WEDNESDAY, 21 APRIL 2004

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

DEATH OF MR G. JACKSON

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.31 a.m.): It is with utmost regret and sorrow that I inform the House of the untimely death of my senior media adviser and friend, Greg Jackson, who passed away yesterday morning. I would like to thank the many members of the House and the gallery and parliamentary staff who have expressed their condolences to Greg's family, to me, to other opposition members and to the opposition staff. We are deeply saddened by this loss, which will diminish the performance of this House with the absence of his professional and personal contribution. I will be saying more about Greg's contribution at some future time in this place. He was not only my senior media adviser; he was also a great mate.

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.32 a.m.): On behalf of the government, I want to join the Leader of the Opposition and express our condolences to Greg's family. The Leader of the Opposition was kind enough to inform me about Greg's death yesterday and I had a short meeting with him. We all know how difficult these times are. We get very close to the people who work with us on a day-to-day basis and I know that this is a difficult time for Lawrence, his staff and all the opposition. All of us are thinking of you, Lawrence, and Greg's family. We all know that not all the good players are on the one side of this House. I know that Greg was well regarded by everyone in this House and certainly well regarded by my staff, who tell me that he was a fantastic individual. I do not want to say any more, other than our thoughts are with you today and I think that you have handled this in a very dignified and appropriate way.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Hon. C. R. Porter

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.33 a.m.): I move—

That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late Hon. Charles Robert Porter, a former member of the parliament of Queensland and minister of the Crown;

That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of parliament in Queensland for the loss that they have sustained.

Mr Charles Robert Porter was born on 17 May 1910 in London in England. Mr Porter arrived in Australia with his family in 1914 and was educated in primary and secondary schools in Brisbane. Before his election Mr Porter was already engaged in public discourse. He was a journalist and freelance writer and was involved in broadcasting and television. He wrote a number of experimental plays for radio, including *Variations on a Printing Press*, *The Footsteps After* and *Nellie Lacy and the Bushranger* and his work was broadcast at home and abroad.

At the same time he was involved in politics. He was general secretary of the Queensland People's Party between 1944 and 1949—the forerunner of the Liberal Party—a role he later continued with the Liberal Party from 1969 to 1977. His active role in public life strengthened when he was elected as the member for Toowong in the state election in May 1966. In his maiden speech on 23 August 1966, he discussed the need for the government to embrace change and to rise to the challenges that that change brings. In this vein, he referred to local decision-making arrangements in greater Brisbane, the relationship between Commonwealth and state governments and reducing road traffic fatalities—all subjects that remain topical today.

During Mr Porter's 14 years as the member for Toowong he provided a valuable service as a member of the Parliamentary Buildings Committee, a member of the Select Committee on Privileges and as chairman of the Select Committee on Punishment and Crimes. He was also a delegate at the Australian Constitutional Convention in 1975, 1976 and 1978.

The apex of Mr Porter's political career was as the Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs between December 1977 and December 1980. During this time, he continued his focus on the

need for change and the importance of governments. Away from politics, Mr Porter was involved in diverse activities. Among many other local cultural, community and sporting bodies, he served as chairman of the Church of England Grammar School from 1958 to 1967.

Mr Porter's funeral service was held yesterday, at the Anglican Church Grammar School. I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to his family: to his children, Penny, Chilla, Warren and Christine, and their families.

As someone who has been around politics for a little time, I can say that Charles Porter was well known in his heyday. He was involved in quite a number of controversies. He was part of what was then a very strong presence for the Liberal Party. He was part of, I guess, the Gordon Chalk mould. The Liberal Party at that time, as many will recall—and I am not trying to be clever when I say this—held quite a number of seats in metropolitan Brisbane and that was because of people like Charles Porter who were well known. He was perhaps, without being unkind, on the drier side of the Liberal Party. I think that is a fair description of Mr Porter. He was someone who was a very good communicator and everyone knew exactly where he stood. Love him or hate him, no-one was in any doubt about the views of Charles Porter.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.37 a.m.): I join with the Premier in passing on condolences to the family of the late Charles Porter and the opposition's condolences in particular. As the Premier has already said, Charles Porter was born on 17 May 1910 at Greenwich in England. He arrived in Queensland in 1914 and he died on 14 April 2004. He was the son of George Henry and Evelyn Day. He was married to Joy Welch and had four children, Chilla, Warren, Penny and Christine, and quite an extended family of grandchildren, great-grandchildren and also various in-laws.

Mr Porter's employment history was author, playwright, actor, broadcaster, state public servant, salesman, and director of the Queensland division of the Institute of Public Affairs. His professional and community involvement included the chairman of the Church of England Grammar School Parents Association from 1958 to 1967. He was patron or president of many cultural, community and sporting bodies.

His political history involved, from 1944, member and general secretary of the Queensland People's Party, which became the Liberal Party on 8 July 1949, led by Sir Thomas Hiley. Mr Porter was general secretary and campaign director of the Queensland division of the Liberal Party from 1949 to 1966. He was elected on 28 May 1966 to the electorate of Toowong—a position he held until his retirement on 29 November 1980. He was appointed Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs on 16 December 1977 until his retirement in 1980.

As founding member of the Liberal Party in Queensland, Charles Porter was held in high esteem within conservative circles. As he was a highly principled and honourable gentleman, he was held in high esteem by all members of the parliament. He was a great supporter of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen and the mutual respect was clearly evident as Charles Porter was recognised as a trusted confidant to the then Premier, particularly when offering political and constitutional advice.

Charles Porter was a strong advocate for better road safety and road conditions. On the de-amalgamation of the greater Brisbane area as the local authority, a relevant quote of Charles Porter was 'power dispersed is also power safely used', and he also advocated taxation reform.

One of the most outstanding elements of Charles Porter's character was the way in which he embraced change. Even in his maiden speech he spoke at length about change which can now be regarded as prophetic. To quote Charles Porter—

> Today's community, with its particular attitudes and wants, is as different from yesterday's as chalk is from cheese, and tomorrow's will be different again. Politicians and parties who refuse to acknowledge this are doomed.
>
> All political parties in Australia are now caught up in the toils of change, and out of the consequential adjustments of this emerge some of the altering relationships between parties which have provided a kind of star attraction for the press circus here over the past 18 months.
>
> It is my view that there will be no quick or easy ending to the stresses and strains inherent in these changes, but they should be recognised only for what they are. Investing them with a sensational significance far beyond their true meaning can be utterly misleading.
>
> As party organisations compete electorally with each other—and compete they must if democracy is to receive more than mere lip service—so parliamentary members are required to show their true mettle of their pasture.
>
> Once elected a member surely has the obligation to rise above whatever attitudes may have been engendered by his campaign battles. To whatever extent he fails in this rests the measure of his mediocrity.

So I conclude much as I began, with the platitude that change is inevitable, and universal. Those who seek the seeming safety of a mythical status quo only make it more certain that they will be swept away when the tides of change reach flood.

I am well aware that those who advocate change that is unpopular in some quarters, or who seek dispersal of established power, cannot hope to be too popular. But in public life any man worth his salt must make a choice. And, because of this, I would not expect that any honourable member, whilst differing from a viewpoint expressed, would do other than agree that one must hold to cherished principles.

I think that for many of us there is probably a sense of deja vu in that, because the change which Charles Porter talked about so eloquently in his maiden speech is something that we continue to deal with in this place and will continue to deal with in future parliaments and future generations.

As the Premier said, he made an enormous contribution. Whilst I did not know Charles Porter, he was certainly around at a time when I was formalising my political allegiances and philosophy, and he is a person for whom I had an enormous amount of respect because of his diligence, his commitment and his principles and the way that he enunciated them. He was a person held in the utmost regard because of his high principles and the very moral way he went about espousing them.

On behalf of the opposition, I join with the Premier in expressing our very true condolences to the family and friends of Charles Porter.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (9.43 a.m.): I rise to record on behalf of my local community our condolences on the passing of Charles Robert Porter. I did not know Mr Porter, but I felt it was appropriate today to record the sympathies of those members of the Indooroopilly and formerly the Toowong communities, where people still remember him. They speak very highly in some areas of his ability to speak, which apparently was quite legendary. He had, I am told, a vocabulary that was genuinely very impressive. A number of the older residents of my electorate remember him very well and remember him speaking at community groups and, in fact, remember speeches that he delivered in this place. With those few words, I record my community's sympathies on his passing.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (9.44 a.m.): On behalf of the Liberal Party, I rise today to pass on to the family and friends of the late Charles Porter our sympathies and condolences.

Charles Robert Porter was born in Greenwich, England, on 17 May 1910, the son of George Henry Porter, an insurance agent, and Evelyn, nee Day. The family migrated to Queensland in September 1914 and Charles was educated at primary and secondary schools in Brisbane. Charles had a variety of careers. He worked as a state public servant and a salesman. However, because of his love of writing he was lured into radio broadcasting in its earlier days and wrote plays which were broadcast in Australia, England, South Africa, Canada, France, Italy and Poland. He also became a radio breakfast announcer under the pseudonym John Christopher, an actor, and was involved with the advertising and merchandising industries.

On 31 May 1931 Charles married Joy Welch and the union produced two sons and two daughters. One of his sons, Chilla, won a silver medal in the high jump at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games in a memorable contest with the winner of the gold medal, an American, Charles Dumas, and he also served the Liberal Party for many years as state director of the party in Western Australia.

In 1943 a new political party was formed, the Queensland People's Party, the QPP, under the leadership of John Chandler, a former member of this House and the Lord Mayor of Brisbane. Charles Porter joined the QPP and was the state campaign director from 1944 to 1949. In the latter part of that year the QPP agreed to become the Queensland division of the newly formed Liberal Party and Charles was the state campaign director from 1949 to 1950 and from 1957 to 1966. He was therefore at the administrative helm of the Queensland division during most of its successful period.

During 1949 Charles had been a member of the planning group for the federal campaign of that year, which resulted in the election of the Menzies Liberal government and helped keep it in office for a record period. During his 17 years as general secretary, Charles Porter was a close confidant of the then Prime Minister and founder of the Liberal Party, Sir Robert Menzies. In 1957 the Liberal Party and Country Parties ended 25 years in the political wilderness at the state level and remained in coalition government together for the next 26 years. Charles Porter, as state director, played a key role in this success. He was elected to parliament as the member for Toowong, succeeding the former state leader, Sir Alan Munro, in the seat of Toowong in 1966. He held the seat until his retirement in 1980. Between 1977 and 1980 he served as Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs in the coalition government.

It must be said that Charles Porter was a highly controversial political figure. He was one of the driving forces behind the three-cornered contest between the coalition parties and is generally regarded as one of the founders of the ginger group which made life difficult for one or two of my predecessors in the 1960s and 1970s.

Porter became increasingly disillusioned with Queensland politics in the late seventies and eighties and firmly held views on how the system should respond to changes. The following is an excerpt from his book *The Gut Feeling* published in 1981 and, I believe, a fairly concise view of his opinion. He wrote—

Parliamentary democracy's capacity effectively to function is necessarily dependent on community's support for the system. When so many endeavours are directed against the system without any clear view—and certainly no discernible consensus—on what will be provided in its place, then we are all under threat. At all times and in all societies it always was easier, and much more exciting, to wreck than to build, and in these days when anything sensational can get the publicity spotlight it is even easier and can be almost hysterical fun. Our problem is compounded by the obliteration over the years of many once respected philosophic and moral guide posts. This confuses us all: not only are 'anti' positions taken to excess but the more mature who should check the excesses have become so unsure of themselves that they now hold back, and so allow forces to gather that could and should have been halted.

Charles Porter served Queensland, this parliament and the Liberal Party well.

In May 2001 Charles and Joy celebrated 70 years of marriage. Unfortunately, Joy predeceased him in 2003. Charles passed away on 14 April 2004 at the Jindalee Nursing Centre aged 93. He is survived by his two sons, two daughters, 11 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. My colleagues and the Liberal Party organisation join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in extending our sympathies to his family.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

Mareeba Wild Animal Park

Ms Lee Long from 4,701 petitioners requesting the House to ensure the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy works with David Gill of the Mareeba Wild Animal Park by assisting him in every possible way to get the park up and running.

Management of Visitors to Special Events, Surfers Paradise

Mr Langbroek from 120 petitioners requesting the House to implement an independent commission inquiry into the conduct and management of the Schoolies Week Festival, nightclubs and Indy culture in Surfers Paradise, Gold Coast region, as an urgent issue of deep concern to the Surfers Paradise community.

Coastline and Sea Channel Charts, South-east Queensland

Mr Chris Foley from 6,599 petitioners requesting the House to release the current charts of the coastline and sea channels for South-East Queensland from the Tweed River (Queensland-New South Wales border) to Bundaberg as soon as possible so as not to endanger persons or property.

Crown Land Vegetation Management, Gold Coast

Mr Langbroek form 1,270 petitioners requesting the House to call on the Minister for Natural Resources and the Minister for Sport to take all necessary action to prohibit removal of vegetation from areas of Crown Land at Macintosh Park and north and south of Narrowneck on the Gold Coast and prevent the further degradation and encroachment of these areas in connection with the Gold Coast Indy race and associated events.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

The Consultancy Bureau

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.52 a.m.): The Consultancy Bureau has been contracted to provide services to assist in the implementation of the Crime and Misconduct Commission report *Protecting children: An inquiry into abuse of children in foster care*. The Consultancy Bureau has received $391,560 inclusive of GST for the completion of phases 1 and 2, and the estimated fee for phase 3 is $158,400 exclusive of GST. The total contract sum is $549,960. Contract services commenced on 6 January 2004 for a period of almost six months and will finish on 30 June.

I advised the House generally yesterday of the costs that were to be paid to Peter Forster and The Consultancy Bureau. I see there is some suggestion from certain quarters—the Leader of the Opposition and some press reports—that there is a need for more detail, which I am quite happy to present to the House. I thought the figures were sufficient, but I do not want there to be any suggestion that we are not happy to provide this information, because we will.

The contract stipulates three phases. The phase 1 deliverable was the development of a project plan which outlined the tasks to be undertaken to implement the CMC report and the sequencing and timing of these tasks and the resources required for an implementation team. Payment of this phase amounted to $71,588 inclusive of GST. I have here a number of points. I seek leave to have them incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Payment for this phase amounted to $71,588 (inclusive of GST). Specifically, this included:

- The establishment of the organisational arrangements necessary to develop the Blueprint including the Implementation Unit and working groups;
- The development of a comprehensive consultation strategy involving key government and non-Government stakeholders on a statewide basis;
- The development of the implementation change strategy showing the sequencing, timing and costs of establishing the child protection arrangements foreshadowed in the CMC recommendations;
- The further development and refinement of the CMC recommendations so that the full implication for implementation could be assessed; and
- Ensure that the CMC recommendations and Gwenn Murray's audit recommendations were scoped in a complementary manner.

Mr BEATTIE: The phase 2 deliverable was the development of the blueprint for implementing the recommendations of the January 2004 Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry into the abuse of children in foster care. This was presented to the government on 22 March 2004 and released publicly the same day. Payment for this phase was $319,972 inclusive of GST. Specifically, this included a whole range of points, which I again seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Payment for this phase was $319,972 (inclusive of GST). Specifically, this included:

- The most effective and efficient process for the implementation of the recommendations of the CMC report, including the sequencing and timing of the transition process, legislative timeframes, budget and resourcing matters;
- The structural arrangements needed to deliver the approach indicated in the CMC report, including advice on how the work of the Department of Child Safety can be clearly delineated from, and yet aligned with, the work of other agencies with an involvement in the area of child protection;
- The future organisational arrangements needed to ensure effective management processes, including the timely development of appropriate information management infrastructure and processes and staff training and development.
- The processes and structures needed to bring about the requisite cultural change in Queensland's child protection system; and
- The most appropriate and effective mechanism to monitor and evaluate progress and provide effective accountability, over time, of the proposed new arrangements to improve service delivery for the protection of children.

Mr BEATTIE: The phase 3 deliverable is for Mr Peter Forster to assist the government with the development and implementation of the transitional arrangements for area office staff in the Department of Child Safety and to finalise advice on the central and regional office structures for both the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Communities. Subject to Governor in Council approval, the estimated fee for this phase is $158,400 exclusive of GST. Again, I have a whole series of dot points. I seek leave to have them incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Subject to Governor in Council approval, the estimated fee for this phase is $158,400 (exclusive of GST). Specifically, this will include:

- Provide background and focus to child protection reform activities to ensure personnel within the Departments of Child Safety and Communities and Disability Services Queensland understand thoroughly the change strategies within the Blueprint;
- Design and lead processes to finalise corporate structures of Department of Child Safety and Department of Communities and provide advice on regional/zonal structures as requested by the Directors-General, Department of Child Safety and Department of Communities;

- Jointly with the Minister and new Director-General of the Department of Child Safety, develop/equip leaders, managers, supervisors and change facilitators so that they may discharge their reform roles more effectively;
- Facilitate knowledge and information transfer from TCB to the Implementation Unit to ensure the sustainability of the reform process post 30 June 2004;
- Assist with the appointment of the Director-General, Department of Child Safety as a member of the selection panel;
- Select provisional teams for conducting transitioning workshops in area, regional and central offices;
- Involve these teams in the design of the transitioning workshops;
- Identify the sequencing of transitioning workshops, in particular those area offices which will be established as pilot sites for detailed monitoring;
- Develop and assemble information packages for staff;
- Advise on appropriate engagement strategies including partnership protocols with key non-government stakeholders; and
- Provide advice on matters as requested.

Mr BEATTIE: I do not believe I can be more forthcoming in terms of the detail of where that money was spent. We have announced the amounts. We have announced exactly the areas in which the work needed to be done. I hope that this satisfies both the opposition and any media inquiries. If anyone wants any more information—I say this very genuinely to the Leader of the Opposition—I am prepared to arrange for one of the staff of my department, one of my public servants, or Peter Forster himself, to brief the Leader of the Opposition. I do not want any doubts about the allocation of this money or where it is spent. I think it is value for money. I have enormous faith in Peter Forster. I think he is very good. I do not want any political hoo-ha about the expenditure, so I make that offer on the parliamentary record today.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Community Cabinet, Townsville-Thuringowa

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.56 a.m.): I am delighted to report to the parliament on the Townsville community cabinet. The people of Townsville and north Queensland are great supporters of participatory democracy. They proved as much with their overwhelming response to the first regional parliament in 2002. They proved it all over again at the weekend when in Townsville we held our 70th community cabinet. This was the third such meeting in Townsville since 1998.

Combining the three events, ministers, senior public servants and I have now met with almost 500 formal deputations in Townsville. While we initially expected 168 prebooked formal deputations on Sunday, I am advised that the number climbed to about 170 on the day. This placed it in the top five of 70 community cabinet meetings in terms of formal deputations. I took some incisive questions from the floor. There were scores of informal deputations.

This is the sort of enthusiasm that makes democracy tick and helps keep our government's feet firmly on the ground. I thank the people of north Queensland and the many volunteers who made the two-day gathering a success, and I thank the local media for alerting their readers, listeners and viewers to the event. It was with pleasure that I joined with my parliamentary secretary for north Queensland, Lindy Nelson-Carr, the member for Thuringowa, Craig Wallace, and of course the local minister, Mike Reynolds, and all ministers to deliver a clutch of important announcements for the region. I seek leave to have those announcements incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

- A proposed $145 million CBD residential development for QR North Yard. Honeycombes Investment Group signed a heads of agreement giving 90 day exclusive dealing over the site to undertake further investigations.
- $4.5 million for the Thuringowa Riverway Project.
- Granting a technical consultancy as part of investigations of the viability of a world-class cruise ship and military vessel facility.
- Turning a sod for an immediate start to construction of a new $13.6 million aged care centre at Kirwan.
- Revealing Ergon Energy will spend an extra $17 million in preventive maintenance to boost reliability and safety of electricity supply to regional Queensland (with North Queensland receiving an extra $3—$4 million)
- Starting the $17.6 million Round 5 of Cooler Schools, to complete air-conditioning of up to 560 classrooms (including up to 117 in Townsville and surrounds).
- Appointing Queensland's top public servant, Dr Leo Keliher, to co-ordinate and oversee the government's response to public drunkenness in Townsville.

- Giving a group of Indigenous youngsters from Shalom College the good news that 11 students will be part of a business mentoring program with the help of a government sponsorship.
- Signing off on the delivery of $500,000 to improve facilities at Happy Valley.
- Announcing plans for a new $3.6 million Ingham police station.
- Granting $30 000 to Volunteering Townsville/Thuringowa to help young people develop a peer information network.
- A $64,000 boost to mental health services in the region.
- $34,000 towards the cost of lighting up Thuringowa City Council's parks and gardens.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aviation Industry

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.57 a.m.): There are a number of matters I want to refer to as part of my report on my recent overseas trip. Before I do that, I want to talk about the snowballing in one of the state's developing industries, that is, aviation. My overseas trip interfaces with this series of developments.

The aviation industry is beginning to build and build. Our aviation advances truly are—pardon the expression—taking off. Earlier this month I inspected our latest acquisition at Aviation Australia at the Brisbane airport. Its $250,000 purchase of a Fokker F28 jetliner means that the momentum in Queensland's burgeoning aerospace industry is hastening. I thank the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations for the initiatives which are taking place out there. Tom Barton knows that the Fokker F28 from Air Niugini means Aviation Australia is now the nation's only specialised training provider, offering students hands-on, real world experience in a functioning commercial jetliner.

My government established Aviation Australia in 2001 to support the development and growth of the aviation and aerospace industries in Queensland within our geographic region. In Queensland alone we have seen this industry sector expand by over 4,200 jobs since 1998. What is more, there is an achievable expectation that this growth rate is sustainable.

Secondly, a $2 billion aircraft contract with links to Brisbane was announced last week, with Qantas joining with European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company, EADS, to become the preferred tenderer on a defence contract. Coincidentally, I met with EADS officials in Marseilles while on my latest trade mission earlier this month. I was there to reinforce our strengths and the benefits for them in choosing the Smart State.

Qantas Defence Services and the military transport division of EADS have been chosen to provide the RAAF's fleet of new air-to-air refuelling aircraft. EADS' A330 multirole tanker transport aircraft will replace the RAAF's ageing Boeing 707 aircraft. There will be five A330 aircraft. Basic aircraft construction will be carried out in Europe while Qantas will install and integrate refuelling modifications for four of the five craft right here in Brisbane if they are successful.

Thirdly, while in Vienna this month I detailed how my government has attracted another world-class aviation company to establish its Australian regional headquarters in Queensland. That is Frequentis. Frequentis maintains and develops communication and information systems for air traffic control management and public safety and transport and employs 560 people worldwide. I announced the Frequentis decision in Vienna during that recent trade mission and I am pleased to inform the parliament today of what it means for this state. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*

Leave granted.

My Government's Trade and Investment Office in London and the Department of State Development and Innovation have been involved in negotiations with executives at the Vienna headquarters of Frequentis.

They demonstrated the advantages of Queensland, including the support of my pro-business Government, low taxes, low set-up and operating costs, skilled workers, excellent training, educational infrastructure and the aviation hub that already exists.

No incentives were used to persuade the company to come to Queensland.

The Frequentis regional headquarters will create a significant number of new jobs in Brisbane as the company grows, with the majority of them being highly skilled.

Frequentis adds to the critical mass of aviation companies here and makes Queensland even more attractive to other aviation companies.

I expect to be making yet another major aviation announcement later in the week.

Since 1998 jobs created in the Queensland aerospace industry include:

- Virgin Blue headquarters, engineering and training facilities (about 2000 jobs)
- Qantas 767 Maintenance Facility (680 jobs),
- EADS Australian Aerospace Headquarters (100 jobs),
- Australian Airlines Operational Hub (300 jobs),
- National Jet Systems Maintenance Facility (70 jobs),
- Singapore Airlines Lear Jet Training Facility (15 jobs),
- Raytheon Logistics Centre of Excellence (67 jobs),
- Hawker Pacific Maintenance Facility (50 jobs),
- Boeing Regional Headquarters (800 jobs),
- Virgin Blue/Flight Safety Boeing Training International (50 jobs),
- Smith Aerospace Headquarters (55 jobs),
- Qantas Snapfresh Facility (230 jobs).

Aviation Australia now has 132 full-time Aeroskills students enrolled for 10-month courses in the three principal training areas of aviation structures, aviation mechanics and aviation electronics.

During its first full two years of operation (2002, 2003) it had graduated a total of 155 students, more than 95 per cent of whom had achieved employment within the aviation or aerospace industry.

That is a fantastic take-up.

Aviation Australia graduates are now employed with Qantas, as well as with aerospace industry companies such as Boeing, and Pratt and Whitney.

It is currently training some 20 engineering staff from Cathay Pacific, Dragonair, Air Niugini and Air Korea, who will return to their jobs in China, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Thailand and Hong Kong.

