anxiety to Bayhaven's residents and their families.

Despite the district health council making it crystal clear that no concessional nursing home beds would be lost to Hervey Bay and no resident would be disadvantaged, Miss Simpson was reported in the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* on 14 March making the claim that elderly residents would be turfed out. This is disgraceful scaremongering aimed at terrorising elderly residents. It is beneath contempt and was seen so by the Fraser Coast's residents. The editorial in the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* the following day said it all: 'Fiona, please butt out of our health system'. I will quote from the editorial, written by Mrs Nancy Bates, for the benefit of members. It states—

Miss Fiona Simpson is trying to make political capital by stirring up our community with stupid, inflammatory and ill-informed statements about the Fraser Coast District Health Service.

The National Party spokesperson for health should be relieved of her portfolio if she intends to continue in this vein in the months leading up to the election.

She will do neither her party nor the citizens of the Fraser Coast any favours by indulging in cheap politicking, stirring up fears and creating unrealistic expectations among the citizens.

...

Bayhaven is not to close, no patient is to be disadvantaged and no nursing beds are to be lost to the Bay.

As always we have the hysteria lobby creating undue anxiety. Miss Simpson is out there with them.

As Health Minister Wendy Edmond revealed she had given the health council approval to explore the options.

...

The health council is delighted by Ms Edmond's decision to allow the community to have real input into how it manages its health affairs.

Miss Simpson's highly emotive nonsense about the elderly 'being turfed out' of Bayhaven should be treated with contempt. Anyone who recklessly alarms elderly patients and their relatives is not responsible enough to be a minister.

That is not an ALP assessment of Miss Simpson's performance. That is the *Fraser Coast Chronicle*, which has certainly never in its history been described as a Labor rag. One would think that after receiving a belting like that, the National Party's health spokesperson might pull her head in, but no. A week later she carried on with the same untruthful and discredited scare campaign, this time in last Thursday's edition of the *Hervey Bay City Independent*.

She accused me of representing my party, not my constituents, but conveniently ignored the fact that this proposal is being driven by the community, not the government. If she were here in Australia today she might learn a little about that; but no, she is overseas instead of being in parliament. Miss Simpson is recklessly irresponsible and completely out of touch with the health issues and community concerns on the Fraser Coast. I am happy to listen to people, the minister is happy to listen to people, to work with the district health council and to have those views taken into account. Miss Simpson, however, has shown herself to be disdainful of the health needs of Maryborough and Hervey Bay's residents in her desire to score political points. In doing so, she has aligned herself with the hysteria lobby and shown herself to not be responsible enough to be a minister.

Finally, I would like to offer my best wishes to my recently retired neighbour, Dr John Kingston. He was always a complete gentlemen in his dealings with me on issues of joint concern as well as on the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee, and I wish him all the best for the future. Health care is a serious issue and it needs serious attention, and Fiona Simpson is not up to it.

Racing Industry

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (12.00 p.m.): Racing is Queensland's third largest industry and it has been dealt a devastating blow by the Beattie Labor government. I am calling today on the Beattie government to inject some money into racing. It is a key industry for Queensland. It provides employment, it helps small business and it provides for social enjoyment.

The problems that racing is facing come from a couple of sources, and they should be identified. First of all, the TAB will be moving from a system of set payments to a formula for distribution of funds. This will mean about a $2.5 million shortfall on current figures from what is being paid into racing for prize money by UNiTAB at the moment.

Secondly, negotiations will take place with Sky Channel, and it is understood those negotiations for the renewal of that contract will lead to about another $2.5 to $3 million loss. So it is probably in the order of $5 to $6 million less for racing at a time when racing needs an injection of funds so that city, regional and country racing can be boosted to compete with interstate racing and all the other surrounding events and attractions. To hit country racing with the cuts that have been made is an absolute disaster for country racing and the real grassroots of racing. We all know that if we have good grassroots it will flow through and provide for the elite forms of racing, whether that is at the city tracks or the major regional tracks.

Some 32 clubs now have no racing whatsoever and other clubs have been decimated. Some of them are great clubs, like Bell. People travel from all over the downs and Toowoomba to go to the Bell races. It has a wonderful track. Flinton has lost its race meeting; again, a great race meeting. It is a once a year event at Flinton. Wyandra runs an excellent race meeting once a year, the only real social event of the year. Cooktown had three race meetings a year and has lost the lot. There is virtually no racing left whatsoever in the Cape, north of Cairns. Mount Perry is one of the best race tracks in Queensland, with literally thousands of people attending race meetings. They come in bus loads. Mount Perry has had its race meetings dramatically reduced.

Places such as Springsure have been affected. Dawson has had its race meetings cut from five to two. I was at the Burdekin race track the other day and they are terribly disappointed in their local member not standing up for them. At Home Hill they have dropped from 11 races down to 7 and at Gladstone from 17 down to 12. The story goes on and on. Mount Perry, which I

mentioned before, has been cut from two to zero. That is all the thanks they get for running such a great club.

What the racing industry needs is a fair and just allocation of funds from the government. Currently the government receives almost $60 million a year from the TAB and does not return anything—nothing at all—to racing other than a paltry $2 million a year which is used for integrity and safety purposes at tracks. Would people not think that for the third biggest industry in the state, an industry that provides so many jobs for people, particularly in unskilled areas like strappers, stablehands, transport operators and lucerne farmers, the government would return a little bit of the $60 million it gets from the TAB each year and puts in its own coffers?

The National Party is prepared to do this. We are prepared to put in a minimum of $10 million per year. That will be part of our racing policy: to inject those funds to be spread across city, country and regional racing and to provide some support to the greyhound and harness racing industries which are contracting day by day under this government.

Greyhound racing at the Beenleigh track, which has been going for decades and decades in the electorate of the Minister for State Development, is going to be closed down. In Toowoomba, harness racing has been fighting through the court system to get back their racing dates, as these race dates have been taken away from Toowoomba. Rocklea harness racing is going to be closed down. Redcliffe is going to lose its TAB status and the contracting of the industry will not do any good. It will not get more people to participate. It will not arouse interest in racing. Some 17 show societies this year were not able to have harness racing because the Harness Racing Council of Australia was unable to get insurance for these show societies which in some cases have run harness racing for decades.

The Beattie government has turned its back on racing in this state. It has turned its back on country racing. The minister stands up and says, 'It is not our problem. It is Queensland Racing, this independent body we have got.' It is a government of cowardice. It is a government that walks away from the real issue. It is a government that does not understand the importance of racing to Queensland country, and the National Party will support it with a minimum of $10 million extra.

Breaking the Unemployment Cycle

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (12.05 p.m.): The Beattie government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative has proven to be a great success in the Mackay electorate. Since 1998 under the initiative, 34 projects have been approved and more than $3 million of funding allocated. I welcome the recently released initiative review prepared by the Department of Employment and Training which evaluates the outcomes and impacts of the initiative and outlines strong grounds for our government to consider continuing this initiative.

When our government was elected in 1988, we set ourselves the goal of creating jobs across Queensland and breaking the unemployment cycle as one of the vehicles for achieving that goal, particularly creating jobs for those most at risk of remaining unemployed. We started it in October 1998, and our first aim was 24,500 jobs over four years. Because of the reception the initiative received—we achieved that target in April 2001—we increased our goal to 34,500 jobs over five years and then to more than 56,000 jobs over six years.

At June 2002, 43,000 long-term unemployed, disadvantaged and other job seekers had been assisted into employment, and we have since passed the 50,000 mark, and are therefore well and truly on target to achieve our goal of 56,000 jobs by June 2004.

In assessing the overall impact of the initiative, the review states that the public sector employment program has been the most effective in achieving ongoing employment for jobseekers, in particular, those aged 15 to 20 years, indigenous people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds, with 80 per cent or more of those groups finding employment. This is in stark contrast to members opposite, who did not even have a policy going into the last election, except to provide some assistance for travel in seeking employment. I think it is about $70,000 all up.

About 55 per cent of job seekers who participated in the Community Jobs Plan achieved ongoing employment, and 60 per cent of participants in the Community Employment Assistance Program. The review also makes favourable comparisons between projects under this state government's initiative and similar federal government programs. For instance, the review points out that the Community Jobs Plan cost $9,552 per person who participated, compared with the

previous Commonwealth government's New Work Opportunities program, which cost $10,600 per person.

Whilst this is not a dramatic difference, the Queensland government's program has ongoing employment outcomes nearly two and a half times greater. A significant difference is that Queensland's employment programs are voluntary, whereas equivalent Commonwealth programs may be obligatory. One of the review's recommended changes to future initiatives is closer cooperation with the Commonwealth government to avoid duplication.

In Mackay, 20 Community Jobs Plan projects have been approved for grants totalling $2.38 million for sponsor organisations to employ 243 long-term unemployed, or those at risk of experiencing long-term unemployment, on a range of public works, environmental and community projects. Twelve Community Employment Assistance Program projects have been approved for grants totalling $623,375 for sponsor organisations to assist 927 long-term unemployed, or those at risk, with 254 gaining jobs upon the completion of projects. Two Get Set for Work Program projects were approved in 2001-02 for grants totalling $181,950 for sponsor organisations to assist 46 unemployed early school leavers aged 14 to 24 years, with 22 gaining jobs upon the completion of projects. Since the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative began, 1,296 jobs have been created in the Mackay area.

There are many outstanding examples of the impact of the Breaking the Unemployment program in Mackay. The Bayersville Resource Recovery Centre received a grant of $228,682 to employ 27 people to participate in a community education program on reducing, re-using and recycling. The centre has been the host organisation to a number of other projects and trainees. Green industries is a growth area and no doubt the skills learnt by participants will stand them in good stead for future work. While the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle has been shown to be of enormous benefit to at risk unemployed people, the benefits derived by the wider community from works completed under the initiatives projects are noteworthy.

In Mackay, Community Jobs Plan project participants have completed the restoration of Illawong Beach, work on stage 1 of the riverside boardwalk, the beautification of the Forgan Smith Bridge and park, and work on the fantastic Mackay Veterans Support Centre which provides counselling and meeting facilities—

Time expired.

Yarwun-Targinnie Property, Compensation

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.12 p.m.): I rise to speak on behalf of a group of families who live in the Yarwun-Targinnie area. The issue that they have had to grapple with over the last three or four years is that of industrial impacts on their homes and their quality of life. At the time that the impacts initially started, a small number of landowners indicated that they wished to be relocated. Because of the complexities of the air shed in the area in which they live, some homes in the Yarwun-Targinnie area are significantly affected by emissions from one particular plant and from industry generically, and others were not. The emissions were, in my description, fugitive in that some homes are affected and others in quite close proximity are not.

I have spoken in this chamber before about their situation and said that because of the dappled nature of impact the government should accept any detriment. The Minister for State Development had already indicated that if there were to be any buy-outs it would be the whole lot. The government could not afford an ad hoc ownership of properties. It has been my view that because of the detriment—and the detriment was outside these landowners' control—and as the government approved the project, it should carry any disadvantage.

After a period of community consultation, however, the State Development Minister made the decision and announced that the state development area would extend. For many people, that was a relief. They wanted some light at the end of the tunnel. They wanted to know that they would have an opportunity to relocate and to re-establish themselves in an area where they could enjoy being home. The government appointed Herron Todd White as valuers. They went to each property in the declared area and valued those properties. In the interim, some property owners were looking at alternate sites. Some people have contacted my office to say that because the offers from the government had not been received they had missed out on properties that they felt may have been suitable. However, at the end of last week the first of the round of offers were posted to the landowners.

The reaction by the community was volatile, to say the least. I shall quote what a few of the landowners said. I say to the House that these are reasonable people. They are not unreasonable. They have purchased at Yarwun-Targinnie. Many have small crops—mango trees, fruit trees of some description. I have been to quite a lot of their public meetings, and they are not unreasonable. I quote—

Targinnie residents yesterday labelled offers by the state government for their properties as insulting and contemptuous and have refused to leave their homes. As the first round of offers were received this week residents lashed out, arguing they would not be sufficiently compensated. The Department of State Development had commissioned Gladstone valuers Herron Todd White to value the properties in the extended state development area but Jim Seiler said he 'could've cried' as he read the offer of $270,000 for his property. 'My wife Irene did—we had our property valued recently at around $450,000,' Mr Seiler said. 'We would've settled for $350,000 because we knew we were going to get screwed but we did not expect this. I told them what they could do with their offer. Jenelle Rutherford said she was stunned and disgusted. 'They've insulted our intelligence—I wonder where they got the value from,' Mrs Rutherford said. She said she had been keeping an eye on property prices in Beecher and Calliope.

Those two areas are the closest in our region that approximate the soil and the living conditions of Yarwun and Targinnie. The quote continues—

'They are not compensating us at all. It's not even the value of our house and land,' Mrs Rutherford said. 'The offer has fallen $100,000 short.'

These quotes go on, but because of time I shall not continue with them. In the Gladstone region, as the Housing Minister has already indicated, property markets are overheated. People in the Yarwun-Targinnie area do not want more than what they need. They want to be able to replace the properties that they have now with the assets that they have established on those properties in another area. They want like for like. They are not asking for more. They are asking to be relocated in an area where property prices are high. The ability to get a builder to build a house is very difficult because of other development occurring. These people, because of decisions made outside of their control for the benefit of the broader community—and no-one argues with those decisions—deserve to be treated fairly. That is what they are asking for. They are asking to be able to move their assets, their facilities, to a like area.

Student Homelessness

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (12.17 p.m.): Before I begin I would like to table a non-conforming petition regarding the report of the contemporary visual arts and craft inquiry by the federal government.

I actually wish to bring to the House's attention the reality of student homelessness and a proactive project taking place in the electorate of Clayfield to support and decrease the number of homeless students. Community Connections and the Queensland Youth Housing Coalition undertook a research project over 2001 and 2002 to investigate the accommodation and support needs of homeless and at risk secondary school students. This research project formed the basis of the final report, Finding a Home in the Smart State. One component of the research project was to investigate, and the other was a community development exercise to explore the needs of the local school community in the north-east corridor of Brisbane in terms of responding to student homelessness.

The primary outcome of this component was the pursuit of funding to develop and implement a community placement program in the local area. Three state high schools in the Brisbane north-east corridor have agreed to the trial, which is fantastic. It is an innovative program called Smart Housing, run in conjunction with Community Connections, a community based organisation situated in the Clayfield electorate, to address issues of student homelessness and early school leaving. Smart Housing is a local initiative providing family based respite accommodation to secondary school students aged between 13 and 18 experiencing difficulties in the family home. These difficulties may lead to the young person leaving home, leaving school or both. Smart Housing aims to prevent this from occurring. Host families will accommodate students for up to 12 weeks, during which time students and their families will be supported and/or referred to counselling, financial or health services as needed.

The goal of Smart Housing is for young people to return home and finish their schooling with the support and care of their own family. Alternatives will be explored where this is not possible. The program is voluntary. Parents must give their consent and students must agree to participate. A recruitment drive for host families is currently under way. Students will begin to be accommodated with host families from May 2003 onwards. Smart Housing is a 12-month pilot

program from October 2002 to 2003. The program will be evaluated and if found to be successful further funding will be supported, which I will be striving for because it is such a fantastic initiative.

Community Connections is keen to extend the initial 12-month pilot project to three years, which I think is really fantastic, to better assess its effectiveness. We need that three years. Yes, we are thankful for the 12-month pilot but we need the three years. In addition, Community Connections and the Queensland Youth Housing Coalition would like to see further research into the extent of informal community placement and an investigation of how it is happening, benefits, needs, et cetera; and further research into the extent of students living independently and the issues and needs of these students.

I congratulate the work by Community Connections staff, in particular, Jan Logan, Louise Villanova and Alice Thompson. They conducted incredible work on researching, developing and implementing this fantastic model. I know of the work they have put into this and I support what they have done. I strongly encourage all members to explore various opportunities to combat student homelessness in their electorate to ensure that young people have the best prospects of education and/or seeking employment.

Education Queensland's Framework for Students at Educational Risk is the state government's response to this social challenge. It is the government's aim that the proportion of young people completing year 12 or equivalent will by 2010 match that projected for leading OECD countries of 88 per cent. The framework states that 'failure of many students is related to factors such as poverty, health, family pressures, including violence and housing'. The policy statement recognises the critical need to enlist appropriate support and collaboration from a range of government agencies, relevant local agencies and businesses and industry to support students who are at educational risk. I congratulate the Minister for Education, Anna Bligh, on the development of this fantastic framework, as it has provided a guideline for a dynamic community organisation to develop an innovative project to combat student homelessness.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jarratt): Order! Before calling the honourable member for Hinchinbrook, I welcome to the public gallery Year 7 students from Middle Park State School in the electorate of Mount Ommaney.

Banana Industry

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (12.20 p.m.): Bananas are worth $240 million to the Queensland economy. The Tully Valley has been under a cloud with the outbreak of black sigatoka, a fungal disease not normally prevalent in Queensland. In 1996 there was an outbreak at Alexander Farms, an organic farm north of the Daintree River, which caused concern within the industry. The detection of black sigatoka on the Daintree farm was taken very seriously, as it was only a few hundred kilometres from the main commercial farming groups at Babinda extending down to Tully, where the bulk of the Australian crop is grown.

The decision was made that if the eradication of black sigatoka was to be accomplished, the 35 hectares had to be totally destroyed and left to fallow for two years to ensure the fungal supports were no longer present. The industry responded to the loss sustained by the grower of Alexander Farms by levying 10c per carton to raise $340,000. The farm had made a range of significant gains in growing organic bananas through the planting of legumes to increase nitrogen levels, and the hot water treatment of weeds and grasses. It also had a deleafing program to reduce other fungal problems.

At that time, Alexander Farms was sending its bananas to a Japanese marketing group and had adopted an organic certificate program acceptable to Japan for the entry of fruit, despite the presence of the papaya fruit fly. There have been a number of instances of black sigatoka on the cape, with the Banana Industry Protection Board dealing with the situation. Through regular monitoring and $350,000 of industry funding, in coordination with the DPI, a replacement program of resistant varieties was put in place to stem the likelihood of this fungal disease spreading to a larger section of the far-north Queensland region of the state. But despite the surveillance carried out by the industry, an outbreak occurred in feral bananas on the southern bank of the Tully River and was reported on 4 April 2001. This was of great concern as this was the first time there had been a report of black sigatoka in a major commercial growing area of this state and in the industry. Quarantine areas were designated to contain the outbreak. A range of protocols was developed, including eradication and compensation for the affected growers. But despite best endeavours, the fungal disease spread to a point where eradicating crops in the Tully Valley was no longer an option.

With scientific advice it was thought the best option for combating black sigatoka was a program of deleafing and the application of the best available fungicides. This required regular inspections to be carried out to make certain that if further outbreaks occurred they would be treated and observed in order to reduce the spread. Growers, the Commonwealth and state governments in banana growing states contributed to the program. The last sigatoka found in commercial fields was in August 2001. There was a campaign of destroying feral bananas, as they were a potential source of infection. Councils in the Cardwell and Johnstone shires, with the cooperation of the industry, ran a program of eliminating bananas in backyards. It was likely, as with the feral bananas, that they could pose a threat of carrying the infection and the spores. Strong community support was an important part of the outcome.

The coordination of aerial spraying operators and growers with their own ground-spraying equipment played an integral part in ensuring regular applications took place. Restrictions placed on areas within the quarantine zone prevented the sale of crops, which were cut and left to rot on the ground for up to three weeks before markets accepted the protocols. During the eradication programs, while waiting for funds to be made available from the federal government, the state DPI continued to support the industry.

On 24 March the ban was lifted to sell bananas to Western Australia below the 26th parallel. Western Australian banana growers lodged an unsuccessful appeal against the decision. QFVG coordinated the industry's team of field staff in the world's first black sigatoka eradication program in bananas.

Time expired.

Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Plan

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.25 p.m.): Last Tuesday, 18 March, I had the pleasure of being invited to the Queensland Police Service Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Plan launch at Roma Street Police Headquarters. The Police Minister, Tony McGrady, and the Police Commissioner, Bob Atkinson, took part in the program for the launch. I was joined by the members for Springwood, Broadwater and Woodridge, members of the minister's backbench committee, who also support the strategy.

The commissioner pointed out that the Queensland Police Service provided a broad range of policing services to the Queensland community. There is also a need to ensure that the services provided continue to be appropriate and relevant within a rapidly changing environment. To assist with service delivery, the Beattie government has increased the number of police by 1,400 since first elected in 1998. The domestic violence strategic plan has been developed very carefully. These plans are organised through an environmental scan and with extensive consultation. The environmental scan assists to identify issues likely to affect policing services associated with domestic violence in Queensland in the future.

It is important that the Queensland Police Service play an integral part in partnership with other government and community agencies to provide an effective, professional and timely response to domestic violence matters. This means working in conjunction with the Department of Families, the Department of Housing and relevant community help organisations. Domestic violence is clearly seen as being a significant social issue affecting communities right across Queensland. As far as the government is concerned, recent amendments to this legislation have broadened definitions so as to ensure that the criminal justice response is in keeping with social and family issues relevant to current living.

The Police Service is currently engaged in significant advances in the area of quality information to guide analysis trends and continuous improvement in the policing of domestic violence. This research assists with planning and the allocation of resources. The guiding principles of the strategic plan ensure a policing service is provided to the Queensland community which reflects the safety of the victim and awareness of the impact of domestic and family violence on all parties involved in understanding the cultural or specific needs groups issues and appropriate and accountable response to all calls of service.

Different cultures may have different ideas and behaviours that are acceptable within their family unit. This can be difficult for police to deal with. However, domestic violence behaviour in our country is totally unacceptable. The strategic plan will employ corporate management practices. It will provide the information systems and administrative support structures required for a dedicated strategic policing response. It will provide proactive, problem-orientated policing responses to reduce and prevent further abuse, serious assaults and death within domestic

settings, and it will continually seek to enhance service delivery and reduce the impact of violence by means of policing partnerships to provide a multiagency integrated response across government departments and community agencies.

There are three goals within the strategic plan. Goal 1 is to employ best practice policing responses to domestic and family violence; goal 2 is through strategic partnerships, which will contribute to the position of best practice responses to domestic and family violence; and goal 3 is to support the provision of a best practice policing response to domestic and family violence. Members will see from the strategic goals provided by the Queensland Police Service that this strategy is very specific and detailed. Domestic violence occurs when one partner in a relationship uses his or her violent and/or abusive behaviour in order to control and dominate the other partner. The behaviour can include physical abuse, damaged property, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, financial abuse, harassment or intimidation or the threat of any of those previously mentioned. No person has the right to use violent and/or abusive behaviour in order to control another individual.

Police are required to use a large number of legislative authorities each day in their policing duties when responding to incidents of domestic violence. Some of these issues can be quite complex and sensitive at the same time and must be handled with the utmost care. Police have certain responsibilities and powers that they can apply to domestic violence incidents. A domestic violence order can be taken out. This order tells the respondent that their behaviour is unacceptable and places restrictions on the behaviour of the respondent by listing a number of conditions with which they must comply. With the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act, the violent and abusive behaviour must be between people who are in a domestic relationship defined by the act.

Time expired.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jarratt): Order! The time for matters of public importance has expired.

SOUTH BANK CORPORATION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.31 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the South Bank Corporation Act 1989, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.32 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the South Bank Corporation and Other Acts Amendment Bill. The South Bank Corporation Act 1989 established the corporation in 1989 to promote, facilitate, carry out and control the development, disposal and management of land and other property within the former site of Expo 88. However, the corporation's role has evolved considerably over the past 14 years, as we would expect it would. It is now responsible for managing a vibrant public space in the heart of Brisbane. South Bank is popular with residents—especially families—and visitors, who enjoy a variety of activities including barbeques, swimming, watching fireworks and celebrating public events as diverse as Australia Day, International Women's Day and 'Buddha's Birthday'.

The South Bank Corporation and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2003 amends the objects and functions of the corporation to acknowledge the dual development and management roles of the corporation. Significantly, it also acknowledges the corporation's social and environmental goals. This will ensure that activities in the area complement activities in other major public use sites in the central business district.

The administration of the South Bank Corporation Act 1989 also relies on legislation that has since been repealed, in particular the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act 1990. This has prompted concerns that many of the act's provisions for planning and development approval no longer apply or have become irrelevant. The bill substantially amends parts 4 and 5 of the act to replicate development and approval outcomes and processes instituted under the Integrated Planning Act 1997. This will facilitate the eventual integration of the corporation area into the city plan, once development is complete. Importantly, the amendments do not give the corporation any additional powers with respect to planning and development of the corporation area, and I want to underline that.

The bill also addresses inconsistencies in the act that have resulted from successive amendments. It removes the ambiguity surrounding Brisbane City Council's role in approving development, by clearly providing that development is exempt from the Brisbane city plan until development is complete. The bill now also provides for the corporation to transfer land in fee simple to other than the council, and on the minister's consent—and I happen to be the minister—to make minor boundary adjustments. The capacity to make minor boundary adjustments is needed to ensure effective management of the corporation area, and prevent possible disputes over future land management.

The bill amends schedule 7 of the act to provide for resolution without dissent. That removes the need for a unanimous resolution of any motion. Activities of bodies corporate in the South Bank corporation area are governed by a modified Building Units and Group Titles Act. The current provisions state that a unanimous resolution requires a positive vote by every member of the body corporate and their mortgagees. The amendment reflects the current legislative practice of the Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997, which allows for resolutions without dissent. This provision avoids the need to seek a positive vote from every owner and mortgagee. However, it continues to protect their interests.

South Bank has become one of the most exciting and attractive parts of our city. What we have to do is ensure that the legislation governing it reflects the changes that have taken place over the past 14 years. The government has had a strategy of integrating South Bank with the Roma Street Parkland and other major inner-city facilities. The North Bank development will enhance it even further. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (12.36 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Corrective Services Act 2000, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (12.37 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The stated purpose of the Corrective Services Act 2000 is community safety and crime prevention. In my time as Minister for Corrective Services, I have never lost sight of that objective. Indeed, the bill I introduce today shares these goals.

The majority of the legislative provisions in the act commenced effective on 1 July 2001. In practical terms, the act has now been in operation for over 18 months. This period has been sufficient to identify areas of the act which require amendment to ensure that operational objectives can be lawfully achieved with clarity and certainty. Generally, the amendments

achieved through this bill will result in changes within the existing legislative framework and the clarification of current powers.

In summary, the bill will amend the Corrective Services Act as follows: it will allow the chief executive, in appropriate cases, to classify remand prisoners as maximum security. If they pose a high risk of escape or inflicting death or serious injury on other prisoners, an order can then be made for the prisoner to be accommodated in a maximum security facility. It will make clear that if the chief executive reasonably believes that a prisoner released to the community under a conditional release order has contravened the order, or is being charged with committing an offence, the chief executive may suspend or cancel the order and issue a warrant for the prisoner's arrest and return to custody.