Aviation Australia now has onsite a Boeing 737 cabin simulator, a Boeing 767 emergency exit chute trainer, and Boeing 737, 767 and Airbus A320 door and exit trainers.

During calendar 2003, Aviation Australia trained over 1000 people through 'short courses' in fields such as Aviation management training; Aviation risk and safety, and Advanced aircraft engineering. (All Australian students)

Aviation Australia has also been chosen as the training provider to run the new Cairns Aviation Skills Centre on behalf of the local $120 million industry in Far North Queensland.

Aviation Australia is currently negotiating a number of training proposals with airlines and agencies in China and the Persian Gulf.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Frequentis

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.00 a.m.): I have a further detailed statement in relation to Frequentis and what it means for Queensland. I highlight that we are now getting a critical mass of aviation expertise and skills. That will create jobs. Frequentis will set up an Australia Trade Coast, joining a host of other companies including EADS, Australian Aerospace, Raytheon, Smiths Aerospace, Qantas, Virgin Blue, Cellnet and Sandvik. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

I announced the Frequentis decision in Vienna on my recent trade and investment mission to Europe.

Frequentis maintains and develops communication and information systems for air traffic control management and public safety and transport and employs 560 people worldwide.

This large Austrian company claims a market share of 30% in the field of Voice Communication for Air Traffic Control and has become the world's market leader in this sector.

The company's systems are also used in public safety (for rescue, police and fire-fighting), the maritime business, Tetra digital mobile radio-communications, as well as railways and public transport.

My government's Trade and Investment Office in London and the Department of State Development and Innovation have been involved in negotiations with executives at the Vienna headquarters of Frequentis.

They demonstrated the advantages of Queensland, including the support of my pro-business government, low taxes, low set-up and operating costs, skilled workers, excellent training, educational infrastructure and the aviation hub that already exists.

Mr Speaker, no incentives were used to persuade the company to come to Queensland.

Since 1998 we have developed an aviation and aerospace industry in Queensland that has created more than 4,200 new jobs.

The Frequentis regional headquarters will create a significant number of new jobs in Brisbane as the company grows, with the majority of them being highly skilled.

More importantly, the arrival of Frequentis adds to the critical mass of aviation companies here and increases our allure to other aviation companies.

It reinforces my government's Smart State vision, and our determination to see Queensland become an aviation hub for the Asia Pacific region.

Allan McDonagh, Managing Director of Frequentis Australasia Pty Ltd, said that Frequentis identified a number of reasons for locating its Australasia headquarters in Queensland.

These included the availability of highly skilled workers, the good quality lifestyle to attract and retain staff and the ability to source suitable business accommodation with room for expansion.

This is no flight of fancy Mr Speaker. This is the mark of a progressive, proactive government that doesn't rest on its laurels.

We are busy promoting Queensland because we have a great product to promote and because we are determined to deliver jobs and real investment.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Worley Group, Aughinish Alumina

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.01 a.m.): While in Ireland on my recent trade and investment mission, I witnessed the signing of a major contract between Queensland company Worley and the Aughinish Alumina refinery in the Shannon Estuary. I congratulate the Brisbane office of the Worley group for its job creation efforts for Queenslanders through its multimillion-dollar alumina refinery expansion contract. I toured the refinery and can attest to the significance of this achievement.

The Worley operation in Brisbane began as one person with a local focus and has grown with the Smart State to become a worldwide hub for specialist process engineering and multidisciplinary services. This is about Smart State going to the world. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Aughinish project is recognition of Worley's worldwide expertise in alumina and its creation in Brisbane of a globally-recognised centre of excellence for alumina.

Aughinish was the largest construction project in Europe at the time, employing up to 6,500 workers.

It represented an investment of 1 billion (A$1.6 billion), making it the largest ever single private investment in the Irish economy to that date.

Aughinish Alumina is expanding refinery operations in County Limerick by 250 thousand tonnes per annum, to a yearly output of 1.8 million tonnes.

After providing preliminary engineering services to Aughinish for the concept design of the expansion and cost estimates, Worley was selected to manage the project.

Worley has worked on site for the past six months and is now increasing the project team to provide engineering, procurement and construction management services for the next two years of the project.

The engineering is being carried out in the Brisbane office, which supports a site team in Ireland.

Worley has a track record in achievement, having won the Emerging Exporter award in the Premier of Queensland's 2002 Export Awards.

It's a company achieving real success on the world stage and I am sure every Member of this House will join me in congratulating it.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Exports, Water Worldwide

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.02 a.m.): While we are talking about trade opportunities, I want to highlight what I believe is real entrepreneurial flair, particularly in relation to what a small business person can do. Queensland bottled spring water is now set to feature in London superdepartment store Harvey Nichols. This story illustrates what Queensland businesses can do. Some members may be familiar with the store from the popular TV show *Absolutely Fabulous*. I know the Leader of the House would be. She is the Minister for the Arts; one would expect that.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, darling. This is one Harvey Nics beverage that Patsy and Eddy I am sure will not be imbibing. It is far too pure and healthy. Water Worldwide, a proud Queensland company, sources its product, Australian Outback Spring Water, from the world heritage rainforest at Mena Creek near Innisfail. Its owner and managing director, Perry Grewar, accompanied me

on the trade mission, and as a result of our efforts the company has successfully negotiated the sale of 500 millilitre, 600 millilitre and 1.5 litre bottles of water to the London retailer.

We organised to meet the buyers before their normal opening hours and held discussions at the store restaurant overlooking Knightsbridge. Mr Grewar used a typically Australian rainwater tank stand and windmill display in the London promotion and it captured the attention of the Harvey Nichols buyers. Britain's annual Farnborough air show has also approached Mr Grewar about a sponsorship and supply deal for his water. Water Worldwide production has been specifically designed for the export market and is bar-coded to scan anywhere in the world. It has also received inquiries from a large Japanese organisation.

Here is someone who had the get-up-and-go to come not only to the trade mission but we helped open the door for him, and now he has access to the English market—and good luck for him. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

In a joint venture with another Queensland company, Rainfarms Australia, it produces pristine and sweet water products and will soon be marketing rainwater that it also collects at the Mena Creek site.

The high altitude springs at Mena Creek provide superb Queensland water and the company has a packaging facility on site.

The head office and administration building is in Mooloolaba on the Sunshine Coast and they currently employ four people in Mooloolaba and 15 at Mena Creek.

The company sells bulk packs at 116 Woolworths' stores in Queensland and learned yesterday that the existing range will be extended to single bottles.

Water Worldwide's success epitomises the importance of overseas trade missions and state government support for Queensland companies.

I congratulate Perry Grewar and his company on this fantastic achievement.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Indigenous Art, Exports

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.03 a.m.): Finally today I want to make reference to the success of an indigenous art export. In 2001 the government set out with a new determination to give Queensland indigenous art an international profile. To achieve this, we knew we would have to work solidly with indigenous communities and artists. Initially we worked with an indigenous reference panel, and in October 2003 I informed the House of the membership of a new Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing Export Agency advisory board. I am delighted to now report that Queensland indigenous artists made a splash at a prestigious international show—the Great Art Exhibition in Dusseldorf, Germany, in January. They displayed 39 works and sold 19.

The exhibition carved an inroad into the German art world which would otherwise have taken years to forge. It has opened doors to new employment, economic and export opportunities for artists and communities all over Queensland. Eleven artists were involved in the collection and they came from the Torres Strait, Cape York, the Gulf, Atherton Tablelands, central Queensland and western Queensland. While there were more than 280 artworks from across Europe at the show, Queensland's own exhibition was very special. Every year a section of the Dusseldorf exhibition is set aside for a foreign country and this year Queensland was the showcase 'country'.

To top it off, the Great Art Exhibition Foundation bought works from Lilla Watson, Joanne Currie Nalingu and Lisa Michl and other artists which are now part of its permanent collection. So that is an important part of taking indigenous art to the world. The sales were made possible by the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency and the Queensland Government Trade and Investment Office in London, who worked with a promoter in Dusseldorf. I congratulate the organisers, and particularly the artists: Michael Boiyool Anning, Joanne Nalingu Currie, Shaun Kalk Edwards, Margaret Henry, Joey Laifoo, Glen Mackie, Lisa Michl, Rosella Namok, Alick Tipoti, Ian Waldron and Lilla Watson.

I am happy to advise the House that the Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency is now gearing up for its first foray into the United States, with a touring exhibit of more than 60 works by 29 artists. I have asked the Minister for Education and the Arts, Anna Bligh, to open *Out of Country* at the Australian embassy in Washington DC, where it will run until 27 May. It will then exhibit at the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection—a highly respected institution at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, from 11 June to 14 August. The artists in *Out of Country* will include

Rosie Barkus, Richard Bell, Fiona Foley, Samantha Hobson, Craig Koomeeta, Rosella Namok, Ken Thaiday senior, Alick Tipoti and Lilla Watson.

The exhibition will include paintings, carvings, sculptures, prints, burnings and linocuts. This is an important part of taking indigenous art to the world. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Two experts in Queensland Indigenous art, Jennifer Herd and Vic McGrath, will further spread the message by giving lectures in a program presented by the Smithsonian Associates on May 3 and 4.

Ms Herd and Mr McGrath are members of an Indigenous curatorial working party which ensures the artistic merit and cultural integrity of all works in our exhibitions.

Like the Dusseldorf show, the US tour will help Queensland Indigenous artists win the international recognition they richly deserve.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education Reforms

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (10.06 a.m.): Our government has embarked on unprecedented reforms to Queensland's education and training systems. We are building a better system from the ground up through the introduction of a full-time preparatory year in 2007, the reduction of class sizes in the middle years, and the expansion of education and training pathways for 15- to 17-year-olds. In the face of such far-reaching changes, it is important that we keep parents and the community updated on the achievements of our students and our schools.

I am pleased today to release a government discussion paper which aims to improve student and school reporting in Queensland. I seek leave to table a copy of the paper.

Leave granted.

Ms BLIGH: This is the next step in our education reform agenda. Parents have a right to know how their child is performing at school, what they are doing well at and what they need to improve on. Parents and the public are also entitled to access information that will help them make informed decisions about the performance of our schools. Queensland schools, both state and non-state, do a great job in forming relationships with parents and the broader community, but there is always room for improvement. The discussion paper canvasses community feedback on eight proposals to improve and broaden reporting of student and school achievements to parents and the wider community. The proposals include requiring schools to produce consistent, comprehensive and easy to understand reports that have common elements.

While many schools have excellent reporting strategies in place, there is very significant variation across the state. This lack of consistency can make it difficult for parents to navigate the reporting systems of different schools. It also makes it difficult for teachers to gain a clear understanding of new students' levels of achievement. This is clearly not conducive to student learning. To better monitor student progress, the paper proposes to issue all students with a student number when they first enrol in formal education. A first for Queensland, the identification system, which would be subject to stringent privacy protection, will help education sectors track the movement and progress of students throughout their schooling life.

Given the significant level of government and personal investment in education and our schools, the paper also includes proposals to make more information on school performance available to the wider community. The paper proposes publishing a snapshot of year 12 outcomes for all schools using data from the senior certificate. This information could include such things as the median OP score of a school and the number of year 12 students completing a vocational qualification. A similar system has been in place in Victoria for a number of years and operates successfully. However, any release of this type of information will need to be handled sensitively and will be subject to strict protocols with media organisations. I want to emphasise that we are not proposing to generate school ranking systems or simplistic league tables which can be misleading and unhelpful.

The consultation paper will be distributed widely with feedback sought by 30 June. I urge all members to take the time to read this document and encourage their constituents, particularly those with school-age children, to participate in a public debate.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Employment Initiative, Gold Coast

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (10.10 a.m.): Today's job market continues to present challenges to particular groups of unemployed—a challenge which the Beattie government is striving to help them overcome. It is a time for creative new approaches. This morning I am pleased to report on an innovative partnership with Australia's largest job network which will hopefully improve the transition to employment for local students.

Gold Coast TAFE will work with the Salvation Army's Employment Plus to offer students on-campus career assessment and advice and employment services including job placement. This partnership is the first of its kind in Queensland and will ensure that TAFE students receive the best possible opportunity to gain employment as a direct result of their training. It is a groundbreaking agreement where the training and the employment sectors have combined their efforts to benefit students and employers on the Gold Coast.

The initiative will provide knowledge, information and support to TAFE students looking for jobs and gives local industry direct access to skilled employees. Specifically, students will be able to meet with an on-site employment consultant and receive help with preparing for interviews and presenting their resumes. For those who gain a job further support will be available during the early months of employment.

Both TAFE and Employment Plus will benefit from this partnership. They will be able to assess changing labour markets and local job vacancies and plan training accordingly. Both organisations are successful market leaders and innovators. They are both well established and well respected by the region's employers and industry and have a community focus. This is a great step forward for the Gold Coast.

Of course we will closely monitor this initiative. If it is as successful as we hope, we will look at extending the concept across the state. The Beattie government understands the positive implications of involving the local community in employment and training and improving the pathways between the vocational education and training sector, schools and higher education. Such partnerships provide a means to fully extend these pathways as we guide the next generation of Queenslanders through education and training into gainful employment.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public Housing

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.11 a.m.): Since the Beattie government was re-elected the Department of Housing has continued its hard work supporting Queenslanders in need of housing assistance. In only 73 days we have spent more than $63 million building new affordable housing, upgrading our existing stock and continuing the successful community and urban renewal programs. This is almost a million dollars a day towards helping to house thousands of low income Queenslanders and their families.

Secure, affordable housing is fundamental to a decent quality of life. I am proud to be the Minister for Housing in this government which has delivered a budget increase for housing every year. It is now a record $528 million—$200 million more than when the opposition was last in office.

Around $17 million has already been spent this term boosting new housing stock. Ten two-bedroom apartments worth $2.2 million are now under construction at Carina Heights and four two-bedroom units worth around $1 million are being built in Ayr. A further $20 million has been spent on upgrades and maintenance to existing dwellings across the state from Cairns and Townsville in the north to Ipswich and the Gold Coast. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing has also been boosted with $7.5 million spent on constructing new units and upgrading around 50 dwellings.

Our successful renewal programs are also continuing, with expenditure of almost $11 million on new projects. That includes commencing community renewal in nine areas across the state for the first time, including Mooroobool in Cairns, Upper Ross in Townsville, and Acacia Ridge and Carole Park in Brisbane.

Since our re-election in February we have also expanded our crisis housing assistance for people who are in the greatest housing need and at risk of homelessness. Through several capital grants programs we have spent $8 million boosting crisis and community housing. All of this funding has been allocated to purchase, build and upgrade accommodation. This is a significant allocation delivering on our commitment to provide additional transitional and crisis housing on the ground. Over the next term we will continue to assist low income Queenslanders access secure, affordable housing and improve the quality of housing we provide.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Hand Guns

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (10.14 a.m.): I would like to inform the House of the overwhelming success of the hand gun buyback scheme. The agreed commencement date for the hand gun buyback scheme was 1 July last year, with ours the only jurisdiction to officially commence the program within the required time frame. Queenslanders were given a one-year amnesty and now have less than 10 weeks to ensure that they are not caught in possession of illegal hand guns and parts, with the buyback finishing on 30 June this year.

The hand gun buyback scheme has been operating throughout the state, with Queenslanders able to surrender their weapons and parts at compensation centres. Licensed sporting shooters who have not been able to personally hand in their weapons to a centre can drop them at a police station. Licensed sporting shooters who retain possession of a prohibited firearm after 30 June will be committing an offence and risk fines of up to $4,500 or one year's jail. The Weapons Licensing Branch of the Queensland Police Service will soon write to all licensed sporting shooters who have not yet attended a compensation centre to reduce the likelihood of them accidentally retaining possession of prohibited firearms.

To date, over 14,000 hand guns have been surrendered and over 69,000 parts and accessories have been handed over to police across the state. For instance, more than 500 Brownings have been surrendered, along with almost 700 Colts, nearly 50 American Derringers, over 600 Glocks, more than 2,500 Smith and Wessons, almost 500 Berettas, nearly 2,000 Sturm Rugers, a couple of Husqvarnas, a Benjamin Franklin and a number of Daisys, Dianas and Daewoos.

Queenslanders have handed in more than 200 different makes of guns. So far, 83,885 hand guns and parts have been removed from the community forever and compensation worth more than $20 million has been paid. The new hand gun legislation is about making our community safer. I urge anyone who owns a prohibited hand gun to surrender it to police now.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Poultry Industry

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.16 a.m.): The poultry industry is an important part of Queensland agriculture with its estimated farm gate production valued at more than $200 million this financial year. Therefore, I am pleased I can announce today a new Queensland developed vaccine to control one of the Australian poultry industry's most common and costly diseases.

This is Australia's first live coccidiosis vaccine. It will save the poultry industry more than $10 million a year on chemicals currently used to control the disease. The vaccine will also help to avoid the emergence of resistant organisms. Coccidiosis was one of the more common and costly diseases in poultry, causing sickness and possibly death. It is characterised by droopiness or depression, diarrhoea and occasionally blood in the droppings.

Coccidiosis has a large economic impact on the Australian poultry industry, due to both the high cost of disease prevention and treatment and reduction in productivity. Controlling coccidiosis with chemicals had become increasingly difficult and expensive as the parasites became resistant. Therefore, I am pleased that components of the multi-species vaccine were isolated by Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries' Yeerongpilly research facilities in Brisbane.

The department's work was done with the support of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. The vaccine was developed by Eimeria Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Bio-

properties Pty Ltd. The department is continuing to conduct research in conjunction with the company to support the registration and field application of the coccidiosis vaccines.

I commend DPI&F scientists Dr Wayne Jorgensen and Dr Glenn Anderson and retired scientist Dr Norm Stewart on the research leading to the development of the new vaccine. It is appropriate I announce this today because Queensland is hosting the Poultry Industry Exchange, the Australasian Turkey Federation Conference and the fifth Asia Pacific Poultry Health Conference.

This week is also Primary Industries Week. Today we are holding rural discovery day. I am sure that I will visit the poultry display to announce this good news. I might also find some time to feed the chooks.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mining Exploration Permits

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (10.19 a.m.): I am pleased to report that the first of Queensland's mining exploration permits processed via the expedited Commonwealth native title procedures are in the process of being granted to applicants. This is the result of the Beattie government's decision last year to revert to the Commonwealth system for processing permit applications. We have already eliminated the Borbidge backlog of permit applications and continue to facilitate access for exploration through Queensland's state model indigenous land use agreements. So far, 138 exploration permit applications have been notified under the Commonwealth expedited procedure since initial applications commenced last year.

A further 120 applications should be notified over the next several months, allowing grants to be made on a regular basis. Several upcoming grants are also likely to be made relying on agreements reached during the four-month notification period required under the expedited procedure. In terms of indigenous land use agreements, Queensland now boasts 70 out of Australia's total 118 ILUAs registered with the national Native Title Tribunal. These include 13 registered ILUAs developed under the statewide model project. The registration this year of two ILUAs under the small-scale mining project is now being used to grant over 300 mining and exploration applications in the central Queensland gemfields and in the opal fields in the state's south-west near Quilpie. These two agreements will mirror the success of the Winton small miners ILUA in the state's west under which over 450 grants have been made since the agreement was registered in June 2002.

Native title processes in north Queensland's goldfields are also about to be installed for the grant of over 140 small-scale mining applications and future applications over a five-year period. Agreement has also been reached with five different native title groups covering the Mareeba, Georgetown and Croydon regions. Three of these agreements are expected to be operational in September. The future now looks very promising for the exploration industry in Queensland. The Beattie government is proud of its achievements in streamlining processes to facilitate the granting of mining exploration permits. We will continue our commitment to negotiated agreements that allow access for exploration and mining while respecting the rights and interests of native title parties.

NOTICE OF MOTION

National Competition Policy

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.22 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

That this House conveys its concerns to the Prime Minister in relation to the impact of national competition policy and privatisation proposals on Queensland business and industry and the devastating effects being felt by Queensland families.

MOTOR ACCIDENT INSURANCE AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1) 2004

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (10.22 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

That the Motor Accident Insurance Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004 (Subordinate Legislation No. 21 of 2004) tabled in the parliament on 20 April 2004 be disallowed.

LAND ACQUISITION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.22 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Acquisition of Land Act 1967.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.22 a.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This is the second bill in a pair that will enshrine in law a charter of property rights for Queensland land-holders. This bill like the Private Property Protection Bill will enshrine in law a charter of property rights that will be the basis for greater security and fair dealing between successive Queensland governments and private property owners. It recognises that from time to time governments will need to resume private land for community purposes and it ensures that such resumptions of private property are carried out fairly and the state properly compensates the individual for the loss suffered for the community benefit. This bill ensures that fair principles exist and are followed when assessing compensation for landowners faced with state government resumption of their land. This bill aims to ensure landowners faced with state government resumption of their land are made aware as soon as possible that their land is to be resumed and the date at which the land is needed for government purposes.

This bill will also ensure compensation provisions for state government resumptions on their land are clear and take into account factors such as market value for the property, including any land devaluation caused by an expectation that the land could have been resumed. It will also ensure that the resumption process recognises the full value of the knowledge of the land gained by a landowner over time and all of the personal costs to the landowner of moving from that land and finding a replacement property. This legislation will also ensure reasonable cost of independent valuation and legal advice incurred because of the government acquisition and any unintended taxation consequences incurred such as capital gains tax are properly considered in compensating property owners. We as a community have a duty to ensure that individuals are not unfairly deprived of their private property when we need to resume their land for our community benefit. This bill seeks to ensure that approach. It is fair and reasonable, and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Robertson, adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Telephone Tapping Powers

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (10.25 a.m.): This morning I bring to the attention of the House the situation regarding this government's policy in relation to telephone tapping powers by police. I notice that in the terrorism legislation introduced into the parliament yesterday by the Premier there is still no concession—

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member cannot talk about that. It is a bill before the House.

Mr JOHNSON: I am not talking about the legislation. The point I make, Mr Speaker, is this—

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Government members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: It is not in the legislation!

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr JOHNSON: Just let me keep going, Mr Speaker. You shut me down.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No. The honourable member is referring to a bill before the House.

Mr JOHNSON: No, I am not referring to the bill.

Mr SPEAKER: No. The member prefaced his statement by referring to that bill and then argued against it.

Mr JOHNSON: I will withdraw that part of it anyway, Mr Speaker. The point I make is that we are talking about telephone tapping powers. This government is not about apprehending criminals. It is not about uniformity with other states and the Commonwealth in relation to telephone tapping powers. The coalition had that policy before the last election. It is still our policy. When is this government going to give the proper tools to the Queensland police so they can apprehend criminals in the proper way? The technology available to Queensland police has been denied to the Queensland Police Service by this government because it is playing into the hands of civil libertarians. The bleeding hearts of this state are the ones whom the government is taking notice of—the drug addicts, the people on the streets and the drug pushers. Even though we worry about drug addicts, there will be more drug addicts because drug pushers, murderers, rapists and whatever else there is around this state—

Mr Hobbs: Money launderers!

Mr JOHNSON: Money launderers, as the member for Warrego says, and all the other people out there who want to break the law—

Time expired.

Re-election of Labor Members, Aspley and Clayfield

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): In the recent state election there were many surprises and remarkable achievements, but on the north side the return of Liddy Clark and Bonny Barry in Clayfield and Aspley—areas that would be naturally considered Liberal seats—was very remarkable. There are two people whom I want to thank who contributed to their victory, and they are Santo Santoro and Michael Caltabiano. Members may not be aware, but because Trevor Nelson-Jones, the Liberal candidate in Aspley, was not of Santo and Michael's faction, they actually stripped the assets out of Aspley and left poor Trevor Nelson-Jones with three or four councillors or council aspirants and half a dozen of his family to run against Bonny. Bonny had a great campaign team. She had great support locally, and the Liberals suffered a primary swing against them.

Santo and Michael tried to put a lot of effort into the seat of Clayfield, but again their choice of candidate, Sally Hannah, was a loss. One of the best doorknocking stories came out of that area, but I will not put that on the record.

Because of what happened, two of our great colleagues, Liddy Clark and Bonny Barry, are here again representing areas which are not naturally Labor areas. They have held their ground in a remarkable way. I thank Santo Santoro and I thank Michael Caltabiano for stripping assets out of Aspley and for dividing people who used to put up signs for election candidates. They refused to because the candidates were not part of their own faction. Long may Santo Santoro and Michael Caltabiano run the Liberal Party, because it is good for the Labor Party.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Sarina State High School, Teacher Safety

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.30 a.m.): My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer the minister to the stop-work protest being held today at Sarina State High School which has resulted as a consequence of a decision made by her department to make the safety of teaching staff a secondary priority. Did the minister support the decision of her department to seek to overturn a school's decision to expel a student after the student assaulted a teacher?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am very pleased to have an opportunity to put some facts about these matters on the record. Firstly, can I say that I am very disappointed that the Queensland Teachers Union has chosen to take industrial action at Sarina State High School today. Teachers will be stopping work for an hour later this afternoon.