Conditional release is a scheme that rewards prisoners serving relatively short sentences who have been of good conduct and industry by allowing them to be released to the community to serve the last weeks or months of their sentence. It is a conditional release only, not an unconditional discharge. These changes will give prisoners a real incentive to ensure that they stay on the right side of the law. If they breach a condition of their conditional release order or are charged with committing a further offence, they can be made to serve out the remaining part of their sentence in custody.

The bill will insert a new offence provision into the act which will state that a person who aids someone that the person knows or ought reasonably know is a prisoner unlawfully at large then they commit an offence. The maximum penalty for committing this offence will be 100 penalty units or two years imprisonment. This offence provision will act as a deterrent against people knowingly aiding prisoners who are unlawfully at large. The bill will amend the act regarding the use of reasonable force and make it clear that an officer may use all force that is reasonably necessary to restrain a prisoner who is, or attempts to, harming themselves. Where an officer is confronted with a critical situation where a prisoner could die or be seriously injured through self-harm, these provisions will clarify that it is lawful to use the force reasonably necessary to restrain the prisoner for their own protection.

The bill will make clear that, if a person is refused access to a corrective services facility, the chief executive may order that the person also be refused access to other corrective services facilities or indeed all corrective services facilities. This clarification recognises that a visitor who poses a sufficient risk to be refused access to one corrective services facility might pose similar risks at any or all other facilities. The bill sensibly provides that if a visitor is charged with an offence allegedly committed in a corrective services facility the visitor may then be suspended from corrective services facilities until the end of proceedings for the offence. In a similar way to the visitor access issue, the chief executive may order that a visitor who has been suspended from entering one corrective services facility may also be suspended from entering any or all other facilities.

In terms of community safety, the most significant amendments to the act achieved by this bill relate to the suspension or cancellation of a post-prison community based release order where a prisoner poses an unacceptable risk of committing an offence or is preparing to leave Queensland without lawful authority. If the chief executive or a corrections board receive cogent intelligence information that a prisoner on a post-prison community based release order poses an unacceptable ongoing risk of committing an offence or taking flight from the state, the chief executive and boards must be able to protect the community by suspending the order and returning the prisoner to custody. It should be kept in mind that offenders on post-prison community based release are still prisoners serving a period of imprisonment and remain in the statutory custody of the chief executive under the act even though they are in the community.

In weighing the competing interests of the community's need to be protected from unacceptable risks and an administrative grant allowing a prisoner to serve part of their period of imprisonment in the community, the community's need should always prevail if unacceptable risks emerge. Where cogent intelligence information exists, it would not be appropriate to afford a prisoner procedural fairness before suspension because it would increase the risk of the prisoner taking flight. However, to balance this, procedural fairness is afforded to prisoners upon their return to custody. Other changes to the act will clarify the chief executive's power to suspend a post-prison community based release order in circumstances where a prisoner has been charged with committing an offence. Again, I wish to emphasise the supervision of prisoners in the community on post-prison community based release is the statutory responsibility of the chief executive and the boards, not the courts. Accordingly, it is appropriate that the weighing up of the elevated risks that may be indicated by fresh charges is undertaken by corrective services

authorities. Where new risks have been identified in relation to prisoners released to the community under post-prison community based release, community safety will take precedence over a prisoner's administrative grant of release in appropriate cases.

The remaining provisions of the bill are concerned with amendments to the act of a minor or technical nature for the purpose of ensuring consistent use of terminology within the act and to ensure that, as nearly as is possible, the provisions in the act align closely with operational practice. The Beattie Labor government believes that the amendments contained within this bill will further the purpose of community safety and crime prevention in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

MOTOR VEHICLES SECURITIES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (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 Motor Vehicles Securities Act 1986 and the Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Ms Rose, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (12.46 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The objective of this bill is to provide Queensland with a Register for Encumbered Vessels Scheme, a REVS for Boats Scheme. Amendments to the Motor Vehicles Securities Act 1986 and the Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955 are required to implement the REVS for Boats Scheme. This scheme represents an improvement on the original REVS for Boats Scheme which was introduced in 2001 but not yet implemented. The revised scheme is more simple and more workable. It is structured so that when Queensland joins a proposed compulsory national Hull Identification Number system, A HIN system, the data on the REVS for boats register will be compatible.

The HIN is the only identifier that can be relied upon to conclusively identify a boat as it is permanently attached to the boat. The bill will allow financiers seeking to register encumbrances over boats to register them on the REVS system only if the boat has a HIN, which will have to be supplied to the Office of Fair Trading in my department. Provision is made in the bill for security interests over boats, which are now registered on the bills of sale register, to be transferred to the REVS register. The original date of registration will be preserved and no fees will be charged for the transfer. When a financier or potential purchaser does a search on REVS with the HIN of a boat, the search will conclusively identify if it has a registered encumbrance over the boat. Any boats that do not have a HIN will remain on the bills of sale register. The number of boats will gradually decrease over time, as all boats manufactured after 1996 are required to have a HIN.

Vessel theft is a cross-border problem. Only a national HIN system would provide a deterrent for the cross-border trafficking and rebirthing of stolen vessels. Consideration of such a system will be monitored by the Office of Fair Trading and Queensland Transport to identify potential whole-of-government benefits for Queensland. Both agencies are also participants on a Queensland Police steering committee which has been established to review the issue of vessel theft and the need for a national HIN system. The bill further improves the original scheme by allowing for separate registration of security interests over outboard motors. The bill will allow the transfer of all security interests in outboard motors from the bills of sale register to the REVS register. The security interests over the boat and the outboard motor respectively will be registered as separate encumbrances, since over time a boat can have one or more outboard motors that can be easily replaced.

The most effective way of drafting this bill was to repeal the unproclaimed provisions of the 2001 Motor Vehicles Securities and Other Acts Amendment Act, which I will call the 2001 amending act, and to replace them with redrafted provisions. The bill therefore also includes other provisions of the 2001 amending act, unrelated to the REVS for Boats Scheme but mentioning boats, which were also not proclaimed.

These amendments fall into two categories. The first category of amendments relates to recommendations made by the National Working Party on the National Vehicle Security Register project. They are mainly of a legal, technical nature relating to the rules governing extinguishment of security interests on sale of the vehicle and the rules governing priorities between competing interests. The amendments aim to eliminate inconsistencies between the REVS legislation in the various states and territories. The amendments in the second category are miscellaneous amendments, aimed at streamlining procedures and correcting current administrative anomalies, including the validation of the collection of a renewal fee.

This bill will be welcomed by financiers and the boating industry, and it introduces a new area of consumer protection by implementing the REVS for boats project. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

LAND LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (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 acts administered by the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines.

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) (12.51 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The legislation before this House, the Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2003, proposes to amend five pieces of legislation: the Aboriginal Land Act 1991, the Land Act 1994, the Mineral Resources Act 1989, the Valuation of Land Act 1944 and the Valuers Registration Act 1992.

Shelburne Bay has been identified by government and independent scientists as an area of extraordinary environmental significance. In studies spanning 25 years, the fundamental importance of protecting that environment and recognising native title rights in the area has been highlighted. Cape York Peninsula, in its entirety, is an area of unique significance. The joint state and Commonwealth government Cape York Peninsula Land Use Study recognised this and was implemented to ensure that any decisions about land use on the cape were appropriate.

After wide public consultation, Shelburne Bay was identified as an initial priority area to receive government support, to ensure that the area's natural values were protected. A major obstacle to the complete protection of Shelburne Bay was the continued existence of two mining leases, which were originally granted in February 1975 and subsequently renewed for further 14-year terms in 1989. These leases have never been mined.

The outcry against sand mining in Shelburne Bay has come from many quarters—the Wilderness Society, the Australian Conservation Foundation and Shelburne's traditional owners to name a few. They have all appealed to successive state governments to permanently protect the area by not renewing those mining leases. In recognition of those concerns and of the unique environmental and cultural significance of the area, this government proposes to ensure that the protection of the area will be permanent by legislating to guarantee that it will never be mined.

The first stage of this guarantee already exists through the establishment of restricted area number 168, gazetted under the provisions of the Mineral Resource Regulation 1990. The restricted area, which will remain in place until this government determines the best way to ensure

complete protection of Shelburne, prohibits any application for or grant of a mining tenement in the future. The proposed amendment to the Mineral Resources Act builds on this by providing that the two remaining mining leases on Shelburne Bay be cancelled.

There will be no provision for compensation to the holder of those leases. This was not a decision that was taken lightly, but that is completely justifiable. It would be completely nonsensical to keep renewing these leases, knowing full well that the land has never been mined and will never be mined and that it is highly unlikely that the Commonwealth government will ever issue an export licence for the sand at Shelburne.

I want to make it completely clear to the House that this provision will only affect these two mining leases. It should not, and will not, create a precedent for the future. The situation at Shelburne is as unique as Shelburne itself, requiring a specific, tailored solution. On this point, I note the Queensland Mining Council's response to this point and welcome their support of this provision as a unique solution to a unique problem.

Very recently the honourable member for Robina asked whether this government put the environment ahead of potential lease revenue from these mining leases. This amendment shows that the answer is a resounding yes. This government takes responsibility for difficult decisions and, after considering the complex web of factors surrounding this issue, we are taking action to protect the sand dunes of Shelburne Bay to benefit Queenslanders today and in the future.

On the surface, an amendment to the Land Act to include a definition of the term 'agriculture' might seem minor. However, consultation with lessees of state leasehold land and other key stakeholders has shown us that many land-holders seeking to diversify are looking to forestry as a new way to generate sound business from that land. My department's recent administrative decisions have allowed this activity on leasehold lands, but it is important to the long-term stability of the industry that we make that trend permanent and transparent.

By including forestry in the definition of 'agriculture' as a land use permitted on agricultural leases, this amendment will deliver much-needed clarity and certainty to land-holders. Naturally, if a lessee needs to clear any vegetation for the purposes of those forestry activities, that tree clearing will require the usual permits from my department—just like any other large-scale clearing on leasehold land.

This bill also includes a number of amendments to the Valuation of Land Act, the majority of which clarify or update that act to reflect changes in other, associated legislation.

Traditionally, state leasehold lands have been valued as an undivided whole for local government rating and state land rental purposes. However, several provisions in the act suggest that an option exists to value separately any parts of these lands which have been subleased. We are making this change to clarify the current approach, following periodic requests from local governments for valuations of parts of the leases. Again, the amendments that provide for this change only reflect, clarify and codify traditional policy and practice.

Leasehold lands that are subleased to a government owned corporation will not be subject to this amendment, and neither will any land a GOC further leases to another party. This maintains the approach of issuing separate valuations and notices to these sublessees, who are the owners for valuation and rating purposes. An example of this lies in the leases held by Queensland Transport, which subleases rail corridor lands to Queensland Rail. Queensland Rail in turn leases part of that land to other parties. The lessees who hold these derivative leases need to remain the 'owners' for valuation and rating purposes.

Another amendment ensures that any GOC or water authority land lessees are recognised as the owners for valuation purposes, which allows these owners to receive the valuation notices and also gives them the right of objection. Currently, the act only mentions lessees of Queensland Rail and port authorities to be considered owners. By extending the definition of 'owner' to cover other lessees of GOCs and water authorities we are ensuring consistency and making sure that the people who pay the rates are recognised as the owners for valuation purposes.

Another amendment to section 6(2) differentiates between the approach taken to valuing land leased from GOCs or from the government and the approach that applies when a GOC owns the land outright. When a lessee is the owner for rating purposes, the current definition of the term 'improvements' does not include the value of any invisible improvements not paid for by the owner in determining the overall value of the property's improvements. However, when a GOC owns the land in its own right those invisible improvements—like filling—are considered an

improvement in the same way as buildings. Again, this amendment clarifies current practice and ensures consistency for the future.

The Valuation of Land Act currently allows valuations to be changed for a variety of reasons, including changes due to a subdivision or amalgamation of properties, a loss or gain of a right or a privilege that affects the land's value, the impact of a planning change, or change of land use to or from 'farming' purposes. The act also allows the previous financial year's valuation to be altered.

The Local Government Act 1993 allows changes in rates to occur from the date that the change happened. This means that if an event affecting the valuation occurred outside the current time limit and the valuation was not changed then the general rates could not be adjusted. This amendment changes that by allowing appropriate changes to be made to a valuation from the date it should have been altered and subsequently allowing local governments to adjust their rates accordingly.

The chief reason for this amendment is to allow people to receive rate refunds or adjustments as the automatic result of a change in valuation, going back up to three years. It is not a backdated revenue grab for local councils. It is fundamentally about ensuring fairness in the system, making sure that people are paying the appropriate rates—no less and certainly no more. It is a power that will probably not be used extensively, but it is important that it exists. In light of the time, I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

An allied amendment will allow land to be valued if it has become rateable, taxable or subject to rent in the past three years, dealing with valuations of land that has never been valued before.

This doesn't apply to land parcels that have been already valued and then subdivided, or similar events.

At the moment, this section has no time limit, but in the interests of clarity and consistency, a three year time limit will be applied, bringing this provision into line with the amendment dealing with valuation alterations.

Another amendment that will give clarity and permanence to existing practice will remove a redundant provision in the Act directing that valuations ignore the effects of a notice of road realignment from a local government.

In practice, the effects of such a notice are already considered by valuers and by the Land Court in its determinations on valuations.

A tremendously important amendment to this Act will allow my Department to prohibit or limit the distribution of bulk valuation and sales data, which is already supplied to bulk data distributors.

As custodian of land titling, my Department of Natural Resources & Mines maintains a Valuations and Sales database containing the names and addresses of more than one million Queensland property owners.

Valuations and sales data is publicly available information under the Act, and any member of the community can access this information for a prescribed fee.

My Department also provides this information under contract to seven licensed private sector bulk data Distributors who value-add and market property information to industries such as real estate, conveyancing, surveying and mapping, and the general community.

The current contracts allow the supply of valuation roll data including the names and postal addresses of land owners to the wholesalers for on-selling to persons for real estate related usage. This is a legitimate use.

However, what upsets many people is they are receiving personally-addressed letters that turn out to be thinly-disguised direct-marketing junk mail touting for real estate services.

The government believes people have a right to some privacy. We are taking action to stop this practice.

The current contracts with wholesale data brokers expire soon and new contracts will apply from 1 July 2003 for the supply of bulk valuation and sales data.

By giving the Chief Executive of my department the power to prohibit the disclosure, or limit the distribution of, bulk valuation and sales data already supplied to bulk data distributors, it means that these distributors will no longer be permitted to allow the distribution of an owner's name and address for any direct marketing purposes.

This will be achieved by inserting clauses in the new contract agreements with distributors. Any breach of these conditions will result in loss of the agreement.

This Bill also amends the Aboriginal Land Act to ensure that the State meets its major commitments under an Indigenous Land Use Agreement to provide Aboriginal Land Act freehold grants to the Kaurareg people, as native title holders, over most of Horn Island.

The validity of a proposed transfer has been cast into doubt due to the presence of a Sales Permit for quarry materials in favour of the Torres Shire Council, which exists over some areas of the land.

This amendment ensures that the transfer will be valid by declaring the Sales Permit not to be an interest in land for the purposes of regulating land under the Act. It also declares a related regulation, passed in May 2002, to be valid.

Because this declaration only relates to Section 19 of the Act, the rights of the Torres Shire Council in relation to the Sales Permit aren't affected.

This amendment will also enable the transfer of further areas on Horn Island to proceed without requiring the Torres Shire Council to surrender the Sales Permit.

Mr Speaker, these amendments are diverse and wide-ranging, and will affect issues like the privacy of home owners, native title grants, and the protection of a unique and environmentally sensitive area of Queensland's north. By improving the administration of these Acts, they will mean benefits for all Queenslanders.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

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

PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 25 February (see p. 101).

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition (2.30 p.m.): There is no real point in labouring the point here today. The National Party opposition will be supporting the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill. We recognise that it provides an opportunity for people to see democracy in action over and above those who are able to attend parliament, those who watch selected excerpts on television each night that portray parliament, those who listen to the bits and pieces that are picked up on radio and further read what is printed in the print media.

The legislation before us today extends the privileges of parliament to the cyberworld. At the moment, if a member of parliament says something in the House and it is traditionally recorded and broadcast, then the member of parliament is immune from liability; that is, civil liability and defamation. Whilst some people believe—and I would say a minority of people—it is a right which members of parliament enjoy unduly over and above the rest of the community, it is something nevertheless which is an important right for members of parliament to have.

If one goes back to England, which is the foundation of our democracy and our parliamentary process, one would see that freedom of speech for members of parliament is something which has been upheld for many hundreds of years. It is extremely important that members of parliament continue to enjoy the right to be able to stand up here and without fear or favour represent their constituents and, importantly, expose matters of concern from time to time.

In exposing those matters of concern, it could be argued that individuals are sometimes defamed or are misrepresented. Whilst that might be the case in the minority of circumstances, it is certainly not the case in the majority of circumstances. In the time that I have been in this House—just over 13 years—I have seen very few cases where members in a cavalier way have stood up in parliament and sought to abuse their parliamentary privilege; that is, the right to say things in this place without any recourse in the courts to defamation. There have been very rare occasions where members may have been malicious in what they have said. But I think by and large when members stand up in this place and make a statement they do so with good intent and because they believe something needs to be exposed on behalf of a constituent or an organisation.

In some cases the House is used as a last resort, when members are unable to have a matter properly investigated or considered by certain authorities which have gone slow. It has been used during periods of suppression and when little interest has been shown on the part of authorities with regard to certain matters. It is a right which members should always fight to preserve, and we should fight to preserve it in the traditional context.

There have been examples around the world in the United Kingdom and New Zealand where members have sought to lift parliamentary privilege so they are able to take something to court based on what they have said in parliament.

Mr Lawlor: You would be in trouble.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I doubt it. Generally, any approach like that has been fought. I think it is important that what we say in here cannot be impugned or used in any place to prosecute a member of parliament and should not be able to be waived by a member of parliament if they seek to take advantage outside of this chamber.

We know what the rules are currently. What we are debating here today is an opportunity for those particular immunities and privileges to extend further to cover the broadcasting of parliament on the Internet. We know it is going to be real time. We know this will be an

opportunity for people in the community to turn on their computers and listen to what is happening in parliament in real time. I am not necessarily sure that it will be the biggest seller. I am not sure that it is going to outrate the football final.

Mrs Lavarch interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Well, a few people. Mind you, I am surprised that there are 35 people in my electorate who want to receive *Hansard*, let alone people who are going to tune in to listen to parliament. But it is important that those who want to have the opportunity are able to enjoy it.

Hopefully, this will provide a better forum for people to understand parliament in its full context. Sometimes the snippets that we see of parliament each night on television might be the really interesting part of the day which was the most inflammatory, it might be the flash point, it must be the funniest part of the day, but people in the general community or people who are not sitting in the gallery after question time do not get an accurate portrayal of what parliament is all about. That is when we get down to the real work. That is when eight or nine pieces of legislation out of 10 pass this place with bipartisan support and very little contention.

I think this legislation is providing us with an important opportunity. When we pass this legislation, which will provide that parliamentary privilege applies to the broadcast of parliament on the Internet, members will need to be a bit more cautious in what they say in the chamber because it is going to be broadcast in real time.

Thanks to a previous Speaker, the honourable member for Ashgrove, we have a citizen's right of reply. Over a period of time, a citizen's right of reply has been used by numerous people who felt they had been maligned in this place by a member and required the record to be set straight. People have been encouraged to use that process, and they do. As we are going live-to-air over the Internet, if something is said which is found to be demonstrably untrue, even though it may not have been malicious in its intent, the damage may have been done. Even with a citizen's right of reply there is an opportunity for a certain amount of mud to stick.

I note that earlier on when this issue was raised, the Premier—and he alluded to it in his second reading speech—said that there may be an argument to look at including a pause button. A pause button may be able to be applied so that the broadcast is being listened to with a few seconds delay, and if something comes up which is in the grey area—it may be sub judice—an employee of significant discretion and experience would be able to push the button and decide that is something that cannot be relayed for obvious reasons. I would encourage the Premier to inform the parliament of what is happening in that area because that would allay the only concern which I really have. As I said, the National Party opposition has no argument with the bill before the House. We believe that it is an important innovation. We hope that the people of Queensland will now take every opportunity to dial in and listen to parliament on the Internet when it comes to pass.

Mrs Lavarch: Especially our children.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes. The other important issue to consider is that people do have different Internet connections. I hope that this will be equitably available across Queensland. Some people are able to stream in voice and video a lot better than other people are, depending on the quality of the line and the connections. Nevertheless, that will be overcome as technology improves either by way of broadband or satellite. There is not a terribly equitable situation in many areas, but at least as that rolls out there will be an opportunity for people to hear what we say in here in a broader context.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Male): Order! I welcome to the public gallery students and staff of Deception Bay High School in the electorate of Murrumba.

Hon. M.J. FOLEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts) (2.40 p.m.): The privilege of free speech is at the heart of parliamentary democracy. It is the essence of this House that members of parliament should be free to speak out against injustice. It is a doctrine which emerged at a time when the Crown could menace the members of parliament who would speak against the Crown. Accordingly, that privilege of free speech is deeply enshrined in the nature of this institution. This reform is a worthy one. It extends access to the people of Queensland, and indeed to people throughout the world, to the proceedings of this House in a way which is modern, speedy and capable of being stored and transmitted in an easy way. There are, however, dangers associated with the move. I want to reflect a little upon the history of the development of parliamentary privilege in this area.

In 1992 I had the honour of introducing into this parliament a private member's bill entitled the Parliamentary Papers Bill. That subsequently was passed with the unanimous support of members of this House and became the Parliamentary Papers Act. I am pleased to say that that has been incorporated into the ongoing law of Queensland through the Parliament of Queensland Act at the time that the legislation was enacted to consolidate the Constitution Act and the legislation affecting the parliament. That was an important reform at the time, because it gave protection to Hansard staff at various stages of the preparation of *Hansard* prior to its final publication in printed form. It seemed an absurdity to me at the time that an independent record taken by Hansard staff should be subject to restricted access when matters of public debate and contention were hot in the public's mind and reliance had to be placed upon the accounts given by journalists at a time when one had this professional staff devoted to the very task of recording accurately what was said in the parliament.

So that reform enabled a codification of the law of parliamentary papers in a way which sought to preserve the privileges of free speech and to preserve the tradition set out in the Bill of Rights of William and Mary but which sought to accommodate the law to the realities of modern technology. On its face, that is what this legislation seeks to do, also. However, in relation to an Internet broadcast and the files which can be created as a result there is a danger in applying that analogy simply and uncritically to the status of a document or a paper within the meaning of the existing Parliament of Queensland Act.

The danger is this—that there may be words spoken in here which would otherwise be forbidden by the law from being spoken, namely, words that are defamatory, words that identify children who are the subject of child protection proceedings or orders, words that identify the complainants in sexual offence matters before the courts or indeed words that identify an accused person before the courts in sexual offences in those cases where that identity may be protected by the law prior to conviction or prior to trial. Those matters may be cured by the processes of the parliament prior to written publication of the *Hansard* record, but they cannot be cured so promptly in a viva voce broadcast.

There are several issues that flow from that. One is that higher standards will be expected of members of parliament. It will simply be not acceptable for members of parliament to abuse the privilege of the parliament by making such references which could give rise otherwise to a breach of the law and saying that they were unaware or failed to inform themselves. With every step forward there is a corresponding degree of responsibility which members of this House must accept. So it is with this. While the great evil in medieval times was the prospect of the King or the Queen of the day taking revenge upon a parliamentarian who spoke out, so it is that we must guard against the wrong that can flow from an improper or wrong-headed use of free speech in this place to render a speaker immune to the normal laws which govern a free and a civilised society.

I am pleased that in his second reading speech the Premier made reference to that. I am pleased that some awareness is apparent amongst members of parliament that these protections need to be ensured. I might say that, at the time that I had the honour of introducing that private member's bill, it had the support of the parliamentary privileges committee which I had the honour to chair. It came about as a result of a bipartisan effort or an all-party effort to enhance the standing of this House and to ensure that, like all institutions, it changes with the times. If institutions are to survive they must change and make themselves relevant to each age. So it is with this reform. We must change. We must adjust to the fact that we live in a world of instant communication and the people who elect us to this chamber, indeed all members of the community, are entitled to know what we say, why we say it, what positions we take on various issues and what evidence and arguments we bring to bear on the issues.

This reform will help in that regard, but it must be accompanied with appropriate safeguards so as to ensure that mischief is not caused inadvertently or indeed deliberately. I support the bill. I urge all members to be mindful of their responsibilities to use the privilege of free speech wisely.

This is not a privilege which attaches as some form of private property to members of parliament. It is a privilege which attaches in the public interest. It arises because we have a duty to the people who put us here to speak out against injustice without fear, favour or affection. That privilege must evolve if it is to remain relevant. I hope this reform will ensure that the proceedings of the parliament are made relevant in a communication age. I urge all honourable members to support the reform.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Lib) (2.51 p.m.): This bill retitles part 3 of the act 'Parliamentary papers' as 'Parliamentary records' and replaces current sections 48 to 51 of that part with new

provisions which incorporate the broader concept of a parliamentary record. The bill also defines the meaning of a parliamentary record to be a record relating to proceedings in the assembly and the bill further states that a record relating to proceedings in the assembly may be in any form, permanent or otherwise, or made at the same time as the proceeding to which it relates or otherwise. For example, the record may be in audio or visual form and last only a short time.

The amendment bill is designed to protect officers of the Parliamentary Service and external service providers who facilitate the Internet publication of parliamentary proceedings. The bill does this by extending parliamentary privilege to an entity engaged by the Speaker or Clerk or a chairperson of a committee for the publication of a particular authorised parliamentary record or their authorised delegate. The bill also provides that the assembly may impose conditions on the publication. For example, the assembly may impose conditions on the publication of the proceedings by a person who has accessed the Internet broadcast. Publication in contravention of a condition imposed by the assembly may be treated by the assembly as a contempt of the assembly. We are yet to hear whether that will necessarily be so. I guess it is up to the government and the Premier to state whether that will be regarded as a contempt. I think there is justification for it to be so treated if there is a deliberate publication in particular for a malicious purpose. We will see what happens in that regard.

As the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, of which I am a member, has responsibility for considering allegations of contempt, the committee will be interested in perusing any conditions. Indeed, if Minister Foley is going to sum up this debate, I ask that he address the question I raised about whether publication in contravention of a condition imposed by the assembly should be treated as a contempt.

The Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee has responsibility in relation to parliamentary privilege under section 93 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, and the committee has a particular interest in the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill because it alters the scope of parliamentary privilege. In its report No. 44, the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee of the 49th Parliament recommended that the committee be consulted in relation to any bills affecting the powers, rights and immunities of the assembly, its committees or members. The committee therefore welcomed the opportunity that the Premier provided to us to review and comment upon the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill. It was pleasing to see that the government of the day sought the committee's input with regard to it.

This amendment bill facilitates the publication and broadcast of parliamentary proceedings over the Internet and, specifically, the bill extends the existing absolute protection currently afforded under the Parliament of Queensland Act to people involved in the publication of parliamentary papers and to authorised publishers who facilitate the publication of the parliamentary proceedings over the Internet. It is appropriate, of course, that these authorised publishers should be protected from civil or criminal liability in connection with the publication of the proceedings under the Parliament of Queensland Act. However, the existing provisions in the Parliament of Queensland Act relate to publication in printed form. The existing provisions do not deal with publication by another medium such as the Internet. The amendment bill extends the existing protection to authorised publishers involved in facilitating the broadcasting of the parliamentary proceedings in any form, including Internet broadcasting.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would well know having yourself been a former chair of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, in conjunction with this bill the committee is running information seminars for honourable members today. There will be one at 3.30. There was one this morning and there will be another some time this evening. I recommend that members attend, if they are able, because there are possibly more obligations on members when there is a direct broadcast over the Internet. They need to think about what they say and do and adhere to the parameters and guidelines for how we should act in this place.

I for one totally support freedom of speech. I do not want to see members curtailed in what they say or do here. I think that could overlie that. At the same time, all honourable members would have to agree that at times our language, the way we deal with each other and the perception of parliament is not good when we see snippets on the television at night. I do realise that these are usually the most heated exchanges and the things that create the greatest sensation. But the great majority of what happens in this House never gets shown—the real work. That is why people out there have no real idea of what a parliamentarian does. Members would know from experience in their electorates that they do not know. It is incumbent on us to have a certain standard while not restricting what have always been the rights of a member of parliament.

There are a number of issues that have to be considered in that. I will not go into them here because we will be covering them in our seminars. Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope that you will be attending one of those seminars not only to listen and learn but also to enlighten us with your vast experience in this field.

Mr Foley interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: I would have to agree with the minister. In this case that is very appropriate. I say to members: I am sure we all support this bill. It is timely. I think we will have to look at ourselves, our presentation and what comes across. In some regards it is of concern that this is a direct broadcast, particularly in relation to matters that could be defamatory or sub judice and where names are mentioned. That is why it is vital that if members are intending to mention a constituent's name or a matter relating to them that is cleared with them first. So if they are not listening to the Internet, they may hear about or be contacted about it by someone else. In respect of contentious issues that does happen. Quite often the media will follow up and try to contact a person. If the person is agreeable and has said, 'Look, I want this issue raised. I am sick of no action' or whatever then that is fine. It is important that the permission is sought from that person to do so. This is a bill that, given the advances in technology, we obviously need and one that I am sure we will all support.

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (2.58 p.m.): It is very pleasing to be able to rise to speak in support of this bill. It is pleasing to hear that all members of this House will support this bill. This is an important first step. As many of us would know, the Internet is here with us. Our children have been using the Internet for many, many years and many of us in this place are slowly learning its intricacies ourselves.

The broadcasting of parliamentary debates via the Internet is an important thing. As the honourable member for Caloundra said, it can be dangerous and that is why all honourable members must be very careful in what they say in this place. We cannot—and I dare say will not—allow our voices to not be heard. That is a very important part of the parliamentary democracy that we have inherited from Great Britain. However, the Internet allows a greater cross-section of the community, especially our young people, to sit up at nights listening to our speeches on the Internet, I am certain.

Mrs Lavarch: We can be heard all over the world.

Mr BRISKEY: In fact, all over the world.

Mrs Lavarch: Do you think the people will enjoy the insightful questions of the Leader of the Opposition at question time?

Mr BRISKEY: I am sure that, after the progress of this bill, people of all nations will be able to sit at their computers and listen intently to the questions from the opposition.

Mrs Lavarch: Do you think the witty interjections of the Minister for Housing will be known world wide?

Mr BRISKEY: I am fearful that they will be.

Mr Johnson: I think the Minister for Housing might be curtailed.

Mr BRISKEY: I do not think that anyone could curtail the Minister for Housing.

Mr English: And nor will they want to.

Mr BRISKEY: We look forward to enlightening the people of the world with the entertaining interjections from the Minister for Housing.

The objective of this bill is to provide absolute protection within Queensland to all authorised broadcasters of parliamentary proceedings on the Internet from criminal or civil liability. The Queensland government has committed to broadcasting parliamentary proceedings on the Internet as one of the government's e-democracy initiatives. The initiative will feature a live audio broadcast of parliamentary sittings with text captioning to identify speakers and the stage of proceedings where possible.

Mr Pearce: One good thing about it is if you are listening to it at home and it is boring, the person who thinks it's boring can go to sleep.

Mr BRISKEY: Or, in fact, a person can actually turn the Internet off. So it is not a problem at all.

Ms Keech: They certainly would not turn off the member for Cleveland.

Mr BRISKEY: Of course, never would they turn it off when I am on my feet.

To facilitate the broadcast of parliamentary proceedings, the bill extends the existing protection provided by the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to the authorised publishers of parliamentary papers to provide absolute protection to all authorised broadcasters of parliamentary proceedings within Queensland. This means that authorised broadcasters such as the Speaker, the Parliamentary Service staff and Internet service providers engaged by the Speaker or the Clerk will not be liable to criminal or civil action in performing their legitimate functions of broadcasting parliamentary proceedings on the Internet.

I want to take a little bit of the time of the House to talk about how this bill contributes to this government's commitment to open and accountable government. Last year, I and all other honourable members of this House had the privilege of being part of the first ever regional sitting of parliament when we took parliament to Townsville and north Queensland. It was the first time in 140 years of this parliament that it had left Brisbane. Quite frankly, in such a decentralised state as ours, it was wrong that it took more than 140 years for this parliament to leave Brisbane. This government, in its commitment to Queenslanders, righted that wrong. The Townsville regional parliament took parliament closer to the people of north Queensland and rightly acknowledged the importance of north Queensland to this state.

Ms Keech: And didn't they love us.

Mr BRISKEY: They did.

Ms Keech: And they loved it.

Mr BRISKEY: They enjoyed the experience and they were very welcoming to all honourable members and staff. As I said, more than 8,000 people visited the three-day parliamentary sittings. On the last night of sittings in Townsville, an Australian record was set with 1,000 people in the public gallery.

Mr English: A great night.

Mr BRISKEY: As the member for Redlands indicated, it was indeed a wonderful night. That sitting meant that many thousands of people, especially schoolchildren, witnessed what was not previously available to them.

This year, through this broadcast initiative, parliament will be taken to every Queenslander who has access to the Internet, making state government even more accessible. So once again, this legislation demonstrates the Beattie government's determination to listen to Queenslanders and to bring the democratic process closer to them. The Internet broadcast of parliamentary proceedings will increase the avenues and speed of access to parliament available to Queenslanders.

Mr Schwarten: Did you say nasty things about me?

Mr BRISKEY: I said wonderful things about the minister. People everywhere who surf the Net will be able to listen to live broadcasts of parliament with text captioning to identify speakers and the stage of proceedings, as I said, where possible.

For the people of Australia's most decentralised mainland state, this will provide a convenient alternative to physical attendance at Parliament House. As I have already mentioned, this initiative presents an opportunity to enhance community and government engagement by opening up the state's decision-making process and democratic processes.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (3.05 p.m.): Whether we think it glamorous or gaudy, fantasy or tasteless, there is something compelling about the Academy Awards, which were shown on TV last night. I take this opportunity to place on record my congratulations to Nicole Kidman for being the first Australian to receive the best actress Oscar.

Ms Molloy: A great woman.

Mrs LAVARCH: As the member for Noosa says, a great woman. Absolutely.

An honourable member: What a nose.

Mrs LAVARCH: Judging from the interjections, show business appeals to all of us, whether we are looking for entertainment or escape, and the Academy Awards is the pinnacle of show business.

Politics is often compared to show business for obvious reasons. Both involve communicating a message to the public. The aim of both is to get a reaction out of the public to win hearts and minds. Parliament is generally called a theatre by commentators. Campaigning was described by Paul Keating as flicking the switch to vaudeville. Of course, our own dear and

much beloved Premier famously said that all politicians would be kidding themselves if they said that they were not 'media tarts'. So members will share my dismay when last week I was travelling behind a car that had a very prominent sticker that read, 'Politics: show business for ugly people'.

An honourable member: Shame!

Mrs LAVARCH: Shame! It would have been easy to dismiss that message if I was told that the person was living in the electorate of Callide. But maybe there was a deeper meaning. After all, stickers with such poignant messages as, 'I fish and I vote' and 'Don't blame me, I voted Democrat. Pity me instead' are often conduits to the real pulse of public opinion. So is it true: are all of us here because we do not measure up on the Julia Roberts beauty stakes or the Brad Pitt hunk meter? Is even the winning smile of the Attorney-General so prominently displayed from the billboard over his Everton Park electorate office just a plaintive call that he really wanted, in his heart of hearts, the lead role in *Chicago*?

If that is the case, then the bill before the House takes on a whole new meaning. Broadcasting parliament over the Internet is not an e-democracy initiative to bring parliament to the 'e-literate' generation, but rather the attempt by us old show business hacks—the member for Clayfield excepted for she is neither old nor a hack—to find another stage. Of course, the first stage is the live theatre where people come to watch parliament from the public gallery. There is nothing like live theatre. People can view the performance in the round and see the Oliviers such as the Premier do their stuff. The second stage is television. This has not always been greatly successful. There would be more chance of the Liberal Party winning a state election anywhere in Australia than the ABC getting good ratings for its broadcast of question time.

Actually, the ABC even once received a letter—and apparently it was a genuine letter—from a viewer urging that the ABC find new actors for its afternoon TV show question time. The viewer urged the ABC in their letter that the actors that it had could not remember their lines or they mucked them up and they found it very annoying. But in all seriousness, the broadcast of parliament across the Internet is not about show business; it is about enhancing democracy. This bill moves us towards an interactive democracy. The e-broadcast of parliament will join e-petitions and e-community consultations. This is a very worthwhile and exciting development which I wholeheartedly support. It is also a development fulfilling our election commitment to improving the community's access to parliament. As the Premier has stated both in this House and throughout Queensland, democracy works better if people have access to the workings of parliament.

On a lighter note—and I will conclude on this lighter note—I do hope however that the show business nature of politics and interactive initiatives do not combine to take us ultimately to that grand daddy of real-life drama, *Big Brother*. Facing eviction every three years is nerve-racking enough for most of us here. Having it interactively possible every parliamentary broadcast day would take all the fun out of the show business for us ugly people.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.11 p.m.): My congratulations to the member for Kurwongbah. I rise to speak in support of the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill. Contrary to some other speakers, I am not sure that people are going to be glued to the broadcast of parliament over the Internet. However, there are many possibilities for Internet access to parliamentary procedures, particularly in the educational field in that students would be able to get a snapshot of parliamentary workings, whether it is a particular part of parliament such as question time, MPIs or whatever or the passage of a bill, and in real time be able to dissect the process of legislation being passed or a matter being debated. With schools improving their technology, their access to computers and the ratio of computers to students, et cetera, there is a real opportunity for education in democracy through the observation, criticism and dissection of the parliamentary process.

I had the privilege yesterday of attending a small presentation ceremony at the Gladstone campus of the Central Queensland University for a group of six over 45s who received IT education through Education Network, which is a state government funded—there may also be a federal component—program for people over 45 with no IT skills and no other TAFE certifications. There were six participants consisting of one couple and four individuals. I would guess that the oldest gentleman would have been in his 70s. I could tell that they enjoyed the course they had done. They enjoyed the freedom it gave them in understanding computers and particularly in being able to access the Internet. The increase in computer literacy which is occurring right across the age spectrum will mean more and more people will take the opportunity at pertinent moments to observe parliament.

Mr Lester interjected.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: It is very heartening, member for Keppel. A previous speaker in the debate said that there is the possibility that members will feel constrained in what they say in this chamber. Every now and again one member—it is across-the-board—will get to their feet to deliver a very harsh and critical comment or statement either about individuals directly, companies or other entities. We as members of parliament are the final port of call for constituents who have not been able to get what they see as justice or an answer to their situation or fairness in a given circumstance—for instance, a protracted disagreement with a builder. After they have been through the BSA process and everything else and they still feel aggrieved, they see us and the parliament as the opportunity of last resort to have their grievance aired. If it is genuine and it is not somebody who is a serial complainer—and most of our constituents are genuine—this is the chamber where their grievance can be aired. We should never resile from the responsibility that we have to represent our community. However, there does need to be constraint, and this is not the chamber for victimisation on the basis that there is no legal recourse for the people about whom we speak.

One of the most common criticisms that I receive—we all would—is the general behaviour in this chamber. Some years ago a member got up in this place—and I honestly cannot remember who it was—and pointed out that we are very privileged people. Out of the entire population of Queensland, 89 of us in any one given term have the privilege of representing their community in this House. It is a responsibility and it certainly is a privilege. We need to act and respond to these circumstances not only in an adult and mature way but also in a manner that befits the position that we hold. The challenge of our procedures being available live on the Internet will be one that we have to keep in mind. I do trust that it does not constrain us in our genuine representations for people in our community. I look forward to seeing this procedure put in place and particularly look forward to the enhancement of democracy in Queensland.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.16 p.m.): I rise to support this important bill and maintain that passage of this bill will greatly enhance the democratic process in Queensland. As the Premier said, e-democracy is an initiative of this government and using the Internet to expand understanding of parliamentary processes is wholly appropriate to this end. With the impending external live broadcast of parliamentary proceedings through the Internet, it is proper that the Internet service providers be granted exemption from civil and criminal liability for undertaking these broadcasts. Publication of the parliamentary records is also to be extended. Records may be covered by new forms of transmission including audio and visual records of proceedings broadcast or published on the Internet as well as electronic versions of *Hansard* transcripts.

Some members of the Centenary Youth Advisory Committee have already asked me when the programs will go to air. This virtually costless initiative will bring parliament and our various processes closer to a large electronically literate section of our community and in particular to future generations of public leaders. As chairperson of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, I have been instrumental in ensuring that members are given the opportunity to be made aware of the implication of Internet broadcasting from a privileges point of view. It is important that privilege is not abused because it is fundamental to the democratic processes we use to champion the rights of the people we represent. I totally support the bill before the House.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (3.18 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill. I understand that one of the effects of this bill will be to let proceedings conducted in the parliament to be broadcast to more people via the Internet. I note that the proposed Internet broadcast of parliament is one of three e-democracy initiatives of the government. In relation to the two other initiatives of e-petitioning and community consultation referred to by the Premier in his second reading speech, I advise the House that in December last year I sponsored an e-petition that in due course closed and was presented to parliament on 3 December 2002. The e-petition was 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; and call on the Australian New Zealand Food Standards Council and Food Standards Australia New Zealand to amend standards A17 and A1.5.3 in the Food Standards Code to ban food irradiation in Australia and New Zealand. I was pleased to be involved in sponsoring this petition. I note that in February this year the Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy responded to this petition.

I agree with the Internet broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings and believe that this is a good step forward in ensuring that parliament is more open to the public. Not so long ago I joined students, parents and teachers from St Josephs Primary School in Nambour for the official opening of their school parliament. I recently had the privilege of showing these students around this parliament. Last week I visited students at Mapleton State School and spoke with them about a range of issues involving parliament. Next week they also will be visiting this chamber. In May, students, parents and teachers from Nambour State Primary School will visit parliament for the purpose of getting a better understanding of how parliament works. I know that many of the students have access to the Internet and are keen to follow up on issues they raise with me whenever possible.

I believe that the Internet broadcasting of parliament will provide increased access to parliament for many more people, especially our young Australians. Last week when I met with students from Mapleton State School we spoke about the investigation the state government is undertaking into the schoolies week activities held on the Gold and Sunshine coasts. I feel confident that as this matter is discussed further in parliament it will create a deal of interest for many students. Who knows? Students may even take the step of e-petitioning members of the government on some of the issues and outcomes of this investigation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (3.20 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill 2003. As we realise, this bill is a necessary part of arrangements being progressed by the Beattie government to enable proceedings conducted in this chamber, the chamber of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, to be broadcast live on the Internet. Our state government is committed to improving the community's access to parliament. Our community will have a greater ability to assess the performance of its elected officials. The education sector will also benefit from the service, which offers students a new way of learning about the workings of parliament.

Sunshine Coast residents are rightly concerned about the performance of some Sunshine Coast elected officials. Sadly, we live in an era in which community respect for public office-holders—parliamentarians—is at a very low level indeed. Every MP in every parliament—in fact, every elected official—has a duty to work to rebuild public confidence. Our much-loved democracy depends on it.

Last week we saw another reason the community's respect is so low—a high-profile politician disgracefully misbehaving in public and then demanding special treatment when he was advised by Qantas personnel that his behaviour was far from acceptable. The federal member for Fisher, Mr Peter Slipper, made national headlines for all the wrong reasons, yet again. Peter Slipper was unceremoniously ejected from a Qantas flight at the remote centre of Gove in the Northern Territory because his drunken behaviour on the first stage of the flight offended both cabin crew and passengers alike. Mr Slipper and his personal assistant ended up needing to specially charter an aircraft out of Gove after being forced to stay overnight at the Gove Walkabout Lodge.

Qantas, Australia's world-respected national airline, refused to carry this federal parliamentary secretary any further. The decision to remove this drunken and unruly passenger was made by cabin and flight crew. On Channel 9 national news last week, a number of passengers were interviewed about the flight. They outlined Mr Slipper's inappropriate behaviour, calling it extremely childish and a nuisance to passengers and crew alike. They said that he was clearly affected by strong drink. The member for Fisher, instead of doing the honourable thing, resorted to the refuge of cowards. He blamed the hardworking crew for overreacting, describing the flight attendants' treatment as entirely unreasonable. According to the *Sunshine Coast Daily*, which rightly gave the matter front-page attention, Mr Slipper said that he felt enormously short-changed by the whole experience and that he was relatively innocent. That then also makes him, obviously, relatively guilty.

Mr Slipper denied that he was drunk, claiming that he was suffering dental problems and was on pain-killers. If this is so, then why was he drinking, which he has admitted to doing? How bad and shameful was his behaviour to be removed from an aircraft in one of the most remote parts of Australia? We are told that no charges have been laid against the federal member, even though the Qantas crew took the extreme step of off-loading him from a flight at a remote territory airport, knowing full well that he would need to stay overnight. Mr Slipper needs to clarify who will be paying for the overnight accommodation, the cost of which was incurred due to his need to sleep off this drunken binge.

The Prime Minister should be advised that Sunshine Coast residents do not believe that the Australian taxpayer should have to pay unnecessarily to accommodate drunken federal parliamentary secretaries and personal assistants because of their inability to act in a manner befitting their position when travelling on Australia's national airline. I am continually approached by Sunshine Coast residents clearly enunciating their disapproval of Mr Slipper's highly inappropriate behaviour. There are already jokes circulating in our community about this issue—a sad reflection indeed.

In a very worrying time, when our nation is at war, our residents look for leadership. Clearly that is something this federal parliamentary secretary lacks. Due to well-documented terrorist attacks, Australia's airlines have taken a tough line with unruly behaviour on aircraft, and rightly so. Passengers who have made threats or misbehaved inexcusably because they were clearly drunk have been off-loaded and charged with criminal offences. There is no doubt that Mr Slipper has been given favoured treatment—something that further undermines the standing of all public office-holders.

This is not a one-off transgression by the member for Fisher, who holds the office of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration. Mr Slipper used to be an Ansett passenger. Qantas has obviously benefited from the collapse of Ansett, but gaining Mr Slipper as a passenger has been a definite setback. No-one wants this drunken airline hoon. It is well known that Mr Slipper used to argue with Ansett cabin crew, to the embarrassment of all of his colleagues. On one occasion he complained that the wine was being served in a wine glass which did not have a stem. Yet Mr Slipper had the hide to say in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* that he was probably one of the most popular customers flown by Qantas. Both his colleagues and opponents alike go to extreme lengths to avoid being seated beside or near him on flights to and from Canberra or in fact anywhere in Australia. That obviously reflects his personality and popularity.

The member for Fisher has an elevated view of his status and importance. When he was given the position of parliamentary secretary some years ago he forced the authorities to replace, at great expense, the sign on his electorate office so that the title 'honourable' could be added to it. Again at further expense to the taxpayer, it has since been removed. It was also widely reported that Mr Slipper rejected a brand new taxpayer funded luxury car purchased for his use. He rejected it because it did not have leather seats, even though the car had been ordered to his specifications.

Mr Slipper's colleagues in Canberra agree, and so do the hardworking Qantas cabin crew and counter staff, who have to put up with his weekly tantrums and demands for special treatment, that Mr Slipper's behaviour is highly inappropriate and unacceptable. Australia's Prime Minister needs to act, to show leadership, to show that drunken behaviour by this non-apologetic federal member is not acceptable. The Prime Minister should act in the interests of the long-suffering voters of Fisher and all elected members of parliament and demote the member for Fisher from the middle benches to the backbenches, where I am sure his colleagues will make him feel even more uncomfortable. Mr Peter Slipper should also publicly apologise to the Qantas flight crew, cabin crew and passengers for making a complete drunken nuisance of himself. In the interests of all elected office-holders, he needs to lift his game.

The bill before us is proof that the Beattie state Labor government is working to improve the democratic process and allow our constituents to access sound and vision of the state government. The Prime Minister of Australia should show his government's intention to improve the standards of federal elected members. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (3.29 p.m.): I rise to address the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill 2003 and recognise that this bill is a necessary part of government in its attempt to enable proceedings conducted in this chamber and of the government process to be broadcast live and on the Internet. This is another step in ensuring that the procedures of government are accessed and scrutinised by the general public. It will also help people understand how things actually work in here.

I know from personal experience the perception of how members conduct their business, whether it be in question time or during debate on bills. It is believed that members can jump up at any time to respond to any other members. That is far different from the reality. Perhaps this accessibility will assist in overcoming that wrong impression. Being a member of this chamber certainly made me aware of the false perceptions many people have. This measure will enhance accessibility through the Internet, along with the e-petitions which were brought in in 2002. I must

admit that I have not kept up with how many e-petitions have come in, but I would certainly like to know.

I know that in my own electorate there are a lot of people who listen to and watch parliament at the federal level and just as many who are very much aware of what goes on or is being put before this House and who will hop on the Internet at any time of the day and night once it is accessible. Although I would not say that this accessing of parliament will wipe away other Internet surfing in a big way, it will give people the opportunity to check a bill's progress if it is of particular interest to them and if it is one that polarises a whole community.

Broadcasting on the Internet will allow constituents to see if their member is working in their community's best interests. Most members are very well aware that behaviour in this House is being criticised extensively, and perhaps if members are mindful of being under constant surveillance then they will at least take control of their own behaviour. I, along with the member for Gympie, have experienced extreme frustration in this House in trying to get a minister to give a sensible answer, and at times tempers do flare and language far stronger than that which passed the member for Gympie's lips has been expressed in this House, although not recorded.

Unfortunately perhaps for the ministers their evasiveness and bad humour will be recorded for their constituency, as will the contempt they hold for the wider community on whose behalf the questions are asked or the statements made. All members in this House should ensure that they address the issues and not attack other members merely because they do not agree on the issue. It is one of our treasured freedoms and one that our fathers fought and died for, not only that we can have an opposing opinion but also that we can be allowed to express it.

The reality is that the 30-second grab which is broadcast on the news at night does not reflect the reality which is parliament, but it is the smart condescending comments and bad behaviour which always grabs the prime time and gives the public that incredibly bad impression of MPs. Unfortunately, it is one that our schoolchildren take home regularly with them after a visit here, especially if they are here at question time. I for one appreciate that this step of broadcasting via the Internet has its considerations for what is vocalised in this chamber and would hope that it does not in fact gag certain members from asking important questions or bringing forward other information.

I have witnessed unintended references being uttered in the House, especially where a matter is before the courts or a particular person's identity has been protected over a period of time, but again it has been revealed unintentionally and Hansard has been able to redress that matter before public access was available. So I do have concerns on that particular score.

As I have said, I do have some minor concerns, but I also recognise the extreme importance of giving the general populace access to the workings of the parliamentary process. I thank the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee for the briefings which I hope to attend today. Hopefully I will at least do my best to not inadvertently abuse my position on the Internet stage. Unlike the member for Kurwongbah, I have had no fascination for the limelight or the stage. Pretending to be someone other than myself has never appealed to me, though I can perhaps remember as a child pretending to be a ballerina or something like that. I support this bill. I hope it brings new behavioural standards to this parliament and a greater understanding by the general public of the parliamentary process.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the honourable member for Capalaba, who I know has been very patient, I welcome the students and teachers from the Glenmore State High School in the electorate of Rockhampton.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (3.34 p.m.): With eagerness and anticipation, I rise to speak in support of the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill 2003. At times we need to remind ourselves that we live in a democracy. We turn on the television and observe the terrible effects of the war on ordinary men, women and children of Iraq. Whether we agree with the war or not, most Australians will agree that the wonderful people of Iraq deserve a better government, a caring government, not the dictatorship that is currently in power which seeks to destroy any opposition by murder, execution and even chemical weapons.

Whilst being concerned for the people of Iraq, it is also fitting that we count our good fortune that we live in one of the oldest democracies in the world. But democracy is fragile. It needs attention, it needs monitoring and it certainly needs safeguards. Part of the hallmark of a good democracy is the transparency, openness and accountability of government. On the one hand, citizens should be able to get access to information regarding legislation which may affect their

lives. On the other hand, legislators must be able to raise issues in parliament without fear or favour regarding the social ills of society.

The Queensland government is committed to broadcasting parliamentary proceedings on the Internet as a way to ensure transparency, openness and accountability of government and also as one of the initiatives of e-democracy. This initiative features a live audio broadcast of parliamentary sittings, incorporating text captions to identify speakers as well. The objective of the bill is to provide protection to all authorised broadcasters of parliamentary proceedings from criminal and civil liability. This is to ensure that MPs and other relevant persons are free and protected to raise any issue of concern.

The bill has been prepared to amend chapter 3 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. The amendment will provide that any entity authorised by the Legislative Assembly to publish the proceedings of the assembly or its committees will not incur any civil or criminal liability for the transmission of broadcasting of such proceedings of the Assembly. It also ensures a process for external entities to broadcast parliamentary proceedings and for certification of such authorisation.