This matter went before the Industrial Relations Commission yesterday and the commission recommended that the stop-work should not proceed. I expect that unions, along with employers and the government, will abide by the recommendations of the independent umpire. I think that is a reasonable expectation and I think the public expects that that will happen. I have to say I am very surprised that the member has asked this question, because I would have thought that he would have joined me in saying that it is not appropriate that the work of our students is disrupted by unauthorised industrial action.

Behaviour management is a very important issue in Queensland schools. Our government takes it very, very seriously. We have in place many, many strategies and we invest literally millions of dollars in making sure that our teachers and our schools are well equipped to ensure that they can enforce the sorts of standards of behaviour that we expect of all students and all staff in our schools at all times. That does not mean that there is not more that we could be doing or more that I would like to be doing. But we do not solve these sorts of long-term, intractable issues in complex organisations such as schools by having unauthorised stop-work meetings.

The enterprise bargaining agreement that was signed by the Queensland Teachers Union not four or five months ago agreed to a grievance procedure to deal with precisely these sorts of issues. That grievance procedure has not been used by the Queensland Teachers Union in relation to this matter. I can say that if the Queensland government failed to keep its side of the enterprise bargaining agreements that we have signed up to, all hell would break loose.

In relation to the specific case that the member outlined, I can also say that that matter went to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. The commission ruled that there was no workplace health and safety issue involved and that the teachers should return to work.

I look forward to sitting around the table with the Queensland Teachers Union and working through these issues in a clear and sensible way. The nonsense that is happening at Sarina State High School today will not advance anything for our students and I caution the QTU in future to accept the recommendations of the independent umpire. The government does. I can tell members that we do not always like the ruling, but those are the rules of the game. I think the public expects the Queensland Teachers Union to also abide by the rules of the game.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the Leader of the Opposition, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Collingwood Park State School in the electorate of Bundamba.

Waste Water Treatment

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. I welcome the government's commitment of more than $28 million for Mackay City Council's new waste water treatment plant at Bakers Creek that will divert waste water from the reef and make it available to cane farmers to irrigate their crops. Will the minister make a similar commitment of a waste water pipeline that would benefit the residents of Brisbane, remove thousands of tonnes of polluting nutrients in Moreton Bay each year, and at the same time provide desperately needed water for our Lockyer Valley and Darling Downs farmers?

Mr MICKEL: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I notice in the preamble to the question that the honourable gentleman did not do what I asked yesterday, and that was to get on to the federal member for Dawson, De-Anne Kelly, and represent Mackay's case in Canberra. We wanted a tripartite arrangement between the state government and the local government and for De-Anne Kelly to take the case to Canberra to get the money for that project. As I said on Mackay radio this morning, there are four winners out of that project in Mackay. Firstly, there are the Mackay ratepayers. Secondly, there are the cane farmers, whom I had the happy duty to meet when I was in Mackay recently with the member for Mackay. I might say that those cane farmers were from the electorate of Mirani and I have not heard the member for Mirani urging his federal colleague to do anything decent about that project. The third area that is going to be protected is the Great Barrier Reef. That is why we want the federal government in there, because this project would take pressure off the Great Barrier Reef—also a federal government responsibility. The fourth aspect, as we know, is that the aquifer in that area is under pressure.

Mr Malone: What's an aquifer?

Mr MICKEL: It has suffered because there is too much salt in the aquifer. The honourable member should know what an aquifer is. I am surprised that a cane farmer such as the member for Mirani does not know what that is. The cane farmers in that area will be only too happy to tell him the problems that they are suffering because of salt in that area. It is no wonder that the

National Party could not improve its majority when it has cane farmers in parliament who do not even understand what an aquifer is.

I turn to the substantive issue of the Lockyer. The Lockyer matter was rejected on cost and environmental grounds—the notion that we could push that sort of fantasy land economics. Unlike the Mackay area, the topography in the Lockyer is substantially different. Anybody who has visited the Mackay area—and I would like the member for Mirani to visit his own electorate on occasion—would notice that the topography is quite flat, unlike the area in the Lockyer.

One of the schemes that I would refer the honourable gentleman to is the Lockyer Valley water reliability project—a project that looks at total water reliability issues. It is not like the Lockyer project that puts all its eggs in one basket; it is a project that looks at meeting industry needs, such as the Wetalla waste water project in Toowoomba.

Mr Shine: Hear, hear!

Mr MICKEL: We have committed $11 million to that project, which I hear the member for Toowoomba North supporting. Of course he supports it, because it is a great project.

Anzac Day

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: My question is directed to the Premier. Anzac Day remains a most important day to everyone in this nation. What is the Premier's government doing to ensure that the memory of those who fought and died for this country will be enhanced?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member for Stafford for his question. My government is playing a role in ensuring that Anzac Day and memorial services in this state remain sacrosanct. Before I detail the state's $2.4 million plans for Anzac Square and the $1.5 million that we have also committed to a three-year community memorial restoration program, I want to make a point about this week's Anzac celebrations. While there will be extra police on the streets, I am calling on Saturday night party goers to be mindful of those turning out for Sunday's dawn services. The right of people to enjoy themselves also extends to them showing courtesy and respect to those honouring those who fought and died for this country. I ask people to please ensure that rightful respect is extended on this important national day.

My government is committed to helping Brisbane's Shrine of Remembrance with a $2.4 million restoration package. The shrine, one of Queensland's most important reminders of the men and women who sacrificed themselves for our freedom, must be rescued. The passage of time has taken its toll with water penetration and vibrations from the railway lines damaging the shrine. This grand monument, made largely of sandstone and tiles, is crumbling and needs extensive and dedicated repairs. We have responded to a request from the RSL by committing $2.4 million over three years from the Smart State Building Fund to restore the shrine. The fund builds on $300,000 that the government contributed a year ago towards the cost of a conservation report and initial remediation work.

The Shrine of Remembrance houses the eternal flame, which burns in memory of the fallen. This shrine was officially dedicated on Armistice Day in 1930 and has been a focal point for Anzac Day tributes ever since. We have also committed to a three-year $1.5 million community memorial restoration program to ensure that memorials of significance to Queenslanders are preserved for future generations.

Brisbane has a close link to Anzac Day. Australian troops were withdrawn from Gallipoli in December 1915. The then Mayor of Brisbane, John Hetherington, called a public meeting a month later where it was proposed that the spirit shown by the Anzacs should not be forgotten, and that the anniversary of the date of the Gallipoli landing should be the day for celebration and remembrance.

It is believed that the first man ashore on 25 April was Lieutenant D. Chapman, 9th Battalion AIF, from Maryborough. Lieutenant Chapman survived Gallipoli but was killed in Pozieres in France in 1916.

I do appeal to party goers and revellers and people enjoying themselves on Saturday night who carry over to Sunday morning to have a bit of respect for the dawn service. That is all I ask.

Pacific Paradise Bypass

Miss SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. I refer to the government's pre-election promise to build the $35 million Pacific Paradise bypass and motorway

interchange commencing next year. I also refer to this week's revelation that the road will not be completed until 2008—after the next state election.

Given that this bypass has already been subject to a six-year road study, including public consultation, how does the minister justify this delay in delivering this desperately needed project and breaking his promise to the people of the Maroochy north shore?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for her question. We have allocated the money to the project and we will build it, which is a lot better than what she did.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Ipswich.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I call the member for Ipswich.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Ms NOLAN: When he's ready, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for Hinchinbrook will cease interjecting!

Mr SPEAKER: I call the member for Ipswich.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Gregory, order! I call the member for Ipswich.

Acting Premier; Acting Leader of the Opposition

Ms NOLAN: When the member is ready, my question is to the Premier. Premier, whilst you were overseas the state was very well administered by the Acting Premier. He undertook his role well and maintained a very clear direction for the government. Can the same be said of the acting Opposition Leader when his leader was out of the country on his recent three-week study tour?

Mr BEATTIE: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition's little exchange—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: We all know that that opinion would not be worth repeating.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I always have faith in my deputy because I know that he is solid, reliable and he is trustworthy—

Mr Schwarten: And he's smart.

Mr BEATTIE: And he's smart. I have to say the same cannot be said for K29 over there who has been a little bit clumsy. If you have a look at what he did while his leader was away, it really is a long litany—a long litany! What it really means is that Lawrence should never leave the country again.

First of all, let us look at what he did. First he likened the Liberals to car salesmen. That was the first thing he said. He gave his former coalition partner a good old biff on the way through. The media report said—

Opposition Deputy Leader Jeff Seeney has compared the Liberal Party to used car salesmen, in a move expected to further strain tense relations between the former state coalition partners.

What he said was—

It was a bit like trying to buy a car from a second-hand car salesman who kept putting the price up each day.

Bob, you're not really like that, are you? I refuse to believe Bob is like that. What he managed to do then was upset Geoff Seeney. What he managed to do was upset his poor old namesake in Hervey Bay. Here you go, you have a poor old used car salesman in Hervey Bay, and what does he say? 'Yesterday car dealer Geoff Seeney was copping a ribbing.' Here he is, this poor small businessman, being undermined by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. What a disgrace! What an absolute disgrace!

The motor industry's Tony Selmes, who is a really decent guy from the MTAQ, then came out and said he hoped that it would not be the normal practice of the opposition. I do not know about any of that.

Thirdly—this was not only a slip-up—he even got a biff from Larry Acton from Agforce along the way. I have to tell you: that took a real lot of achieving on your part! Here we have that very well-known Labor Party rag called *Queensland Country Life* that supports the Labor Party at every opportunity. It is, in fact, the official Labor Party journal. It says—

Seeney used old details for point-scoring: Larry Acton.

Good heavens! So what did he do? He attacked the Liberal Party, he attacked used car salesmen, and then he tried to mislead everybody about what was happening in the tree clearing legislation.

I have to say, Lawrence, we were really pleased you went overseas, but it was not good for you. Jeff, we are your strongest supporters and one day we would love you to be leader. We will vote for you, mate!

Payroll Tax

Mr HOBBS: I had a question for the Minister for State Development, but in his absence I will refer it to the Treasurer. I refer to federal Labor leader Mark Latham's plan to introduce a new payroll tax on every business in Australia with more than 20 employees and I ask the minister whether he supports Mark Latham's new tax on jobs, jobs, jobs, or will he rule out supporting his federal Labor colleague's plans to impose another new tax on small business?

Mr MACKENROTH: I read in the paper this morning that Mark Latham will outline his taxation plans for the next election probably two days after the federal budget is brought down this year and I would urge the member to wait until that happens.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: I am not making his policy.

Daniel Morcombe

Ms MOLLOY: My question is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Can the minister outline to the House the overwhelming public response to the heightened media coverage of the Daniel Morcombe case?

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for the question. The unprecedented public response that has occurred since the disappearance of Daniel Morcombe has taken on new dimensions. Prior to the airing of *Australian Story,* Crimestoppers had received over 3,500 different pieces of information, and that was more calls than any other case in Queensland's history.

Since *Australian Story* went to air on Monday night, and we had Red Ribbon Day ourselves here in Queensland yesterday, a new wave of people have come forward believing and hoping that they have some vital information. Calls are still coming in. However, there have been an additional 350 calls in Queensland, and more than 80 calls have been received by interstate Crimestoppers call centres. People from as far away as Perth also logged into *Australian Story*'s online forum, which had to close when it recorded an incredible 1,088 hits. More were logging on when the forum had to be shut down. Yesterday the media helped to promote Red Ribbon Day across the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane. They handed out red ribbons and released red balloons in a show of support.

I can assure members that the dedicated police in the major incident room are going through every piece of information that they are receiving and hopefully they will receive the right information to solve this crime.

As well as that response, the Brisbane Broncos have generously offered to put Daniel's photo and the Crimestoppers number on the replay board during Sunday's game against Penrith at Suncorp Stadium and they have also indicated that they will be asking other NRL clubs to do likewise at their home games.

Queensland Police have been approached by the operators of the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Optus Oval in Victoria with an offer to display Daniel's picture and Crimestopper's number at AFL games and other major sporting events. This is certainly publicity that money cannot buy. I know that the Morcombes and the police are very grateful.

Today police are coordinating a videotaped re-enactment of Daniel's last known movements from the time he left home to catch a bus to the shops on 7 December last year to the site of his disappearance at the Kiel Mountain Road overpass at Palmwoods. This has been funded through public donations. It will be used as part of the community awareness campaign and for analysis by police.

I do not think any of us can comprehend what the Morcombes are going through, but I know that they truly value the support they are getting from ordinary people and from all Australians. I think we should all be very grateful for this overwhelming public response.

Land Valuations

Mr MALONE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government and Planning. As this is the first question she has been asked, I congratulate her on her elevation to the position of Minister for Local Government and Planning. Will the minister stand up for Queensland local government councils by immediately requesting her colleague the Minister for Natural Resources to withdraw this year's annual $10 million payment expected from councils for a valuation service the majority will not receive because of his failure to provide appropriate resources?

Ms BOYLE: I thank the member for Mirani for my first question and for his congratulations. I do appreciate it. I look forward to working with him in a partnership for the benefit of local government right across this fair state. We have 125 councils in Queensland and pretty much every one of them is doing a very fine job. If he and I can both assist them on the matters of concern to them then the state will be the better for it.

So far as the Minister for Natural Resources is concerned and the actions that have been taken with regard to the valuations, that is a matter for him to properly address. It comes as a relief to many of the councils around the state of Queensland and many of the newly elected councillors that in fact, for good reasons, the valuations will not be conducted at this time.

There are many rating choices for councils. There are ways they can go about balancing their budgets just as well without the valuation this year. That breathing space, as it were, that councils will have has been generally welcomed. There are some, as there are on any issue, who are concerned about it, but they are in the minority in terms of contacts I have had at my office and in terms of the discussions I have had as I have travelled around the fair state of Queensland.

I have not got very far yet, I must say, as the Minister for Local Government and Planning in meeting very many of the councils, but I have had the pleasure of meeting with the mayor of Mirani and with some of the councillors and the CEO of Mirani shire and, in fact, the great pleasure of travelling through part of the Mirani electorate. I had the pleasure of too briefly visiting Eungella—a very fine tourist facility where I would indeed like to take up the offer of spending a pleasant, relaxing weekend when the stress becomes too much.

My compliments indeed go to the Mirani shire. It is working hard, of course, on very many rural matters but recognises, too, that it has opportunities in the future to engage in tourism—to piggyback the success of the Mackay shire and the Whitsunday shire in attracting tourists to that region and make sure that they, too, in the Mirani shire get the very best they can in terms of future tourism facilities and visitation.

Film Industry, Gold Coast

Mr POOLE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education and the Arts. I believe the minister was recently on the Gold Coast in the wonderful electorate of Gaven for a familiarisation tour of the Warner Roadshow Studios. For the benefit of other members, could the minister please explain the importance of this industry to Queensland?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. He is right: I did very recently, with a number of members of my caucus committee, have the opportunity to tour the Warner Roadshow Studios on the Gold Coast. It was a very worthwhile tour, and I would encourage other members to do it to get a sense of the world standard facilities and the world-class crew, actors and directors on display. It is a showcase of huge Queensland talent.

Not only did I have a chance to visit Village Roadshow Productions, which has recently worked on such films as *Peter Pan*, *The Great Raid* and *George of the Jungle*; I also had the chance to visit some of the services such as BEEPS, which is a postproduction service, and Photon, which does design, postproduction and effects for film and TV. If members want to see

the future, they would do well to spend a little time in services such as BEEPS and Photon. They will see them packed full of bright young talent who are at the cutting edge of the entertainment industry. We will not keep talent here without work. Television production is the bread and butter of the Australian film industry. It keeps the industry afloat between the production of feature films. It provides long-term employment and training vital to the industry.

I have recently, along with other state ministers, written to the federal government calling on it to extend the current 12.5 per cent tax offset to large budget films to TV production. Other countries have started to leapfrog Australia in this regard. New Zealand in 2003 introduced a 12.5 per cent production grant for television production. In the same time we have seen television production in Queensland alone drop by $30 million a year. Australian production has been down by 86 per cent. If we continue to see that decline we will see the kind of talent that is resident on the Warner set at the Gold Coast simply being driven offshore in order to get reasonable work. I hope to see in the federal budget later this year that those calls by the industry and by my colleagues have been heeded.

It is an extremely competitive industry. A total of $5.4 billion of American financed films are shot outside of the US every year. It is little wonder that the Governor of California is getting worried. It is little wonder that the 'Terminator' is shaking in his boots. If he could see what is happening at the Warner studios he would be even more worried. I am going to Los Angeles at the end of the month to maintain our important relationships with film production companies and with executives. The California governor may well have muscle, he may well have a limited vocabulary and he may well have Danny DeVito, but I can tell members that what we have here in Queensland's film industry is brains, talent, enthusiasm and determination. We are taking it to the world, and the bad news for Arnie is: we'll be back.

Mareeba Wild Animal Park

Ms LEE LONG: My question is addressed to the Premier. The public of far-north Queensland are overwhelmingly calling for an inquiry into the treatment of the highly experienced owner/operator of the Mareeba Wild Animal Park who was recently subjected to an unceremonious dawn raid on his premises by Beattie government officers and others. Will the Premier conduct an independent or CMC inquiry into the handling of this matter and report back to parliament on the outcome?

Mr BEATTIE: As I have indicated when I have been asked by the media in relation to this, the Department of Natural Resources had received a number of serious allegations regarding the Mareeba Wild Animal Park. The department is bound to investigate complaints of alleged breaches of permit conditions under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act. Members would not expect it to do otherwise. That is its job. We cannot simply say that we are going to have selective investigations. Under the act it is required to investigate.

What is the member suggesting we do here? That we simply say to the department, 'Don't do your job'? Any piece of legislation passed by this parliament puts obligations on public servants. Is the member suggesting that we should simply direct them to breach the law? These serious allegations involve potential breaches of permit conditions.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Those opposite might be a mob of anarchists, but we believe in the law. These serious allegations involve potential breaches of permit conditions including public safety—so those opposite do not care about the public—security of the animals—they do not care about the animals—unreported deaths of animals, unreported escapes of animals and animal welfare. The department is conducting these investigations in the standard manner and investigations, as I understand it, are ongoing.

The park was closed to the public in early April, and the department was heavily criticised for its treatment of Mr Gill. The decision to close the park was made by Mr Gill for his own commercial reasons. There was no order, suspension or any other instruction given by the department to close the park.

Let us be really clear about this: the Department of Natural Resources did not close the park; Mr Gill closed the park. The department did not close the park and any reports that suggest otherwise are wrong. The minister has advised me that negotiations have been under way for a couple of months to sell the park. The department has become aware of a prospective purchaser

and all indications are that the sale was going to proceed. I understand that is still the case. The minister indicates that is his understanding as well.

I note recent media reports state that the caretaker hired by the owner to manage the zoo has acknowledged the department had some serious concerns about its operations and said that remedial work to resolve these issues would occur over an agreed period of time which would enable the park to meet its permit obligations, and the caretaker is cooperating fully. Mr Gill had previously purchased animals from Tipperary Wildlife Sanctuary in the Northern Territory late in 2003 without first securing the permits or approvals required in Queensland.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I would urge the member for Tablelands to seek a meeting with the minister—

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Look, this is not your question. Would you stop being rude?

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to answer the question of the member for Tablelands but there continue to be rude interjections from the National Party spokesman. I ask him to have some manners and courtesy.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hinchinbrook!

Mr BEATTIE: You really are rude! It is not your question. I say to the member for Tablelands: it is her area, she is entitled to ask this question and she is entitled to get a sensible approach, which I am trying to give her. I have not completed the detail of this answer. Can I suggest that the member for Tablelands approach the Minister for Natural Resources, who will arrange for an appropriate briefing of any further detail. We believe we have acted appropriately here and hopefully the work with the caretaker can go on and the sale can go ahead, as I understand is the position, and that should satisfy everybody.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Barron River, I welcome to the public gallery a second group of students from the Collingwood Park State School in the electorate of Bundamba.

Crime Prevention, Far-North Queensland

Dr LESLEY CLARK: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Communities and Disability Services. Can the minister please inform the House about the steps the state government is taking to reduce or prevent youth crime in far-north Queensland?

Mr PITT: I thank the member for Barron River for her question and would like to publicly acknowledge the hard work she does on behalf of young people in our joint constituency of far-north Queensland. I thank her for that work. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to inform the House that my department has this week allocated more than $125,000 for five projects in far-north Queensland all aimed at reducing or preventing youth crime. This is part of the Beattie government's Queensland crime prevention strategy.

In Cairns the Wuchopperen Health Service has been allocated almost $27,000 to provide at-risk indigenous youth in the Manoora area with a program to develop leadership, participate in self-esteem activities and build self-discipline and respect for others. The project incorporates a mix of cultural activities and sports such as kickboxing, rock climbing and abseiling, and targets young people at risk of offending or reoffending.

The Cardwell shire community support centre has been allocated $27,000 to stage four camps focusing on building self-esteem, implementing a drug and alcohol early intervention program and talks on peer pressure and indigenous culture. In Mareeba, the Mareeba Shire Council has been allocated $35,000 for its truancy and graffiti program which helps young people break the cycle of truancy and petty crime by re-engaging them with the school, police, local government, peers and businesspeople. I am pleased to acknowledge that this program has already been recognised with a Premier's Award for Excellence.

The Cook Shire Council secured almost $29,000 to involve indigenous young people in working to improve the youth centre by painting reconciliation and cultural murals, propagating a bush tucker garden and creating a music program featuring an outdoor concert. Finally, the Queensland Blue Light Association will receive almost $7,500 to set up Blue Light activities

including discos, entertainment and film nights for young people in the Torres Strait. By taking part in projects that tackle the factors which lead to offending, young people have the opportunity to participate in family and community life, and reach their full potential. Preventing and responding to youth crime is not just a government responsibility but also a community issue, which is why I am so pleased to be able to announce these grassroots community initiated projects.

Energex

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Minister for Mines and Energy. I refer to Energex's submission to the Queensland Competition Authority and the admissions that the electricity network is unable to cope with existing demand, and I ask: since Energex has clearly misled the public over the state of our electricity network, would he now as a shareholding minister withhold the millions of dollars in performance bonuses to be paid to Energex's senior executives and reinvest that money into our ailing electricity network?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. I find it incredible that anyone from either the Liberal Party or National Party would stand up and talk about dividends from our electricity authorities given that when they were last in office they ripped out $800 million over two years—$800 million under Liberal Party Treasurer Joan Sheldon—from our electricity generators and network providers. So for them to suggest that in some way we have been irresponsible is absolute nonsense.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: They do not like the truth. The report that was referred to in a number of *Courier-Mail* articles over the last week or so is a draft report—one of literally hundreds of reports that go round to organisations the size of Energex as they prepare their final submission to the Queensland Competition Authority for the period 2005-10. There has been a lot of nonsense spoken over the last couple of weeks about that report, in particular about the potential for higher electricity prices.

I take this opportunity today to remind all honourable members—and indeed the media—that it is not Energex that determines the price of electricity, it is not the Queensland Competition Authority that determines the price of energy, it is not Powerlink or Ergon. There is only one person who determines the price of electricity in this state, and that is me, and I have absolutely no intention of changing the existing policy with respect to electricity prices in this state which reflects the consumer price index only. Since 1988 this government's policy has delivered real reductions in the price of electricity.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will say that again for the rude members opposite: since 1988, when this government came to power, there has been a real reduction in the price of electricity. That is, the increase in the price of electricity has been below the CPI—12.8 per cent CPI over that period of time; a nine per cent increase in electricity prices; a three per cent real reduction or reduction in real terms in the price of electricity. That is the record of this government and that policy is not changing. That is why when you compare us to other states like South Australia, which last year increased its electricity price by 25 per cent, Queensland has a lot to be proud of in relation to its existing energy policies and its existing energy networks.

Travel Costs, Smart State Initiatives

Mr HOOLIHAN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing, the Hon. Robert Schwarten. As Queensland is the most decentralised state in Australia, the state government is always looking for new ways to deliver services more efficiently. Can the minister please advise the House of his department's latest initiative using Smart State technology to reduce travel costs?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for his question and congratulate him on winning the seat of Keppel so that I now have a Labor member instead of a Tory next to me. I wish Vince well in his retirement.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: It is tragic really. The honourable members opposite obviously are not interested in this subject, but given that Queensland is the most diverse state in terms of where

people live—in fact, more people live outside the capital city in this state than in any other state in Australia—and given the fact that all of us from regional Queensland, like the member for Keppel, have to come to parliament, we are very much aware of just what the cost of running government is.

This government is looking at ways of cutting down on costs. For example, some agencies have saved up to $3 million by cutting down on public servants flying to and from Brisbane. They have done this by installing video conferencing. The Department of Health and the Department of Education have done this.

The Department of Public Works has decided to trial this idea throughout Queensland to see whether it has wider application. If we were able to put in video conferencing for all public servants for one hour we would save about $300 per public servant in travel costs. Of course, there are the personal costs to public servants who have to go away from home and be away from their families on a regular basis—as members of parliament do.

The trial will involve departments being forced to consult on video conferencing before they make the decision to allow someone to travel. I think that will have a strong effect. I thank the Department of Education and Department of Health for their cooperation in this. The Department of Public Works will make its centres available for across government use.

It is a smart initiative as far as I am concerned. It is a commonsense initiative. We in this state must do business in increasingly better ways and we must use IT to our advantage. This is an example of this. I believe the trial will have some very positive results and I look forward to reporting back to this parliament in 12 months.

Gladstone Hospital

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. Last year I passed on complaints of men and women being accommodated in undivided wards at the Gladstone Hospital. At the time I was advised that my information was incorrect. Again this year complaints were received and Gladstone Hospital has confirmed that this is occurring. Would the minister agree that mixed wards are unacceptable and compromise patient confidence, safety, privacy and dignity? Will the minister intervene to stop this management practice?

Mr NUTTALL: I thank the honourable member for the question. My understanding of the situation of male and female patients being put in the same room is that from time to time people may need acute care and have to be carefully watched. I certainly agree with the member that it is not a practice that I would support. It is not a practice that is favourable, but from time to time it may be necessary.

I am not sure if the wards where this is happening are close to nurse stations so that the nurses can be close by for cases requiring acute care. I give the member an undertaking that I will have a serious look at that matter. As I said, it is not a practice that I would recommend or support. I am sure it does not happen on a regular basis and that there would be obvious reasons for it.

We need to have a look at that. I will certainly investigate that matter. Not only will I get back to the member but I will also make sure that the district manager of the region talks to the member about that matter and consults with her to ensure that we try to improve the practices that we have at Gladstone Hospital.

Local Government Elections

Mrs SMITH: My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government and Planning and Minister for Women. I refer the minister to the 27 March local government elections which have subsequently caused some disquiet amongst residents of the Gold Coast. Can the minister advise the House of the outcome of the elections?

Ms BOYLE: May I take the opportunity to congratulate the member for Burleigh on her recent electoral success. It came as no surprise to many of us in this House who have recognised her steady community based style both in the parliament and in her electorate. I thank the member for Burleigh for her question.

Members might not realise it but one of the great outcomes of the last local government election is that 30 per cent of elected councillors across Queensland are women. I have no doubt

that the men of parliament are disappointed that women make up only 30 per cent and that they look forward to the years to come when, of course, that proportion will rise.

The other good news that I would like to alert honourable members to is that now 17 per cent of Queensland mayors are women. As the Minister for Women I look forward to working with these fine ladies, including: the eminent Mayor of Toowoomba, Di Thorley; the eminent mayor of Mackay, Julie Boyd; and the newly elected mayor of Burdekin, Lyn McLachlan.

Many amusing anecdotes came out during the election period but there were also some serious incidents that have raised questions about the integrity of the electoral process. As a consequence of that particular factor, but for some other reasons as well, I am commencing a review of the conduct of local government elections with a view to finding improved processes so that four years from now the standard of the elections and their conduct will be better than they were on this occasion, with a view towards minimising the risks of any misbehaviour or even misconduct on the part of those engaged in running the elections or those competing for office.

The extent of community concern over this last round of local government elections has been reflected in the many letters that I have received from councillors, from employees of councils, from candidates who failed and from members of the community. One of the key questions the review will need to address is whether the Electoral Commission of Queensland should in fact run local council elections or at least assist in setting standards in matters such as a caretaker period, council logos and their uses by candidates during the election period, council resources being used by candidates, absentee voting and the processes thereby to ensure integrity of that voting, proper authorisation, adequacy of the rolls and even where there have been such things as claims of bullying and intimidation on the part of those engaged in running the elections. Nonetheless, I take the opportunity to congratulate all of those who have been elected. What they have ahead of them is a very important job and a very difficult job in many of the councils around this state.

Philippine Banana Imports

Mr HORAN: My question is directed to the Hon. Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries. On 18 March this year the minister told parliament that the two DPI scientists involved in the import risk analysis process that recommended banana imports from the Philippines be allowed into Australia were not asked to vote or sign off that they agreed with every element of the report. However, on 8 March, Executive Manager of Biosecurity Australia, Mary Harwood, told a Senate inquiry 'Everyone agreed with the report and agreed with its release'. Last week the DPI was scheduled to give evidence at a Senate inquiry but did not end up giving that evidence. Why did the DPI not give evidence at the Senate inquiry? Was the decision not to give evidence related to fact that two DPI scientists apparently support the IRA recommendation to allow banana imports from the Philippines?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I stand by the answer I gave the honourable member on 18 March. I had discussions with people from the banana industry at the community cabinet last Sunday, and with Len Collins in particular, and he agreed with the DPI's position in relation to the appearance before the Senate inquiry. What we really need to understand is that DPI sent a letter to the Senate inquiry and basically stated that they would not appear because they had not completed a written submission for the committee.

The reason for that is quite plain. It is difficult for the department to complete its submission when Biosecurity Australia has yet to release the corrections to its draft IRA. I therefore urge Biosecurity Australia to release the corrections as soon as possible because I believe further delays are frustrating.

In relation to the issue of DPI scientists, I will reiterate what I said in the answer I gave the honourable member on 18 March. I stand by what I said. At the end of the day, as a government and as minister I have made it abundantly clear that we do not want to jeopardise the banana industry by leaving it at risk to exotic pests and diseases. As members know, there are significant differences that exist between the draft IRA report released in 2002 and the revised draft IRA report tabled recently. It is these differences that need to be explored and explained as part of any response to Biosecurity Australia's draft IRA. Our response is going to be science based and it will deal with the scientific issues raised by the published IRA and the socioeconomic impacts as well.

In conclusion, as minister I fully support the work that is being done by the banana industry. I understand the position that the honourable member is coming from. I was informed at the

community cabinet meeting that the honourable member would ask this question. In terms of the response I have made, I stand by my answer on 18 March. The explanation I have given to the honourable member in relation to DPI appearing before the Senate inquiry I believe is a reasonable explanation. Our submission is going to be based on science. At the end of the day, I firmly believe that working together with industry we will get the result that we expect from BA, and that result should be in favour of the local product.

Mackay Courthouse

Mr MULHERIN: My question is directed to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. I refer the minister to his commitments to improve access to justice by providing modern, efficient court facilities, particularly in regional areas of Queensland. I ask: what progress is being made in the Mackay courthouse refurbishment project?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for his question, and I thank him also for the tremendous assistance that he has given to the project in the development of the Mackay courthouse. This is a new state-of-the-art judicial centre, and I am pleased to say that it is well on track. I recently had the pleasure of opening the first stage of this $11.4 million project.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr WELFORD: It is a project managed by Public Works, as the honourable minister says. It is one of the most significant courthouse projects our government is undertaking in regional Queensland. This new extension features four courtrooms, jury facilities and, of course, judicial chambers. It is more than just bricks and mortar; it is bringing to Mackay all the elements of a modern judicial system.

Before we began this project to modernise the Mackay courthouse, there were virtually no interview room facilities and privacy for victims and witnesses was very limited indeed. Now we have two new Magistrates Courts, new courtrooms for sittings of the Supreme and District courts, new witness and interview rooms, a jury assembly room, areas for court support groups and an improved public waiting area. These facilities will not only benefit victims of sexual assault and domestic violence but enable lawyers to speak with their clients in privacy and with discretion. There is also better access for the disabled and improved amenities for the public and for court staff. When the project is completed, there will be closed-circuit television facilities to enable child witnesses and sexual assault victims to give evidence from a separate room in the court precinct. This will help reduce the trauma they face when giving evidence at court hearings.

The final stage of the project, the refurbishment of the existing heritage building courthouse which was built more than 60 years ago, is now under way. An important aspect of this project has been the cooperation between our government, the local council and the many stakeholders. This has been due in no small part to the enormous efforts of the member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin, and I thank him for his efforts. I look forward to returning to Mackay later this year to celebrate with the honourable member the completion of this project.

Drug and Alcohol Programs, Indigenous Communities

Ms STUCKEY: I refer the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to a statement made in November 2002 by the former minister in which she promised more drug and alcohol programs following the introduction of alcohol restrictions in indigenous communities. Given that since the introduction of the alcohol restrictions there has been an increase in other substance abuse, including petrol sniffing and chroming, I ask: why has this government cut funding for initiatives such as the Which Way You Mob program?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I thank the honourable member for her question. I have to say that volatile substance abuse is not only in communities in remote or regional areas; it is part of an Australia-wide and worldwide phenomenon. It is unfortunate, but it is a part of our life. There are alcohol problems and there are substance abuse problems, and that is just a part of life. I am not sure about the funding to that particular project, but I will find out about it and will let the honourable member know. But I can assure her that with the alcohol management plans that this government has implemented there are other areas that will support those. We have a number of projects implemented in these areas which I am also happy to inform the member about, and I will do so.

Cane Toad Eradication

Mr WALLACE: I refer the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy to recent media reports that CSIRO scientists are using genetics to try to eradicate cane toads. As a member from north Queensland, I ask: what role is the Queensland government playing in the development of a national approach to cane toad control?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for Thuringowa for a very important question, because there is promising news from the CSIRO that genetics may hold the key to eradicating one of Queensland's and northern Australia's most stubborn pests. I am advised that a $3 million CSIRO research project on cane toads may have found a way to prevent cane toad tadpoles maturing into reproductive adults. If successful, this would be a most significant biological breakthrough and one of the few controlled methods that does not harm native frogs.

Controlling the spread of cane toads has been an issue of great frustration to governments ever since the toad was first introduced into Queensland in 1935 to control agricultural pests. Today cane toads are migrating out of Queensland into the Northern Territory and New South Wales and have the potential to invade and infest all Australian states and territories with devastating consequences. They pose a major threat to biodiversity and their advance appears limited only by environmental factors such as availability of water for breeding, tolerable temperatures and an abundance of food.

That is why a coordinated national approach is needed to develop appropriate measures to manage and control the cane toad. Queensland is playing a lead role in the national effort to control cane toads. This issue was discussed at last week's Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council in Adelaide. Federal and state ministers agreed to refer development of a national plan for cane toad control to the council's Vertebrate Pests Committee. This national committee is chaired by Queensland and will meet in Cairns next month to begin work on coordinated action to meet the cane toad threat. The committee has been tasked to review the current threat posed by cane toads, review the status of research into developing measures to abate the threat, identify any gaps in current approaches and assess the costs and benefits of options for priority national action. The management and control of cane toads is a high priority and research into control and possible eradication needs to be coordinated. That is why Queensland is working together with the Commonwealth and mainland states and territories to achieve this goal.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Gregory, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Mount Crosby State School in the electorate of Moggill. Welcome.

School Based Policing

Mr JOHNSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. The school based policing program has been regarded as a real success story since its official launch in February 1997 under the Borbidge government. I note that during the election this government has committed to increase the number of officers involved in the program. Does the minister recall that on 20 February 1996 here in parliament she ridiculed this program by saying—

> A cop in every school. What for? To frisk kids when they come through the school gate? To find the chewing gum stuck behind the chairs or the cigarettes hidden in the school bag? If the coalition is going to waste its police resources by having them behind school gates, then the police are not going to be catching real criminals.

Does the minister still stand behind her criticism, and will she now be cancelling this program?

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for the question. I am flattered that the member has gone through the old *Hansards*. I have to say that many of us who have been here for a long time know that we move on and our ideas change. I certainly regret suggesting over a decade ago that the member himself might be intellectually challenged, and I take that back.

We have all said things in this place that we revise a decade or so later. Seriously, on the subject of school based policing, it truly has been a successful program. As the member says, we went to the election with a commitment to in fact put more police into schools. I stand by that commitment. In fact, school based policing is not only highly valued in schools but so is the Adopt-a-Cop program. Members will be hearing more about where those police are to be situated in the next few years.

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

PRIVILEGE

Land Transactions, Comments in *Courier-Mail*

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.30 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. I would have done this earlier today, but because of the sensitivity of certain matters I did not. I refer to the story on page 16 of today's *Courier-Mail* titled 'Land deal loophole returned for MPs'. I think that it is important to clarify the actions proposed by the government in this legislation. Really, it is in a spirit of bipartisanship. MPs on both sides have land transactions with the state and we should have a commonsense approach to maintain stability of the parliament. What happened here was not intended. We are correcting that. MPs with interests that may have been inadvertently caught by an error include—and I say this by way of information; there is nothing mischievous in it—the member for Southern Downs and Leader of the Opposition, who holds three rural leasehold parcels in Inglewood; the member for Warrego, who holds two rural leasehold parcels in the Tambo shire; and the member for Mirani, who holds two rural leasehold parcels in the Sarina shire. There could be other people. Therefore, it would simply be unfair if we did not get this right. I urge commentators to be fair. There are people on both sides of politics who are affected by this issue. To do other than what we are doing would be unfair and unreasonable and I ask for some courtesy in how this is reported.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 20 April (see p. 237).

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (11.31 a.m.): Section 269 of division 3 of the Land Act states—

A lessee may clear trees for routine rural management purposes prescribed under the regulations without obtaining a tree clearing permit if

(a) the lease is—

(i) used for agriculture or grazing; and

(ii) not a lease over a State forest or timber reserve; and

(iii) not a lease over a protected area, or forest reserve, under the Nature Conservation Act 1992; and

(b) the lessee complies with section 270.

That relates to compliance with the act's regulations.

Despite the fact that this act is still in force at this time, freehold agricultural landowners operating under the Queensland Land Act 1994 are being penalised in Queensland. Therefore, one must feel compelled to ask of the parliament the following questions. How does this bill maintain the rights of freehold property owners? By what specific authorisation does this bill propose to alter the existing rights of freehold property owners? To what exactitude are the boundaries of this act and jurisdiction defined?

I would like to refer to a recent report on the ABC's *Catalyst* program, which provided an interesting insight into what is happening in the forest. Researchers at the Australian canopy crane research facility in the Daintree rainforest are reported as having found evidence that the forest might have started to produce carbon dioxide, hence possibly contributing to global warming rather than abating it. It appears that over the past year the forest has moved from being a sink for carbon to being more of a source for carbon—a move that has been attributed to the area being under stress caused by dry conditions.

A canopy crane, the only one of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, 45 metres in height and located in the middle of the Daintree forest, is being utilised to ascertain what is occurring. Until now, there has been no ability to access a forest canopy to take measurements, and now with the use of the canopy crane, carbon flux can be measured, which is the balance between photosynthesis and carbon dioxide producing respiration by the plants and microbes in the soil.

Researchers at the canopy crane first teamed up to ascertain how the Daintree rainforest recovered from a severe cyclone. It appears that after the cyclone the forest produced carbon dioxide as a result of the breakdown of fallen leaves and branches. This carbon was quickly utilised by photosynthesis to make new leaves and branches. Once the forest had regenerated to a situation similar to that which existed before the cyclone struck, the study continued to find that the forest was not performing as it should be. In short, the forest was producing more carbon than it was consuming. It has been reported that without sufficient water to photosynthesis the carbon

into new plant matter, decomposition is taking precedence, which releases carbon into the atmosphere.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr ROWELL: No, this is a fact. I know that the minister might be frowning about it, but this is research that has been established by that group in the Daintree rainforest just north of Cairns. With the long-term predictions being drier climatic conditions, the increase in carbon output could possibly spell ruin for Queensland's rainforests as well as exacerbating the problem of global warming.

That being the case, it might be considered that an overabundance of vegetation in many cases could result in a flux of carbon in the atmosphere. That raises a question as to whether there has been conclusive evidence found in other studies of various vegetation types under dry conditions whereby fallen leaves and branches might also be contributing to increasing levels of carbon.

To cut to the chase, could it be established that, under adverse conditions, forests might be contributing to carbon levels being produced rather than acting as a carbon sink, which converts carbon dioxide to beneficial oxygen? Could that be a regular occurrence in high-density forests that are impacted under dry conditions? I think that this is something that really needs to be looked at very closely.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr ROWELL: No, it is science. This group put up a canopy crane in the Daintree forest to assess this situation. It is not me saying it; it is them saying it.

In keeping with issues relating to carbon dioxide, Minister Robertson in his second reading speech on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill stated that there is a requirement for Queensland to provide 20 megatons to 25 megatons of carbon emission savings to contribute to the Commonwealth government's greenhouse commitments. The minister did not say over what period. I understand that it could be up to about eight years—to 2012—but I have heard other reports saying that it could be in a year.

Each year, four billion litres of petrol fuel is consumed in Queensland. Had a 10 per cent ethanol blend been mandated in all petrol sold in Queensland, as was included in a private member's bill that was introduced by the Nationals, a saving of one megaton of carbon emissions could have been achieved each year through the use of this clean, green petrol. If the government was serious about meeting the commitment that I am talking about—this 25 megatons—it would have agreed to mandate the 10 per cent ethanol blend. That would have been a far more positive outcome, in direct contrast with what is being pushed.

Time expired.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (11.39 a.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004.

In doing so, it is the first occasion I have had to speak in this 51st Parliament and I must say how nice it is to be back and to be able to continue to support the good citizens of the electorate of Greenslopes. I express my gratitude to them in re-electing me to this office.

My electorate represents what might be described as the mainstream of Queensland people. It represents a range of people who are diverse in their backgrounds and occupations; many people who might be described as middle class public servants and workers in the main metropolitan district of Brisbane. As such they are people who are indeed deeply concerned about the welfare of their families, their lifestyle, their quality of life. They comprise families who have a desire to see their children and the generations that follow their children live in decent conditions and who wish to see this country is looked after well. That desire has certainly been expressed over the years in the way that local citizens have strongly supported the maintenance and protection of our local pockets of remnant bushland, particularly in areas like Toohey Forest and Whites Hill, which are great tracts of land that have been locked up for future generations as bushland.

A lot of work was done in the early nineties, particularly by my colleague, the Hon. Matt Foley, now retired from this place, and Judy Spence, the member for Mount Gravatt. Their electorates border Toohey Forest. They worked with the city council to make sure that the various packages of land in that area were locked together to form one park that could be maintained in the future.

As a person who walks through those parks with my family, I can say that they are being looked after very well by the local bush care groups who are doing tremendous work in revegetating those areas. I see, as an amateur birdwatcher, species returning to those areas, particularly places like Whites Hill where we see the scarlet and blue wrens returning en masse. Lately I have seen a significant increase in the number of double bar finches, which have not been present in that area to my recollection. They are coming back to the area and it is tremendous to see. I know many of us would have recollections from our childhood of seeing these birds in great abundance. It is tremendous to see.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: My father used to breed them.

Mr FENLON: I take the member's interjection. We used to breed them as well as boys, keeping these hobbies going. It is tremendous to see that these birds are returning in numbers and coming back into the metropolitan area. It is encouraging to see our local groups doing so much to provide the environment to allow this to happen. We are increasingly reclaiming areas in Whites Hill, for example, that were cleared previously, and I congratulate the city council on their foresight under the previous Labor mayor in doing so much to lock up these areas.

On the other hand, we see an attitude at a federal level that is an absolute disgrace. We see an attitude from the Howard government towards greenhouse gas emissions which is absolutely appalling, and like many of the other actions of the federal government we will be left with a legacy that will take a generation, if not generations, to recover from. Here I am speaking about the decision of the federal John Howard Liberal government to refuse to sign the Kyoto protocol. Not pursuing this is a fundamental error on the part of the Australian government. This is something that is being pursued internationally. Obviously Japan, who is the prime signatory to this protocol, is now locked into it. Other blocs that are closely following it are the European Union, Russia and parts of the former Soviet Union. Canada, from recollection, is another country that is going down that road.

Australia, a country so linked to its natural resources that relate to carbon and coal, must confront these issues. This does not mean that we throw out our mining industry, it does not mean that we destroy our industries, but there are so many other mechanisms by which we can address our carbon emissions. If we go to the web site of the Australian Greenhouse Gas Emissions we can see that there are many devices that can be pursued by governments and by industry to ensure that whatever action can be taken is taken. There are many practices in an agricultural sense, many practices within industries, many practices within the processing of environmental waste that can be adopted or modified to reduce our carbon emissions.

I found the web site of the Australian Greenhouse Gas Emissions not very user friendly, although I must be constructive in the sense that I am sure that its heart is in the right place and it is operating within a very limited financial capacity. It is also operating in an environment where we are not signatories to the Kyoto protocol. Leaving that aside, I would like to see it be more proactive in promoting its activities within the wider community and in trying to apply some of the innovations and technologies to go about the process of decreasing greenhouse gases.

That issue alone is significant enough for this House to overwhelmingly support this legislation. There need be no better approach to it. As somebody whose approach to science and the environment is basically informed through avenues such as watching the *Science Report* after the 12 o'clock news on the ABC on a Saturday, it is something that I think all Australians should be well informed about and we should be addressing with haste this issue of greenhouse gases.

The briefing notes on the legislation indicate that at the point of the imposition of the moratorium about 12 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions in Australia were attributed to tree clearing in Queensland. That is a very significant percentage. In the current environment we have to look at being able to scale back any percentage of our greenhouse gas emissions. As I said, there are many ways to do it and I do not think we have to be paranoid about losing or damaging our industries. There are ways to go about this. This is obviously a great start—to make sure that those carbon commodities remain locked in the environment within our trees that cover this state.

There are a range of other effects which are also very significant for the environment. I would like to touch on the issue of salinity because the reduction in tree clearing will have significant implications in terms of declining water quality, land degradation, damage to coastal and marine zones, species extinctions, et cetera. When we had the Science in Parliament briefings last year, the area that I sought a briefing on to enhance my understanding was salinity. It is a complex issue but it certainly becomes very complex when we try to go back and remedy the salinity problems that have been created. I think the fundamental starting point is to not further create

them and the way we do not create them is to ensure that we do not embark upon wide-scale clearing of land without knowing what we are doing.

I had the opportunity a few years ago to fly over a part of Western Australia—from Perth to Albany. I was shocked. I could not believe what I saw on that occasion, with great eruptions of saltpans in the middle of what had hitherto obviously been beautiful tracts of farming land that had obviously been cleared of forests. Seeing these eruptions right across the landscape, as far as I could see to the horizon, was terrifying. I thought if we end up with that situation in areas such as the Lockyer Valley, which I know members of this place represent and cherish as a beautiful area of farming land, that would be a great tragedy for this state.

We have to make sure we find a balance. I am not talking about some mad, radical approach to stopping all prospect of knocking down a tree ever again. This is what I would call a balanced approach in that it is a sensible approach to ensuring we do not undertake wide-scale tree clearing in this state ever again and that we have a balanced and appropriate approach to this process taking account of conservation values and maintaining our industries, particularly our rural industries. We need to put in place processes for ensuring that balance is created.

This is a piece of legislation that puts in place the mechanisms to achieve that balance. The moratorium was a very appropriate mechanism to be put in place to reach this point of starting this process. I welcomed at the time the January 2004 announcement by the Premier relating to the cessation of broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation in Queensland with or without federal government assistance. This is a bill that sets out to achieve exactly that.

This is something that is very dear to my electorate. During the state election campaign I spent a lot of time out on street corners and in my neighbourhood offices, making sure I was out and about in the electorate. This is something that was clearly foremost in the minds of my electors. I would go out with a bundle of materials to provide people—all sorts of policy initiatives. They asked for only one thing, basically. People were only interested in some further detail about this particular piece of policy. They welcomed it from one end of my electorate to the other and throughout the different community and social groups within my electorate. It is a great pleasure to be able to stand in this parliament now, after being re-elected as part of this government which my electorate supported, and deliver this legislation. It will be a source of great satisfaction not only to my electorate but also to the wider community for generations to come. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (11.53 a.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in this debate on one of the most important issues that challenges all of this great country, Australia. We have all heard the famous words of 'Banjo' Paterson's *Waltzing Matilda*—

> There once was a swagman camped by a billabong,
> Under the shade of a Coolibah tree

We are now asking ourselves: where are the coolibah trees? Since European settlement land clearing has occurred. In the early days most farm land was used to simply run sheep and cattle. As time has gone on, our simple living and farming styles have disappeared.

Balancing native vegetation, grazing land and cropping areas has never been so important or so controversial. The fact is that protected lands such as National Parks are not enough to maintain biodiversity. Currently, two-thirds, or 500 million hectares, of Australia is managed by private land-holders while only about 40 million hectares is within the terrestrial reserve system.