Naturally, these privileges should be used with a high degree of accountability. I agree with the Opposition Leader that, even during my short time of two years in this House, time and time again my fellow parliamentarians have raised issues in this House with good intentions and in good faith based on information they have received on a particular issue. Therefore, they should not be subject to any civil or criminal prosecutions.

Young people in Queensland are taking up technology in a very rapid manner. In fact, a couple of days ago my second daughter, Rachel, was trying to send me an email but because of the login name that she used, 'Rachel the rabbit', my computer decided that this person must have very ill intent and therefore blocked out the email from my daughter. Somehow she managed to break into my computer and left a message for me that as her second daughter she deserved my attention as well. Certainly young people of that age are embracing technology in a very quick manner.

Queensland being the Smart State is obviously embracing technology in an unprecedented manner as well. In the not too distant future with suitably available bandwidth, I am looking forward to live video coverage being broadcast—we should have a powder room outside so that MPs can powder their nose before they walk in here—so that the public can not only hear what we have to say but also see democracy in action. With those words, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (3.38 p.m.): This bill is part of the government's e-democracy initiative which includes a number of elements, including the broadcasting of parliament on the Internet, e-petitions, of which a number have already been lodged in this House, and also a trial of community consultation on important government initiatives. This bill is principally about extending and clarifying the protection of broadcasters who provide access to parliamentary proceedings via their web sites. Although there is protection under existing law, principally through the Defamation Act, for those who in good faith publish reports on the proceedings in parliament, this bill will further strengthen and extend the provisions and protections provided, provided such people who publish those proceedings have been authorised to do so by the Legislative Assembly.

This is an important piece of legislation which will improve access to the parliamentary process and I believe ultimately will improve the accountability of our parliament to the people of Queensland. Despite what many people might think, I believe there is a thirst in the community for opportunities to connect with the decision-making processes of government.

Other speakers have referred to this, but the historic sitting of the parliament in Townsville provided evidence of this, with thousands of people turning up at all hours of the day and night to witness at first-hand their elected representatives at work in the parliament. At one question time there were over 1,000 people in the gallery listening to the proceedings. The Internet is an exciting and very effective way of expanding access to parliamentary proceedings.

I read with interest the draft speech notes tabled by the Premier today about making the media more accountable. I just say in passing that I think it is important to look at ways in which the media can be held accountable for the opinions and the information which it publishes, but in that particular set of draft notes the Premier said this—

Someone once observed that we all walk backwards into the future, that is, we create institutions and policies that make sense for the world we have experienced rather than the world as it will be.

In the main, our response to the Internet has fitted into this category. However, in this instance I believe that we are looking to the future in providing an easy means by which people can directly tap into the parliament which determines, as we all know, many issues of great importance to the day-to-day lives of Queenslanders.

I considered the issue of Internet usage, and the statistics available show that Internet usage is growing at an exponential rate. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that the number of households with access to the Internet has grown from 19 per cent in November 1998 to 25 per cent in November 1999 and 37 per cent in November 2000. On those trends, the ABS projected that by end of 2001 every second household in Australia would have access to the Internet. The number of businesses with Internet access has also increased dramatically. In 1999, 29 per cent of businesses had Internet access; 56 per cent in 2000; 69 per cent in 2001; and 72 per cent in the year 2002. Figures on Internet usage give a more accurate picture of what is happening in the increasing number of homes and businesses that now have Internet access. In the ABS census of 2001, nationally 36.7 per cent of people indicated that they had used the Internet. In Queensland, the figure was 35 per cent and in the Nudgee electorate the figure was 35.4 per cent.

This brings me to the issue of the Nudgee electorate web site, which can be accessed at www.neilroberts.org. Like all members, I seek out ways to connect and communicate with my constituents. Traditionally, this is achieved via active participation in local community affairs, newsletters, correspondence and also the local media. A lot of people, however, for a whole range of reasons do not come into contact with their member for any of these means. It is important therefore to seek out new ways of providing access and opportunities for constituents to see the work of their local member and also to communicate with them.

The Nudgee electorate web site has been established in its current form for around nine months. On it I provide information about state and local issues and also an opportunity for constituents to provide feedback on general issues but also on matters of significance to the electorate. For instance, presently I have two questions on the site which seek community feedback on the proposed sea cage fish farm in Moreton Bay that forms the eastern boundary of my electorate and on the impending sale of 30 hectares of Defence Force land at Banyo. The site is updated monthly with new state and local stories, and I try to include a regular posting of photographs of community events and people who are making great contributions to the community. Currently, the site attracts around 100 to 120 site visits a month. Whereas that is not a startling figure compared to many other web sites—and I use that as an example—my local councillor, Kim Flesser, has a web site which receives hundreds of visits per month. From the site statistics, I can see that the number of visits is steadily increasing. This indicates that information about the site is slowly being absorbed within the electorate.

I draw the attention of the House to the Nudgee electorate web site simply because I believe that the Internet is an important communication tool that members of parliament should seek to access, particularly for their constituents' benefit. There are many other members of parliament who also have web sites which provide a range of services and information for their constituents. The publishing of the proceedings of parliament on the Internet will greatly increase and enhance the accessibility of members of parliament. Accordingly, I support and commend the bill to the House.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (3.46 p.m.): I am pleased to take part in this debate on the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill. I noted that in the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth Affairs' contribution he spoke about his actions as a private member in bringing before the House the Parliamentary Papers Bill. This occurred when I was the Speaker. As the Speaker at the time, it made my job and my life a lot easier in terms of privilege and *Hansard*. It certainly made it easier for me to do my job.

The minister also mentioned the Bill of Rights 1688, which is where parliamentary privilege comes from. It is important to note that in the development of parliamentary processes there was a very tough civil war. The blood and carnage of that war at that time gave members of parliament the freedom to say what we wanted without fear or favour. Of course, that Bill of Rights also gave the parliament the power of the purse as well as the right to make laws that impacted both on the Crown and the people. Prior to that, the Speaker was the King's man and in parliament we 'looked after the King's man'.

This concept of using the Internet to broadcast parliamentary proceedings goes a long way from the early days of first, second and third readings of bills. In those days a lot of members were not literate. Of course, there were no printing presses and the poor Clerk of the day would

actually have to read every line of a bill three times before it passed parliament. In today's parliaments, of course, legislation has grown exponentially in complexity and size. It would be just about impossible to suggest that we would be where we are now without technology. Of course, the Internet is an important communication tool.

The public has always expressed concern about parliamentary privilege and about coward's castle where members can say what they like without fear or favour. I remember sitting in this House in the early 1980s next to a member for Inala called Kev Hooper. Kev would get up time and again and make what I thought were outrageous assertions and implications about corruption in very high places. I would think that he was over the top. In fact, if I had suggested to Kev that he not make those statements when in fact they were right, I would have been wrong. Yet it was his choice to do so, and in fact he was right.

I certainly do not believe in using this parliament in such a way that one has the right to defame people. With privileges comes the need for responsible behaviour. In that light, when I was the Speaker I thought that it was time that we did something about civics education. It is important that people understand how the parliament functions. When situations get out of hand, the public can say, 'Hey, this has gone too far and we are going to make a stand on this.' As a society we do not provide anywhere enough in terms of civics education. This is to our greatest disadvantage. Any American child can say what the fourth, third or first amendment of their constitution stands for. I think that very few of our children understand that we have a constitution, and that is very sad.

However, there is a study of parliament group where people interested in parliamentary processes meet and hold discussions and seminars about how parliament functions. I am pleased that we have also had, since the advent of the Goss government, an Education Unit at Parliament House that produces videos about how parliament works—the role of the Speaker, the Clerk, the opposition, the government and so on. That is very important.

The Leader of the Opposition made the point that we are the only state parliament in Australia that has a citizen's right of reply. Importantly, when members of the public or corporations feel they have been maligned, they can have their say, which ends up in *Hansard*. This gives them an opportunity to address what they feel has been defamatory.

Also, we are not allowed to talk about things that are sub judice; we cannot in any way use our position to influence the courts. We have to understand that the fact we will be on the Internet should not mean that we behave differently from the way we behaved previously. Where we have the propensity to name someone in a speech in a derogatory fashion, we should do so irrespective of whether that is broadcast. I do not think broadcasting should limit us. If we feel it important enough to claim parliamentary privilege about something we should still be free to say those things. However, we will have to be more careful.

The other day, as Chairman of Committees, without realising that I had left my microphone on I made a couple of asides to the table officer beside me. My electorate officer told me later, 'Jim, you ought to be careful about what you say when the microphone is turned on while other people are speaking.' She heard what I said. I asked, 'What did I say?' It was not anything too naughty, but it was private. However, the comments were broadcast. Members should always act in a constrained and disciplined manner. Members ought to be careful about using this place to malign somebody and they ought to be sure of their facts.

Ultimately, there is no doubt, as all members have said, that the broadcasting of parliament over the Internet is all about enhancing democracy. With about one in two households having access to the Internet, the potential is enormous. Only one in four people buy the newspaper. The potential of the Internet is much greater than the newspaper. However, I cannot say that what we say in this House is so riveting that we will get those 50 per cent of households on the Internet actually listening to our debates. However, the important point is that it will be available.

I have already sponsored an e-petition, and I was pleased to do so. I am computer illiterate and a bit of a luddite. I do not carry around a mobile phone or pager.

Mr Cummins: A watch?

Mr FOURAS: Yes, I do have a watch to remind myself of the time. Some constituents lodged an e-petition. I will monitor the take-up of that process and how many people use it. It is an important communication tool.

In conclusion, in this brave new world that we live in these things are inevitable. As much as I would like to be a luddite and hold back overwhelming change, that is not the real world. I cite my

three children as an example. One is a teacher librarian, one is doing a PhD on computer modelling and another is a computer programmer. They work with computers day and night. They tell me, 'Look, Dad, if you don't start using it your grandchildren will not be able to communicate with you. It is the way of communication of the future.' I accept that and I think it is good that we are doing this. The parliament should be proud of the fact that we are saying to people, 'Put it on. See how your institution works. Take note of the calibre of your members and the issues being debated.' Based on what they see in the media, people think that parliament is about altercations and people behaving badly. However, if they listen to the broadcast they will note that most of the time people rise to their feet determined to make a contribution and express their views on an issue; that we are often in agreement; and that we do not often behave badly in this place. We do not.

During the debate on the poll tax I was visiting the House of Commons. The House of Commons was going berserk. Over a cup of coffee with the Speaker afterwards I said, 'This is terrible. We expect the home of our parliamentary system to be better than that. Has it ever been worse than this?' He said that it had been. I said, 'What happened?' He said, 'The House was so bad that I rose on my feet and said, "Honourable members, the House is in grave danger of being in grave disorder." ' I asked, 'What happened next?' He said, 'It got worse.' I asked, 'What did you do?' He said, 'I said, "Honourable members, the House is in grave disorder. The Chair will be resumed at the ringing of the bells." I went out and had a scotch.'

Mr Flynn: Who was the Speaker?

Mr FOURAS: I do not remember his name. We should understand that heated moments will occur. Ultimately, we want the public to take an interest in how their parliament works, how their members perform and how the government and opposition work. This is another measure for them to do so. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (3.55 p.m.): I congratulate the Premier on introducing the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill 2003. I believe this bill demonstrates his ongoing commitment to Queensland being the Smart State. What better way for Queensland to continue to live up to this goal than for parliamentary proceedings to be broadcast live on the Internet?

This service of live audio broadcasting as well as text captioning will go a long way towards bringing parliamentary proceedings to many people who otherwise would not have had access to the very engine room of democracy in Queensland. This bill is necessary as it will continue to provide absolute protection to all broadcasters of parliamentary proceedings in Queensland, which not only allows for consequence-free dissemination of information; it also allows members of parliament the ability to act responsibly when addressing other honourable members knowing that their words will be heard beyond these walls.

This bill, although an amendment, is indeed an historic occasion for the parliament and for all of Queensland. Through broadcasting over the Internet, for the first time Queensland parliamentary sittings can be utilised as a learning tool in schools and to simply provide greater accountability for our actions to the wider community. I know this embrace of broadcasting parliamentary proceedings on the Internet is one of the government's e-democracy initiatives, but the notion of broadcasting parliamentary proceedings goes significantly further than just simply another Smart State initiative. I believe it is one of the very first tenets of democracy, and that is accountability and engagement of the community in the decision-making process. I think it is also fitting that we debate this bill today—Greek Independence Day—Greece, of course, being the birthplace of modern democracy.

I believe this bill achieves both of its aims, but it goes further in helping to create Queensland as the Smart State. This government promised that it would have three main e-democracy objectives. E-petitioning is already up and running. I encourage all members of the public to utilise this wonderful service. I have already sponsored a number of e-petitions that are getting large numbers of people signing them online. Recently, I spoke with members of the Indooroopilly Electorate Youth Advisory Committee about a concern they had. They were thrilled to know that they would be able to lodge an e-petition and that their friends would be able to sign their petition online when they got home from school rather than having to run around having things photocopied and signed in hard copy. They were thrilled.

The second major e-democracy proposal is the live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings, and this bill will provide for that. All that remains is a trial of community consultation online. I believe it is vital to democracy in Queensland to provide ready public access to the parliament. I think that broadcasting parliamentary proceedings online goes a good way towards

achieving this. I would also like to put on record that my Indooroopilly electorate web site, which can be found at www.ronanleemp.org, will contain a link to the parliament of Queensland web site so that people will be able to access broadcasts of the parliament using my site as an intermediary.

I also note—and I think I am correct in stating this—that I am the only elected representative in the western suburbs of Brisbane who maintains their own web site. I found the site to be incredibly popular with the public. I would like to challenge my other elected representatives to join with me in providing their own web sites for their communities. On my site, I run what I call the Indooroopilly community billboard. It is an opportunity for community groups to have their own page on the Internet. I found that this billboard is utilised mainly by groups that would not usually have a web site. That provides them with the ability to put their own text online with links to their own site—if they have one, but usually they do not—and also links to their email addresses.

On this site people advertise upcoming meetings and events. They talk about what their group does. For example, theatre groups talk about upcoming plays. I also think that this site provides an ideal introduction for people who move into the electorate to get a snapshot of the community groups that are available in my electorate. I think that it is a good online community resource. I would also like to plug the Indooroopilly electorate e-news, which can be signed up to via my web site. People can sign up by providing their email address. They can get regular updates of state government news and local Indooroopilly electorate news. With the passing of this bill, Queensland will not only continue to be the Smart state but also I think it will strengthen its quite appropriate claim of being the accessible state.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (4.01 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to support the bill as—as has been said by a number of speakers from this side—it is necessary to provide absolute protection within Queensland to all authorised broadcasters of parliamentary proceedings on the Internet from criminal or civil liability. This bill does this by amending a number of provisions of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. It extends the existing protection provided to authorised publishers of parliamentary papers to encompass authorised broadcasters of parliamentary proceedings within Queensland. That means that authorised broadcasters such as the Speaker, Parliamentary Service staff and Internet service providers engaged by the Speaker or the Clerk will not be liable to criminal or civil action in performing their legitimate functions of broadcasting parliamentary proceedings on the Internet.

As a member of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee—

Ms Keech: And a fine member, too.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: I will take that interjection from my good friend the member for Albert, but may I say that my participation pales in comparison to hers. I agree with the suggestion that any legislative provisions that facilitate the wider dissemination of parliamentary proceedings have merit. The bill has sufficient regard to and, indeed, enhances the institution of parliament.

Prior to the last election, the Premier made a commitment to the people of this state—and I know that he received a lot of positive feedback—to put in place arrangements to enable parliament to be broadcast live on the Internet. I know that a number of my constituents are looking forward to this proposal that will provide this e-democracy initiative to Queenslanders and beyond.

Ms Keech: And also to the people of Albert.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: I hope that the people of Albert will take a keen interest.

This means that everyone will have the opportunity to tune in and listen to debates on bills such as this one. It will not only give them a choice as to how they view the parliament; it will also be a direct link, which is somewhat different from reading or listening to someone else reporting on the parliament. They will be able to make an informed opinion instead of hearing it from someone else.

Mr Lawlor: What a great idea.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: It is a great idea. Quite frankly—and I know that every member would agree with me, including the member for Albert—it is very important to get this information first-hand. I take great pride in showing this place to constituents and schoolchildren. Often it is their first visit and they are stunned by the level of activity and work that is actually put in here, particularly by members such as the member for Albert.

This broadcasting will give people an insight into how the House operates before they visit. That must be considered a real advantage as I am sure that it will enable them to get more benefit from their actual visit. We all remember the hundreds of schoolchildren who visited parliament at its historic sitting in Townsville in north Queensland in September last year.

Ms Keech: Thousands.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: It might have been thousands. This government is to be commended for its community engagement policies. This bill is another step forward to ensure that more people will be kept informed directly of the government's activities and, more importantly, it will allow and promote public involvement and comment.

The broadcasting of parliament is yet another outside mechanism to keep the government even more accountable. We have seen already the successful introduction of freedom of information laws, the introduction of judicial reviews of ministerial decisions, and organisations such as the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Crime and Misconduct Commission. I am looking forward, as other members of the House are—and obviously the member for Southport is very passionate about this—to the live audio broadcast of the parliamentary sittings on the Internet, including text captioning to identify speakers and the stage of proceedings where possible.

I congratulate the Premier on his foresight, his openness and his accountability and all others who played a part in bringing the bill to parliament. I commend it to the House. Maybe this bill will help clean up some of the uncouth language heard and the behaviour that has been seen in this House in recent times. I commend the bill.

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (4.06 p.m.): I am pleased to support the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill 2003. The Queensland government is committed to making the parliament more accessible to the people of Queensland. We want to encourage all people to become more involved in the governing of this great state.

I think that this is a move that is long overdue. Often in talking to my constituents, I find that they have a very confused idea about the parliamentary process. According to them, all they ever see on television is shouting and arguing and they think that we do that for 12 hours a day. Schoolchildren in particular seem to think that the whole purpose of being a member of parliament is so that 'you can shout rude things at other people and get paid for it'—something which a lot of them find appealing, admittedly, but hardly the image that we wish to project.

As part of our commitment to accessibility and in order to use the tools that a new generation finds most appealing, we have developed three e-democracy initiatives: e-petitions, online community consultation and the live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings on the Internet. This has necessitated a change in the legislation to offer protection to broadcasters. Currently, absolute privilege is extended to the authorised publishers of parliamentary proceedings. This protects the publishers of *Hansard* and other documents from either criminal or civil prosecution for printing what may be considered either inflammatory or libellous material. These protections do not extend to broadcasting. Consequently, there is a potential risk to broadcasting parliamentary proceedings. Although the risk is considered to be low, it is important that broadcasters be extended the same protection as publishers.

The amendments to this act simply extend the current protections to include all methods of publication. It is important to note that this does not mean that anyone can broadcast or publish parliamentary proceedings with immunity. The protections offered under this bill extend only to people authorised by the Legislative Assembly to publish parliamentary records. I would like to congratulate the Speaker on such an exciting initiative. I believe that it will provide an important connection between the people of Queensland and their representatives. This bill provides for the broadcast to go ahead and is to be commended.

Mr FLYNN (Lockyer—ONP) (4.09 p.m.): I rise to support the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill. Any move to free up access to parliamentary debate can only be considered an advantage to democracy. However, it is to be hoped that parliament will not be forced to continually go into damage control debating public reaction. I am on record as having supported Mr Speaker in being critical of abusive and unparliamentary language to the extent that I have been accused from government ranks of being thin skinned and not a main player. Members who may have attended the information sessions facilitated by the chair of the ethics and privileges committee will be aware of the minefield that faces members who pursue the goals of their electorate without fear, believing that they are privileged totally. Following the introduction of the web cast of parliamentary proceedings, maybe members need to be aware of private comments

that might be picked up by the public system that might normally be edited by Hansard to reflect what they really meant against what was actually said.

Mr Lawlor: You think I might have to be more careful?

Mr FLYNN: Indeed. Those members who intend to use the live line to play the stage need to understand that politics can distort the truth and also need to understand that any advantage gained by public rhetoric can be severely negated when in the cool of day emotions of the day are matched with rhetoric with word by word recordings not matched with *Hansard*, the official record. If parliament is to be held up as a valued and accredited public representative body, then we must show our public that we do not or should not behave like children. We all believe that it is pretty smart to come up with funny comments and snide comments, but we are now going to be held to account. Members can ask that things be expunged from the record and ask for things to be withdrawn, but when it is on the web the public will see for itself how stupid, how childish, how vindictive and how silly members on both sides of this parliament are when they have a go at one another.

Government members interjected.

Mr FLYNN: Those members behind me can keep chipping in like children if they want to, but they all know that we are all capable of saying things that, in the heat of the moment, we would rather not have said in public. Hansard does a great job of picking up those incidents that one might not normally want recorded.

Government members interjected.

Mr FLYNN: Why are these people carrying on in the background? They are all guilty and capable, as I am, of saying things in the heat of the moment where they disagree with something somebody said and they say something that they would not normally want to be repeated. This will be picked up and it will be repeated to their electorates, it will be repeated statewide and, if strong enough, it will be repeated to the country. I am listening to the honourable member back there, not that he has anything very important to say, and I think, 'How childish can you get? Why don't you contribute to a substantive debate constructive comment instead of behaving like a two-year-old?' We need to contribute to constructive debate, and in actual fact this parliament has done the right thing in that it is now going to be broadcast live and all these stupid remarks made by the children from the Labor backbenches will be recorded for public posterity.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (4.13 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill. I do not know whether or not the previous speaker in this debate knows, everything we say in here is recorded now. If this place is going to be relevant in the future, we need to be on the Internet. As other speakers have said, that is how the younger generation communicates. They communicate with the Internet. They communicate with text messages on mobile phones. They communicate in ways that people of my generation never even dreamed of. When I was young, we would communicate by going to the pub on a Friday night to have a few beers. That is how we communicated. We would communicate at a football field, a cricket game and those sorts of things. These days people tend to stay more at home and do not go to those sorts of events. I remember going to a local cricket derby between Young and Cowra and people could not get on the sideline to watch it because there were that many people there. In terms of the Maher-Cup between Cowra and Young at the local football derby, the communication there sometimes got a bit rough because loyalties would be shown forthright.

Mr Cummins: To the furthest limits.

Mr PURCELL: To the furthest limits, as the member for Kawana says. That is how people communicated. It is a little bit different these days in that they communicate via the Internet and text messages. We do not talk to one another face to face as much as we used to, which is a shame, because talking to one another face to face creates a rapport. I think it is pretty hard to get to know somebody over the Internet.

Government members interjected.

Mr PURCELL: I would have thought that it is hard to do that, but others, as I can hear, say differently. The other thing about this bill is that anything that demystifies parliament is for the good. I try to bring all my primary schools here. I am fortunate in that my electorate is an inner-city electorate and it is not that difficult for them to come to parliament. As all members do, I bring them in here and show them through both chambers if I can and spend some time with them. I talk to them about parliament, the procedures and who does what, why, how and so forth. That helps demystify the process for kids by explaining what we do in here and why.

They are able to come into this chamber, which is great, because when this Labor Party came to government 10 years ago members of the public were not allowed in this chamber. They were not allowed in this chamber if parliament was not sitting, but now members can bring kids in and talk to them and explain where the opposition and government sit. We can explain that question time is what they normally see on TV, because it is the only time the cameras are here, but that is the system of government we have—that is, an adversarial system. We can tell them that is the Westminster system and that is what is meant to happen. So when they see the member for Callide on TV going hammer and tong, they know that is what he is supposed to do. He is the spokesman from that side of the House testing out the minister on this side. That is what parliament is about. We can explain that when they see the member for Yeerongpilly get up and expound the virtues of training and so forth he gets very passionate about it and there are interjections from the other side, as we saw in this House this morning in terms of training in country areas, and those opposite had a bit to say. That is what this place is about. The broadcast on the Internet will give people more flavour as to what parliament is about.

I do not use this place to have a go at too many people. I see parliament as a positive theatre, if you like. I have taken up one item in here for a constituent's brother who worked in Cairns. I will not go through it again; members will probably remember it. I thought that a great injustice had been done to that bloke with regard to his employment, how he was treated and how some government departments had not dealt with it and not helped him. I copped a fair bit of flak at the time over it, but I was proven correct in the long run. That defamation case went to the Supreme Court and the person who I had backed and knew he was correct received a fairly substantial payment from his previous employer who, by the way, fled the state and went somewhere else. That is just one example of the positive things members can use parliament for. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (4.19 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions. I will deal with some of the comments that have been made. Before I do so, I make the point that this is about taking the parliament into the 21st century. There will always be issues with change and reform—it is not easy—but this is about making the parliament relevant. It is about accessing more people. If we do not make ourselves relevant then we become a dinosaur and disappear. We all know what happened to the dinosaurs! It was not a very nice ending. Forget about the big bang; they withered away. T.S. Eliot said 'not with a bang but a whimper'. That is what will happen if we do not undergo change. We have to be relevant.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition supported the bill as it extends democracy, and I thank him for that. He said that it is important to protect parliamentary privilege. He said that this will provide a better forum for people to understand parliament. He said that it is important to understand that broadcast will be in real time. He praised the instigation of a citizen's right of reply by former Speaker Jim Fouras. He said that, notwithstanding this, members will need to be more cautious in what they say as, once broadcast, 'the damage may be done'. He is interested in further investigation of the pause button facility as mentioned in my second reading speech. That is generally what the Leader of the Opposition said, and I thank him for those comments and for his support for the bill.

In my second reading speech I gave an undertaking to investigate the use of a pause button facility to suspend the broadcast of defamatory or inappropriate comments that may be made in the House. After thorough investigation, the use of a pause button is not considered appropriate for the purposes of Internet broadcasting. The system which has been developed provides for a direct, live audio broadcast from the chamber to Internet users. This is also how other Australian jurisdictions, including the federal Senate and House of Representatives, the New South Wales parliament and the Western Australian parliament, provide a similar service.

I agree with what the Leader of the Opposition has said, but there are practical difficulties. I think I need to be up front in this debate and say that there are practical difficulties and that it will not work. Therefore, we have to look at what happens elsewhere. We are following what happens interstate and federally. That is the basis upon which we will proceed.

Let us remember: the intention of e-democracy and its relevance to today's society is that this is an initiative to enhance transparency and openness in our democratic processes and provide a fair and accurate report of proceedings. At the end of the day, people have to exercise discretion, watch their language and behave appropriately in this House.

Mr Robertson: Responsible.

Mr BEATTIE: I take the interjection of the minister. They have to act responsibly. I cannot force people to do that. Democracy does produce some interesting characters—flamboyant, extravagant, exhilarating—

Mr Robertson: Scottish.