This legislation is critical. The legislation will see an end to broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation by December 2006. This will see an area of 20 million hectares saved for our generation and future generations. That is an area almost as large as the state of Victoria. During the moratorium, in May 2003 and at the end of 2006, 500,000 hectares of clearing will be permitted. Land-holders who have regrowth clearing approved according to a property map of assessable vegetation will not need to keep reapplying to clear regrowth. Areas of high conservation and areas vulnerable to degradation will be assessable, meaning they cannot be cleared.

This is about a balanced outcome on an issue of national importance. The way land is farmed not only impacts on the farmer but also has implications on public infrastructure. Dams, rivers, native plants and fauna do not need to be vandalised. Some soil should never have been cropped as the soil is very light and will blow away. It needs to be protected. Land management is what is needed.

Changing the way we farm can be achieved. Just as many industries have faced a lot of changes due to technology, farmers must now face up to the challenge of having a duty of care

to their land for the good of the whole of the environment, which means their future. I am sure there are farmers out there who are putting in place sustainable agricultural production and conservation management actions to protect significant environmental parcels of their land. I heard the member for Cunningham say this. Well, this now needs to become the norm.

I said that this important national issue has come with controversy. Some of the arguments against the legislation I have heard include, 'Why should the private land-holder be responsible?,' 'Why shouldn't all the community pay compensation to us for telling us what to do with our land?,' and, 'The conservation groups will never have enough open space to be satisfied.' To the critics I say: here is just a small sample of why the legislation is so important. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics has estimated that Queensland's tree clearing package may reduce greenhouse gases by 25 million tonnes per year, and it is estimated that Queensland's tree clearing ban will save Australians $600 million a year. It is anticipated that this bill will lead to the single largest reduction in greenhouse emissions ever in Australia.

I was given a copy of a report by Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall entitled *An abrupt climate change scenario and its implications for United States national security* of October 2003. The report states—

> The cooling of the northern hemisphere may lead to increased warmth, precipitation, and storms in the south, as the heat normally transported away from equatorial regions by the ocean currents becomes trapped and as greenhouse gas warming continues to accelerate.
>
> Either way, it is not implausible that abrupt climate change will bring extreme weather conditions to many of the world's key population and growing regions at the same time—stressing global food, water and energy supply.

I was given this report to read by a constituent—Sonny Whitelaw—who lives at Daisy Hill in the electorate of Springwood. Sonny graduated in 1979 from Sydney University and began a masters thesis on coastal management. She soon realised that her thesis would verify what many scientists were already saying about global warming and that the issue would become a scientific and political nightmare of equally global proportions. Sonny also gave me a gallery advance review copy of her new book, *The Rhesus Factor*, which I have read about three-quarters of. I must say, I am very impressed with Sonny's writing style. The other part is very scary. Although she writes fiction, I now know and others believe that some of the events in the book could happen in the future. I will not give anything in the book away, but I encourage members to buy it when it becomes available.

The effects of global warming are certainly evident in this book, as is how this has put stress on the world, leading to world events that include terrorism, environmental vandalism and a lifestyle that we do not want for future generations. It really explains why we must start managing our environment for outcomes such as reducing greenhouse gases.

I also note that Environment Australia considers that the package will have immediate and long-term benefits for both landscape and biodiversity conservation and will improve protection of remnant native vegetation across Queensland. Its report also noted a proposed outcome of significant medium and long-term benefits resulting from increased retention of native vegetation. Benefits will also be future savings on interventions to improve impacts of salinity, water quality decline, soil loss, ecosystem degradation and species decline. I know that previous speakers have spoken on all of those topics.

To ignore this issue is to not want to protect our rivers, our farmland and our wildlife. Yet the federal government still refuses to be a part of a package that would be equivalent to taking two cars off the road for every man, woman and child in Queensland. Since 1999 the Queensland state government has been negotiating with the federal government regarding the regulation of land clearing in Queensland. It is disgraceful that the Howard federal government could walk away from Queensland farmers by reneging on a promise to join the Queensland government in this historic reform.

We have been waiting for the Howard government in Canberra to confirm its commitment, but we can wait no longer. The Beattie government has moved to end Canberra's policy paralysis. The Beattie Labor government has decided to act and fund this decision because the environment of Queensland cannot wait. I am proud to be a part of a government that has made a decision described by the Wilderness Society, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Queensland Conservation Council as the most significant decision for the environment in Queensland's history.

The Beattie government will also continue to protect our green space from any inappropriate development through the Nature Conservation Act and is displaying its commitment to coordinate

planning for challenges of growing urban sprawl through establishing the Office of Urban Management. Everyone is speaking about tree clearing and keeping an open space, and I noted the member for Greenslopes talked about inquiries in this regard while setting up mobile offices. I, too, was contacted by many constituents about this issue. So it is an issue that all our constituents are talking about. They are talking about it while south-east Queensland is growing at an incredible rate. Urban land clearing and land development in cities comes under the jurisdiction of local government, and while most councils have orders to control what can be cleared for urban development I believe one of the biggest challenges for the new Office of Urban Management is to work with councils to get the balance right for the retention of open space and the protection of our natural resources while providing infrastructure to a growing population.

This bill means that native animals and plants, water quality and land productivity that depend on Queensland's remnant vegetation will be protected for future generations. Reports confirm coral bleaching is happening on the Great Barrier Reef. One only has to go snorkelling to see that. To me, this is one of the most important of many reasons as to why we must pass this legislation. The bill is also a step towards protecting aspects of our health, lifestyle, economy and environment, which includes the Great Barrier Reef, that are threatened by global warming. This legislation means the bulldozers that currently clear the equivalent of 1,200 football fields a day will be stopped and mothballed forever, and that is why I am very pleased to support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition (12.02 p.m.): In rising to participate in the debate on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I acknowledge that broad community support exists for this particular bill and this particular approach. It does not necessarily mean, though, that it is right in fact in many places throughout. The perception that is often created and what is often sought to be addressed is not necessarily in correlation with the facts that exist. However, I understand and I know that many people have concerns with regard to vegetation management and vegetation retention. If you look at it in an overall simplistic, perceptual way, and considering the imagery that people are given, this is the response that they demand to fix such a problem. However, there are some flaws in this bill and I intend to go through them.

Whilst other members have talked about issues in this parliament including salinity and the loss of biodiversity, those issues concern us all in this place. If we want to talk about fact, it is fact that in many areas of Queensland there are now trees where there were not trees at the time of European settlement in this state. That is fact. If those opposite want to go through the historical records that the Department of Natural Resources has—and the surveyors went through those areas some 150 years ago—there are records which detail areas of vast open treeless plains or semi-open savanna which is now almost that thick you cannot go through it.

The reason that has changed is as a consequence of European management of land. Fires have been controlled in those areas and some of those areas have been locked up. It is also fact that there are many areas throughout Queensland where there were vast areas of forest and trees at the time of European settlement where there are no longer forest and trees. All of those things are fact; all of those things are true. One thing that really pains me in this debate is the fact that we hear from honourable members opposite about the loss of vegetation, salinity and such issues. They never talk about vegetation encroachment. In a net loss perspective, it is probably not as bad as what the government says it is based against the number of trees that were not in some areas at the time of European settlement in Australia. That is fact. It is not just me saying it; it is fact. It was recorded by the early surveyors in this state and also by the likes of explorer Leichhardt.

This is the sort of intellectual dishonesty which has concerned me in this debate. Sure we need to deal with salinity. There is no doubt about it. And sure we need to deal with the loss of sensitive biodiversity. There is no doubt about that whatsoever, but it is also a fact that salinity will never be a problem in a lot of areas of Queensland. It is also a fact that salinity has always been and will always be a problem in many areas of Queensland and will be a problem in some areas where it has never been a problem before. That very much depends on the salt content of the soil and potentially the historic depth of the watertable, the removal of vegetation from the top and irrigation.

In the majority of areas of Queensland we do not have the same problems of the southern states and we will not because of the difference in the porous nature of the soil, the depth of the watertable and the level of salt that is there. That is not to say we should rest on our laurels, but do not stand up and proselytise and just say it is all about fixing salinity because removal of trees

causes salinity. Removal of trees per se does not cause salinity. In actual fact, removal of trees can enhance the problem of salinity. I will explain why.

It is now being found out that, in a lot of areas in Queensland and also in other areas of Australia, vegetation such as perennial grasses is far more effective at dealing with the issue of salinity than are trees because of their capacity to reduce the watertable. I have that on the western part of my electorate at Weengallan, where some trials have been done that prove perennial grasses are reducing the salinity issue more than in areas where they have retained trees, and that is because of the amount of water that is taken out. Also, there is a symbiosis between the plant and the soil.

It is also true that perennial grasses are a far better carbon sink than are trees. I am not advocating the removal of trees, but perennial grasses are a far better carbon sink than trees because they lock up carbon above the ground. Sure, some of that is consumed by stock and goes into the food chain and back into the atmosphere and back down again, but the same can be said for trees because old growth trees are not positive when it comes to retaining carbon. When they die and as they get older they become net carbon emitters. They do not attract carbon and store that carbon. With grasses it has been proved they have a capacity to lock up carbon not only above the ground but also below the ground. They have a greater capacity to lock up carbon below the ground in their root system. We have always talked about the retention of trees but we have never talked about the benefits in many areas that have come from the promotion and the retention of our grasslands, because that is one of the real benefits with regards to addressing salinity and also addressing the issue of carbon.

It has been mentioned that salinity rises from under the ground to the surface. What has not been understood is a lot of the problem with salinity has been the lateral movement along old creeks, historical creeks, rivers or other fissures in the ground. That is where a lot of the problem is with salinity: the lateral movement of salinity, not the deep movement of salinity up and down. If we address that salinity issue, we need to look at ways of addressing the lateral movement rather than the up and down movement of salinity.

Many members opposite would not know those things. I am not saying that in a bad way. I am just saying that it is very easy to get a glib understanding and overview of this whole issue of vegetation management, salinity and biodiversity and the way that it relates without understanding that it is a bit simplified and it is not always true that the clearing of trees means salinity and a greater impact upon the emission of greenhouse gasses in this state. I think we really need to understand that properly. As I said, I concede that there is a lot of support out there for the legislation in a simplistic form, but there are some very serious issues here that need to be properly considered.

We have heard disingenuous platitudes about farmers trying to fix their land and do the right thing. In my electorate, the majority of farmers are doing that. Anyone not doing it was pressured by Landcare through the 1980s and into the 1990s to change their land management practices. There have been some quite extraordinary gains in that particular area. People need to understand that when one buys an asset like a property one buys it to preserve it, to add value to it and to make a living from it and then probably hand it on to the family. One does not buy it to destroy. If there were land management practices that destroyed a person's property, then quite frankly that person is a fool to oneself and a fool to one's community.

The Nationals in opposition do not argue against having restrictions on the clearing of trees. We have not argued against that for some years. The simple reality is that we have said in recent times that we have no problems with regards to the phasing out or stopping of clearing of endangered vegetation or of concern species. With regards to other remnant vegetation, we simply say that to phase that out and say that it will have no consequence on the environment or it will fix the environment and have no consequence on agricultural production is a very simplistic way of looking at things.

I will touch on a couple of areas of concern. This legislation does not give certainty as members of parliament have said during the course of the debate in the last couple of days. The legislation that was passed in this place in December 1999 has been by and large implemented by land-holder and environment and community groups under the regional vegetation management planning process. Those communities engaged in that somewhat reluctantly. They were concerned about the all-embracing nature of the parameters set down, but they did it.

Groups in many areas of the southern Darling Downs and the Granite Belt had come back to the government and said, 'We have established in our area that there should be no more clearing

of remnant vegetation.' They had done that acting in good faith with this government and based on its vegetation management legislation passed in this place in 1999. The thing that really pains those people is that, while they were out there working on this, the Beattie government was going behind their backs to Canberra and saying, 'We want to actually take it much further.' There was no consultation whatever.

We have heard other members of parliament say that they are very dismayed because the Commonwealth government has not stepped in and supported this. When the original legislation was passed in 1999 there was no consultation with the Commonwealth government. What the federal environment minister got when we went into his office on the Monday morning after this legislation passed through this parliament was a letter of demand from Premier Beattie: 'I have passed this legislation, now pay the bill.' That is fact. Members should read *Hansard* to see that. The government cannot have that unilateral approach and hope that they will have a cooperative approach from the Commonwealth government.

Last year, when it actually came out that there had been negotiations at officer level between the Commonwealth and state, the Commonwealth government became proactive and said, 'Sure, we have no problem with properly discussing this as a way of meeting our greenhouse obligations, but we want a cooperative approach and we want all issues properly considered.' That is all the Commonwealth government has ever said. It said, 'If you do that, then we will put in place compensation.' That has not happened. It is a bit rich. How would people in this parliament like it if someone made a unilateral decision to buy a business or buy something in their household or their extended family's household and then they turned around and said, 'I have done this. You have to pay half the bill even though there has not been any genuine consultation.'

That is exactly what has happened between the Commonwealth government and the state government concerning this legislation. We cannot expect the Commonwealth government to be supportive of something that they have been, by and large, excluded from. It is not completely honest to be out there saying, 'The Commonwealth government supported all of this. Where is their money?' The reality is that they set down some the parameters last year and the state and Commonwealth governments have not been able to work that through in a cooperative way.

That is why the Commonwealth government does not support the way that the state government has gone about this. It does not support the legislation before the parliament. They support elements of it, but they do not support the approach of the government. That is why they have not been coming to the party in recent times. We support the Commonwealth government's position.

We have also heard what the Wilderness Society and others have said about the retention of vegetation and the immediate greenhouse benefit. How many people realise that, when equating the benefits of carbon retention for greenhouse purposes, they do not assess all species of vegetation in Queensland as having an overall benefit. There are certain species that they look at and they exclude other species of timber. That is completely stupid, because all species of vegetation have the capacity to retain carbon.

As the Hon. Deputy Leader of the Opposition and shadow minister knows, this is the embarrassing part of this legislation. There is a fellow just outside of Roma who had an independent carbon audit on his property. He found out that, with all the vegetation management processes on his property, his property was actually a net carbon sink—that is, he was retaining more carbon than he was emitting on his property. This involved a species of timber which has not been considered in the overall equation of meeting our Kyoto or greenhouse obligations. That shows the bureaucratic, stupid nature of the way this whole process has been gone about.

Mr Robertson: That is Commonwealth stupidity.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I am not saying that it is not. What I am saying is that these are the sorts of things that people do not know. That is happening at a bureaucratic level in Canberra.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Sure, and we have bureaucratic and ministerial issues here which I will come to in a moment.

Mr Robertson: I cannot wait for that.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The minister was no doubt listening to many of the things I have been saying, and I hope that he is. There is lot about this debate that is over-simplified. I acknowledge the magnitude of the support that the government may have for this out there.

Mr Robertson: Perhaps you would like to indicate to me whether you have read the draft vegetation management plans. If you can prove to me that you have actually read them, then I might actually listen to you.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That comment is typical of the smarmy arrogance that the minister has shown.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fraser): Order! Members should direct their remarks through the chair.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that so far as my area is concerned, I have read it. I have not read all of them, because a lot of them are in draft form and had not been accepted when the minister went running off to Canberra and talking to people in Canberra. The whole process has been circumvented.

The minister has misled Queensland primary producers in the worst possible way. The minister said he would fix the issue of regrowth. From the discussions that I have had with people, I think that he was possibly very genuine. But this does not fix that issue.

The member for Fitzroy has a genuine understanding of the issue of regrowth. The legislation introduced the other day may have gone some way towards that, but the amendment which the minister introduced yesterday makes it worse. For people to stand up in this place and say that the issue of regrowth is fixed now is absolutely wrong.

It was absolutely stupid to have a system in this state where primary producers, whether it is the same producer on that land or another, have cleared pieces of land over and over. Sometimes it will be 20 years before they come back and clear a piece of land that has grown again. They do this for various land management reasons. Once it got to over 70 per cent of its original height or 50 per cent of its original canopy cover it became remnant vegetation. That was absolutely stupid.

For one reason or another, whether financial or part of the overall management program on that property, the farmer or grazier might not have been able to get back to it. That was recognised by the member Fitzroy and I think, to be fair, by the Minister for Natural Resources. He squibbed on this issue because the amendment he moved in parliament has gone against what he said to the rural organisations when they took him in good faith. I actually went out and commended the minister for this, as did the shadow minister. The minister has made it worse. It is a stupid, ludicrous amendment. What the minister is saying is that it has to be part of a property plan. It is not as easy as it was going to be.

The minister gave the impression that as long as one could prove that something was historical regrowth one could map that up and clear it. What the minister has done now means that the 70 per cent and the 50 per cent limits, which were stupid, still apply. Not only that, he has made it even more difficult by saying that that can happen as long as the species which is there now is not the predominant species. Anyone who understands what predominant species is all about would understand that very rarely is there an encroachment on non-predominant species. If brigalow is cleared, it suckers up. It is the predominant species always. The minister has excluded any capacity there. Other than the likes of black wattle or certain other types of woody weeds, there is very rarely that sort of encroachment.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I can tell the minister that it does not happen at the speed of, say, wattle. I would suggest that the minister go out there and pull down a block of gidgee in order to see what the prominent species is going to be in 40 years time. It is going to be gidgee regrowth. That is the simple reality.

We talk about erosion and biodiversity. It is also a studied fact that the retention of old growth mulga stands actually leads to erosion in many cases, including the soil becoming denuded and blowing away and washing away. The minister knows that as well. It is true in the higher rainfall areas that trees do not tend to affect the lower vegetations—the shrubs and the grasses—as much, because the higher rainfall overcomes the natural competitive nature of trees—that is, to become dominant. In the mulga lands and other areas throughout Queensland where there is lower rainfall, the trees suppress the grasses. That is what happens. When the brigalow country was opened up years and years ago, there was no grass. I am not saying that it was not a unique ecosystem, but there were very few animals there because there was nothing for them to eat. When it was opened up, it was terribly fertile and the grasses grew and many native species became predominant as a consequence.

But to say that the retention of old growth mulga leads to a reduction in erosion is wrong when the reverse is true. I am not saying that we should go out there and destroy all of the stands; do not get me wrong. However, this demonstrates a lack of understanding from members on this issue. The minister mentioned the RVMP process. If there were faults with the RVMP process, then why did he not fix them through legislative changes? I do not believe there were many faults whatsoever. By and large, the opposition has some real concerns about this legislation, including this compensation farce. It is almost impossible to have any sort of regime which is going to address the productive loss for primary producers or the valuation losses that will come from their properties as a consequence of this legislation. The $100,000 cap is silly. We understand that this is some sort of production loss or—

Time expired.

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (12.21 p.m.): It is significant that the first bill being debated in the 51st Parliament is arguably the most important piece of legislation ever debated in this place, because this is the one that will secure our futures. The Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 will protect the environment and biodiversity for future generations. It will protect land from salinity and erosion and secures the future of agriculture in this state. It will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help protect the earth from global warming. This is legislation for the future. This is the legislation that Queenslanders and all Australians will be able to look back at in 100 years with pride and say, 'Thank God they got it right!' This is the legislation which my great-grandchildren will thank me for, because this is legislation with vision. It takes a Labor government to deliver such legislation, and of that I am immensely proud.

The end of broadscale tree clearing is core Labor policy and is the major election commitment which the people of Queensland have overwhelming mandated the Beattie government to deliver. We went to the election promising to do this with or without the help of those serial renegers—the federal government. We have pledged the $150 million compensation, not it—every cent by us. We are doing exactly what we said we would do, and you cannot get any more honest or up front than that. Far from being dishonest, which is what National Party members have accused us of, this is the most honest thing we can do because we are securing this state's future. It is a move that has been backed by science, by the community, by the Liberal Party, by the federal government—even if only with its words—and by international experts. In my view it is the National Party which is being dishonest, which is perpetuating that great urban myth that it is representative of farmers and the agriculture industry—not us, but it. It is the one who is playing politics, driving a division into the community and scrambling to make itself relevant to its constituency and to conservative voters everywhere.

If the National Party was being honest, it would support this legislation and would tell its constituents the truth—that it has no plan whatsoever for protecting the future of agricultural land for coming generations, that it does not care about the environment, that it is prepared to sit back and watch millions of hectares turn to salt and dust and not do something now which will result in sustainable land use and a real future for all Queenslanders, including landowners. That is playing politics. But it is doing that because it is ignoring the science and calling us fraudulent and corrupt because it knows better. It knows better than the scientists at the rainforest CRC at James Cook University who say in a report entitled *Environmental crisis: climate change and terrestrial biodiversity in Queensland* that both remnant native vegetation and regrowth vegetation should be protected where the regrowth is determined to be in an area for connectivity—it is important for the connection—in relation to biodiversity and planning for climate change.

Of course the National Party knows better than the Wilderness Society and World Wildlife for Nature and the Queensland Conservation Council and the CSIRO, which says that there is a clear connection between land clearance for agriculture and urban development on the Queensland coast and the threat to the ongoing viability of the Great Barrier Reef. The CSIRO also points to the financial burden of overclearing and predicts that by 2050 15 million hectares will be lost to salinity and the 2.5 million hectares of salt-affected land we already have is costing the nation $1.5 billion a year in lost production. That is land that cannot be farmed anymore because of past practices of slashing, burning and felling everything in sight in order to 'open up' the land. Isn't that a great phrase? Let us open it up! It did not have the key to open it up and that is why it would not yield.

That is the point. That is the big lie—that is, that the National Party is actually representing farmers and graziers by opposing this bill. If we left it up to it to do that, its short-sightedness would leave nothing but a legacy of unyielding poisoned earth. It proved by its argument that it is

the same old National Party. It has not moved forward from the Joh era one jot. It and some of the Independent members talk about land being locked up as if it were a bank vault. It may be a bank vault containing precious jewels but, unlike the vault, once you take those jewels out you can never put them back in.

The first warnings of the dire environmental consequences of massive tree clearing go back 120 years when arguments first arose around the Brigalow Belt. While scientists and forest managers warned of the consequences of wholesale tree clearing from 1924, farmers, encouraged by successive conservative National Party-led governments, invented new and ever destructive ways to fight their war against the natural environment. Whose idea was it to use surplus Army tanks towing steel cables between them to knock the bush flat and, when that did not work, to bring in the big bulldozers into the South Burnett rigging a shipping anchor chain in place of the cable to open up the place? None other than the hero of the National Party, Joh Bjelke-Petersen—the chainsaw manufacturers' best friend!

Joh's National Party did nothing to protect the land then and the future generations of farmers. Today's National Party is doing nothing for them now, but it supports farmers. Well, it lied to them and it is lying to them now. Or is it the case that maybe in those frontier times people did not know what they were doing? Let us give them the benefit of the doubt. They did not know the devastating effect they were having on the environment and on their own agricultural lands and on native plant and animal species. Maybe they did not know or appreciate then what a precious resource they actually had before them, but they know now. They cannot use that excuse anymore. We have the science. We have the technology at our fingertips.

Now we know that to maintain productivity; to allow for future development and population growth; to prevent land degradation and salination; to maintain biodiversity, the environment and amenity of the landscape; to maintain scientific, recreation and tourism values of the land; and to ensure public safety we have to listen to the scientific evidence and introduce more and more sustainable environmentally friendly farming practices and we have to manage development and growth better. That is called being smart. That is what the Smart State is all about. I have to explain it to the National Party in simple terms. That is what smart is. To the many farmers and agriculturalists who are looking to these new and innovative practices and sustainable practices, congratulations! Good on them! Perhaps they could give their National Party friends in this parliament a bit of a lesson.

I am pleased, however, to see the Liberal Party supporting this bill. But I cannot help wondering whether this bill and the notions and the elements contained within it, which the Liberal Party says it has always supported with its long-term view, would ever have seen the light of day had it won the election and formed a coalition government with the National Party at the helm. At a meet the candidates function in Mudgeeraba during the election, my Liberal opposition candidate was asked his views on land clearing. He stated that as someone who grew up on the land he supported the Beattie government's approach and the end of broadscale tree clearing because he had seen first-hand the devastating effects of salinity of land which had been overcleared. But of course he went on to say that, as a member of a coalition—which he clearly hoped to be—he could not say how he would vote on the issue. But he knew exactly how he would have voted. He would have turned to water just like the federal government and this bill would not even be on the table.

There was great support for this legislation in my electorate, but perhaps the comment I heard most frequently during the election campaign and have heard over the past three years is that it did not go far enough. The argument was, 'What about south-east Queensland? What about the Gold Coast hinterland?' The Mudgeeraba electorate contains some of the most precious jewels—pockets of enormous environmental value and biodiversity in the Springbrook World Heritage listed national park and its surrounding areas, including Lamington National Park, the CERRA and the McPherson Range.

Mudgeeraba and the Gold Coast hinterland is also experiencing unprecedented growth and the demand for housing is high. Of course, we must have growth. We must continue to grow and build so that we can continue to fuel the Gold Coast and Queensland economies. The most frequent concern raised with me is the pace and nature of this growth and the fear that, in growing, we will lose or destroy the very thing that we seek to be a part of: a green community, surrounded by natural bushland and wildlife. When people move to the Gold Coast hinterland they make a specific lifestyle choice. It is that lifestyle, that amenity and that environment that the Beattie government has been charged with protecting. I am confident that by working with the Gold Coast City Council, the Minister for Local Government and Planning and the Environment

Minister, and the new Office of Urban Management and Infrastructure under the Deputy Premier, Terry Mackenroth, we will be able to make sure that development is managed, manageable and, most importantly, that it is environmentally sustainable. It is our duty to do so. That is what we have to achieve.

The Premier, the minister and his staff, the staff of the Department of Natural Resources and all members of cabinet are to be congratulated on having the courage and conviction to get this bill on the table and the vision to stand up and secure the future for generations of Queenslanders to come. I am enormously proud to support the bill.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.31 p.m.): Just over 12 months ago I spoke in this House on vegetation management. That followed a visit from the minister, the Hon. Stephen Robertson, to Mount Ommaney to discuss environmental concerns with residents and groups. Their main concerns related to the devastation of our environment in Queensland caused by illegal land clearing over many years. This bill, the first of the 51st Parliament, is of immense interest to those of my constituents who are interested in land clearing and environmental degradation. Those residents and groups were very appreciative of the minister's visit last year and I believe that, in terms of vegetation management, the government is on the right track.

As part of our election commitments, Labor promised to ban wholesale remnant vegetation tree clearing. This historic bill will achieve the end of clearing remnant vegetation by the end of 2006 no matter what tenure the land is held under. At a cost of $150 million, the impact of this legislation on the land-holders affected will be to provide certainty of operational management, security of areas deemed non-assessable and will also enable land management issues such as the construction of firebreaks, fences and maintenance roads, fodder gathering, thinning, regrowth clearing, extractive industries and the eradication or control of declared woody weed pests to be undertaken.

The Vegetation Management Act 1999 and other relevant legislation about tree and vegetation clearing are amended by this bill. The tree clearing provisions of the Land Act 1994 will be repealed. Tree clearing provisions in the Integrated Planning Act 1977 are also amended by this bill. The bill will improve the ability to enforce existing tree clearing regulations and provide greater deterrence to illegal clearing as it provides clarification of existing provisions and encourages landowners through the use of monetary incentives.

Although it is important to be aware that many property owners and lessees are doing the right thing ecologically and that they should be recognised for their outstanding preservation efforts, I am dismayed and appalled by the amount of illegal clearing that is threatening our natural resources. Ecological destruction on a large scale can cause widely felt consequences. Queensland's ecosystem is fragile and needs protection. Various crucial facets of our magnificent wildlife, our remarkable biodiversity and our abundance of flora are all in danger of annihilation by random, arbitrary clearing of vegetation. We have witnessed the change in vegetation and the abundance of animals on our urban fringes. The serious and often irreversible impacts of illegal clearing include the loss of significant areas of vegetation, the loss of associated critical habitat, in some cases the loss of whole species of plants and animals, and land degradation.

The efforts made in attempting to raise community awareness of the major problem that salinity will force upon us and the need to prevent salinity, loss of flora and fauna, biodiversity, and general land degradation is ongoing and intricately linked to the vegetation management discussions that will occur during the determination of the vegetation assessments. The issue of greenhouse gas emissions and global warming are also interlinked with the vegetation assessments and subsequent management of carbon sinks. Locking up carbon in the form of vegetation benefits the broader environment as it reduces greenhouse gas or carbon dioxide emissions from the burning, decaying or decomposing vegetable matter. It may well be that some of the affected landowners will be eligible to trade in carbon credits in the near future.

Effective and, I believe, operationally applicable to this bill are the enforcement of severe punitive measures relating to vegetation clearing existing within the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2003. It is fundamentally important that clearing occurs only in accordance with the provisions of this legislation.

This government is serious about environmental protection. The introduction of more stringent enforcement provisions could be coupled with financial incentives and this may ensure that rogue land-holders take illegal clearing more seriously. The environmental groups in my area and I believe that this bill will assist to manage, preserve and secure our state's diverse natural resources. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (12.36 p.m.): At the outset, I want to congratulate the minister and his department on this achievement of bringing this important bill before parliament. The whole issue of tree clearing has been quite a significant and difficult one for the government and, judging by the contributions to this debate, it is clear that it is one that invokes very strong views on both sides of the House.

During the recent election campaign—I recall the day very clearly—I returned to my office and pulled off my fax machine a joint media release from the Wilderness Society, the Queensland Conservation Council and the World Wide Fund for Nature that outlined their views on the government's proposal to outlaw broadscale clearing. I think it is fair to say that traditionally these organisations have been very hard markers when it comes to decisions of government, particularly Labor governments, on environmental issues. But within this joint media release was the statement describing this decision to end broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation as the most significant environmental decision in Queensland's history. For such groups to jointly put out a press release I think underlines the significance and importance of the government's decision. In terms of the government's focus on this issue, that was also underlined by its commitment to proceed with this proposal, underpinned with a commitment to a $150 million assistance package for those land-holders who would be affected by the decision with or without the assistance of the federal government.

In this debate, many other speakers have outlined specific elements of the bill and I do not intend go into a lot of detail on those issues. I simply wanted to take the opportunity to place on record my support for what I believe is a significant decision that will be looked upon by future generations as a turning point in Queensland's environmental history. There is no doubt that the implementation of these reforms will have some difficulties for some land-holders. In a sense, the financial assistance package is in recognition of that—to assist those land-holders where there will be some impact. Certainly, we hope that the federal government comes to the party at some stage and shoulders its share of the required compensation to land-holders.

The bill puts in place some quite practical and workable solutions and responses to what is a very urgent problem. I read in the explanatory notes some information that essentially summarised the fact that the scientific arguments supporting this move have been overwhelming and show clearly that inappropriate land clearing over the last century did pose a serious threat to Australia's environment through its contribution to species extinction, salinity, declining water quality and so on.

It was an issue that all sides of the House recognised government needed to make some clear decisions on. Additionally, and quite significantly, at the time that the government announced the moratorium on tree clearing in May last year, that activity accounted for around 12 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions within Australia. Despite what many members have said, particularly those in the National Party, this issue is not about demonising land-holders. In fact, I agree with some of the comments made about the responsible approach that many land-holders have towards conservation and looking after the asset that is their land that they currently farm or is included in their property.

There are many members on my father's side of the family who are still on the land, and I know from my experience with them that they are very responsible and recognise the fact that if they do not look after the land they do not have a future income. It is not about demonising land-holders, it is not about putting in place a regime that will put land-holders out of business; it is about a workable and sustainable plan to ensure the future of rural industries in the state by protecting the very asset that land-holders rely upon, and that is the sustainability of their land holdings.

I am proud to stand here in support of this bill. I note also the Liberal Party's support of the bill and I am disappointed that none of them are here to hear what I am about to say. I welcome their support of the bill. However, I do not have a lot of confidence in their maintaining their position on this issue. I recall in the last term, at least for the first two years, the Liberal Party distinguished themselves—and I say that in a sense of separating themselves out in terms of some policy issue—from the National Party on key issues, one of which was tree clearing. It has done that again in the debate on this bill. However, we all know what will happen if and when the Liberal and National Party ever return to government. The fact of the matter is they will have to enter into another coalition agreement, because the reality for the Liberal Party and its new members is that they can never, ever govern in this state without a coalition with the National Party.

When it comes to significant issues like tree clearing, let us have a look at what they agreed to in the 12 months before the last election, because this is the real testing time for the Liberal Party—once they get the whiff of an election and the possibility of returning to the leather benches on the government's side. This is what they agreed to in the last coalition agreement, and it encompasses this issue of land clearing, gun control, et cetera. They signed an agreement which says—

Each member of the Parties, their State candidates and Office Bearers will support and advocate Coalition policy both inside the Parliament and elsewhere. No Member of either Party shall advocate in the name of his or her Party, policies that differ in substance from coalition policy.

The reality on the tree clearing issue is, despite what the Liberal Party say in this chamber today, we know perfectly well that when and if they ever return to government, whether it be before the election or after, they will return to the fold with the National Party, they will be dominated by the numbers in the National Party and they will revert back to National Party policy when it comes to the issue of tree clearing. I want to again acknowledge the significant efforts of the minister, his staff and the department in putting this bill together for the government and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (12.43 p.m.): I rise to take part in the debate on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. This bill was introduced with a second reading speech that listed a number of things this bill is supposed to do. It is supposed to deliver on a Beattie government election promise. Perhaps it will, but it was a promise aimed entirely at vote catching in the populated south-east at great cost to the rest of this state.

The claim is that it will give certainty to land-holders. Perhaps that is true—certainty that their land is less productive, that their futures are hobbled and they have more and more burdens to overcome and restrictions with which to comply.

For the first time in this legislation the government reaches out and treats freehold land as no different from any other tenure in regards to protection of of-concern regional ecosystems. This, the minister claims, is because it benefits land-holders and the government to have a simplified framework providing as far as possible a consistent approach across all land tenures. It might benefit the government, but I do not see how anyone can think stripping away rights and freedoms associated with freehold title is a good thing.

Vital to all of this is the creation of property maps of assessable vegetation. Given past flaws and inaccuracies on government maps based on satellite imagery, I shudder to think of the grief inherent in this proposal. We will, I believe, have maps based on information deemed accurate, as distinct from actually accurate, being used to hammer primary producers on this issue.

What we are looking at here is some of this state's primary producers having practically all their future stripped away. They may have a 100, 500 or 10,000 plus hectare property, some of it may already be cleared and productive, some might be due for clearing when needed to meet increased demand or to make room for diversification into another form of agriculture, or to meet changing farming practices, or simply cleared when it was affordable to do so to increase the farm's capacity. These options as regards remnant and some other categories of vegetation are now gone. The argument might be that it is necessary to save the environment. If so, then why are no constraints placed on this urban blight in the south-east? Why is it that the incessant spread of suburbia goes on and on? Why is it that there is no 2006 cut-off for residential developments in this part of the state? There are transport problems, infrastructure problems, power problems, and on and on it goes. Yet there is no cap on new housing developments.

I think the message is clear: there will be no real burden imposed on the highly populated and therefore vote-rich south-east to meet any environmental targets. Instead it will be the bush that is gutted. Here we have a government tearing the future growth from the bush and touting a paltry $150 million adjustment package as the answer. How far will that go in compensating farm after farm, let alone the clearing industry where each bulldozer alone is, at new prices, somewhere between $700,000 and $1 million each? It is a paltry token effort.

There is only one way this bill can be seen, and that is that the bush is being thrown overboard so the urbanised rest of the state can feel warm and fuzzy about looking after the environment, and it is just too bad about the country people whose lives are devastated along the way.

To lock it in, those affected will not even be able to go to this state's justice system for redress. Proposed section 22L of the Vegetation Management Act 1999 prohibits an appeal to

any court under any act against the ballot process or the result, a refusal of an unsuccessful ballot application and/or length of the currency period, or of any appeal of a decision made by a tribunal in relation to a broadscale clearing application.

There are also unworkable constraints imposed, for example, in relation to requests for information from an assessing tribunal from two months to just 20 business days. This is a ridiculously short time given the detailed and complex issues one might expect would be addressed by such a request. We are looking at real people in remote locations possibly having to arrange specialists to make on-site investigations and provide reports all in this short period of time. If they wish to access the limited appeals process that is provided they have just 10 working days. Murderers get longer than this.

There is an argument that this is because the end point, the December 2006 spot on the calendar, is fixed to meet reporting requirements for the Kyoto Protocol. After checking with the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs I am advised that the Kyoto Protocol is not one which has been ratified by Australia and not one which binds us in any way.

I come now to the consultation, or alleged consultation, behind this bill. In the explanatory notes only state government agencies have been listed. This is ridiculous. There are well-established, respected stakeholder groups from the mining, primary industries, tourism, local government and other sectors that are not listed. Why? Because this bill always has been about buying the votes of the south-east at the expense of the bush and never about reaching a reasonable consensus based approach to real sustainability.

One of the aspects that shocks me about this legislation is that it reaches into freehold land and interferes with the established traditional activities of a landowner clearing his freehold land as and when it suits him for whatever purpose it suits him. This interference will be conducted under the guidance of the regional vegetation management codes. Section 12 provides that the minister can seek public input into drawing these up. So anyone—any green radical—can have a say in what a land-holder can or cannot do on his freehold block. This is more than an infringement of freehold rights; it is a corruption of them.

Worse, clause 11 replaces section 16 and recognises that any person can initiate the process to make a declared area—that is, an area of high nature conservation value or vulnerable to land degradation. Freehold is apparently of little value at all to this government. Even regrowth can be declared under clause 13, which makes amendments to section 19, if it meets the criteria outlined.

This bill is plain stupid in some cases. For example, in clause 32(3)(b), in amending the Integrated Planning Act 1997, it provides for firebreaks to be cut—that is, those cut in the face of a conflagration—but it insists that they can be no more than 10 metres wide. One can only suppose that if, in the face of a raging inferno, a land-holder cuts a break somewhat wider than that he could face prosecution. However, it gets worse. That 10-metre width is the maximum. In the face of a fire the land-holder must only ever clear a break, called in this bill a 'fire management line', only as wide as necessary. It suggests that after a fire our country land-holders could have to face a horde of tape measure carrying departmental flunkeys measuring any and all fire management lines and after the event assessing whether it could in fact have been only two, three or four metres wide rather than up to 10 metres. It seems that the minister's department is working from the protocol manual of the ministry for funny walks.

There are also buried in this bill some arrogant changes to the way the issuing of warrants will take place. Clause 17 amends section 33 of the Vegetation Management Act 1999 to enable a warrant to essentially be issued to any authorised officer—a marked change from the present situation, where a warrant can be issued to and exercised by only the authorised officer named in the warrant. And they will now be permitted not only entry but also re-entry. I would be very interested to know how our urban civil libertarians would view such a change to warrants likely to affect suburbia. It is a pity there is so much silence surrounding civil liberties that affect the bush. In the same vein, there are massive changes in clause 19, which amends section 55(4) of the act, to increase penalties from 100 penalty units, or $7,500, to 1,665 penalty units, or a whopping $124,875. This is a massive increase.

There are claims made as to the amount of greenhouse gas savings these bans will bring. This is in fact presented as a major driver for this legislation. This being the case, the people of the bush will be very anxious indeed to see just how their urban cousins will also share the burden, for it is their luxurious urban lifestyles, their concentrated excessive consumption of coal generated electricity, that is also a major contributor to greenhouse gas release. Could it be that

the income received by this government from the coal industry is sufficient to overcome any greenhouse concerns in that instance?

Perhaps our urban Queenslanders should be required by legislation to have double-glazed windows, to have insulated walls and ceilings and to have new houses built with features such as high ceilings, verandas and breezeways suitable to our climate before they are permitted to install even one airconditioner. It might sound ridiculous, and it might sound like a grossly unfair imposition on what people can and cannot do with their own property, but that is what this government is doing to the bush.

I have constituents who believe that the definition of what is remnant vegetation is still a grey area, as, I might say, are the definitions of regrowth and how that can become remnant. Clarity in such important issues is paramount. I also want to comment on the use of the supposed precautionary principle in this legislation. It applies to environmental matters, to sustainability issues, to social and cultural issues and so on. It is a pity similar caution is not taken to protect the investments, futures and livelihoods of rural Queenslanders.

This is a bully-boy bill that takes the bat to rural and regional Queensland, and members opposite are so blind to what they are doing that they go home at night feeling good about doing so. I oppose the bill.

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (12.54 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak on this bill, which amends the Vegetation Management Act 1999, the Land Act 1994 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to enable assessment of the clearing of remnant vegetation on freehold land and state land to occur under one act.

I know that many folk in my community in the Noosa electorate think this legislation is actually long overdue. We have to start somewhere in taking responsibility for our environment, rather than wait until there is no environment to speak of. This legislation does not, and nor do we on this side of the House, point its finger at individuals or groups for violations against the environment because we understand how these practices have evolved. We have an opportunity today to shoulder the responsibility as a state community. If we continue broadscale clearing at the rate we are going, eventually those rural communities will cease to exist for obvious reasons.

Queenslanders today have to tackle the painful and hard issues to secure a future for all Queenslanders. No-one on this side of the House is insensitive to the pain many rural families suffer due to the nature of their work and its often times shocking and tragic hardships, but that empathy and understanding cannot and must not be used to continue practices that are no longer sustainable. The short-term benefits are, we all know, just that, and we have a responsibility as a government to act now or be damned by our children and our children's children for our crimes against the environment.

Undoubtedly speakers such as the member for Toowoomba South have a keen and passionate interest in this area and have first-hand knowledge of wonderful farming communities whose farming practices are first class and who will feel disadvantaged by this legislation. Again, I have to say that this government intends providing compensation. There are many instances in this life where we experience loss in our working lives and, sadly, rural communities are not exempt. I am not surprised by the position taken by the opposition, but it saddens me that there are people here in this House who would bury their heads in the sand.

In my electorate we pride ourselves on the glorious green surrounds, but we also are not without our problems. Developers such as Forrester Kurts have literally denuded the landscape in parts of Peregian Springs of natural flora, leaving a few token stands of native trees. The community tried to get some sort of hold on those actions but to no avail. Those actions can only be described as environmentally criminal. No doubt, if greater scientific evidence comes to the fore that this legislation is not appropriate legislation and that somehow this legislation is ineffective, then we can revisit and review.

This bill gives Queenslanders an opportunity to celebrate responsible government. I heard a lot of codswallop about lies and deception coming from the opposition, which refused to understand the basic arguments that support this bill. The key points of the legislation are: the phasing out of broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation by 31 December 2006; protecting of concern remnant vegetation on freehold land for the first time, in line with the existing protections on leasehold land; a ballot for broadscale clearing applications to receive an allocation under a transitional cap of 500,000 hectares as part of the phase-out process; allowing applications for particular but limited purposes to be considered outside the cap; permitting clearing of most regrowth vegetation; permitting some selective clearing or thinning; extending the regulation of

vegetation clearing to deed of grant in trust lands for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander purposes; greater certainty for land-holders through new property maps of assessable vegetation which delineate assessable and non-assessable vegetation at the property scale; amendments to the declaration of certain areas under the Vegetation Management Act; clarification of the exemptions under IPA from the need for a permit; and combination of the vegetation clearing provisions for freehold and leasehold land under one act.

I cannot help commenting on some of the comments made by members opposite stating that graziers are being demonised—not true—and that basically the whole Queensland farming community is being used as scapegoats. This is simply not true. This legislation will ultimately benefit those farmers' and graziers' futures, as it will benefit all.

I note that some members believe the bill has been rustled together to secure Greens preferences at the last election. They should note that the Labor members did not need the green vote to be returned because we had already been identified as having healthy environmental credentials both as local members and as a government. I also realise that the opposition, in its disarray with Liberals supporting the bill and the Nats howling it down, depicts itself not only as being totally disorganised but also as lacking in credibility.

Today's Queenslanders quite rightly may not understand the perils of life on the land any more than some farming families do not appreciate the hardships of city life—people being made redundant, lack of employment and educational opportunities, factory closures, the loss of our manufacturing base, the loss of our textile industry, the casualisation of the work force, and the list goes on. But there are some issues that Queenslanders clearly understand, and they are matters pertaining to broadscale tree clearing. In their haste, members of the opposition have insulted the communities of south-east Queensland by saying they have been bought off with feelgood rhetoric, but basically none of them know what they are talking about.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

Ms MOLLOY: You have to live and breathe the land to make an informed decision about how it is best managed and survives—a flawed and baseless premise to argue from. I have a 12-year-old at home, Bonnie, who will tell members opposite—or all of us for that matter—that what we have been doing with the environment has been mismanaged and criminal. Children in primary schools today are better informed than many adults on how to best look after the environment. Ask your children tonight what they think of broadscale tree clearing and you will have to seek the truth no further. This legislation gives us an opportunity to not let them down any longer. I also know that the opposition will denigrate and lie through its back teeth about this government's—

A government member: There's no-one here.

Ms MOLLOY: No, I note that there is no-one from the opposition here in the House. That is how much it cares about Queensland tree clearing.

Mr Shine: They do not care about tree clearing.

Ms MOLLOY: I will take that interjection from the member for Toowoomba North. The opposition will lie about this government's supposed duplicity with regard to this legislation and come screaming like banshees because it knows that this is the right thing to do and it is torn between the heartache of the heart and the logic of science.

There is a $150 million rescue package for those affected by this bill. There is no need for hysteria from the host of unbelievers opposite. There is compensation along with exemptions which will make their lives easier. For example, there are exemptions for essential and routine maintenance, forest practices that require notification, single residences, approvals under other legislation and regrowth exemptions. The member for Fitzroy, Jimmy Pearce, mentioned the opposition could help by lobbying the federal government, which again is letting this state down by not coughing up the $75 million promised to Queensland to assist those farmers who will undoubtedly suffer. How gutless are the members opposite? They let the federal government run roughshod over Queensland farmers and not one of them has the gumption to make them accountable. Not one of them will stand up for Queenslanders. I say that is very un-Australian.

This government is at least attempting to redress some of this state's glaring failings and you people cannot see the forest for the trees. Minister Robertson, congratulations for having the guts to make a stand for our collective future, our Queensland future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (2.02 p.m.): I rise to join the debate on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. It is important to acknowledge in this

debate that we went to the 2004 election with this as a centrepiece of our election promises to the people of Queensland. This government is now delivering on that election promise and it has delivered in an extremely short time frame. Irrespective of what the opposition may say about the government and its introduction of this bill, it is a bit rich to criticise us for implementing policies and programs which we said we would implement if elected. The fact that 63 seats in the last election were returned Labor gives us the mandate to introduce this legislation into the House.

Democracy is about balance, as is this bill. We do need to balance the competing interests of the land-holders, of environmentalists, of every person living in Queensland. Every piece of legislation we introduce inhibits in some way the rights of the citizens of Queensland to exercise their free will. We bring in rules or regulations. We say you cannot murder someone. We say you must observe the speed limit. What we do is bring in regulations for the good order of our society. Quite often the government and the opposition may disagree on where the line is drawn, but the basic process of what we do day in and day out is to put qualifications on the ability of people to live their life the way they see fit for the greater good of Queenslanders.

I believe that we have that balance right in this bill between the environmental concerns and the rights of land-holders. At the same point in time, there are no absolute rights. Councils legislate or regulate what types of houses people can build. We legislate how those homes can be built with building regulations. I do not see this as an urban versus rural issue. Governments at all three levels legislate regularly what people in an urban environment can do on their particular piece of earth and how they can do it. If I own a block of land it does not give me the right to tip 100 litres of oil all over that property just because I own it. We regularly legislate what people can and cannot do with their own property. This bill just extends that.

I believe on the basis of the information presented to me that we have the balance right. I also acknowledge that we may not. The opposition is unable to prove whether we have or we have not. The test of whether we have this balance right or wrong in this legislation will be in 50 years time. There are three possible outcomes. The first is that we were too restrictive. The second is that we got the balance right and Queensland is heading where it should in relation to competing interests of farmers, primary producers and the environmentalists. The third—heaven forbid—is that we got the balance wrong, we were too lenient and our natural environment has been severely degraded to the point where it may not be able to be returned to a pristine condition.

We will be judged in 30, 40, 50 years time on the outcome of this legislation. The government was honest with the Queensland people when we went to the election. They voted accordingly. The opposition may disagree with where we drew the line in relation to this piece of legislation. However, many of the opposition will not even be alive when we do get our report card back on this piece of legislation. All I can do is hope and pray that when we get the report card on this legislation in 50 years time people will look back and say that the Beattie Labor government in 2004 did the right thing by the people of Queensland. I commend the legislation to the House.

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (2.08 p.m.): I rise to place on record some of the views put forward from my constituents regarding the end to broadscale clearing as set out in the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The apprehension felt by many farmers, in particular, regarding this legislation stems from the fact that the inability to clear freehold land may impinge upon the owner's ability to earn a living.

Realistically, there are not any farmers out there who do not have the same concerns about the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and the need to maintain a clean environment as others in the wider community. However, the way in which the Queensland government plans to deliver this reduction is a bone of contention to many farmers. I do not believe anyone can claim that it is fair for a landowner to possess, say, 100 acres of land and be able to utilise only five per cent of that land for production purposes. The ramifications of the limits on land clearing for farmers, especially following a severe drought and the deregulation of the dairy industry, could be far reaching and potentially devastating.