Mr BEATTIE: And Scottish, yes. At the end of it all, it is important that we in this House do not lose sight of that vibrancy. It does also require a greater deal of responsibility. I made it clear in my second reading speech that this legislation requires a maturing of members, requires a maturing of the process and requires people to act responsibly.

The Minister for Employment talked about the privilege of free speech deeply enshrined in the heart of democracy. He mentioned the Parliamentary Papers Act, which he introduced as a private member in 1992, as we all recall. That was passed with bipartisan support. He said that these are steps forward in technology and that the bill will lead to an increase in the responsibility of members, and he urged members to be mindful of this responsibility. He said that the broadcast of parliament may ensure that proceedings remain relevant. I agree with everything the minister said.

The member for Caloundra, who is a member of the MEPPC, said that the committee will be interested to peruse conditions of access for broadcast. That is fine. My response is that the committee will be provided with a copy of the conditions of access as soon as possible. I should have received a briefing note requesting approval for the conditions of access and approval to send them to the MEPPC. When that is done the committee will get a copy. The member was concerned about contempt and public contravention of the proceedings in relation to the broadcast. Clause 12 of the bill, in particular section 58(3), clearly states that a deliberate publication, including subsequent broadcast, in contravention of the conditions of access imposed under the section will be a contempt of the Assembly.

I will mention the types of measures we have begun to implement to address some of the perceived dangers spoken about by members today. The MEPPC is delivering awareness training sessions about parliamentary privilege and appropriate speech and conduct in the House. We are also providing restriction around the use and rebroadcast of material accessed via the Internet by conditions of access, which must be agreed by the Internet user before accessing the service. It will be necessary for these conditions of access to be adopted by the House before the Internet broadcast service goes live.

Members have overwhelmingly supported the bill and the access it will provide for members of the public to gain a greater understanding of matters raised in parliament and the workings of parliament itself. The bottom line is that this is the Smart State in action, to be blunt. I am sure that members will be very mindful of the Internet broadcast. I thank the MEPPC for its role in providing awareness training to members. The MEPPC really is a wonderful mob.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr BEATTIE: I take the interjections of members. Many members have also mentioned the other e-democracy initiative that has been instigated by the government, that is, e-petitions. It again assists in making the democratic process more accessible and closer to the people of Queensland. One of the benefits of the e-petition service is that the electronic process provides an alternative to the paper based system. Details of the paper based petitions are also available on the e-petitions web site.

I should have mentioned that the member for Nanango made some points in support of the bill. She thinks that e-petitions are good but would like to know what sorts of issues have been raised. Since the e-petitioning system was launched on 26 August 2002, we have received 15 e-petitions as well as 55 paper petitions, which are now automatically posted on the Parliament of Queensland web site. I encourage members to access this site to keep informed of the issues being raised by Queenslanders. Some of the current issues on the e-petitions site relate to land clearing, the GATS agreement and the stolen wages issue. Issues raised in e-petitions which have now been closed are the proposed sea cage fish farms, no nuclear irradiation, no food irradiation and school airconditioning. That roughly covers most of the issues that were raised by members. I always try in my reply to debates to deal with issues raised.

This is about keeping the parliament relevant. This is about ensuring that the community has access to their elected members. This is about having an opportunity to listen to members who are speaking in this House. As I said, this House can be robust, but it is about ensuring that those robust debates go to the people who pay the bills, and that is the community at large. As I said, this is about the Smart State in action. This is about ensuring that the latest technological

mechanisms available are utilised to keep democracy relevant. I thank members for their contributions. I am delighted that this bill is being supported by members.

Motion agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 17, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

FAIR TRADING FEES AMENDMENT REGULATION (No. 1) 2002
Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.30 p.m.): I move—

That the Fair Trading Fees Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002 (Subordinate Legislation No. 311 of 2002) tabled in the Parliament on 26 November 2002 be disallowed.

There is no doubt that the Beattie government is broke. There is no doubt that this is a government which is strapped for cash. If there were any doubt, the doubters need only look at this regulation which has been introduced by the Minister for Fair Trading and which the opposition seeks to disallow today. If there were any doubt about the absurdity of the government's claim of no new taxes, the doubter would have no need to look any further than this regulation.

This regulation, which was notified in the *Government Gazette* on 22 November 2002 and tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 26 November 2002, amends the Motor Vehicles Securities Regulation 1995, the Pawnbrokers Regulation 1994, the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Regulation 2001, the Property Agents and Motor Dealers (Auctioneering Practice Code of Conduct) Regulation 2001, the Second-hand Dealers and Collectors Regulation 1984, the Security Providers Regulation 1995 and the Travel Agents Regulation 1998.

It amends all of those statutory instruments with a view to increasing the amount of money that the government is able to obtain from people engaged in the businesses that are covered by those regulations. It seeks to increase not just the amount of money the government seeks to obtain from those people by an amount that would reflect increases in government costs or that would reflect increases that were in line with the CPI but also the amount of money the government takes from people engaged in businesses covered by those regulations by an amount that is almost impossible to believe.

The amendment increases existing fees across the full range of those businesses and it also introduces a small number of new fees. I will take some examples from the regulation. Section 7 of the amendment regulation replaces the schedule of fees contained in the Motor Vehicles Securities Regulation 1995. The new schedule contains increased fees payable for the registration of encumbrances, the searching of the register and other services provided under the Motor Vehicles Securities Act 1986.

A wide range of fees have been increased by between 10 per cent and 85 per cent. What justification is there to increase such fees at all, let alone to increase such fees by 85 per cent? We are talking about fees for registration and searching, which are the fees provided for under the Motor Vehicles Securities Act, and we are talking about increases of 85 per cent. Is anyone going to try to convince this parliament that the government's costs in these areas have increased by 85 per cent? Or are we simply going to see an admission of the facts here today, an admission that this is simply a money grab, a grab for cash by a cash-starved government?

In a further example, section 9 of the amendment regulation inserts a new item into the schedule of fees contained in the Pawnbrokers Regulation 1994. The new fee for an application for a licence has been increased from $395 to $790, an increase of almost 100 per cent—a doubling of the fees.

Mr Shine interjected.

Mr SEENEY: The member for Toowoomba North likes to interject, but perhaps before this debate is concluded he might stand up and justify to the business people not only in his electorate but also right across the state why their fees need to be increased by 100 per cent. A

100 per cent increase in fees is almost impossible to justify in any circumstances. What extra services are these businesses going to get from the payment of such massively increased fees?

Section 11 of this regulation amends schedule 1 of the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Regulation 2001 by increasing the fees payable for initial licence applications. The application fee for a licence has been increased from $51 to $202, an increase of 100 per cent. That is a fee to lodge an application. It was bad enough that somebody should have to pay $51 simply to lodge an application. That in itself could not be justified in terms of the work involved in lodging an application. This regulation doubles the fee. It is now $102—a 100 per cent increase for a fee that is attached to the lodgment of an application. Yearly licence issue fees and registration fees have also increased by 100 per cent. For example, the individual licence issue fee for a real estate agent has increased from $382 to $764—yet again a 100 per cent increase in fees.

Section 15 amends schedule 1 of the Second-hand Dealers and Collectors Regulation 1994 by increasing the fee for a dealer's licence from $236 to $472, an increase of 100 per cent for second-hand dealers and collectors, a lot of whom operate their businesses almost at a hobby level. That is the nature of second-hand dealers and collectors. A lot of collectors certainly do operate their businesses as something of a hobby. Irrespective of whether they do or not, how can the government justify an increase in a fee of 100 per cent from $236 to $472 just for them to have a licence? How on earth can such an increase in fees be justified at any time, let alone by a government which likes to trumpet the fact that it has not introduced any new taxes? This is a doubling of an existing fee that probably was a burden on those businesses in the first place. Now it is to be increased by 100 per cent.

Section 17 amends the Security Providers Regulation 1995 by amending the schedule of fees increasing licence application fees by 100 per cent—again, a 100 per cent increase. For example, an application for an individual licence has increased from $93.50 to $187 for businesses that are covered under the security providers regulation.

Section 19 of this regulation which the opposition seeks to have disallowed amends the Travel Agents Regulation 1998 by amending schedule 4, increasing application fees and annual licence fees again by 100 per cent. The initial annual licence fee for every travel agent has increased from $190 to $380, a 100 per cent increase in fees. Once again, I have to ask why. What do people who are engaged in conducting travel agents businesses get for their 100 per cent increase in fees? What did they ever get for the initial fee that they paid, the $190? They certainly do not get twice of whatever it was once this regulation is in place.

Those are the types of increases in fees which are contained in this regulation. Those are the types of increases in fees which this government has to justify in this parliament before this regulation is passed into law. That is the purpose of this parliament. As the member for Bulimba said in the previous debate, that is the purpose of this place—to have the minister stand up in the face of this opposition disallowance motion and justify and explain to the people of Queensland how the government can possibly ask business people to pay an increase of 100 per cent in this range of fees.

This parliament deserves an explanation. It deserves to hear from the minister how these particular increases could possibly be justified. I hope that before this debate is concluded we get some explanation from the minister as to how on earth a 100 per cent increase in any fee can be justified, let alone the types of fees covered by this regulation. It is estimated by the Office of Fair Trading that the proposed fee increases would lead to an additional per annum collection of $2.29 million. That is what it is all about. Everybody in this parliament knows that that is what it is all about. It is about increasing the amount of money that the government takes in an increasing range of areas. It is about increasing the revenue that the state government can squeeze out of the Queensland electorate in every way that it can. Every fee, every licence and every tax that can possibly be increased is at the moment being pushed up to try and cover a budget deficit situation that has become the hallmark and will become the legacy of this Labor government.

$2.29 million will not go far towards addressing the budget shortfall of this government. $2.29 million on its own will not go far towards addressing that problem. But this is a small part of a strategy that is being employed right across all the fields of government administration. Every department is out there looking for ways to squeeze extra money out of the licensing systems that they administer. They are doing that at the behest of a Treasury starved of funds. In this case, the department has probably gone further than most in terms of the fee increases it has placed upon the people who work under the regulations that they administer—a 100 per cent increase in fees. A 100 per cent increase in fees in a lot of instances is impossible to justify.

The increase will affect a large number of Queenslanders. In the 2001-02 financial year, 3,037 new licences and 5,577 certificates were granted under the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act. A total of 4,478 licences were granted under the remainder of the licensing acts. That is a lot of small business people, many of whom are starting off in business on their own for the first time and are caught up in this move by the government to replenish its failing financial situation. The Real Estate Institute of Queensland has voiced its extreme opposition to these fee increases and says that the increases will hit doubly hard as many real estate agents are bound to hold multiple licences.

In examining the regulatory impact statement, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee noted that the 28-day period that the notice must allow for submissions had not technically complied with the notice published in the *Courier-Mail* as it allowed only 27 days for comment. While that in itself is not a major issue, it shows the haste with which this government is proceeding in its attempt to recover as much money as it can from as many people as it possibly can.

As I said when I moved this motion to disallow this regulation, there is no doubt that the Beattie government is broke. There is no doubt that the financial mess into which this government has the state will be the defining legacy of a government which cannot manage the state's finances. What we see today, as we consider this regulation introduced by the Minister for Fair Trading, is just one small attempt to address that diabolical situation into which the government has been plunged. No doubt, we will see many more of these attempts to squeeze out money in small amounts from small business people up and down the state. The government can be assured that the opposition will seek to disallow every one of them, because it is the government's responsibility to manage its own finances.

The government cannot put its hands into the pockets of small business people every time it is in financial trouble. The government cannot put its hands into the pockets of Queenslanders simply because it cannot manage the state's finances. It cannot expect Queenslanders, whether they be small business people, workers or whatever role they have in the Queensland community, to pay more to pay for the mismanagement of an incompetent government. We saw it in the Treasurer's half-yearly budget review where he predicted an extra 10 per cent in state revenue between now and the end of the financial year. He had to predict that to try and get his budget to a paper thin surplus, but to do so he has predicted a 10 per cent increase in state revenue. That 10 per cent revenue is supposedly coming from a range of fees and charges amongst which are those covered by this regulation that we debate this afternoon. This regulation should be disallowed. No justification has been put forward for it. There can be no justification for a 100 per cent rise in fees, and this House should disallow the regulation.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (4.46 p.m.): I want to second this disallowance motion, but I particularly want to speak on behalf of small businesses as the shadow minister for small business. In this Beattie Labor government we are seeing increasingly that small business in Queensland is bearing the brunt of this government's financial mismanagement. This is a government well into its third massive budget deficit. The consolidated deficit two financial years ago was just over $800 million. Last financial year, the consolidated deficit was $9.1 billion. How much will it be this financial year? We already know that the government deficit alone will be well over $700 million, because the Treasurer stated so in parliament. It will probably be more than that. Add to that the losses that will probably be made by the government owned corporations and we could again be facing a multibillion dollar consolidated deficit like the $1.9 billion deficit we saw last financial year.

The deficits of this government are almost unparalleled in the history of Queensland government. It is small business operators who are paying for this, who are copping it in the neck. It is small business operators who borrow money, work hard, take the risk, employ staff and endeavour to improve the economy in their town, suburb or region who are going to pay, because the message has gone out from the Treasurer and the Premier: rake in all you can because we are broke. Rake it in—100 per cent increases, 200 per cent increases, 250 per cent increases, anything you can possibly do—because we are dreadful financial managers. We are typical of Labor Parties who spend up big, waste the money on propaganda and publicity, raise the white flag and say, 'Pay some more taxes.'

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr HORAN: The member for Mansfield is one who has not yet spoken up in this parliament on behalf of small business. We saw it with the ambulance tax in terms of the absolute financial mismanagement, the broke government, the government that misled the people by saying that the free service for seniors would cost $20 million when it actually cost $117 million. What did the

government do? It just ran out there and ran up a new tax. Not only a new tax, but a new tax that is unfair on small business so that small business operators will be paying two, three, four or five times. These are the same small business operators to whom I am referring in this disallowance motion—those in the motor vehicle industry, in pawn broking, real estate agents and property agents, second hand dealers and collectors, security providers and travel agents. These are important people in the small business sphere who have fees and licences to pay on top of all the other charges that they have to pay. Now, they will see these huge increases.

Once again, we are seeing small business being forced to pay for the financial mismanagement, shortcomings and blunderings of the Beattie Labor government. It is no wonder small business has had enough of this government. That is why I urge small business to get out there and tell their customers every day that this is a government that is broke. This is a government that has no regard or respect for small business. This is a government that is big-spending, wasteful on propaganda and which is running up taxes, hitting the little people working so hard to make our regions and other areas grow.

This is aimed at raking in some $2.9 million extra. We are seeing it everywhere. Every department is out with the rake. They have the forking stick up every hollow log they can find. They are raking it in from decent, hardworking people. We are not seeing increases of just three per cent, four per cent or anything like that. We are seeing increases of 50 per cent, 100 per cent, 250 per cent and 300 per cent. With payroll tax we saw the inclusion of superannuation contributions in the base. That increased the payroll tax base by seven per cent. We have seen the inclusion of eligible termination payments and grossed up fringe benefits. This government also dropped the payroll exemptions on wages paid to existing employees. With respect to land tax, the 15 per cent rebate has gone. It is reported that property owners will be slugged an extra $38 million to $40 million.

We saw increased electrical charges. Workers will cop fees of $240 to renew or apply for an electrical contractors licence and more than $1,500 to apply for approval of various classes of electrical equipment. Electrical work licence application renewals will cost $50 each. Workers face fees of up to $250 to apply for or renew an appointment as an accredited auditor. These fees will see electricians' costs soar and make work very difficult.

We have seen about $10 million in new transport fees. These were the fees that were not even in the budget. They were snuck into this parliament and we found out about them only because they were reported in the media, and the government was forced to put them in. All members opposite would have had people in their electorate offices who have forgotten to renew their licence by one day and had to pay $40 to help the charitable cause of the Beattie government and its broke budget. There has been a 100 per cent increase in tick inspection fees. Court fees have jumped from $156 to $420 per application, and $820 for two applications.

They changed the mining royalty regime in January 2002. The government changed the imposition of the royalty from the price received at the mine gate to the gross realised value aboard ships. That is estimated to bring in another $60 million a year. The Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act has seen an increase in 26 existing fees under the act by between 20 per cent and 50 per cent. There are a couple of others. In relation to the food safety regime for dairy farmers, there is a $250 accreditation charge and a $150 fee for auditing, plus travel costs. That is about two or three times dearer than it is in other states. Today we are looking at increases in business licensing fees. The charges have increased by between 25 per cent and 100 per cent. We all know about the huge hike in water charges. SunWater is being used as a milch cow for this broke government.

If members opposite have any regard or respect for small business operators in their state they will support this disallowance motion moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. It is about time we saw a bit of courage from members opposite. They have not spoken up about what is happening with the ambulance tax. They have not spoken up about all of the race clubs in their electorates that have been closed down or decimated in terms of the number of meetings they can hold. They are not speaking up about the deficit and budget losses. They are not speaking up about the massive increases in fees. They are a cowardly mob that just go along with the Premier and the Treasurer and play the game. They are not prepared to stand up and speak out on behalf of their constituents.

I can tell this parliament that small business operators in this state are waking up. They know that this government is broke and they know that they are the ones being targeted. That is the idealistic view that this government has of small business. They will hit them in the neck all the time. Small business will be the downfall of this government. Small business is starting to realise

that all of the words, glossy brochures and propaganda out of the 180 staff in the propaganda unit of the Premier's Office are doing absolutely nothing for small business in this state. They also see how in addition to all of the existing costs they will now have to pay these extra charges.

Under the Motor Vehicle Securities Regulation, if we are unsuccessful with our disallowance motion the fees for searching a register of encumbrances and so on will increase by between 10 per cent and 85 per cent. Under the Pawnbrokers Regulation there is a new item, an application for a licence, and an increase of 100 per cent. Under the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Regulation, initial licence fees and yearly licence and registration fees will increase by 100 per cent. There is a vast number of real estate agents and motor dealers in our electorates. A vast number of people will be affected by this.

Under the Second Hand Dealers and Collectors Regulation, the fee for a dealers licence will increase by 100 per cent. Under the Security Providers Regulation—another essential service for small business in most electorates—the fee will increase by 100 per cent. Under the Travel Agents Regulation, the licence application fees and annual licence fees will increase by 100 per cent.

These increases are nothing short of a disgrace. If government members were running a business would they say to their customers, 'We're going to up your costs by 100 per cent'? Of course they would not. They would do something fair, reasonable, decent and honest and increase it by three per cent or four per cent in line with the CPI or cost increases. But this is an example of a government in panic. This is a desperate and incompetent government. It is broke, and the people who will pay for it are the small business operators and families involved in small business in Queensland.

If members opposite have any courage and respect at all for small business in this state, they will join with us and disallow this motion. This is another attack by the Beattie Labor government on small business operators in Queensland. It is an attack directed by the Treasurer, who has brought this state to its knees financially and has directed all ministers in this government to rake in all the money they can out of hardworking, decent, honest Queenslanders.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (4.56 p.m.): Let us get some proportion back in this debate. The Fair Trading Fees Amendment Regulation 2002 increased fees for initial applications for licences under five acts. These five acts are the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000, the Security Providers Act 1993, the Second Hand Dealers and Collectors Act 1984, the Pawnbrokers Act 1984 and the Travel Agents Act 1988. Under these acts, initial application fees for new licences only were doubled. This means that existing industry participants were not affected. Only new entrants entering these industries after the fee increases were introduced have been affected. This is a one-off cost to businesses, as all renewal fees charged by the Office of Fair Trading have only increased in line with the Consumer Price Index.

The increased fees commenced on 1 January 2003. What the fees reflect is the greater cost of processing new licence applications for the Office of Fair Trading. The direct costs of licensing include administrative costs for wages, leasing and equipment costs, the maintenance of database systems, and conducting fitness checks on applicants. All of these are services that are essential to the licensing operation.

The Office of Fair Trading also pays the Queensland Police Service a fee to conduct Queensland criminal history checks on applicants. In addition, legal costs are incurred in administering and enforcing the various pieces of legislation. The industries covered by this regulation are real estate, motor dealers, pastoral houses, auctioneers, second-hand dealers, travel agents and security providers. The fact is that they benefit from the regulation that this government provides. They benefit through enhanced public confidence in doing business with them. They benefit because it allows us to root out of the industry any disreputable players who could cause harm to the whole industry. They give us the basis on which we can deal with those who are not fair traders trading in the interests of the people of Queensland.

The industries want us to be able to do that job. Therefore, it is necessary that it be paid for. Consumers know that licensees meet minimum competency standards and that complaints will be investigated properly by the Office of Fair Trading. The pattern of complaints that the Office of Fair Trading receives bears witness to that and to the particular importance of the general public having confidence in motor dealers and the real estate industry. Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that these licensing regimes be self-funded. Taxpayers should not have to bear the cost of providing a benefit to these industries. That is the bottom line. That is the key reason why these charges have been introduced as an increase to the initial application fees.

These days, any government of any political persuasion considers their important priorities of government spending. There is no doubt that a user-pays system that is self-funding is not appropriate for the primary functions of a state government. For example, health and education must be provided to all Queenslanders without restriction on the basis of ability to pay, without direct costs involved in public education and public health. Yet if these services are to be well provided and provided to the extent that we are capable of through health professionals and education standards, in terms of the demands of the people of Queensland, then we cannot use funds to subsidise business operations that should properly be self-funded. That is what this is about.

It is important to recognise that these industries have had a reasonable chance to have their say. The Office of Fair Trading prepared a regulatory impact statement that was available for public comment from 6 September 2002 until 4 October 2002. Comment was specifically invited in writing from all stakeholder organisations, including Commerce Queensland. It may be that some of those stakeholder organisations did not inform all of their members. I certainly have had reports from some business operators in Cairns that they did not know about it. A question was even asked of me as to whether we were doing this behind closed doors. I was able to not only inform the businesses that their impression was incorrect but also ask them to confirm through their peak bodies that the consultation had taken place and over that period.

The results of the consultation were incorporated into a public benefit test report, which was endorsed by cabinet on 11 November 2002. The regulation was then approved by Governor in Council on 21 November 2002. There is no doubt that these services need to be provided to the industry—to keep these industries operating at least at the basic level of competency and to protect the consumers of Queensland. There is no doubt that these are not fees that should be subsidised by the general taxpayer. I am pleased to stand by the Fair Trading Fees Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (5.02 p.m.): I agree with my colleague the member for Cairns who has just spoken about the Office of Fair Trading compliance activities in relation to real estate agents and motor dealers. As the member has just stated, these industries will continue to be monitored in both Brisbane and regional areas to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 and the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Regulation 2001.

So far the opposition has not mentioned that since 1 July 2002, five security providers, six second-hand dealers and 13 travel agents have been visited in Brisbane as part of the proactive compliance monitoring activities of the Office of Fair Trading. The Office of Fair Trading is continuing to liaise with the Queensland Police Service Property Crime Squad in relation to second-hand dealing and pawnbroking activities. Unfortunately, these compliance measures cost money.

Ms Jarratt: And they cost a lot of money.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: They do. It is an ongoing cost. If everyone played by the rules—and, unfortunately, some do not—we would not need the revenue. I reiterate that only the application fees for new business licences under the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2002, the Security Providers Act 1993, the Second-hand Dealers and Collectors Act 1984, the Pawnbrokers Act 1984 and the Travel Agents Act 1988 were increased. That means that existing industry participants were not affected; only new entrants entering these industries after 1 January 2003 have been affected. This increase is a low, one-off cost to new businesses and is not significant when we compare it with the other costs of establishing new businesses.

Most importantly, a regulatory impact statement, public benefit test and public consultation process were all undertaken in relation to the proposed fee increases. These highlighted that the public benefit from increasing the fees to improve compliance activities, consumer education and regulatory development significantly outweigh any costs incurred by business. As members would expect, business and consumer sector peak agencies were generally supportive of the proposals because of the additional revenue being directed to compliance and educative activities undertaken by the Office of Fair Trading—a factor that members opposite have failed to grasp.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (5.05 p.m.): In speaking to this disallowance motion this afternoon, I ask: did the members opposite think that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition moved this motion because he wanted to cause some sort of angst within the parliament? The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and other members of the opposition differ a little bit from those

members opposite. Many members on this side are businesspeople—people who understand what it is like to run a business. They know exactly and precisely—

Mr Reeves: We don't know about that.

Mr JOHNSON: No, the member does not. In supporting this disallowance motion that has been moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in relation to the Fair Trading Fees Amendment Regulation—

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. I find the words of the member for Gregory offensive and untrue and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr JOHNSON: I did not say anything about the member for Mansfield and I am not withdrawing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McNamara): Order! The member for Gregory did not refer to the member. There is no point of order.

Mr JOHNSON: I ask: where is the accountability, the transparency and the honesty of this government? They are the things that this Premier, Mr Beattie, went to the last election with. He said that he would not be introducing any new taxes; there would be no further burdens on the taxpayers of Queensland. What is this regulation going to do? As the member for Toowoomba South said, it is going to be a further burden on small business. I remind Queenslanders, and in particular those opposite, that Labor went to the last election with that express promise. I remind members that last year I moved a similar motion when this parliament was confronted with a classic example of deceit when the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads introduced regulations to give effect to a raft of new fees and charges, which equated to some $10 million, and which were deliberately withheld from the scrutiny of this House by being excluded from the budget proceedings and publications and from the estimates committee process. If that is not deceit, I do not know what is.

Once again, the Beattie government is thumbing its nose at the requirements and processes of this parliament with its high-handed approach to subordinate legislation. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee noted that the government could not even be bothered to abide by the 28-day notice requirement because of its undue haste to put its hands on more of taxpayers money. Again, I am sure that the class driven ideologues opposite think that increasing these fees and charges on the many small business operators impacted by this regulation is justified.

Mr Shine interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: All it is is a tax on the bosses and not the workers. That is just how naive and irrelevant this government is. I hear the member for Toowoomba North mouthing off. If I were him, I would have a little bit of a look around Toowoomba and see how many businesses in his electorate this increase is going to impact. I can assure him that there are going to be plenty.

These costs will be passed on to the ordinary man and woman in the street. This is a dishonest and unfair tax slug. It will particularly impact upon businesses like the real estate industry, which is often required to hold multiple licences and is now being confronted by increases in charges of up to 100 per cent. These people are the ones who most times have to find money every week to pay wages, superannuation, workers compensation and payroll tax. If their business is not firing, they have to borrow that money and go into overdraft. A previous speaker in this debate said that there are a few people out there making it hard and that is why there is the need to increase these charges. A previous government speaker said the fact is that they need more people and more computers, but they tend to forget that small business operators will be laying people off at the other end of the scale because they cannot afford to pay them as a result of the impost of charges put in place by this government.