For those who could no longer continue as dairy farmers, the only alternative was to diversify into crop production. But now, due to the conditions of this legislation, that option, in many instances, is no longer a viable alternative. One could accept the limits placed on leasehold land having restrictions applied, but when the land is owned outright by an individual or family the proposed restrictions are unfair and inequitable.

To look at this from a rural or farming perspective, just imagine how they feel when they are being told what they can and cannot do with the properties they have worked and managed for

generations, in many cases. It seems as though the farming community is having to bear the brunt of years of pollution, most of which has emanated from the cities. Why are city developers not told, 'You cannot put up a building there because we want to plant some trees in order to preserve the air quality in the city'? Taking into consideration the fact that rural and regional air quality is much better than that found in urban areas, why is it that farmers are having to shoulder the burden of reversing the damage of greenhouse gas emissions which have been perpetrated by a variety of different sources?

The farming community should not be made to suffer unreasonably when their city counterparts are still carrying on as usual. There are so many ways in which the level of emissions could be decreased. It appears that the fastest way to do so is to place the responsibility on the rural landowners, as it is probably the quickest and cheapest way of being able to make the claim that Queensland did it first, even if it destroys the livelihood of farmers who have already taken a financial beating over the last few years.

Why could the option, at the very least, not be on a fifty-fifty or on a percentage of land basis? Surely that would be slightly more reasonable than this new proposal. If farmers were given the option of perhaps keeping the vegetation around the perimeter of their properties, even that would enable them to continue to farm and make a living.

One problem which has been envisaged as a major impediment to the legislation is the uncertainty regarding the classification of what is and what is not remnant vegetation and new growth. What if someone cleared some land 15 or 20 years ago; what is the definition or cut-off point going to be? In regard to compensation, the amount offered is not going to go anywhere to help farmers if they cannot diversify. They will not be able to subdivide and sell. Who is going to want to purchase a property that they will not be able to clear?

Alternative measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions could be achieved through providing more public transport, a reduction in city parking to force people to use public transport, new building approvals could require some new planting around perimeters or courtyards, increased bike lanes, more grassed areas instead of concrete, encouraging the increased usage of solar power. There are so many ways to improve air quality rather than placing the responsibility purely at the feet of Queensland rural communities.

Tighter restrictions in regard to industrial emissions through improved technology, as seen in other countries such as Denmark and Spain, would contribute to a dramatic decrease in greenhouse emissions and would cease the pressure on farmers. If we truly were a Smart State, this government would be carrying out investigations into alternative clean energy resources such as wind powered turbine towers, just as an example. The popularity of this type of renewable energy is such that major investors are attracted to the prospect of a new generation of power.

A number of European governments are taking a proactive approach to looking to the future without picking on one sector of the community such as this government is doing to the farming sector, which is being targeted as the scapegoat for the state of our current air quality. Clean air can be achieved without depriving one sector of their livelihood. Numerous new industries are emerging, even here in Brisbane, which promote sustainable living.

We are in a marvellous position to be at centre stage in areas such as biomimicry and eco-efficiency. Sustainability can mean profitability. Just look at the Sydney Olympics, which have been described as the first green Olympics and the best Olympics ever. If we could use our resources more wisely and reduce the major source of dirty air—that is, smoke and oil, and the use of coal as a basis for energy—and take advantage of the growing market for clean air technology, Queensland could become a major player in the global market and make a positive impact without taking away the rights of landowners who have worked their fingers to the bone, only to have their primary income source ripped out from under them.

I wonder how many Labor members have primary producers visit their offices, begging for some help or advice as to how they can make ends meet, how they can hold their families together, when all they know is farming. It is not realistic to expect a 50-something-year-old man to retrain to re-enter the work force when all he has ever done is farm.

When legislation such as this is proposed, no advice is provided in the explanatory notes about what future there will be for people who rely on farming for an income. Where are these people supposed to go? What are they supposed to do? The flow-on effects of destroying rural and regional farming are tremendous. It is not just a handful of farmers who suffer but whole communities. The growing trend amongst governments in recent times of eradicating our farming communities via the deregulation of their industries, exorbitant inspection and certification fees

and now land clearing restrictions is impacting heavily on many families, and to witness the sense of hopelessness in the eyes of these people is heartbreaking. I feel frustrated because their government is letting them down. No matter what government is in power, they cannot come to terms with the fact that fellow Australians would do this to them. So many of the farmers I speak to are in a perpetual state of shock. They honestly do not understand why all this is happening to them.

What I really wish I could convey to members in this House is the sense of desperation many farmers are feeling. Some are living on food parcels from interstate relatives. This is not about politics; it is about human survival. I know some people who are providing counselling to farming families and they break down when they get home from a day visiting a property where a meeting is held because of the extent of suffering which is going on in many communities.

A friend of mine contacted a farmer in Britain whom he had heard about in order to seek advice as to the best way to assist farmers in crisis and what to tell them. His reply was—

Tell your farmers that what is occurring is a global crisis, not just someone picking on them personally. I know from my own experiences as a farmer just knowing that farmers elsewhere are in the same boat didn't help my own individual situation as such, but the knowledge that I was not a failure as a farmer because I was at fault personally but that I was, along with many others, trapped by a crazy global policy, which has led me to working and sharing information and ideas with others and given me a feeling that we might be able to change things but even if we fail to do so, we will be able to look our children in the eye and say—we tried.

The world of the rural producer is already at its lowest ebb. What they need is a sympathetic government, not one which kicks them when they are already down.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (2.16 p.m.): I rise to support the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. During the election campaign earlier this year a commitment was made by the Beattie Labor government to end broadscale remnant tree clearing by 2006. This historic commitment is honoured with this legislation and its importance is reflected in its being the first to be introduced by this government in the new term.

The purpose of the bill is to phase out broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation in Queensland under a transitional clearing cap by December 2006 and to protect of concern regional ecosystems whilst still allowing clearing for necessary ongoing purposes and management activities. The government will also provide a financial assistance package of $150 million because, as we have seen, time and again the Commonwealth government has reneged on its promise to jointly fund the package. The package will provide $130 million for structural adjustment, $12 million for incentives and $8 million for best management practices.

The hypocrisy of the National Party on this point is astounding. I listened to the member for Warrego's tortured and twisted explanation about why the Queensland Nationals have convinced the Prime Minister not to support our farmers and it was unbelievable. It is outrageous. Where is the science? Where is the assistance for farmers? Nowhere if it is left up to the National Party.

The key features of the bill are phasing out broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation by 31 December 2006; protecting of concern remnant vegetation on freehold land for the first time, in line with the existing protections on leasehold land; a ballot for broadscale clearing applications to receive an allocation under a transitional cap of 500,000 hectares as part of the phase-out process; permitting clearing of most regrowth vegetation; permitting some selective clearing or thinning; and combining the vegetation clearing provisions for freehold and leasehold land under the one act.

I am proud to be a part of a government that recognises the importance of preserving our environment to ensure that issues such as salinity, declining water quality and land degradation are addressed. I note that consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders, as is usual government policy, and I believe that every opportunity to provide input was given.

Whilst I am speaking about land clearing, I would like to take the opportunity to bring the House up to speed about the issues of vegetation clearing on the old cattle yards sale site at Maleny—the site of the proposed new supermarket. Last week, early in the morning, the developers—Cornerstone Properties—sent in the bulldozers and chainsaws with the notorious Dean Brothers to make an assault on the Maleny community via tree clearing on the site. My understanding is that Caloundra City Council issued a vegetation clearing permit to allow vegetation to be removed so that an old house on the site could be removed. What then transpired was a disgrace.

Andrew Harper from Cornerstone says that he believed they were following their permit requirements and were justified in knocking down trees everywhere they could. The local

community gathered and did their utmost to protect the remaining trees. They were successful in protecting the large Bunya pine and Silky Oak tree.

After much negotiation by new Caloundra city councillor Dick Newman and me, all work was stopped on the site until officers from the Department of Natural Resources could check the permits and ascertain where the high bank ended. They are now investigating breaches of the law, as it would appear that Cornerstone engaged in clearing in the riverine section which it was not allowed to do. I also understand that council is investigating the breaches on the permit that was issued for limited clearing to enable the removal of the old house. This will be on top of the investigations by the Department of Workplace Health and Safety because it is alleged that workers started chopping down trees whilst community members were still in them.

I have spoken to Andrew Harper from Cornerstone and Peter Thomas from Woolworths and have previously made it clear to both that I do not support their methods or this development. This type of corporate bullying of the community—which has made it quite clear that it does not want its environment of trees and grass to be torn down to be replaced by a concrete box in the middle of a river of bitumen—cannot be supported. Woolworths and Cornerstone now have the opportunity to sell the site to the council, and I would encourage the council to purchase such a key environmentally important site and to protect it for generations to come.

But there is a wider issue concerning the jurisdiction and terms of reference of the Planning and Environment Court. Residents of Maleny have expressed their disappointment with the decision taken by the Planning and Environment Court to overturn many of the conditions that council had put on the development, and this has happened elsewhere in Queensland. I call on the Attorney-General and the Minister for Local Government and Planning to instigate a review of the Planning and Environment Court as soon as possible. Whilst the Maleny issue is a planning and local vegetation law issue, it still cuts to the heart of Queenslanders' concerns about inappropriate clearing. I commend the minister and his department for preparing this comprehensive bill with such excellent environmental outcomes, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (2.20 p.m.): I rise briefly to speak in support of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. There can be no doubt that this government received a very clear mandate from Queenslanders which cannot be challenged. I do have issues, though, in relation to the contents of the clauses and the fine print contained in the bill. There can be no challenge in my mind about the mandate from Queenslanders to this government. However, I want to raise an issue of concern. I was always of the view that the address-in-reply debate was the place where members could make their first speech, yet here we are debating a contentious bill. Certainly, it is an important bill, but I believe that it would have been more appropriate to have debated this bill following the conclusion of the address-in-reply debate. When one looks at the matters that the Governor spoke about at some length, I would have thought that that debate should have taken precedence to debate on this bill.

There needs to be greater support from the federal government in relation to putting money on the table to assist in resolving this very difficult issue. There is no doubt that we are only here today debating it because some property owners in Queensland have simply not done the right thing. At the same time, if the state government, federal government or local council wants to take away someone's common law right, then there needs to be appropriate and realistic compensation. When I talk about compensation, I do not believe that the provision of money is the only way we can resolve this issue when we take away someone's rights. There are many other avenues of compensation which the farming community would be prepared to take on board but which have unfortunately not been adequately covered in this bill.

With regard to tree clearing, we have already heard from many speakers as to the impact it will have on the farming community in Queensland. We have seen that the state government is clearly prepared to take on that challenge and bite the bullet irrespective of the impact it has on many people in Queensland. I would also urge the Premier and Treasurer to take a similar degree of passion in responding to the pressures facing south-east Queensland. Almost 1,000 people a month move to the Sunshine Coast area. As a result, people cannot get tradespeople. In 10 minutes I will be meeting with the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing to discuss crisis accommodation for men on the Sunshine Coast. The member for Gympie will also be joining me at that meeting. I also hope that the member for Caloundra and the member for Maroochydore can join us in talking to the minister about this regional issue of concern on the Sunshine Coast and south-east Queensland.

Unless the state government is prepared to bite the bullet with the passion with which it has bitten the bullet over the issue of tree clearing in relation to responding to the growth, quite frankly we will see houses wall to wall from the New South Wales border up past Gympie. That is not what we want, and I do not think that that is what Queenslanders want. My challenge to the government is to please pursue resolving the issue of growth in the south-east corner of Queensland with the same degree of passion it is prepared and has demonstrated it has been prepared to pursue the contentious issue of legislating to limit the level of tree clearing in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (2.24 p.m.): I bring to this 51st parliament a message from the people of Burnett on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It is a simple message. It is a message that I think most members on the other side of the House will appreciate: which group of bozos dreamt up this piece of legislative lunacy? Don't they realise that when this bill is made law it will cost jobs in the bush? I cannot emphasise this point enough. The 'vegetation mismanagement bill' is a job killer. The only message that any rural worker or unemployed rural person can possibly take out of this hypocritical and opportunistic collection of red tape is that their best friend has to be the National Party, because Labor has just killed off any hopes of a jobs revival in regional Queensland.

Unemployment in the Burnett is double the national average. It is a disgrace. It is about 13.4 per cent. Youth unemployment is even more depressing. It is about 39 per cent. So how many property owners, horticulturalists and beef producers are going to be reaching for their chequebook so that they can hire some more workers after this regurgitated collection of ideological drivel is rammed down country Queensland's throat? This legislation was dreamt up by people who have never got their hands dirty in their lives. It was dreamt up by ideologues and academics who have no respect for commonsense and who have never had the gumption or the guts for once in their lives to get off the government's teat and find out what it is like to earn a living for their family by watching the sweat of their brow mix with the dirt of this great land.

I visited an elderly Avondale farmer recently, a Mr Arnold Reed, who is struggling so hard to stay on the land and in the sugar industry. The experts have told Mr Reed to diversify to survive. Mr Reed has taken the expert's advice and is trying to diversify. He wants to clear 10 hectares near his home and plant some pawpaw and avocado trees. But, because Mr Reed's freehold property appears in a pink colour on a government map, he cannot clear that land and plant those trees and so he must also forgo the income that those trees would have produced.

Is the Queensland government going to compensate Mr Reed and the hundreds of other primary producers who will, state wide, lose billions of dollars? Is the Queensland government going to create thousands of new jobs that are lost because of the ruin this silly bill will bring on our primary producers and rural communities? No! This bill will create nothing but misery, uncertainty, confusion, falling property prices, bankruptcy, social hardship and dislocation. Mums, dads and teenagers who are trying to find work or struggling to stay in work have copped it fair and square again from the party that is supposed to be the workers' friend. But with friends like the Labor Party—

An opposition member: Who needs enemies?

Mr MESSENGER: Yes, who needs enemies? The member took the words right out of my mouth. At the next federal election, let us pray that the workers, farmers, landowners and regional Queenslanders do not forget Labor's breathtaking arrogance.

The next federal election will be a perfect opportunity to return the kick in the guts to Labor, because, if we think that it is bad in the bush now, we should just imagine what it would be like under both a state and federal Labor regime. We would all have to live in the city, or at least in the south-east corner of Queensland, because there would not be any jobs left in the bush.

I draw members' attention to the remarks of the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy during this bill's second reading debate. The only thing that the Beattie Labor government is going to put an end to is regional prosperity and jobs growth. The only thing that the Beattie Labor government delivers with this abomination of a bill is the largest single reduction in jobs in rural Queensland and a guarantee that Mr Howard and Mr Anderson win all marginal seats in the bush. The only principle that Mr Beattie and his friends are trying lamely to ensure is the long-term survival of an arrogant and out-of-touch government.

In closing, the member for Greenslopes mentioned how much he enjoyed a walk in the park.

Mr Shine: What's wrong with that?

Mr MESSENGER: He can. He can afford to buy some expensive hiking boots. But what do I tell the unemployed people in the Burnett who cannot afford expensive hiking boots when this bill becomes law and their rural jobs dry up? I say, 'Don't worry about your rent, don't worry about clothing your kids and feeding your kids, you'll be able to forget your woes and maybe forage in the bush for a bit of bush tucker when you go for a walk in the park, courtesy of Mr Beattie and his ignorant and arrogant mates'.

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (2.31 p.m.): I was intending to restrict my comments today specifically to how this legislation affects my large electorate in far-north Queensland. However, after hearing the extraordinary outburst from the member for Burnett—this irrational and completely illogical thrashing about from the member for Burnett, a really extraordinary contribution to this debate—I must say that I do not think that anyone in this House or in Queensland can doubt that human activity is affecting global climate, it is reducing biodiversity and it is simply unsustainable. Our practices over the past 200 years are unsustainable. I just could not believe that outburst. Certainly, the minister has recognised that people are going to be affected by this legislation. We have ways and means to try to address that. But I do not think that the irrational outburst from the member for Burnett was an appropriate way for him to represent his constituents in the long term.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr O'BRIEN: This legislation is not about appropriating blame, it is not about putting blame on existing land-holders or even previous land-holders for past practices. Most members opposite have tried to express some support for vegetation management in some unknown form. They all support vegetation management. We do not know how, we do not know why, but they support it. At the same time they have taken great pains to say that we are environmental vandals because we are trying to protect remnant vegetation in Queensland.

The bill is simply a mechanism to ensure that remnant vegetation in Queensland, most of which has already been destroyed, is protected. Members opposite have made enormous efforts to highlight problems that individual land-holders may experience. Although it is difficult to guess all scenarios that may occur, this bill provides a fulsome process, including provisions for appeal.

The minister has made it clear that there will be specific provisions for Cape York Peninsula in that, essentially, the laws will come into effect immediately and not in 2006. That is in recognition of the untouched and incredibly biodiverse and internationally significant natural areas of the cape. As the minister indicated, there has been little clearing on Cape York and the department receives few applications for clearing. Given that the cattle industry is well established on the cape, this legislation will assist to make way for the escalation of tourism—an industry that is very much in its infancy in the region but which has enormous potential for exponential growth. The member for Burnett asks, 'Where are these people going to find jobs?' Certainly, they are going to have to find the capacity to either enter into joint ventures with neighbouring properties or buy out neighbouring properties. Those opposite are always saying how resilient those on the land are. Here is an opportunity for them to think creatively, to look at diversifying their interests and to think about entering into partnerships with neighbouring properties. I think that they will prevail. I think that, despite the doomsaying of those opposite, those on the land and those large property holders will prevail. There is always a way.

The legislation also makes provisions for projects of state significance, which will assist in the expansion of the mining industry in some parts of Cape York. Yesterday, the minister introduced other legislation into the House concerning the Pechiney mining leases near Aurukun on western Cape York Peninsula. When the Pechiney legislation is passed, there is provision within the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill for the clearing that will be required for the government in order to proceed with the exploration of the rich bauxite deposits there. So thanks in no small way to this legislation, we will end up with a much broader economic base, particularly on Cape York Peninsula, than what is currently available. Given the chronic underemployment that still plagues many communities on the cape, as in Burnett, this will be an important step forward for them.

The legislation also brings for the first time deed of grant in trust—or DOGIT—land under the umbrella of vegetation protection, and not before time. For those who do not know, most Aboriginal communities sit on land that is held in trust by their community council. I will just tell a quick story to illustrate how important it is for DOGIT communities to come under the auspices of this legislation. Last year a company came to Lockhart River called the Futures Corporation. It met with a few people involved in the land trust there. Those members who have had the pleasure of going to Lockhart River would know that it is fantastic country around there, some of

which is included in the Iron Range National Park. There is a lot of black bean and oak trees and other quite good timber in the area. This company made all sorts of promises to the people in the land trust regarding the harvesting of trees on DOGIT land. At one point a person from the company was waving around a cheque for $50,000. It was not that the company wanted anything in return; it was simply a goodwill gesture to get the negotiations rolling. They are the sorts of white shoe brigades that we have had coming into DOGIT communities during the period of the moratorium. One can only imagine what would have happened should the land trust have decided to have dealings with this company.

The Lockhart River Council, which faces hardships, I would suggest, far greater than most communities in most electorates—and I would suggest in all electorates—is now focusing on building enterprises that build on ecotourism in the region. In particular, it is focusing on bird watching, given the fact that the area is home to quite a number of rare and threatened species. Some people who enjoy bird watching are quite fanatical about it. They are prepared to go to the ends of the earth to see particular species of birds. They are really trying to tap into quite a niche market and a market where people have quite a lot of disposable income.

However, this debate is not about the city versus the country, Green preferences or blaming the farmers and property holders for the situation we all now find ourselves in. Unfortunately, the member for Mount Coot-tha was rudely interrupted during his opening remarks on this legislation yesterday, but he had the perspective exactly correct. We must take a long-term view with a view to protecting our part of the global ecosystem that we in this House have responsibility for.

Much has been made by those opposite of the political factors that have led to this decision and none of the science. Doing nothing is not an option the government enjoys, and there is widespread acceptance of this view amongst Queenslanders. While I can understand the National Party standing on its principles on this matter, I cannot understand why they will not face this geographic, scientific and now political reality. In his speech on the second reading debate the member for Callide recognised that the legislation was likely to pass. While standing on his principles, he should be pragmatic and lobby his federal counterparts to meet their commitment to assist the land-holders he purports to represent.

This is groundbreaking legislation. It is a hard decision that the government has to make. There are people who are going to be affected by the legislation. I believe that those land-holders will find a way to move forward. I do believe that they are resilient and tough, but I believe that when they sit down and rationally consider all of the arguments and the big picture, being the global picture, they will come to understand why the government is taking the action that it is.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (2.41 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill as Liberal shadow minister for natural resources. I am inclined to support this bill in principle. However, I am wary of the sustained attack which members opposite employ against the federal government on this issue.

In his second reading speech the Minister for Natural Resources mentioned an answer to a question of federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Warren Truss. In the answer Mr Truss said that the federal government would not support giving funds to this program. I must say that the words of Mr Truss were manipulated very sneakily and the situation portrayed in a biased manner by the Minister for Natural Resources. The real situation is that the Commonwealth was not the one who excluded the Queensland government from negotiation, as the minister would claim; it was the Queensland government which excluded itself. As Mr Quinn said earlier in this debate, if you choose to go it on your own you must foot the bill as well. You cannot choose to exclude the federal government from your consultation leaving it with no input and then stick your hand out for money. This is another case of buck-passing by this state government.

Mr ROBERTSON: The honourable member is misleading the House. I ask him to withdraw the comments that he made earlier with respect to Queensland excluding itself from negotiations. As I said, that is incorrect. He is misleading the House and I seek for it to be withdrawn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Croft): Order! Minister, are you calling for a point of order?

Mr ROBERTSON: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr LANGBROEK: As for the legislation, though, I believe it is necessary for the proposed changes to occur. Again, as was mentioned by Mr Quinn, this is a policy that the Liberal Party has held since the Surfers Paradise by-election three years ago. I was a candidate in that by-election

and it has been my view that this policy is the best policy for a sustainable triple bottom line in Queensland. Once again it is the Liberal Party on the cutting edge of policy. While three years ago the Labor Party could make neither head nor tail of this issue, the Liberal Party unveiled a solid policy—a policy that has now been adopted by the state government. It may very well be in part due to the surprising success of the Liberal Party in that by-election in which we outpolled the Labor Party and the National Party.

This is a policy that ensures the sustainability of the environment. In doing so, the sustainability of industry is also assured and western Queensland industrial centres can continue to function. Lack of support for this bill would not strike that same balance. While industry would thrive even more so, the benefit to industry would be disproportionate compared with the detriment to the environment.

Moreover, we are a party that looks at the big picture. As a signatory to the Kyoto protocol as well as many other environmental treaties, our federal colleagues have shown a great commitment to measures that will reduce environmental destruction. One of the positive outcomes of this move is the massive reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. It is very good to see Queenslanders hopping on the federal bandwagon by taking positive steps to reduce carbon emissions. The move has certainly been a long time coming.

The bill finally brings about the carbon emission savings that Queensland has been promising the federal government for years. The bill is estimated to result in Queensland coming in very close to the 25 megaton saving the federal government asked the state government to provide during the limited negotiation the state government allowed on this issue. I also join with my learned colleague Dr Flegg in his warning to government members that, while we support this bill, we will also be watching closely to ensure that the government continues to live up to its commitment to protect remnant vegetation.

There are also worries with the implementation of the bill. Liberal Leader, Bob Quinn, also mentioned in his speech that there is a concern—and it is one that has been put forward by members on my right—that $150 million compensation is not enough. The figure is backed by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics. It may not be enough. It is only when the compensation is being paid out that we will realistically be able to gauge whether there is going to be enough to go around. As such, there will need to be flexibility from the state government to ensure adequate compensation.

On this issue, however, I refer to the federal minister's comments, which I mentioned before. He stated that one of the concerns of the federal government was that the Queensland government would not follow through with its share of the promised compensation. I do take this point as put forward by National Party members that the compensation must be paid. The compensation is not written into legislation, and nor does it have to be. However, this bill cannot go through and at a latter date the state government renege on the compensation. As pointed out by the federal minister, the Beattie government does not have a good track record on this issue. So while I support the bill, I would not support a double-back in the area of compensation.

I also commend the intention of this bill to bring together all existing legislation on this issue. One of the past problems was that under an excess of legislation farmers did not know for certain what they could and could not do. This will change. The bill clearly outlines what can and cannot be done, providing a degree of certainty that previously was not present.

In another area regarding certainty, it was realised during the consultation process that regional ecosystem maps were not as accurate as they should be. Just as it has been mentioned by National Party members that modern machinery has enabled environmental control to be more precise, this precision was not matched by those ecosystem maps. With property based maps, as is suggested under the bill, this issue will be cleared up. Owners of properties will know exactly what they can and cannot do with regard to every patch of land on their property.