Do members opposite ever stop to think about that for a moment? It is not just that it is impossible to budget for increases of 100 per cent per annum but also the fact that this government said that there would be no new fees and charges. Small business operators will be the ones who will be on the receiving end. This government has not heard the last of the new ambulance tax, particularly from the battlers and the small business owners who will be paying it many times over. I was speaking to a constituent in my electorate last week who will be paying the ambulance tax 12 times and there is not even an ambulance in their town! How is that for fair and equitable! This comes at a time when fair dinkum citizens have been paying for an ambulance service through their private health insurance. They will now have to cop the bill for an increase in insurance as well as the ambulance levy.

Let us look at a sample of these fee increases. Property agents and motor dealers application fees have been increased by 50 per cent. Licences have been increased by 50 per cent and certificates have been increased by 50 per cent. Second-hand dealer licence applications have been increased by 50 per cent. Pawnbroker applications have been increased by 50 per cent and travel agent fees have been increased by 50 per cent. Motor vehicle securities approval has been increased by 45 per cent on top of the increase in payroll tax, and land tax up by $48 million across business. Every time this parliament sits we seem to be arguing about some new tax. It seems to be a government of stealth. It is a government that is treating the people of this state as mushrooms. I can assure members opposite that come next election the people of this state will be saying at the ballot box that enough is enough, because the opposition will be opposing exactly and precisely what this government has been doing.

This issue is typified by the $40 late payment fee for registration. I have said before that this is nothing less than a direct attack on the battlers who are having trouble paying their bills on time. In relation to the fees and charges for tick clearance, this is again an impost on the man on the land. Many people think that the recent rain has stopped the drought in many parts of Queensland, but I can assure them that drought is very much still raging. There are many parts of this state that have not had any rain but it is reported by many forms of the media that the drought has broken. It has far from broken. This is just another impost on those people who are trying to get a dollar from the land.

Court fees have increased from $156 to $420 and there are increases in mining royalties of $60 million per annum. The ambulance tax is a tax to cover up the total failure of the scheme because of a tax promise bungle. Accreditation charges for dairy farmers will push more people over the edge. The water charges tax has increased by $50 for bore water and on top of that they have to pay $3 per megalitre. The list goes on and on, but people on the other side of the House take pride in standing in this chamber and their electorates saying what a great job the government is doing. They forget about the impost on small business. They forget about the impost on the ordinary citizen, because it is the ordinary citizen again and again who pays these charges.

I saw the Minister for Transport in the House a while ago but he has left the chamber now. But the real issue in the community is funding for roads and funding for infrastructure. The Minister for Education says in this House what a great job the Smart State is doing in relation to education. My own electorate is fearful of losing teachers from our schools because families have moved away because of the drought, yet this government is going to kick them again while they are down. This is not a—

Government members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: You what?

Mr Reeves: Where's the money going to come from?

Mr JOHNSON: So the government is going to penalise those people because they are in an unfortunate situation. I will tell the member what: come next election I will take the smile off his face when a Labor candidate trots around Gregory and he tells him that the job is all right. This is no laughing matter, member for Mansfield, because it is a very serious situation. Those opposite say time and time again—

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order.

Mr JOHNSON: Sit down. I have only got a minute left. Those opposite say time and time again—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McNamara): Order! Member for Gregory, there is a point of order.

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. I find the words by the member for Gregory offensive and untrue and ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr JOHNSON: I do not know what is offensive and untrue. The smile on the member's face was an admission of his behaviour—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the member withdraw?

Mr JOHNSON: So I would say that the member better just wear it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the member withdraw?

Mr JOHNSON: I do not know what I have to withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is the member's minute.

Mr JOHNSON: I am talking about the very issues—

Time expired.

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Gregory defied your ruling and did not withdraw. I ask him to withdraw.

Mr Johnson: I withdrew.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will deal with the point of order.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I asked if he would withdraw. I did not rule that he had to withdraw. There is no point of order.

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. Under the rulings of the parliament, after you have asked him to withdraw he has to withdraw.

An honourable member: He didn't refer to you.

Mr Reeves: He did so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The words that the member found offensive were that the member should remove the smile from his face.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you withdraw the point of order?

Mr Reeves interjected.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (5.16 p.m.): This is a debate that quite frankly we should not have to be having tonight. There is no question as to why we should not be having it, because the Premier made it very clear that there would be no new taxes. But that is what this is. Once fees go above the normal rate of inflation, then we are in tax territory. Let us not kid ourselves. That is what has happened. People went to the last election expecting various fees to go up at the normal rate of inflation. Fees have not only gone up in the order of 100 per cent or so but there have been many new fees. It is taxation by stealth. There is no other way to describe it.

I simply have to ask what is going on. This government quite frankly has gone fee mad. Is it broke? Is it having to bleed the normal citizens who cannot afford to pay these types of taxes? This is a Labor government, a government that is supposed to look after the workers and the people who find the going a little bit tough. But members of the government get into this place with a new suit and new tie and forget all about the worker.

This is a government that said there would be no new taxes. Quite frankly, in terms of motor vehicle securities regulations and all of the various search fees, et cetera, there is no reason that they should go up between 10 per cent and 85 per cent. There really is not. Then there are the pawnbrokers regulations of 1994 where the application fee has increased by 100 per cent. That is obnoxious, outrageous and wrong. In relation to the property agents and motor dealers regulation—again, looking about the various fees there—we are looking at a 100 per cent increase. Second-hand dealers and collectors regulation fee for a dealer's licence will increase by 100 per cent. Imagine if we went to Woolworths and the plums we bought went up overnight by 100 per cent. There would be anarchy in the streets.

Ms Stone: They do.

Mr LESTER: They do not, unless there is a jolly good reason such as a shortage or whatever. It just does not happen.

I refer to travel agents regulations. We are supposed to be fostering travel at the moment, particularly in uncertain times, when people are less likely to travel. Those fees have gone up by 100 per cent. Quite frankly, it is a sorry situation that we have to be bringing the government to heel. If you have a pet dog and it misbehaves, you bring it to heel. I think the pet dog has more understanding of human nature than some members of this government have.

Mr Fouras: Don't be so precious.

Mr LESTER: I am not normally very vicious, but this is a very serious issue. Members opposite know that I am not a vicious person. That I have to get up and be just a bit that way shows how serious this situation is. Viciousness does not come easily to me. It comes with great pain. I do not like to have to be that way, yet government members have driven me to it. I am

hurting, too, because it is not me to be that way, but the government has to be brought into line. The people of Queensland have to get a fair go. How do they get a fair go? They only get a fair go through the opposition raising these issues in the parliament and bringing the government to heel for the atrocities and the fibs it has bestowed upon the people of Queensland.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jarratt): Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the House.

Mr LESTER: Thankyou, Madam Deputy Speaker. That shows again just how uninterested government members are in the issue at hand. They are too busy having a conversation. They could not care less about the people who are being hurt by these fees, the people who are going broke as a result of these fees and the people tied up with ambulance fees—the $85 tax on all property. What are we coming to?

Anybody who has shown a bit of initiative, got out there, had a go and tried to employ a few people has got it fair in the tummy. There is no question about it. Members opposite are showing such little compassion for those people who are hurting. They have gone into this without really thinking about it. The reason is that the government is very short of money as a result of mismanagement.

I turn to the food safety regime as it relates to dairy farmers. A food safety regime announced by the Primary Industries Minister introduced a $250 accreditation charge for dairy farmers and a new charge of $150 per hour for auditing and travel costs. This is really outrageous. Business licensing fees have increased in the order of between 25 per cent and 100 per cent, depending on the particular fee we are talking about.

Mr Shine: That is what it costs.

Mr LESTER: Does this government not understand that if business is prospering it goes out and employs people and those people pay tax? That is the way government gets its revenue. The better deal we can give small businesses, the more likely they are to start up another little business and employ people. They may have started with two or three people working with them and before long have up to 30 or 40 workers. That is what I thought collecting revenue was about. You collect revenue through various taxation measures and at the same time give people hope and incentive so that they can see they are doing something very positive in the world. Getting belted across the forehead with a piece of four-by-two every time they try to make a move dampens the spirit. Australians are all about owning their own homes, getting a little business, employing people and doing something useful in the community. Instead, this government belts them across the forehead with a lump of four-by-two.

The change in relation to mining royalties is a doozey. Royalties will be charged on an amount that includes rail and freight costs. That is taxation by stealth if ever there was such a thing. Freight is already being paid. This is double dipping of the worst order. Those opposite should not kid themselves. The mines in China are getting more efficient and they will be a great competition to us one day. That seems to be being forgotten. We might have better coal, excellent work practices and so on, but the Chinese are starting to perfect blending coal. They can make better coal by blending. With their 1.4 billion people they will be able to produce coal at a cheaper rate than us. That means that we will not get the orders. It is as simple as that.

Business is about getting orders. We help businesses to get orders by giving them encouragement and not by belting them across the forehead with these further stupid taxes. We can go along with increases in taxes at the rate of inflation, and there could be a situation where there is a need for an additional tax of some sort—we are not all that unreasonable—but the way the government has gone about it, with many new taxes and increases in existing taxes, is totally not fair. It is wrong. I hate to use the word, but it is being deceitful. The Premier got out there and said that there would be no new taxes. He smiled and carried on and people believed him. Those who did have been dealt a blow.

New transport fees and charges in the order of $10 million have been included in the budgetary process. Tick fees and charges were amended during the time of the drought. Members should bear in mind that we still have a drought in many parts of Queensland.

Time expired.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (5.26 p.m.): We often hear consumer stories of rogues who do not comply with good and honest business practices. Often these stories involve real estate agents, motor vehicles or goods and chattels that mean a lot to people financially and emotionally. For some time there has been a growing need for the Office of Fair Trading to have

a dedicated unit concentrating on serious cases of non-compliance which result in significant consumer detriment. The Strategic Compliance and Enforcement Unit addresses this need. The funds from the increase in application fees will be utilised for increased compliance monitoring activities.

Office of Fair Trading investigators undertake compliance monitoring activities throughout Queensland, and an increased presence in the marketplace will continue to reduce the number of legislative breaches. Since 1 July 2002, 60 Brisbane real estate agents have been visited and their records inspected to determine their level of compliance with the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000. In regional Queensland 315 proactive compliance checks of property agents have been conducted. In that period one Gold Coast real estate agent and two Brisbane real estate agents have been prosecuted for trust account offences, and one Maryborough real estate agent was prosecuted for unconscionable conduct.

Infringement notices were introduced for Office of Fair Trading investigators as an additional enforcement weapon from 1 July 2002. These have proven to be an effective tool, with 60 tickets issued to real estate agents in Queensland since that time. Offences included inadequate trust account procedures, employment of unregistered salespeople, failure to maintain employment registers, late lodgment of audit reports and failure to disclose prescribed information.

The first series of Office of Fair Trading blitzes on real estate agents commenced in August 2002, when agencies in the Wide Bay and Burnett region were visited by teams of investigators. While compliance levels were generally found to be high and most agencies had good working knowledge of the legislation, 10 infringement notices were issued. Funds from the increase of application fees will be used to increase monitoring and enforcement operations in this region. In other words, we are looking after those people that the member for Keppel said we are not. We are looking after consumers, we are looking after small business and we are looking after the workers.

In September 2002, Brisbane based investigators joined regional officers in other centres, including the Cairns-Port Douglas area, where 21 licensees were visited and their records inspected. Two infringement notices and five warnings were issued to offending agents. Office of Fair Trading staff also carry out educational visits and address groups of real estate agents, informing them of their obligations.

These discussions have also informed agents of issues which have been raised by consumers in their dealings with agents. Educational strategies such as these will also have the capacity to expand with increased revenue. With education comes better business practices and better custom for those small businesses that put in the time to have better business practices. With training and so forth they have better staff.

Members opposite have said that we are not interested in small business. That is totally untrue. By doing this we are making sure that small businesses out there survive.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: And they need our help.

Ms STONE: They do. As I said before, the increase in these fees will go towards weeding out those traders who do not abide by honest practices and give their colleagues in the industry a bad name. Small businesses need consumer confidence. They do not need rogues in their industry. That is what looking after people is all about. It is about looking after the business operator and it is about looking after the consumer.

In an article in the *Albert and Logan News* on 22 January it was claimed that businesses were told about these fees after the gate had closed. The fact is that the regulatory impact statement was freely available and sent to a wide range of consumers and industry organisations, and they include the Australian Federation of Travel Agents, the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, the Motor Trades Association of Queensland, the RACQ, the Queensland Consumers Association, the Insurance Council of Australia, the Australian Property Institute, the Queensland Pawnbrokers Association, Cash Converters Queensland and many other major industry stakeholders, and it was on the Office of Fair Trading web site.

The Office of Fair Trading prepared a regulatory impact statement which was available for public comment from 6 September 2002 until 4 October 2002. Comment was specifically invited in writing from all stakeholders and organisations, including Commerce Queensland. In other words, there were plenty of opportunities to respond. I note in the *Albert and Logan News* article that the Logan Chamber of Commerce stated that it had not received information prior to the date. The members of those industry associations that were contacted ought to speak to their respective associations, because maybe they are not doing their job with respect to association

fees. Association fees are what members pay to their associations to do a good job, and they are not letting them know the information. To the Logan Chamber of Commerce, I say: talk to Commerce Queensland. To those other industries and businesses that contacted the Logan chamber and said they were not informed, I say: maybe their members should look at their association fees and see what they are paying for.

I have already stated what these increases will be used for and many of my colleagues on this side of the House have done so. Small business will have peace of mind knowing that the Office of Fair Trading will be out monitoring and enforcing compliance with regulations under the prospective legislation, getting rid of shonks and increasing consumer confidence. With that comes increases in custom for small business. I am amazed at the opposition. The members opposite whinge about wanting more government expenditure, then they whinge about fees. For the reasons I have outlined, I do not support the disallowance motion.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (5.32 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise in support of the disallowance motion before the House. There are probably only so many matters that a member can raise in a debate such as this, and I think that most have been raised. However, it is worth while examining the reasons why we are here this afternoon debating this particular regulation.

It is probably true to say that this government has based its modus operandi on low taxes, transparency, jobs, jobs, jobs—I can remember that as part of the election campaign—and looking after small business. This regulation is all about government getting bigger, charging small business extra to enhance a department that is pretty substantial as it is, and putting costs on small business that they really cannot afford.

It is probably fair to reiterate some of the issues raised in the debate so far. There has been more than passing comment in respect to the effect of the drought on small business in Queensland. Firstly, we need to establish what is small business in Queensland. There is no doubt that most of the respected people within our community and people who have any association with Treasury would recognise that small business is a generator of economic development in any state, particularly in Queensland, being a decentralised state as we are.

Right across Queensland we have small businesses that through no fault of their own, and particularly because of the current drought—it is probably the worst in a generation at least—have been affected very badly by low economic returns and will continue to suffer for probably the next two or three years because of the downturn in their communities. Lo and behold, we have a government that at this very time has increased fees and charges not just in one segment of the community in respect to this regulation but right across a whole range of areas that impact on business and small business.

It is a shame that the battlers and the people who are the cornerstone of our community, the people who work for a living and generate taxes, are again being slugged by this government. No matter how much spin the government puts on the increase in charges, at the end of the day somebody has to pay it and somebody has to find the money to pay it. Unfortunately, in business it can mean the difference between being successful and walking out the door.

This is the straw that breaks the camel's back. In and of itself, a 100 per cent increase in fees will probably not be what forces a business into bankruptcy. It is that combined with all the other issues—a downturn in business, the natural increase in wages and the cost of doing business. That is what this is all about. The big debate is the impost of government on business. Unfortunately, whether we like it or not, there has been a tendency for government departments to get bigger and that is not just restricted to the state government. We have issues with the federal government in that regard. What we should be doing is trying to reduce the operating costs of business so that businesses have the freedom to grow, to employ people and to generate income and so that they can pay taxes at a reasonable rate that is aligned to the returns they are getting from their operations.

The regulation that is currently before the House and which the opposition has moved a motion to disallow certainly has an impact on certain sections of business. As I said, my colleagues have raised issues in a lot of areas. As shadow minister for employment and training and also emergency services, it is incumbent on me to keep an eye on the costs that have an effect on employment. As I have said previously, the reality is that, as we increase the costs of small business or businesses generally, there is a natural inclination to reduce the number of employees a small business has or, alternatively, to throw up the hands and say it is all too hard. As I have said, it is the straw that breaks the camel's back. It is just another charge that makes it more and more difficult for businesses to operate.

I am sure that my colleagues have gone through the regulations and itemised most of the increase in charges, so I am a little reluctant to go back over that. I should probably talk a bit about the cost to the community of the ambulance levy and the way in which the government has brought that in. It is fairly typical of a lot of things that are happening with this government. After an initial attempt at imposing a fee on land titles and the subsequent kerfuffle with the Local Government Association—and rightly so, because it would have involved a multiplicity of charges—the government then moved on to adding an ambulance levy to electricity bills.

Right throughout our community there are quite a number of people, and particularly small businesses, that will have to pay a multiplicity of charges. No matter how we look at it, it is quite unfair. The reality is that, if we have a service to a community, it should be based on each of us paying a reasonable amount of money for that service to be put in place. It is also the government's responsibility in terms of supplying services. The reality is that that is what government is supposed to do. It supplies a service at a reasonable cost. Unfortunately, in the case of the ambulance service, there was no investigation whatsoever in terms of the cost benefits in relation to the money being allocated to the ambulance. Without any investigation at all, the government has decided, with some very minor exceptions, to impose a levy on every electricity account. That will be very unfair on a lot of people right throughout our community. As I said—and it has been raised in this debate again—the people who have generated an economic activity in our community, whether they are builders, small business people or people in our community who have got off their butt and done something in terms of trying to take the state forward, will be impacted by this tax.

It is almost the attitude of this government that anybody who sticks their head up cops a tax. I do not think that is quite fair. The government really has to look at the way in which it imposes these regulations and taxes. The government needs to ensure that government departments run very efficiently and deliver a good service to the people of Queensland without increasing hugely the taxes we currently pay. Frankly, I do not think any reasonable man or woman in this parliament would regard as fair a 100 per cent increase in a levy in one year. It is quite unbelievable that this government assumes that small business and people in our community will accept an increase of 100 per cent as fair and reasonable. I defy anybody in this parliament to stand up, even with the best spin they can put on this, and accept that 100 per cent is a fair increase. With those few words, I support the motion.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.42 p.m.): I rise to support the motion. It has been stated that part of the reason for this increase is to police the rogues in industry. I do not believe that any of those who support the disallowance support rogues in industry. We all want to see services provided to our community at a fair and reasonable rate and in a fair, reasonable and transparent manner. However, the increases in these fees of at least 90 per cent are well in excess of CPI. It is the breadth of the increase that has caused the greatest discomfort. There are a couple of specific areas that I shall address, because the increases have the potential to significantly impact on these businesses, and they are very small businesses.

One of the proposed increases is a doubling of the new licence application fee under the pawnbrokers regulation of 1994 and an increase in the renewals. For pawnbrokers, second-hand dealers and collectors, new licence application fees have doubled and fee renewals have increased significantly. In my experience, other than Cash Converters or such big name chains, pawnbrokers and second-hand dealers in Queensland, particularly regional Queensland, are very small operators. Often they develop a business out of a collecting hobby, whether it is old goods or a certain style of goods, and over time accumulate a number of articles to the point where they need to disperse them. They then think about starting a second-hand dealers business or a pawnbrokers enterprise. They are usually family businesses. Whilst the cost of a new second-hand dealers licence has doubled to $472, for pawnbrokers it is $790. It does not seem a lot of money in isolation.

Two other government speakers said that it is a one-off cost and a small cost. The reality is that it is a one-off cost that has increased exponentially in a large range of costs, all of which have increased. As I said, a lot of these pawnbrokers and second-hand dealer businesses are modest enterprises. In country Queensland they develop out of a habit or an interest in most instances. All of the costs aggregated together, all with increases, add up to a large sum of money to start a business. That is a disincentive in a community where we are trying to keep people in the work force longer and where we are trying to keep people active and interested, yet we are creating this disincentive with significant price increases.

In terms of property agents and motor dealers and security providers, their fees have doubled. I shall comment cautiously on travel agents because, in the main, they tend to be the major chains. They get together as a conglomerate and share a name, but, again, they often are individual, small businesses that buy into a chain for buying power. In Queensland, the travel and tourism industry has been suffering since September 11. A couple of years ago—or less—the Tourism Minister visited my electorate. I know that the industry valued the fact that she visited the area and was as well informed as she was on tourism and on addressing the factors that travel agents in our community faced with the downturn in both overseas and domestic travel. The situation has not improved. There was the Bali incident and, now, the conflict in Iraq.

In terms of certain decisions by domestic carriers—I raised one in the last sitting in relation to Alliance ceasing to travel out of Gladstone—a lot of travel agents are facing a difficult and challenging time. They do not need increases in all of these fees. Again, some members said that it is a one-off cost; but it is a one-off cost being increased along with a lot of other one-off costs that add up in the end. Most businesses may budget for a small increase, CPI plus a small percentage, but they certainly do not budget in any financial year for a doubling of fees.

I do note that there was a consultation process on the RIS. Whilst it has been stated that some of these lead agencies should have and may not have consulted with their membership, the reality is that often they do not. The people who actually have to pay these bills may not be well versed in the depth of the increases proposed.

The other issue to which I refer concerns real estate agents' fees. Whether it is the initial issue of a licence or the renewals, a lot of agents carry more than one licence. Again, many of these operations, in rural Queensland at least, are modest operations. In the auctioneering area, they are not fly-by-nighters. They are people who in many cases started to do auctions as a service to their clientele in rural Queensland. These fee increases will be a disincentive in terms of the availability of those services in rural Queensland. If it comes to the point of having to import auctioneers or other agents to rural areas, it will price it out of the reach of many rural and regional constituents. That is not something that government should be a party to. Generally, fees and increases along the lines of CPI are accepted and tolerated by the community. The exponential increases in the proposed fees will not be acceptable to the community. I will be supporting the disallowance.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (5.49 p.m.): It has been accepted practice by governments of all persuasions over a long period to increase fees automatically in line with CPI movements. Regardless of whether the individual fees are raised by the exact CPI figure or somewhat above or below, as previous speakers have said, this has been an accepted part of public policy and generally accepted by the broader community for a long period. But when we see a range of fees such as these, which have increased by 100 per cent, I do not think under anyone's definition they can be described as fair or reasonable. It is on that basis that the Liberal Party will be opposing the introduction of the fees and supporting the disallowance motion before the House.

More evidence that the government lacks financial discipline is the fact that it has to introduce these large fee increases after increasing other fees and charges over the past 12 months. We have already seen a range of increased court fees, some up to 100 per cent or even more, the ambulance levy has been whacked on over the past couple of months, and we have had new fees and charges for transport introduced after the last budget. The list goes on and on. The question that has to be at the forefront of everyone's mind is: when will the government stop putting its hands in taxpayers' pockets in this state to fund an ever-increasing budget blow-out? When will some financial discipline be exercised by the Labor Party? That is the real question in this state. How long will it go on for? It has run three budget deficits in a row, and the government is still trotting extra fees and charges into the parliament to cover up the financial losses. We simply cannot allow it to go on and on. At some stage, the Labor Party will have to bite the bullet and take some hard decisions in this state. I hope I am here to see the day, because the track record of Labor governments to date does not suggest it has the heart; it has never had the ticker to indulge in financial discipline. It has never had the ticker to come to grips with financial discipline in any way, shape or form in the past. I will not be holding my breath waiting for it to happen in this state, either.

The reality is that Labor governments run amok with the finances of state governments around Australia and inevitably the other side of politics has to come in and clean up the mess. Everyone around Australia accepts that as the reality. And it will occur in Queensland as well, because the Labor Party simply does not have the ticker or courage to tackle the hard issues about financial management.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (5.52 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on this disallowance motion. It appears to me that this debate revolves around the issue of whether these fee increases are taxation by stealth or reasonable fee increases for services delivered. I have listened to the contributions to the debate made by all members and note how the government members have attempted to justify these increases in fees as reasonable. I personally believe some of these fee increases are not reasonable and certainly will be supporting the disallowance motion.

This contrasts with the way in which many local councils operate. When there are amendments to local council fees we see a very different system in operation. Local councils vary their fees for services not part way through the year but at budget time. These fee variations are part of the normal local council budget process. My challenge to the state government, the Treasurer and all ministers is: if local councils can have these fee variations in their normal budget process, I cannot see any legitimate or reasonable reason as to why the state parliament cannot do the same. If that occurred, we would not be having the debate tonight about whether this is taxation by stealth or whether these fees are legitimate and reasonable.

I urge the Treasurer and all ministers to genuinely investigate, perhaps when this year's budget comes down, having all of the fees, services and charges set out and brought into line so that each year all Queenslanders will know what the fees and charges will be for the year. I will be supporting the disallowance motion.

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (5.53 p.m.): I thank all government members for speaking in opposition to this disallowance motion. However, there are a few facts that I wish to place before opposition members, particularly the member for Callide, who moved the disallowance motion; namely, the regulatory impact statement was sent to a wide range of stakeholders, that is, the REIQ and the Queensland Consumers Association, and it was also available on the OFT web site. An REIQ letter stated—

> The institute supports initiatives to improve education and compliance and it is therefore prepared to accept the proposal.

The Queensland Consumers Association 'supports the changed fee regime for the various industries based on the policy objective outlined ... our support is based particularly on the firm view that legislation is only effective if it can be enforced.'

The member for Gladstone, who is still in the chamber, raised the issue of second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers setting up on the basis of hobby collecting. I need to point out to the member that the point of regulation is to restrict trafficking in stolen goods. Small operators without adequate financial backing are more likely to be tempted to deal in stolen goods and require more, not less, compliance monitoring and enforcement. It is the same argument with respect to travel agents; small agencies require more oversight if consumers are to be safeguarded.

The Fair Trading Fees Amendment Regulation increased fees for initial licence applications for licences, not for existing licences. These are not new fees. Assessment of initial licence applications is a labour intensive administrative task. The Office of Fair Trading staff have to ensure that applicants actually hold the qualifications that they claim to have. This requires checking with training providers and employers. Police record checks are also required. The application fee has to cover the cost of these checks.

In addition to paying for the simple administrative costs associated with issuing licences, fees need to reflect the cost of administering the whole licensing regime, including compliance, investigations, prosecution, dispute resolution and appeals. Many of these costs are rising due in part to the increasing sophistication of offenders such as two-tiered marketeers. It is important to note that licence application fee increases are the only increases in licence fees; that is, as I said, renewing licensees have no increase whatsoever. In addition, if they take advantage of the three-year renewal option introduced last year they will actually save money.

Apart from the licence fees, the other main fee increases in the regulation are the REVS fees. REVS is a cheap product. For around $10, consumers, dealers and finance companies get guaranteed unencumbered title to their motor vehicle. That $10 represents a tiny fraction of the cost of even a cheap used car. That fee increase on REVS will enable the Office of Fair Trading to improve consumer education through such initiatives as faster, more user friendly web sites, new publications and targeted surveys. These increases will also fund industry compliance education to assist businesses to comply with the letter and the spirit of fair trading legislation.

Disallowing this regulation would gag and tie the hands of the Office of Fair Trading. The losers would be the consumers and the regulated industry themselves, as consumers lose confidence in dealing with licensees. That is why the REIQ and other key industry stakeholder groups are prepared to support this; it is in their interests to make sure that there are proper safeguards. It does not help their industry at all unless there are proper checks and balances and proper checks into the integrity of the people applying for licences. That is what this is all about. This is about protecting not only the consumer but also the industry itself.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 20—Bell, Copeland, E. Cunningham, Flynn, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, Pratt, Quinn, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Sheldon, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Lester, Hopper

NOES, 54—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Choi, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, J. Cunningham, Edmond, English, Fouras, Hayward, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McNamara, Miller, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Phillips, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, N. Roberts, Robertson, Rodgers, Rose, C. Scott, D. Scott, Shine, Smith, Stone, Strong, Struthers, C. Sullivan, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Reeves

Resolved in the **negative**.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumption of Committee

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) in charge of the bill.

Resumed from 13 March (see p. 673).

Clause 18—

Mr SEENEY (6.07 p.m.): Clause 18 relates to the forfeiture of leases generally and, obviously, follows on from clause 17, which the opposition opposed. Clause 17 allows for lessees with more than one conviction under the Vegetation Management Act, regardless of whether those convictions for offences were committed on the land that is subject to the lease, to have their leases forfeited. As I said in the debate on clause 17, this is an horrendous provision if it is passed into law which, given the result of the division on clause 17, would appear more likely than not.

Clause 18 amends the Land Act by inserting a new chapter 5, part 4, division 2 regarding the forfeiture of leases and inserts a section that states that that provision does not apply to the forfeiture of the leases under new section 234E, which was the subject of clause 17. That means that the leases can be forfeited at the whim of the minister if there has been more than one transgression of the Vegetation Management Act. This clause is related to clause 19 and we will certainly also be opposing that clause, because that clause also relates to the forfeiture of the leases and it is in that clause that the issue of appeals and the rights of the land-holder to make appeals on the grounds for forfeiture would be best debated.

But we are certainly opposing this clause 18 as well. There has been no case made by the minister, there has been no case made in this parliament or in the public debate that has ensued since the introduction of this legislation that the government needs this draconian power of being able to seize people's leases, being able to destroy people's businesses, simply because those people find themselves in transgression of the Vegetation Management Act on more than one occasion. It is quite an horrendous penalty in the hands of departmental officers with an agenda to pursue.

Unfortunately, since the implementation of the Vegetation Management Act and since the implementation of the water reform process, we have seen officers within the department who are prepared to pursue their own agendas and who are prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to obtain convictions under that new legislation. We have seen examples that are currently before the courts where officers of the Department of Natural Resources have gone to quite extraordinary lengths, presumably at the direction of the minister—

Mr ROBERTSON: I rise to a point of order. That is untrue and offensive and I ask the member to withdraw. Vegetation management officers do not operate under my direction. The member knows better than that.

Mr SEENEY: I withdraw whatever the minister finds offensive. However, it is undeniable that the minister is responsible for the actions of vegetation management officers within his department. He is the person who is ultimately responsible for the actions of every officer within

the department. Every action of every officer within the department, no matter how irresponsible or how illegal, the responsibility stops with the minister. Under the democratic processes of our society, the place where the minister is answerable is in this chamber. In this chamber, the minister will be held responsible and answerable for the actions of vegetation management officers. Before this debate is concluded, we will deal with some of the irresponsible agendas that have been pursued. We will illustrate some of the illegal approaches that have been taken by officers of the Natural Resources Department for which the minister is undeniably responsible.

As I was saying, this clause is dangerous. It is dangerous at first reading. It is even more dangerous in the hands of a department whose officers have shown themselves willing to pursue individual agendas, who have shown themselves willing to go to extraordinary lengths to secure convictions. Indeed, this legislation in its entirety has been accurately described by independent people in the media in the last week as setting out to obtain convictions, making it easy to obtain convictions. That is what the whole thrust of this legislation is about. But it is even worse when that legislation is seen against the background of the Vegetation Management Act as it has been introduced and as it has operated since 1991—that is, when we see it against the background of the politicisation of the vegetation management issue and the way it has been turned into a political football by successive ministers in this Labor government and the enormous amount of uncertainty that has existed since 1991 and the complete unpreparedness of the department to implement this legislation. The provision encompassed in these three clauses together of being able to seize leases, forfeit leases and destroy people's business is unacceptably dangerous. It is unacceptably dangerous to anyone who is interested in fair play or any sort of a sense of fairness.

It cannot be denied by the minister or any person in this House that the department was unprepared for the implementation of this act. The data upon which permits were issued, the data upon which evaluations were made was far from perfect—far from perfect! There are any number of examples remaining even today where the department has considered a particular piece of vegetation to be of one type such as endangered vegetation only to find that when it is actually groundtruthed—when someone actually goes there—it is not that at all but is old cultivation or it was cleared years ago or whatever. And so we would expect it to be, because we are dealing with technology that is relatively new and relatively untried. This clause allows the minister to forfeit leases and to seize people's businesses based on that sort of database and that sort of information.

It is horrendous to suggest that this sort of a provision can be justified by anything that has happened since the vegetation management legislation was introduced. It is totally unacceptable to suggest that the government needs this sort of forfeiture power for any reasonable administration of the Vegetation Management Act. If there was a reasonable approach adopted, if there was an inclusive approach, if there was a consultative approach, we would not be here in this House tonight debating this legislation that is all about securing convictions, all about big stick punishments for land-holders. It could have been so much different if the whole issue had not been politicised the way it was.

It is totally unacceptable now that the government has lost control of the issue to put in place the type of forfeiture provisions that are contained in this clause, the clause before it and the clause after it. It is simply not justified. It has not been justified by the minister. It certainly will not be supported, nor should it be supported, by the land-holding community, the majority of whom—and I will repeat this again so I cannot be misrepresented—are certainly not people who would break the law. We do not support anyone who deliberately sets out to break the law, nor should anyone else lend support to that sort of activity. But this provision and the response that it encapsulates is totally unnecessary. It is totally unacceptable. It is totally unfair given the situation that has existed over the last three years that has led us to this point. It is totally unwarranted in terms of obtaining the type of fair, reasonable vegetation management regime that Queensland needs and Queensland could have had, had it not been for the politicisation of this issue by a series of incompetent ministers in a government that was more interested in media stunts and more interested in hype and sensationalism than obtaining any sort of reasonable outcome in what was always going to be a contentious area but could have been properly resolved.

Mr ROBERTSON: When it comes to stunts, untruths and political agendas, there is no-one more guilty than the member for Callide. What we have just heard is 20 minutes of absolute, unmitigated nonsense. To say that the member for Callide and the truth remain strangers in this place is an understatement. As we have seen—

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. I find the minister's personal references offensive, as he knew I would. I seek for him to withdraw it and perhaps we could debate the substance of the issue rather than reverting to personal slander.

Mr ROBERTSON: I withdraw, but I would just ask members to remember the Berri incident. Remember when the truth suffered at the hands of this gentleman's political agenda? Remember how he was caught out exaggerating? Remember how he dragged public servants through the mud in a cheap and tawdry attempt to advance his own political agenda publicly?

Today we see a repeat of exactly the same thing: dragging my departmental officers' reputations through the mud, accusing them of corruption, accusing them of acting illegally, accusing them of breaking the law. As he well knows, my friend has a responsibility under the relevant act pertaining to the Crime and Misconduct Commission to prove it—to make those allegations to the proper authority, the CMC, and have it test them. But he should not use this place, the coward's castle, to make those allegations against vegetation management officers throughout the state. I cannot wait to circulate his speech to all of them. They will remember him, because he has just dragged their name, their reputation and their commitment to the Public Service through the mud with no proof.

If the member for Callide has an allegation about criminal misconduct, an allegation of impropriety or a suggestion of illegal actions by a public servant, he knows where he should take it. To get up here and politicise this particular provision demonstrates once again how absolutely irresponsible and disgraceful he is, not just to the parliament but also to his political party.

I will deal with one more matter, which is yet again a gross exaggeration of the truth—not even getting close to the truth. I refer to the allegation that leases can be cancelled at the whim of the minister. If the member had one shred of honesty about him he would know that there are quite detailed provisions in the existing act and in the amendments before the committee today that place significant constraints on any minister before cancelling a lease. To suggest, as the member has done, that it can be done at the whim of the minister is grossly irresponsible. He knows better. If the member keeps getting up, as he has just done, to speak to every other amendment, either pursued by him or as part of this bill, I will repeat the absolutely irresponsible nature of his conduct. One good page in *Queensland Country Life*, brother, does not make for a good alternative minister.

Mr SEENEY: Well, well, well. The minister has demonstrated just how vulnerable the government is on this particular piece of legislation. I do not need to make accusations against individual officers of the department. The departmental officers have certainly destroyed any trust that existed between them and the land-holders of Queensland. They have done it themselves. They have done it with the minister's knowledge and they have done it, if not at the minister's instruction, then certainly with his agreement.

I refer members of this chamber to the extensive debates we have had in this place about the Anchorage court case at St George. The department's evidence could not stand up in court. The departmental officers were forced to admit under oath to rather less than responsible actions, I would suggest. That is the type of approach that has been used by departmental officers not just in relation to the water reform process, which was the subject of that court case, but also in relation to pursuing people under the Vegetation Management Act. Those are the officers who are given quite draconian powers by this clause.

There has been ample public scrutiny of the actions of departmental officers in relation to a couple of what are becoming very high profile court cases. I predict that before those court cases are over we will see some very close scrutiny of the integrity of departmental officers, who are responsible to and answerable to, if not at the instruction of, the minister who has just performed in this chamber.

That is the background against which we should see the proposition to include within this legislation the draconian measures of being able to destroy an individual's business for two transgressions of this act—two transgressions that, conceivably at least, could be the result of the pursuit of a personal agenda or agendas by one or more of these less than responsible departmental officers who do exist in the department. Whether it is at the behest or instruction of the minister, they exist. That has been clearly shown to be the case. It is not an accusation I have to make; it is part of the public record. If the minister were responsible, rather than berating me for raising it in the chamber he would be doing something about those departmental officers who want to pursue their own agendas, who want to engage in less than creditable actions.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the member for Callide has made those comments four times. Repetition is not allowed. I know that you are entitled to speak four times on one clause, for 10 minutes then five minutes then five minutes. It does not mean that you have to use the time by repeating yourself.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Chairman, I think the comments the minister made make it imperative that I restate the point. However, I do take your point about repetition. Suffice it to say that we will oppose this clause, just as we will oppose all of the clauses that deal with the forfeiture of leases—all of the clauses that give the department and the minister the right to destroy an individual's business based on convictions that have been obtained in the circumstances I have outlined. We will certainly be opposing the clause.

Mr HOBBS: I am disappointed that the minister did not take the opportunity to answer some of the questions raised by the member for Callide. In fact, the minister's whole response was basically shooting the messenger. I think it would be far better for the constituents of Queensland if we could actually debate the issues as they are raised.

The minister said that the departmental people were not at fault in any way. Will the minister give the assurance that the government will prosecute any agency officer who provides false information, false submissions or false evidence to support prosecutions against land-holders for alleged unlawful tree clearing? Will the minister also give an assurance that he will immediately cease prosecution proceedings if such misconduct is confirmed to him? That is the issue here. The minister is putting in place a process that Mr Mugabe would be proud of.

Mr Robertson: You are debating the wrong clause.

Mr HOBBS: No fear I am not. We are talking about the forfeiture of leases generally. The minister is commencing a process that in the past has only related to significant events such as perhaps the non-forfeiture of small blocks around town that people have walked away from that are being disused. I would be interested if the minister could talk to his departmental officers and ask them how many cases there have been in recent history where a forfeiture of land has occurred on large-scale properties.

Could the minister give us some advice as to how often this forfeiture procedure has been used in the past? In the past there was a process to be followed, and that was through the Land Court. We do not have that now. We have to go straight to the minister. The government is giving a show cause notice to the land-holder. The land-holder will have to show cause to the minister. On the various leases—not one lease but maybe two, three or four leases—he will determine the improvements on the forfeitures. There may have been significant improvements made to that land over generations.

In this legislation the minister is denying in the first instance even the right of compensation for those improvements. It is there in black and white. How can he possibly do that on the basis of a ministerial office? Sure the Land Court in the past would make a determination and then make a recommendation to the minister and the minister would then take appropriate action in relation to leases. That is the process. We all know that. But now the minister is bypassing this process.

In his summing-up the other day, the minister mentioned that because an offence in the first instance was dealt with by the Land Court, he therefore has the right to do this now. But that is not the case. Neither the minister nor his ministerial office has the right or the ability to determine the finer points of what the land-holder should receive in relation to the value of that lease, the value of the improvements and all the associated land matters. This is a very complicated process. The Land Court has been in place for 104 years. It is a specialist court established to handle these matters.

Why is the minister trying to bypass the court? That is the first question. It would seem to me, quite frankly, that this is an act of desperation. He has lost control of the debate. He has lost control of tree clearing and is thrashing about wildly trying to use the biggest stick that he can. But the government does not have to do that. A forfeiture is the most serious of offences. If that is what the government wants, it has to allow a democratic, fair and independent process for that to be valued. That can be valued and evaluated by a respected judicial process. We have one of those in Queensland. We have a Land Court. That is where it should be done, not through the minister's office.

Another point which is significant is that there was no consultation on this issue. We talked about this in the general debate. I ask the minister now: why did he not consult with land-holders, with the industry in general, in relation to these issues? He would have been able to work his way

through these difficulties had he done so. He would not be in here now making a goose of himself in relation to these matters. If the minister is offended by the word, I withdraw it.

I am very sincere in my belief that the minister has got this wrong. I am quite surprised that when we were trying to debate this in a sensible way in the House a while ago his only response was to attack the shadow minister on things that were totally irrelevant.

Mr Robertson: I was provoked.

Mr HOBBS: I am not provoking the minister. I am trying to get him back on track. I would hope that the minister would responsibly answer those questions and perhaps we can have a reasonable debate as to how he was thinking, as to how he made this conglomeration and how he is going to try to make it work. To me it seems very difficult, but we would like to hear what he has to say.

Mr ROBERTSON: In terms of action against officers, as honourable members would know, when we strip away all the hyperbole of what has been said regarding an officer being found to be misleading a court on the evidence provided, they know that would be a contempt of court, and the court on its own directive would take appropriate action against that officer.

In addition, there is a code of conduct in place for all public servants in relation to how they go about their business. There would be an expectation that, if an officer had acted outside the code of conduct in terms of providing evidence to a court where he or she may have perjured themselves, appropriate action would be taken to discipline that officer.

I do not think I need say much more than that. The member knows that is the case. Strip away the hyperbole of what he has been saying, and I think he will admit that significant safeguards are in place to deal with any such matter where an officer pursues a personal agenda to the extent that they perjure themselves to the court or act in contravention of their responsibilities as an officer of the Queensland Public Service.

Mr Hobbs: Are you prepared to instigate action against those people?

Mr ROBERTSON: It would not be up to me to do that. The member knows that.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: The member knows it would not be up to me to do that. It would be up to the director-general either of the department or the director-general of the Department of the Premier who has carriage and responsibility under the Public Service Act. The member knows that, and that would obviously apply.

Secondly, in terms of my ministerial office or my making determinations outside the realm of the real world, again I say to the member for Warrego, as a former Minister for Natural Resources he is aware of the procedures that apply and the level and quantity of advice that he would seek or any minister would seek before taking such a significant step as cancelling a lease. In terms of his call for the Land Court to be involved, any decision that a minister takes to cancel a lease is appealable to the Land Court. I draw his attention to subsequent provisions in this bill that outline that.

If a minister, in this case myself, acted inappropriately or without due consideration of all the appropriate advice in terms of coming to a decision to cancel a lease, then that land-holder, after he or she has exhausted all processes that would be available to them through both the department and me as minister, nevertheless has the ability to take that matter to the Land Court for final determination.

Mr HOBBS: I think it simply says that the matter is appealable to the minister. Could the minister tell us exactly where in the act it says that it is appealable to the Land Court? If he could find that, I would appreciate that.

Mr Robertson: Section 24D, right of appeal. The lessee may appeal against a minister's decision to forfeit the lease.

Mr HOBBS: To whom? The minister keeps saying 'to the Land Court' but it does not say that.

Mr Robertson: It says it in the principal act, I am informed.

Mr HOBBS: The minister talked about the fact that, if an officer was misleading with information in a case, it would be contempt of court. He also mentioned the fact that he or she would be breaching a code of conduct.

The minister said that in such a situation it would be appealable to the court, but any issues in relation to the code of conduct are up to the minister or the director-general. After a land-holder spends several hundred thousand dollars defending themselves in court, they would then face a perjury charge. At this stage, most land-holders would not be in a position to do so. I will give the minister an example of such a scenario that is actually on the public record. A number of agency officers did in fact fabricate the facts and give deliberately false information in an attempt to prosecute a land-holder. No government of any political colour for any reason whatsoever can condone, much less approve, false evidence or submissions being used by agencies to prosecute citizens of this state. The court records show that it has happened in relation to this very issue of tree clearing. The minister knows that. If the minister does not, he should ask his departmental officers to show him where that has occurred. Will the minister ask his director-general to look at those cases—and I am sure the minister knows what I am referring to—to see whether that code of conduct to which the minister referred a while ago has been breached?

Mr ROBERTSON: I actually do not know the case to which the member is referring. If I were to guess, it is a matter currently still before the courts. So it would be inappropriate to do so until such time as that matter exhausts itself. Secondly, I remind members opposite that, of all the cases of illegal tree clearing to go before the courts, the department has a 100 per cent prosecution success rate. That does not suggest to me that there is an absence of evidence or of officers of my department acting inappropriately. It seems to me that we are pretty thorough in terms of the work of officers. Thirdly, I have said before that perhaps the member should be the shadow minister for natural resources. I hope he never becomes the shadow Attorney-General because, as I hope he would be aware, if someone perjures themselves before the courts it is not up to the defendant in the case to go back to the court to seek to prosecute the person who perjured themselves. It is up to the Attorney-General to do so or, indeed, for the court to recommend accordingly.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: The court would start the process, but it is the Attorney-General who has ultimate responsibility for that based on a report from the court as to the actions of a particular individual in terms of the evidence that they provide. It is not up to an individual minister. It is not up to a defendant in that there are necessary checks and balances in our legal system to ensure that that occurs automatically.

Question—That clause 18, as read, stand part of the bill—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 52—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Choi, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, J. Cunningham, Edmond, English, Fenlon, Foley, Hayward, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McNamara, Miller, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Phillips, Pitt, Poole, N. Roberts, Robertson, Rodgers, C. Scott, D. Scott, Shine, Smith, Stone, Strong, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Purcell, Reeves

NOES, 16—Copeland, E. Cunningham, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, Pratt, Quinn, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Watson. Tellers: Hopper, Lester

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clause 19—

Mr SEENEY (6.51 p.m.): Clause 19, once again, deals with the same element as clause 18. It deals with the issue of the forfeiture of leases. I will not repeat all of the arguments that were put by me and others on this side of the House about how unnecessary the forfeiture of the leases provision is. The fact is that the House has now passed clauses 17 and 18, which regrettably allows for the forfeiture of leases under this amendment to the legislation.

However, clause 19 deals with the processes the minister has to abide by during the procedures for the forfeiture of those leases. I was interested to hear the comments of the minister in response to a question in the debate on the previous clause. He said that there was a very complex and thorough process that the minister had to go through before he could forfeit a lease under this provision. I think it would be an error on my part if I did not point out to the House that it is clause 19 that sets out that process. By any reading and interpretation of clause 19 it is difficult to get to the point of view that the minister expressed. I want to go through it to illustrate to the House, the people of Queensland and particularly to the lessees who will be subject to this draconian provision just how easy it is under clause 19 for the minister to require the forfeiture of leases, despite the answer that he gave. He may like, as part of the debate on this clause, to correct some of those statements that he made previously.

Clause 19 states that before the lease is forfeited the minister must give the lessee a show cause notice. That is fair enough. That is not particularly difficult for the minister to do. Subsection (2) sets out what the show cause notice must state. It says that the show cause notice must state why the minister proposes to forfeit the lease. That is not particularly difficult to do. We have dealt already in the previous debate with how easy it would be, given the current legislation and the background to it, for the grounds for the proposed forfeiture to be less than reliable. Subsection (2)(c) requires the facts and circumstances that are the basis for the grounds. Once again, we have dealt with the issue of how unreliable are the facts and circumstances that the minister's department relies on in the implementation of this act, simply because of the way the government has handled it and simply because of the way the department was so underprepared. We have dealt with and established the extent to which the facts and circumstances are completely unreliable.

Subsection 2(d) states that the lessee may make within the stated period written representations to the minister to show why the lease should not be forfeited. That would appear to me to be something of a contradiction of what the minister said earlier in reply to the member for Warrego. Subsection (2)(d), as I would read it, is a normal provision which requires the minister to inform the lessee of his rights to appeal. Subsection (2)(d) states that the minister must tell the lessee that he has got a right to make written representations to the minister to show why the lease should not be forfeited. That is why I read—I think quite understandably—the legislation to mean that the right of appeal was to the minister. The minister has said that that right of appeal is to the Land Court under the primary act. I am pleased that that is on the record. The way this clause is written, especially subsection (2)(d), it is quite easy to arrive at a very different conclusion.

The clause also goes on to state that in deciding whether to forfeit the lease the minister must consider those written representations. That is fair enough. But within five days after deciding whether to forfeit the lease the minister must give the lessee written notice of the decision and, if the minister decides to forfeit the lease, the notice must include reasons for the decision—none of which is particularly erroneous. That could not possibly, I would suggest to the minister, be described as in any way a process that is likely to make any future minister think twice about going through the process of forfeiting the lease. The process itself is very simple, irrespective of what the minister said to the House. What the minister said to the House was less than honest and, to use one of his favourite words, probably disingenuous. It was less than honest, because it is quite a simple process for the minister to require the forfeiture of the lease and it is quite clearly set out in clause 19 just how simple that is.

I am pleased, as I said, that subsection (2)(d) has been confirmed to represent a right of appeal to the Land Court. That is the way it should be. I would suggest that a much fairer drafting of this particular clause would have required the minister to apply to the Land Court for the forfeiture rather than to just take the number of simple steps outlined here. That would have been a much fairer process to put in place. To have the minister, whoever they were in whatever circumstances, have the right to apply to the Land Court and let it make the decision about whether the leases should be forfeited or not would have been a much more acceptable way to go if we are going to have this provision in the legislation. That is not the case here. It is not the case. There is a very simple, straightforward, step-by-step process that any minister can undertake very easily to forfeit the leases of anyone caught up in this draconian measure, and it is very easy to foresee a situation where an individual's business can be ruined at the behest of a minister who is prepared to go through this very simple process.

We will be opposing this clause, just as we opposed the previous two, because this whole provision of forfeiting leases is obnoxious, unwarranted and it certainly will not be supported. The process involved is certainly not, as the minister described it, such to discourage ministers from pursuing it lightly. It is simple, it is straightforward and it can very easily be misused. It should be rejected by this House.

Mr ROBERTSON: As all members of this place know, if a member seeks ministerial office, it comes with a number of responsibilities. I am sure that every member who has performed the role of shadow minister from time to time understands that one of the things that they must do before coming into this parliament to debate legislation is actually read the legislation. Unfortunately, the time of this place has been wasted no end with fairly puerile and uninformed debate about the so-called simplicity of provisions relating to the forfeiture of leases.

Before I sit down, I will help the honourable member by referring him to part 3 of the Land Act, which sets out in quite detailed fashion how appeals or reviews of decisions are provided for.

All of the amendments that are before the chamber today correspond with this section of the Land Act, which has been in place since 1994. The appeal process of any decision taken starts, first of all, with an internal review. If the person wishes to appeal against that internal review, that person then has the ability to go to the Land Court. I ask the honourable member for Callide, the shadow minister for natural resources, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, to please, oh please, read the primary legislation before he comes into this place.

The CHAIRMAN: Before calling the member for Callide to speak, I have to say that I am not as expert as my two learned friends in the chamber.

Mr SEENEY: One of us is, anyway.

The CHAIRMAN: But I see a very simple process that I understand quite clearly. I suggest that we do not go back to clauses 17 and 18, but we actually ask for an explanation of something in this clause. To me, it is very simple. I am not going to allow the time of the chamber to be taken up by redebating clauses that have already taken us a couple of hours to debate. I am making that ruling quite firmly.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Chairman, I take your point and I have no intention of doing that. In my first contribution to this clause, I gave the lie to the minister's earlier statement where he said that there was a long and complex process that would discourage future ministers from using this forfeiture provision. I did that. I went through the provisions that are encapsulated in this clause.

The minister, in a smart alec way, has stood up and tried to denigrate me in his response by talking about the right of appeal. In my first contribution to this clause I acknowledged that the minister had clarified that the right of appeal was set out in the primary legislation. Obviously, the minister did not listen. Had he listened and had he responded to the bulk of my first contribution, I would not be on my feet now.

I certainly reject the minister's suggestion that I have not read this legislation. I know this legislation a heck of a lot better than the minister does. The evidence for that is the number of times that the minister has to talk to advisers instead of listening to the contributions that have been put forward by the members on this side. I want the record to show that the minister did not respond to what was the thrust of my first contribution to this clause. In summary, that was the process by which a future minister would seek to forfeit leases. We will oppose this clause. The chamber should reject it.

Mr HOBBS: There are a number of issues here. This clause talks about repeat convictions. This is where the minister does not have, as we suggested, minor and major offences. In a press statement, the minister stated that he had. But under this legislation, I do not believe that he has.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I gave a ruling to the member for Callide that members can debate only the procedure for forfeiture as in this clause and ask questions about that. I will not allow the member to refer back to previous clauses, either.

Mr HOBBS: I am not going back there.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, you are.

Mr HOBBS: I am talking about clause 19.

The CHAIRMAN: What section?

Mr HOBBS: Repeat convictions. There are only three lines to it. It refers to the forfeiture of leases for repeat convictions.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! No, the member has the wrong clause.

An opposition member: No, you're on the wrong clause.

The CHAIRMAN: No, I am not. Clause 19—

Mr HOBBS: It is repeat convictions for tree clearing offences. That is what I am referring to. I am talking about repeat convictions. In other words, strike one, strike two and then a person is on a show cause. A land-holder may have elected to pay the fine and admit guilt even though, had that land-holder gone to court for that first offence, he may have been exonerated. If somebody has a conviction, it is a first offence.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have now reread the clause. Although that is the heading of the clause, we are debating the procedure for the forfeiture of leases. I am going to sit the member down.

Mr HOBBS: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! No, you are not debating it.

Mr HOBBS: I am.

The CHAIRMAN: No, you are not. Just because the clause says that it is forfeited because it is a repeat offence, the member is not going to be allowed to get away with that. The member will resume his seat.

Mr HOBBS: That is a bit unreasonable.

The CHAIRMAN: I am not being unreasonable at all.

Mr HOBBS: It is part of it. It is part of the whole thing. You do not understand the damn thing, for heaven's sake.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will ask the member to withdraw that. That is disrespectful to the chair.

Mr HOBBS: I will withdraw.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I say again that the member is wrong, because although clause 19 refers to the forfeiture of leases for repeated convictions for tree clearing, the whole clause is about a process.

Mr HOBBS: It is that process that I want to talk about.

The CHAIRMAN: But we are not debating the issue of repeat—

Mr HOBBS: We are.

The CHAIRMAN: We are not debating that. We are just debating the process of forfeiture.

Mr HOBBS: It is about repeat convictions.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr HOBBS: It is about repeat convictions.

Mr ROWELL: The last time that we were debating these clauses, I asked the minister about issues relating to repeat offences. If there was going to be a statute of limitations between when a person offends and then may re-offend some time in the future—

Mr ROBERTSON: It is five years.

Mr ROWELL: So in other words, if a person had an interest in two properties and has recorded a conviction on one, would that mean that both properties would be forfeited, even though he may not have had the same interest with the same people in the other property? I think that is quite important, because it really leads to a considerable degree of concern that I believe people would have in the event that, in the first instance or even in the second instance, a minor conviction was recorded. It might be a very frivolous conviction in the first instance. But when something else happens within that five-year period, that conviction could then lead to the forfeiture of both properties that a person has an interest in—either one or both of them. I would like to know quite clearly whether this legislation is going to rule out any prospect that a person might have of retaining a property when a conviction is recorded twice on one property and where that person might have an interest in another property.

Earlier, the minister indicated quite clearly that he has had a 100 per cent success rate in relation to convictions. Why is it so necessary to take a further step and make sure that people who have very complex businesses and who have spent almost a lifetime building up their asset can be just written off because of a minor offence on one property or on two separate properties? It could get quite complex and I would really like a determination from the minister as to what it does mean exactly, because it appears that there was no necessity to go through this process with the success rate to date. If there is already a high rate of success, why introduce legislation which has been described by the shadow minister and others as being disgraceful—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member will resume his seat. The chair is speaking.

Mr Rowell interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: The member will resume his seat.

Mr ROWELL: This is—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Debate on clauses 16, 17 and 18 covered issues the member is talking about. We are now on clause 19, which actually goes through the process.

Mr ROWELL: I did not have a say in those clauses.

The CHAIRMAN: The member is going back to debating issues already raised in clauses that have been debated for hours before this House. I am not going to tell the member again: the member will resume his seat.

Mr ROWELL: Quite clearly you are being totally unreasonable and I think you are trying to shut down debate on these clauses.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the member to withdraw that statement. It is a reflection on the chair.

Mr ROWELL: I withdraw it, but the point is—

The CHAIRMAN: Withdraw it without exception.

Mr ROWELL: I withdraw it. It is very important to a lot of people.

The CHAIRMAN: Honourable members, we have had hours of debate on clauses 16, 17 and 18. All of those clauses deal with the forfeiture of leases. We are now debating a clause which explains the procedure for forfeiture of leases. I am not going to have a further debate on other clauses because we have had the debate.

Mr Rowell interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not the issue. The member will resume his seat.

Mr ROWELL: I thought that it would be, because—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member will resume his seat. I now warn the member under standing order 124 for disobeying the chair and the consequences that go with that warning. I am not going to allow bedlam in here, member for Hinchinbrook.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (7.12 p.m.): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

SunWater; Lake Tinaroo Pontoons

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (7.12 p.m.): Tonight I speak on a matter of ordinary Queenslanders doing things the same way as they have done for years but who are now confronted by the sudden imposition of a raft of onerous and costly government conditions. I am referring to people with property on the shores of Lake Tinaroo in my electorate and the activity is the installation and operation of a pontoon. Pontoons have added to the utilisation of the dam and have contributed significantly to the development of an appealing and enjoyable lakeside lifestyle, the benefits of which are shared by many more people than those whose address happens to include lake frontage. These pontoons have been in place at no expense to the taxpayer. Unlike the Gold Coast Indy, they have added value to Queensland without costing this state one red cent.

This government, through its corporatised entity SunWater, has decided the time has come to regulate these pontoons. I know that the government will say that SunWater is corporatised and so it has nothing to do with it, but it is the only shareholder so it should own up to the problems as well. I do not believe that reasonable people have any problem with reasonable regulation. The application of a bit of commonsense is always for the best, and that is what could have happened here. Instead, SunWater has blocked anyone with a pontoon from using it until they have submitted a license application. That pontoon may have been in place for years, may have served them well and may have been able to do so for many years to come. But that does not cut with SunWater now and certainly not without some expensive paperwork.

The application fee alone is a hefty $500, then there is the annual licence fee of $100 and pontoon owners must also provide design plans, specifications, dimensions, material, live loading information, the maximum size of the boat to use the pontoon and so on. Owners have to add on to that a certificate from a qualified engineer, which I believe will cost in the order of another $500 or more, and then there is the requirement for a $10 million public liability cover. If the pontoon is within 100 metres of somebody else's land, they need permission not just from the owners of that block but the next closest block as well. If the application succeeds, pontoon owners then face

yearly costs of hundreds of dollars, if not more, for the annual fee, the insurance premium, the expense of mowing a specified area and of keeping that area clear of declared pests. After all that, SunWater still reserves the right to have the owner shift their pontoon at 14 days' notice. This all seems a long way from a reasonable fee for a commonsense solution to the issue of pontoons on Tinaroo.

Business Safe; Community Policing

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (7.15 p.m.): I rise tonight to inform the House of a policing initiative that I had the pleasure of launching at Paradise Point recently. The Business Safe initiative has been introduced to the Broadwater electorate by local Senior Sergeant Murray Underwood and the staff at Runaway Bay Police Station. We were fortunate to have in attendance at the opening Assistant Commissioner David Melville and District Superintendent Ian Stewart. Both of these gentlemen are very supportive of innovative programs such as this and it was a pleasure to have them at the launch. Also attending were representatives from the Runaway Bay Rotary Club. With President Barry Slocom and Treasurer Rob Curtis, Runaway Bay Rotary deserves a special mention to acknowledge the financial contribution it made to this project. It donated over $1,200, and this support was a key factor in getting the project up and running. I am delighted that Runaway Bay Rotary has joined us here in the gallery tonight, and I welcome them to the Queensland parliament.

The Business Safe project is unique in that it provides direct contact with the business owners and operators at their place of business, addresses security and safety concerns and utilises the resources of police and volunteers to provide a thorough and professional service. This is a fine example of what can be achieved when police, businesses and the community work together. I am confident that this program will be successful in Paradise Point and I encourage businesspeople to work with the local police as well as the district crime prevention coordinator. Our crime prevention coordinators can analyse local crimes and crime problems and then initiate and implement solutions in partnership with the business community. In particular, they work with volunteer police to provide direct support to small business owners and operators through the provision of information, advice and assistance with things like safety audits and property engraving.

I previously discussed with local business owners the formation of a Commercial Watch for the Paradise Point area. However, I am sure that this Business Safe initiative will be very useful in addressing a lot of the concerns I have discussed with locals. After all, break-ins, robberies and other crimes are an expensive business and are something that both police and the community are eager to avoid. I believe that by working together we can take a step towards a safer community. Policing today is all about partnerships. Everyone knows it is unrealistic to imagine that police can be everywhere all the time. Policing is not just about enforcing the law but also about working with the communities to aid crime reduction and crime prevention.

At this point, I take the opportunity to commend one section of our community in particular—the Volunteers in Policing, or VIPs. These wonderful people give up their time selflessly and they undertake a range of tasks which complement the activities of paid officers and staff. The officers of Runaway Bay station are very committed to working with our local community and they deserve to be commended for that. I have no doubt that Paradise Point Business Watch will be successful, and I hope to see it expanded to other centres throughout the Broadwater electorate in the near future.

Mosquito Prevention and Control

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (7.18 p.m.): Local governments in Queensland have responsibilities through the Mosquito Prevention and Destruction Regulation 1982 to control mosquitos in their respective areas. In many cases this entails carrying out treatments on both privately owned land and Crown land. Controlling mosquitoes has been carried out by local governments at their own expense with limited research assistance from the state government. Mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria, Ross River, Barmah Forest, dengue, Australian encephalitis and Japanese encephalitis occur in Queensland. Among these, Ross River virus is the most prevalent disease, comprising 90 per cent of the total notifications of mosquito-borne diseases. We have heard recently of 144 cases of dengue fever in Cairns. Obviously there is a wide variety of species of mosquito that are vectors of disease. Hence their control is absolutely essential.

One of the main species of mosquito affecting Queensland is the salt marsh mosquito. This species breeds in prolific numbers in the salt marsh and mangrove swamps that line the estuaries and foreshores. This mosquito has a long flight range of approximately 50 or 60 kilometres and can therefore infest large populated areas of adjoining cities and shires. In addition to its nuisance value, it is also a proven vector of Ross River virus.

The incidence of vector borne diseases has a significant effect on the Queensland tourism industry. Concern is continually being expressed by local governments, particularly coastal councils, regarding mosquito control and the impact this problem has on health, recreation and the social environment. Loss of productivity has cost the Queensland economy millions of dollars in outbreaks of dengue fever, Ross River fever and encephalitis and has placed significant burdens on local economies. Accordingly, any lessening of the incidence of the diseases brings financial benefits to the state government.

The quality and success of each individual local government's mosquito control program varies across the state, particularly in relation to Crown land, due to resource and access constraints. Further, in many circumstances councils with a small population base have large areas of Crown land to treat, just as councils with large population bases do. Due to the varying available resources of individual local governments across the state to conduct mosquito management, consistency in mosquito management has not been achieved.

The state government, through Queensland Health, provides limited funding for mosquito research. While this is an essential component, delivery of on-ground works needs to be improved. Local governments over many years have endeavoured to obtain financial assistance for the control of mosquitoes, particularly on Crown land, without success.

In November 2001 cabinet endorsed the protocol for the management and control of mosquitoes in Queensland. The Mosquito Management Advisory Group is made up of representatives of the state government, the Local Government Association of Queensland and local governments in Queensland. It oversees implementation of this protocol. Part of the implementation process involves gathering information to provide a mechanism through which a collaborative approach to the management and control of mosquitoes and their associated problems can be developed.

Time expired.

Alpha Caravan Park

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (7.21 p.m.): I wish to place on record my thanks to ministers McGrady, Schwarten and Spence for their recent decisive and supportive actions that have achieved solutions to a longstanding problem that has impacted on the quality of life of residents and businesses in the Aspley-Carseldine area.

When I became the member for Aspley I was made aware of a longstanding problem in relation to levels of crime from a small area within central Aspley—levels of crime that were disproportionate to the rest of the electorate, which enjoys a relatively low crime rate. It was well known that the majority of police calls were to a local caravan park, the Alpha Caravan Park. I met with local police regularly about this matter, and they advised me that they had increased patrols and utilised increased police numbers to the Brisbane North region to respond to the significant number of calls to the park. I was advised that transient residents were the people most often involved in such disturbances requiring police presence.

From early in my term the Minister for Police has worked with me to support police, Neighbourhood Watch groups, local residents, clubs and businesses to resolve the problems emanating from the park. In mid-December 2002 the minister decided to visit the caravan park with Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson, Boondall Superintendent Paul Wilson and me to discuss our concerns with management of the park. The discussions, quite frankly, were difficult, and I do not apologise for the tough approach taken by the Police Minister and me in relation to our expectations that through actions taken by management there would be a reduction in the need for police calls to the park. An offer was made to work closely with management to assist them in reducing the number of calls to the park.

In January 2003 I became aware that, due to insurance difficulties, the owners of the park lawfully evicted 60 people from the park. The ultimate outcome for most of these evicted people would have been homelessness. For many of them, simply having the Alpha Caravan Park as an address prohibited them from gaining private rentals.

I sought the assistance of the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing. With support from the minister, the Department of Housing at Chermside, charities such as Lifeline, St Vincent de Paul, Aspley Care and Save the Children, Lorraine Campbell from the Residents of Alpha Caravan Park Support Group and Brisbane City Council, all of the people evicted from the park managed to find alternative accommodation—no small feat. Following a request for help, the Minister for Families has since provided a $16,500 grant to allow Lifeline to assist these people to maintain those tenancies in the long term.

Dealing with the long-term problems of the Alpha Caravan Park has been difficult. There was a necessity to deal toughly with a problem of lawlessness combined with an understanding that people sometimes need a hand up. I have never believed that as the local member I was helpless to fix the problem. That was a feature of previous representation in Aspley. Being a voice in a government that is committed to being tough on crime but with a preparedness to address the causes of crime, such as poverty, drugs, homelessness and helplessness, means that I can get things done for the people of Aspley.

I am advised that the levels of police calls to the caravan park are dropping and the crime rate is on the way down. I am keen to see the park and its reputation restored to one of quality budget accommodation. I am a member of a state government that understands and supports the importance of such caravan parks in a metropolitan area such as Aspley, but people should make no mistake that I am equally committed to the quality of life of Aspley residents, clubs and businesses that surround the park. I am pleased that we are making significant ground on this particular problem.

Kilcoy-Beerwah Road

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (7.24 p.m.): Recently I attended a meeting held at the Woodford ambulance station which was convened to address the horrendous accident and death toll that the Kilcoy-Beerwah road has recorded. Most people would be aware of the two motorcycle deaths which occurred on 15 February this year. For the third bike rider it was fortuitous that he was lagging 500 metres behind or it would have been a triple fatality. As a police spokeswoman said, neither of them stood a chance at the speed they were going. Another policeman said that it was the worst accident he had seen in his 14-year career.

The concerned citizens of the Kilcoy-Beerwah road and others convened the meeting not only because of the two lives lost that day—in fact, that was the catalyst—but also because this section of road has a long history of accidents. The Queensland government's own graph of accidents shows that there have been 89 accidents over the last 12 years and that 48 of these have occurred in the last five years. On top of that, residents report that there are a number that have never been reported. These accidents predominantly occurred along the section from Cruices Drive to the 4000, which is at the bottom of the range. This section is a long open road on which bike riders and other vehicular traffic feel unrestrained compared with the confining, winding, steep section of road they have just come down or are about to go up. They push the pedal to the metal and speed.

Forty-nine people attended the meeting and crowded into the very small venue. This number was far more than was expected and truly represented the concern of those who live in the area. As any retailer will tell you, for every one person who reports a complaint or concern it would be recommended to multiply it a number of times to get the true picture.

Main Roads is well and truly aware of the situation. I must thank them, for they have engaged consultants to undertake the planning and design of the project for the proposed upgrade of a section of the road. But these planning and project exercises take a lot of time, and immediate action is required to make sure that this ongoing dangerous situation does not continue and result in further property damage, injury and unnecessary deaths. The representative of the local council who attended the meeting has assured the community that measures will be taken to ensure that council not only confers with and assists Main Roads to address issues but also will, where funds are required, look into it very seriously.

The meeting asked that measures which were implemented to reduce traffic accidents during the Woodford Folk Festival, which attracts enormous crowds, be implemented until the roadworks are completed, because those measures ensure that no increase in the number of accidents occurs despite the increase in traffic at that time.

Families who drop off and pick up their children from school buses face particular difficulties because at the current time they reportedly have no safe places to pull over during this process. I

would ask that special emphasis be placed on the children's welfare—not at some time in the future but right now.

One thing all who attended the meeting agreed upon was the importance of the traffic flowing to and through their town. They do not want to give the impression that tourist traffic, whether it be vehicular or motorbike, is not welcome, because in this day and age as industries decline, whether it be the timber industry or any other, it is often the only avenue left for those in rural based towns to remain viable.

It was reported to me that in the year 2000, 1,500 vehicles per day had been recorded travelling the road. Today that has risen to 2,000 plus per day. That number will continue to grow as people see the area as a beautiful place to visit.

Time expired.

Anglo Coal

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (7.27 p.m.): Last week at this time I attended a public meeting in the mining town of Middlemount. The meeting was organised to provide an opportunity for mineworkers, their families and the local community to question the Anglo American coal company management team about the future of current employees—those employed at the southern and central collieries, as well as at the German Creek open-cut mine.

The management team is currently responsible for the development of a new mine in the area to be known as Grasstree. Given that the new mine has been created on an existing lease under plans drawn up for the southern colliery, Anglo Coal considers that it now has the right to turn its back on the current work force and create a new work force.

I need to inform the House that it was soul destroying to sit in on a forum at which current employees were left in no doubt about their future with the company. Anglo is managing the development of Grasstree in such a way that will allow the company to sign up a new work force prior to the commencement of a wind-down of the central and southern collieries, which are running out of recoverable coal resources. Grasstree will be manned up with no commitment to the filling of positions by members of the current work force.

The Middlemount meeting heard from Anglo Coal management how every worker could apply for a job. It was nothing more than rhetoric. There was no sincerity. In fact, management remained silent when asked if current employees, many of them long-term employees and residents of Middlemount, would be given preference over external applicants. I was embarrassed to sit there and listen to the total disregard for decent working men who had given years of their life to work in the coal industry and who live in that community. Management told the meeting that a shift pattern which best suited the needs of the mine would be introduced—seven days on, seven days off, which included three 10-hour shifts, two 12-hour shifts and two 10-hour shifts, or 74-hour shifts over seven days.

Employees will be asked to sign an Australian workplace agreement and the right to collective bargaining will be denied by the non-employment of people sympathetic to the unions. It was clear to me that union members would not be employed at the new mine. The proposed shift pattern offers no consideration for the health of workers or the stability of the family unit or for communities, and workers at the new mine will be temporarily housed in accommodation provided by the company which means that there will be fewer people in that community.

Anglo management was quick to defend the shift pattern, saying it was fair because workers would only be working on average 37 hours a week. There was a clear message for those in attendance at that meeting, and the message is that the current work force will not be welcome at Grasstree mine, and nothing management says after that meeting will change how workers expect to be treated by that company. Anglo management is about creating a new culture for its work force, and it will not matter how long current workers have been in existing mines—

Time expired.

Birdsville Hospital

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (7.31 p.m.): Last Tuesday I attended a public meeting in the far western town of Birdsville in a remote corner of my electorate of Gregory, where the issue of the Birdsville Hospital was canvassed at length. The meeting was convened by the Diamantina Shire Council and chaired by that council. The issue is that Birdsville has had medical services

provided by Frontier Services for the past 80 years and is very well supported by the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

The current hospital was built in 1953, and that building is now virtually obsolete for first-class medical services to that remote settlement. With the passage of tourists through that centre as well as the local community, it is time to see that facility upgraded. I am sad to say that representatives of Queensland Health were not in attendance at that meeting on Tuesday, but there were representatives there from federal bodies, along with the council and the community.

It was resolved that the best outcome for Birdsville would be a new hospital at that centre. We know full well that the centre at Bedourie, a new brick facility built a few years ago, serves that community well, but it is now time for change. Frontier Services, to their credit—and I do salute them for the great work and the effort they have put in over the last 80 years—have donated surplus blocks of land in Birdsville township for the building of a new facility. I just hope that the Queensland government, under the stewardship of the minister, the Hon. Wendy Edmond, can see fit to support this community with the proposal at hand.

The real issue here is that, whilst these people do live in a far-flung, remote settlement, they are entitled to the same types of facilities that are dotting the map right around Queensland. The Diamantina Shire Council has thrown its total support behind the project in question, and the federal authorities have done the same. I call on the Queensland government to support this project in its entirety because, after all, this is a part of Queensland. Whilst it is a remote area, these people are able to care for themselves in many other ways and shoulder the responsibility of these communities on their own. I feel it is time now that we see a new hospital built in Birdsville. I would like to see the state government and Queensland Health work very closely with the Diamantina Shire Council and federal health authorities to see this outcome become a reality.

Time expired.

Mr B. Phillips

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (7.34 p.m.): I rise to draw to the attention of the House a tragic crash that claimed the life of Bradley Phillips on 22 February this year. Brad was killed when his vehicle collided with a horse on the Bruce Highway near the town of Brandon in my electorate of Burdekin. The tragedy of Brad's accident was that he was a paraplegic and a member of the Sporting Wheelies. He represented north Queensland in wheelchair basketball and was an active member of the community.

Brad was born with spina bifida, and I saw him overcome obstacles and endure hardship as he grew up and made the most of his life, obtaining a drivers licence and watching his favourite basketball team, the Townsville Crocs, play.

We are all held responsible and liable for making sure that our dogs and other pets are properly secured in our yards and do not stray onto the roads or cause a nuisance. I have been made aware since Bradley's accident that there is a common law dating back to 1947 which states that owners of land abutting a highway do not have any legal obligation or duty to fence their properties. This law and other similar laws need urgent review. I have sought, with the assistance of the Attorney-General and his department and other relevant government departments, to progress changes to the laws regarding livestock on roads that may assist to prevent such accidents happening.

Since the accident people in my electorate have come forward with their concerns about livestock roaming on the roads in the region and possible further accidents. I will work with the Attorney-General and look at what can be done to address the law in this regard.

I have worked with Brad's grandfather, Syd Hilton, a blacksmith at Kalamia sugar mill in Ayr. Until his death, Syd was always looking at ways to make Brad's life more normal. It took Brad a long time to recover from his grandfather's death. They were inseparable. Brad is now resting with his grandfather, Syd. My condolences go to Brad's mother, Judy, and other family members, relatives and friends. I will be there to assist them in whatever way I can. Brad will always be remembered. May he rest in peace.

Uniquest

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (7.37 p.m.): I rise to bring to the attention of the House a presentation by Mr David Henderson, the managing director and CEO of Uniquest Pty Ltd, to the

University of Queensland Senate last Thursday. As members might know, Uniquest is the company established by the previous vice-chancellor of the University of Queensland, Brian Wilson, in the 1980s as a mechanism to translate intellectual property developed by UQ researchers into commercial reality. It was an intelligent response well before any Smart State rhetoric.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Dr WATSON: The minister would know because he was a student at the time.

Uniquest is now very successful and I think deserves recognition for the progress it has made. David Henderson provided some interesting measures on just how successful Uniquest is on an international basis. First of all, the interesting thing is the growth in revenues. Since 1995 there has been a 400 per cent increase in revenues, from $12.9 million to $51.6 million, and this year they have provided $6.7 million in profits.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Dr WATSON: I am going to get to that in a moment. The minister is quite right. Revenues doubled from 1995 to 1999, and they have doubled again since that time. 2002 has seen not only record profits and revenues but also seven start-up companies produced; the largest university technology transfer company start up, 52 new patents filed, 24 patents granted, 26 international aid projects, and the most AusAID period contracts in Australia. Also, Dr Mark Harvey was awarded the Australian Biotechnology Business Developer of the Year in 2002.

The most interesting statistic Mr Henderson provided was where Uniquest would rank on an international basis if it were included in the US rankings. In fact, if we look at the number of start-ups, University of Queensland/Uniquest would rank No. 10 along with universities like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The University of Michigan and Stanford University were just above it, and it was equal to or better than the University of Southern California, the University of Georgia, New York University, the University of Washington Research Foundation—those kinds of institutions.

Again, if we look at licence income, it would have ranked No. 8, ahead of Stanford and Tulane universities and just below the University of California Systems and Michigan State University. These are universities with far greater research expenditure than the University of Queensland can provide, and yet on an international basis it ranked in the top 10.

Townsville-Thuringowa Defence Personnel

Ms PHILLIPS (Thuringowa—ALP) (7.40 p.m.): Several weeks ago the Liberal federal member for Herbert, Peter Lindsay, was reported in the national media saying that peaceniks in Townsville had publicly vilified local soldiers who were in a shopping mall in their uniform. I was absolutely appalled at this blatant publicity stunt perpetrated by a politician who gives us all a bad name. Like many others in this House, I went through the aftermath of the Vietnam War. I saw young men's lives destroyed by the experience of a ghastly war, by brutal physical injuries and by the treatment they received on their return to Australia at the hands of an ignorant minority. We must not let any of this be repeated with regard to Iraq. We cannot allow people like Mr Lindsay to whip up conflict and hysteria, to divide our community to suit their own agenda.

I publicly challenged Lindsay to disclose the details of these so-called incidents of vilification, but he hid behind an in-confidence cloak. By then, however, his original statement was already out there. Interstate television programs were quoting 'the abuse experienced by soldiers in Townsville' and how 'service personnel were afraid to wear their uniforms in public'. I was disgusted at Lindsay's attempt to stir up dissension by accusing those supporting peace of attacking local soldiers. For us in Townsville-Thuringowa this war is personal. About 100 soldiers with the 5th Aviation have gone to Iraq and other defence personnel who come from our community have been deployed with other Army, Navy and Air Force contingents. We are a relatively small and close-knit community, with many people directly affected in terms of a husband, son, daughter, partner, friend or neighbour sent to fight. Almost one person in five in my electorate of Thuringowa has a personal connection with the defence forces.

In an attempt to counter this negative publicity, and to encourage the people of Townsville-Thuringowa to show that they would not be influenced by divisive tactics, we organised a unique public demonstration. We chose Friday, 7 March, the eve of International Women's Day, and encouraged women in Townsville and Thuringowa to wear white as a symbol of their support for the local defence personnel deployed to the Middle East and as a wish for a peaceful outcome to

the conflict. I wanted to assure our brave servicemen and women of our support, and to let their families and friends know that the women of Townsville and Thuringowa share the anxiety that they are going through and that we wish them godspeed.

Our women responded magnificently. Some workplaces went completely white, women staff and teachers at schools went white, bank staff even wore white and hung white balloons. Men and women not in white wore white ribbons, and taxis flew white ribbons from their aerials. It was a great demonstration from our twin cities. There is a great line in the film *The Quiet American* that finally rouses Michael Caine's character from his selfishness and complacency. It is something like—

There comes a time when, to remain human, you have to make a decision, you have to take sides.

Townsville and Thuringowa showed that, for us, it is that time.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.44 p.m.