I submit that this bill should be supported. It is a positive stance on a contentious issue. It is a stance that the Liberal Party has held for a long time and I am happy to see its adoption by the minister. I encourage the government, however, to deliver on its compensation promise and not renege, as it has in the past.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (2.47 p.m.): I rise to support the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. This is a historic piece of legislation, and I am sure that future generations of Queenslanders will look back on this debate and thank God that we had a Labor government in power that seeks to protect the environment in a very real way—by legislation. Our government was re-elected in February largely because of our green credentials.

Our government has the runs on the board, and the people of Queensland know it. In my electorate of Bundamba my constituents are very aware that I stand up on environmental issues and work with our people to make our electorate a better and a greener place in which to live. I was delighted to once again receive the Green preferences in Bundamba, and I look forward to working with their supporters and with our local environmental groups over the next few years.

The Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 has in section 3 the purpose of regulating clearing of vegetation in a way that conserves remnant vegetation, regional ecosystems, remnant of concern regional ecosystems and remnant not of concern ecosystems; conserves vegetation in declared areas; ensures that clearing does not cause land degradation; prevents the loss of biodiversity; maintains ecological processes; manages the environmental effects of clearing; and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

However, land clearing is not just an issue in rural areas; it is an issue in urban areas as well. I have been concerned for many months about land clearing for a housing development in the suburb of Collingwood Park, where I live. Last year I brought the issue of total land clearing to the attention of the mayor and also the local councillor to no avail whatsoever. Even though the approvals were determined by the Ipswich City Council, the local community was concerned that every tree and every blade of grass was being knocked over, destroying the flora and fauna, yet nothing was being done.

I have recently written to the chair of the Planning, Development and Environment Committee, Councillor Paul Tully, pointing out my concerns to the council. In this letter I said—

For many months I have been concerned at the total tree clearing in land developments ... i.e. the East West development along Goss Drive and the Queensland Group development along Eagle Street.

Concerns were raised with me by local residents about the total tree clearing, its effect on the flora, fauna and other environmental matters.

I also said—

Given the landmark legislation, 'Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004,' to be debated in the Queensland Parliament, I am requesting that the Ipswich City Council abide by the spirit of this legislation in relation to development applications in my electorate of Bundamba.

I went on further to say—

In this day and age it is inexcusable that the Council allows 'scorched earth' or 'moonscape' developments where every tree and every blade of grass is removed.

I have also had discussions with local developers in the Queensland Group and East West Developments. I told both groups that in my view in this day and age, in the year 2004, there is no excuse, no reason whatsoever, to moonscape the land for housing development purposes. As members can imagine, we had a full and frank discussion about their tree clearing activities. I am now pleased to inform the House that, following my discussions with the Queensland Group, it has now written to me stating—

Stage Four (our next development stage) will be the environmentally-friendly eco-focused area of the entire estate. This is due to the fact that it is a large land parcel (174 blocks versus 120 in stage two) and allows for a longer planning period in which to instigate the proposed eco-friendly stage.

It went on to say—

Stage Four will be eco-friendly through the use of a water catchment system for rainfall which will then be used for gardens, the selective clearing of trees only for roads and the encouragement of building pole homes which compliment the environment.

It said further—

Additionally, we are currently commissioning landscape architects to recommend a selective clearing plan—which trees should be left and which species to plant for all future stages. Finally, once development progresses, as roads are sealed and landscaping is finalised, more trees and grass will be planted within the estate—on roadsides, etc. to give the estate a much prettier look.

Finally, Stages Five and Six are also earmarked for more selective clearing in consultation with the current landscape architects.

In addition, only yesterday I met with East West Group's engineers, and the planning surveyors have indicated to me that Deborah Lee, the proprietor of East West will stop total land clearing along Goss Drive and Collingwood Drive and will take into account the spirit of this legislation in future developments. I have an undertaking from East West Developments that it will only do selective land clearing and that it will leave as many trees, including small trees, as practicable in future developments. It has already planned flora and fauna corridors along Goss Drive and Collingwood Drive and also along the creek.

Jo-Ann Miller Drive, which happens to be in an East West development, does not have a tree in it, but I am assured by East West Developments that trees will come there soon. Bernie Ripoll Drive will also have some trees planted. I am very grateful for that. Of course, the naming of our streets continues a great, longstanding tradition in Collingwood Park of naming our streets after Labor people. We are very proud of that. In fact, the member for Ipswich will be proud to know that I think they have also planned a Hamill Drive. You never know your luck: there might also be a Nolan Drive! Every Labor member in this parliament might be named in the development!

I have no doubt whatsoever that if I had not discussed these issues direct with the developers they would have gone on their merry way, knocking down everything in sight. However, the developers tell me that they have had difficulty convincing the council that parks should be developed and that trees are an important environmental issue. Some developers told me that they would like to have more parks and more areas of open space but that the parks and gardens department of the council frowns upon this due to future maintenance costs. Some developers are of the view that they in fact are actively discouraged by council from being environmentally friendly and are of the view that the parks and gardens department has more say over developments than the planning department. I sincerely hope this is not the case.

My constituents want to live in an environmentally friendly housing development. They want walking tracks. They want bicycle tracks. They want trees. They want parks where their children can play and where they can walk their dogs, whoever pays for maintenance, whether it be the developers, the council or, I would like to suggest, a partnership between the developers and the council.

I have suggested to the planning committee of the council that my electorate is developing very fast and that urban development committees should be established in the suburbs of Collingwood Park, Springfield, Springfield Lakes, Brookwater and Redbank Plains. These committees should be fully informed on issues that affect them, including parks, gardens, bikeways, planning issues and so on that I have previously mentioned.

Community forums have been successful in relation to industrial developments, such as the Swanbank reference group and the Bremer Industrial Park reference group. It is my view that these committees should now be considered for urban developments where lifestyle and environment issues, planning issues and urban land clearing issues are becoming increasingly important. In fact, today I received a letter from the chairperson of the Planning, Development and Environment Committee, Councillor Paul Tully. That letter states—

In the vast majority of cases, there are no appreciable problems created by developers. My experience of many years is that most developers comply with Council's town planning conditions and endeavour to retain as many trees as possible, consistent with construction constraints and the eventual physical layout of the estate.

In the past, developers have claimed that potential purchasers have demanded the removal of all trees from individual house sites. The developers' argument was the trees were too close to where the houses were to be situated.

Those arguments are now quite spurious as a result of advanced GPS technology which now makes it possible to pinpoint every tree on an estate and relate that to the various building envelopes. This approach maximises tree retention and, in my view, makes those estates more appealing to potential purchasers as well as protecting the local environment.

Unfortunately, not all developers embrace these views.

He went on to say—

I have asked Council's Chief Executive Officer Mr Jamie Quinn, in conjunction with the head of our Planning & Development Department, Mr Gary White to review the issues in your letter to ensure that the spirit of the proposed Vegetation Management Act is abided by and enforced by the Ipswich City Council as far as our legislative and planning powers permit.

He says—

I support your eminently sensible suggestion of local urban development committees comprising residents and stakeholders to give the community a real involvement in the future development of our region.

He then suggests that we discuss this in the near future to move this proposal forward as soon as possible. I would like to thank him for that letter. It is a very important letter as far as the council is concerned.

This is a win-win situation with regard to urban tree clearing in my area. It is a win for the people of Bundamba, particularly my fellow Collingwood Park residents; it is a win for our government, as the spirit of the Vegetation Management Act will be abided by; and it is a win for cooperation and partnership between the Queensland government, the Ipswich City Council, the

developers—the Queensland Group and East West—and also our local Collingwood Park community.

I would also like to thank the other developers in my area who consistently plan as far as practicable for environmentally friendly housing developments. I would like to include in that the Springfield, Springfield Lakes and Brookwater developments. I look forward to working with them, the council and my community in future years, through the proposed urban development committees, so that my electorate can become in fact a showpiece for good environmental design and planning.

The spirit of this legislation in my electorate, due to intergovernmental, business, environmental and community commitment, will be enshrined by our local partnership initiatives I hope for many, many, many generations to come. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (3.00 p.m.): It is with a great deal of pride that I rise in support of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill will bring to an end broadscale tree clearing and help to protect the environment and to provide for environmental stability in the future. The scientific arguments in support of this legislation are significant. Prevention of broadscale tree clearing will assist in the prevention of such environmental ills as species extinctions, water salinity, greenhouse gas emissions, land degradation, coastal damage and declining water quality. These are issues which need to be addressed urgently, and I am proud to be part of a government which has taken this important step. We hope that Queensland can show the rest of Australia that it is possible to be economically viable and environmentally sustainable at the same time.

The Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is part of the Beattie government's commitment to the environment. This commitment extends far beyond stopping tree clearing. Of course, broadscale tree clearing is never going to occur in the Burleigh electorate. However, considerable time and trouble has been taken to provide protection to the environment. One great example of that is our commitment to save the Miami bushland—a piece of virgin bushland right in the heart of Miami. Land which was destined for development has been saved by this government. This government's commitment to the environment includes working closely with local communities and environmental groups in order to ensure strong local networks that will provide the best possible communication and action to protect the environment.

The southern Gold Coast is one of the most beautiful parts of Queensland. In my three years in office I have had the great privilege of meeting and working with some very dedicated environmentalists. Gecko is a well-known environmental organisation on the Gold Coast and does tremendous work. I am proud to be associated with it. In the Tallebudgera environmental park, Col Collins and his band of dedicated volunteers are continuously waging war on the scourge of asparagus fern, which threatens our native bushland. The Elanora Wetlands group has worked very hard and with great success on a rehabilitation project on the south-west of the Tallebudgera conservation park. On 29 November last year, Mr Collins was involved with organising an Earthwatch project which targeted asparagus fern within the conservation park. Mr Collins is a dedicated and much respected community figure and I applaud his efforts.

This legislation will prove to be Australia's single biggest contribution to greenhouse gas reduction. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (3.03 p.m.): It is an absolute pleasure to be able to rise in the House today and support this outstanding piece of Beattie government legislation. I believe this legislation before us today will be remembered as the single greatest achievement of this Labor government. I think it is entirely appropriate that debate about this significant piece of legislation is the first order of business for this re-elected government. For too long broadscale land clearing has been Queensland's greatest environmental shame. Around half a million hectares of bushland have been cleared each year in Queensland. That is an area three times the size of Fraser Island. It is more than 10 suburban house blocks every minute. In fact, three-quarters of Australia's land clearing has been carried out in Queensland.

I think it is worthy to note that in public opinion polls upwards of 80 per cent of Queensland residents and Australians believe that an end to tree clearing and better protections for native bushland are incredibly important. I am delighted that we are going to debate this today. I think it is also a great achievement by the Wilderness Society, which has done so much campaigning over a great number of years, to see this legislation before the parliament today. I was having a browse not so long ago on the Wilderness Society's web site—www.wilderness.org.au—and there is an immense store of information about this issue that I think some of the members opposite

would do well to peruse. I am very pleased, on behalf of the Wilderness Society, to have been able to sponsor a parliamentary e-petition last year. I think it is still by far and away the largest ever parliamentary e-petition. I think that says a lot about how important this issue is to Queensland residents.

I want to address a couple of points that I thought were worth noting about the contribution of the member for Burnett. I was absolutely fascinated by some of the things he said. It was obviously a colourful performance from the member for Burnett. Members on my side of the House were accused of having some sort of—I cannot remember the exact words—arrogant and ideological agenda. This is precisely what is wrong with the National Party in this state. Its view is really simple. Its view is that with 15 seats it is right and everyone else is wrong. It has this idea that the Howard government does something for its voters. Frankly, it does not. You want to talk about things putting people out of work; talk about the GST.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine): Order! The honourable member will address his remarks through the chair.

Mr LEE: I beg your pardon, Mr Deputy Speaker. I believe the GST is the single greatest impediment to job creation in this country. It is a tax that taxes people based on what they consume. So a family with five kids will pay more tax on what it consumes than a person with no kids. It is a tax that damages families. I think it says a lot about the way the National Party clutches at straws and attacks the Labor Party over our commitment to the environment, looking after families in the future and making sure that our kids have clean air to breathe in 20 years time. I think it says a lot that it is not prepared to address some of the significant damage that has been done to the fabric of Australian society by the Howard government. I think it says a lot, too, when frankly we have an issue like this and all it wants to do is belt the people who are doing something about the environment. If National Party members want to do something about job creation, they ought to look at what the federal government has done to the economy. It is an absolute disgrace.

This piece of legislation, which will phase out broadscale tree clearing by 31 December 2006, will also make sure that there is protection for of concern regional ecosystems. There will also be a $150 million package to assist land-holders. I think it is worth asking where the federal government is on this issue. I think it is typical of the federal government that when there is an important issue like this it is nowhere to be seen.

I want to state frankly that I believe Queensland's rate of land clearing has up until now been an absolute national shame. Professor Ian Lowe from Griffith University described land clearing as without doubt the greatest threat to biodiversity in Australia. There are around 20 million hectares of bushland across the state that have been open to land clearing. They will be protected from the bulldozers under these new laws. That is an area that is larger than the state of Victoria and three times as big as all Queensland's national parks combined. Just one of the places that are going to receive improved protection is Cape York Peninsula. We are talking about the tall eucalypt forests. We are talking about rainforests. We are talking about being able to see trees from one horizon to the other, and I have to say that I want my kids and my grandkids to be able to see that. We are talking about protecting the low woodlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria, tea-trees and eucalypts. We are talking about looking after the Channel Country, the Northern Uplands, the Brigalow Belt. I want to be certain that my kids are going to be able to see that.

This legislation is also a lifesaver for native animals. It will protect large areas where, frankly, the lives of hundreds of millions of birds, mammals and reptiles of all shapes and sizes have been under threat. Land clearing in Queensland kills more native animals than any other activity in Australia. It has been calculated that approximately 100 million animals die each year. We are talking about 19,000 koalas, 300,000 possums and gliders, and 8.5 million birds. Frankly, that is an absolute disgrace, and I am very proud that this government has taken such strong steps to be able to remedy this.

This piece of legislation will also go a long way towards preventing dryland salinity. It is about making sure that Queensland is able to avoid many of the environmental problems that are now confronting southern states. We are about finding a new, more sustainable way to make a living out of the land. We are going to protect bushland. We are also going to decrease the spread of dryland salinity. We are going to make sure that our children are left with healthier rivers, farms and landscapes in the future. Land clearing is the number one cause of dryland salinity because removing trees allows more water to enter the water table, making it rise and bringing salt to the surface.

Research in Queensland has identified five million hectares of land with a high salinity hazard. Much of that land is in regions with rapid rates of land clearing. This legislation is also going to contribute significantly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. When fallen trees are burnt or left to rot a greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, is released into the atmosphere adding to global warming. An end to broadscale tree clearing will benefit the global effort to control climate change and will also reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by about four per cent a year and allow us to meet our target under the Kyoto protocol.

I am immensely proud to stand in the House today and support this wonderful piece of legislation. I thank the Wilderness Society for its tremendous work, in particular Louise Matheson, its land clearing campaigner. I think it has done marvellous work to bring this issue to the attention of Queensland residents and the Australian public. It is a wonderful achievement. I am delighted to be able to support this bill.

Hon. R. J. MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for the Environment) (3.11 p.m.): The Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is a historic bill.

Mr Terry Sullivan interjected.

Mr MICKEL: I do not want to be tempted by the whip, but I have to say that I heard the contribution from the honourable member for Burnett. He was talking about getting dirt under his fingernails. How filthy was the ABC studio in Bundaberg? Talk about 8c a day—didn't we get robbed!

This historic bill will create new opportunities for Queenslanders, particularly those living in our regions. It will conserve a precious natural resource. It will also ensure our primary producers and the communities which depend on them will have a sustainable future by stemming the loss of biodiversity and helping to tackle dryland salinity. This bill is about acting today to protect tomorrow.

One of the key findings of the Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment carried out in 2002 under the National Land and Water Resources Audit was that vegetation clearing is the most significant threat to species and ecosystems in eastern Australia, with Queensland the state most affected. The audit included a case study of the impact of broadscale clearing in the Isaac-Comet Downs area in the northern Brigalow Belt. It is an important habitat for rare and threatened species including star finches, platypus and the golden tailed gecko. The audit found that, of the area's 82 regional ecosystems, 29 are listed as endangered and a further 19 are considered vulnerable. There are 25 threatened species that are on the decline in this area. Over 75 per cent of the natural vegetation has been cleared across the Isaac-Comet Downs landscape. The isolated pockets that are left are subject to grazing pressure, changed fire regimes and feral pests.

What sort of future does that offer to our primary producers and regional communities? Yet this is the sort of scenario the National Party is offering by continuing to support broadscale clearing. We have already cleared about 18 per cent of Queensland's natural vegetation.

The threat broadscale clearing poses to our wildlife is supported by Environment Australia's 2001 State of the Environment report. It declared that 'land clearing is the single biggest threat to wildlife in Australia'. By protecting the most threatened areas of bushland in Queensland from land clearing, it has been estimated that the government will prevent more than 5,000 species of birds, animals and insects from becoming threatened.

Our wildlife is one of the things that makes Australia unique. It draws visitors to Australia from all over the world and is one of the attractions which underpins a multibillion-dollar tourism industry. The destruction of habitat may see some of our tourism icons disappear from view forever. The destruction of habitat also leads to instances where animals are forced to relocate, sometimes to areas where they are living beside humans and not always successfully. Charters Towers is a case in point. The destruction of remnant vegetation has forced flying foxes to seek new roosting and feeding places in the middle of town. The Environmental Protection Agency is continuing to work with Charters Towers council to resolve this issue that has partly come about because of tree clearing.

Our wildlife is not the only tourism icon potentially threatened by broadscale tree clearing. There is growing evidence that run-off is harming the Great Barrier Reef. In 2002 the Queensland government commissioned an independent panel of experts to review the scientific evidence linking land use, water quality and degradation of the Great Barrier Reef. Amongst other things, this panel found that there were clear indications that major land use practices in the reef catchment have led to accelerated erosion and greatly increased the delivery of sediment and

nutrients onto the reef over pre-1850 levels. The panel found that causes included extensive vegetation clearing.

I was interested to read recent media reports showing that, for the first time, scientists had identified a direct link between run-off and the spread of the crown-of-thorns along the reef between Cairns and Mackay. The decline of the reef would lead to a decline in tourism, a decline that would result in thousands of jobs being lost along the Queensland coast. It would also mean the loss of potential opportunities in science and research. Scientists are just beginning to unlock the secrets on the reef and are making discoveries which could lead to a cure for cancer or other diseases. Our reef quality plan is part of the solution to these problems. This bill is another important piece of that jigsaw.

The bill will also address the economic and environmental problems caused by dryland salinity. A review of salinity issues in Queensland, as part of the national land and water resources audit, identified that salinity is an emerging natural resource management problem for Queensland. About 107,000 hectares of land were classified as salt affected in 2003. Over 3.1 million hectares has the potential to be affected by salinity within 50 years if we do not do anything about it.

The CSIRO has shown that there is sufficient information to establish that for many regions of Queensland there are large accumulations of salt in the landscape. It has also shown that vegetation clearing will increase the water that drains beneath the root zone by between two and 10 times, which will be sufficient to unleash the salinisation process. Specifically, it has been shown that the dieback of she-oak and Queensland blue gum in the Mary River catchment was partly caused by salinity as a result of vegetation clearing.

A CSIRO study of the Burdekin catchment highlights the significant salinity hazard following tree clearing in this region. Continued broadscale native vegetation clearing with little or no regard to the salinity hazard will mirror the problems in the southern and central parts of the Murray-Darling Basin. *Setting biodiversity priorities*, a report from the Prime Minister's Science and Innovation Council, estimates for every dollar we spend preventing land clearing we will save $20 in the long run.

That means with this package alone we are looking at a potential saving of $3 billion. Think how many schools we could build, how many regional roads could be upgraded or how many elective surgery procedures could be performed as a result of that saving.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MICKEL: We hear the cackle from the honourable members opposite. The member for Warrego should have been the last one to ever interject in a vegetation clearing debate. He knows the problems, and he knows them full well. He is too timid to address them. He is too powerless to get up and argue in his own party room for the decent thing. That is an entirely different structure from what is going on in Canberra. In Canberra they know the problem, but they will not fund a solution to the problem. They will not fund it because they have welshed on the deal.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MICKEL: Those people over there interjecting now are the ones who know what has to be done for their constituencies but are too feeble to go to Canberra to fight for the money. They are too feeble and too slow and, as Roy and HG would say, 'too stupid' to go down there and fight for what is right for Queensland.

The Prime Minister's Science and Innovation Council also estimates salinity in Australia costs about $130 million a year in lost agricultural production. The loss of production does not affect just primary producers. It means less income for the local shop, the local garage and the local pub, and all of that affects regional employment. The federal government, and particularly the National Party, should rethink its refusal to fund this vegetation management package. The evidence is overwhelming. Broadscale clearing is hurting its own constituency. We have seen it time and again in this place over the years: when push comes to shove, the National Party will never face up to the hard decisions because it will never stand up for its own constituency. And why not? Because so many of its candidates who become members have nothing to do with primary industry. They waltz out of the ABC studios in Bundaberg and proceed to lecture us about the primary industries sector. Successive governments over the years—and National Party ones for 32 years—have been the vandals, not the farmers. It has been the lack of direction by National Party governments over all those decades not providing the right signals, not doing the right thing and not sending the right message to the rural sector which has brought about this problem.

This government is about sustainable development, about getting the balance right and about ensuring that there is a farming future for tomorrow. We are about ensuring that there is a sustainable farming sector for tomorrow. This bill protects the environment, but it also ensures that there will be arable land to sustain future profitable agricultural industries. That is the essential difference between us, the Liberal Party and the National Party on this issue. We have the determination to protect the future of Queensland. The Nationals have always been snatch and grab merchants who want future Queenslanders to preside over the collapse of agricultural production areas. We will not stand by and allow the collapse of the agricultural sector in Queensland. We are here as a government to protect it, because our position is scientifically based. It is not rhetoric based. It is not sell-out based. It is scientifically based.

The Wentworth Group of eminent scientists has stated that stopping broadscale land clearing of remnant native vegetation is the single most important action that the Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmanian governments can take to protect the future of Australia's landscape. This bill will also make a major contribution in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Environmental Protection Agency advises me that vegetation clearing is a significant net source of greenhouse gas emissions for Queensland. In 1999 emissions from land-use change in Queensland contributed about 28 per cent of Queensland's total greenhouse gas emissions. It is estimated that the phasing out of broadscale tree clearing by the end of 2006 will achieve an annual reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 20 to 25 megatons a year by 2008 to 2012. That represents a 60 per cent drop in carbon dioxide generated by land use change in Queensland.

Stopping land clearing will also complement other greenhouse efforts by the Environmental Protection Agency in encouraging the construction of more energy efficient buildings and the use of more sustainable sources of energy such as solar power. By preserving our biodiversity by stopping broadscale clearing, Queensland will build on Australia's reputation as a clean, green source of food. It is that clean, green image that gives us the edge in getting exports to some of the markets that have been previously denied us. It will open up more export markets and create new job opportunities, especially in our regional areas.

The demand for clean beef, for example, is growing in Europe and Japan, particularly in the wake of the mad cow scares. Companies with a proven environmental track record such as Stanbroke and the Australian Agricultural Co., which have no land clearing policies—that is their policy of no land clearing—have the opportunity to capitalise on that record and gain a foothold into new markets. So when we hear, as they have tried to say today, that there is no future for agriculture because of this legislation, they blithely ignore the activities of some of the leading companies in the agricultural sector that have determined that there is a market edge for precisely what this legislation does. I look forward to seeing more Queensland producers following their lead. That is why this rural rump over here did not increase its majority significantly at the last election. It has clearly lost touch with regional Queenslanders. It has lost touch with the leading-edge producers in this state.

The Environmental Protection Agency will provide practical support to the vegetation management regime through the work of the Queensland Herbarium. The Herbarium's mapping of regional ecosystems for local government areas, bioregions, subregions, catchments and natural resource management regions will be used by regional natural resource management groups for planning and management purposes. The information on regional ecosystems will be updated as more vegetation survey and mapping work is completed for Queensland. The Herbarium's vegetation survey work and mapping of the state is being conducted at the highest scientific standard. Queensland is recognised, quite rightly, as a leader in survey technique, classification and mapping of native vegetation.

The vegetation maps are used as the certified remnant and regional ecosystem maps under the Vegetation Management Act 1999. The maps are also used in local, regional, state and national conservation and land use assessments, planning and priority setting. Using the vegetation maps to make decisions at the individual property scale requires, in some cases, review of the detail of the relevant vegetation map. The Environmental Protection Agency has procedures in place to quickly process vegetation map reviews and, if substantiated, to map amendments in concert with the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. The protection of remnant vegetation is a key component of the government's program to secure and enhance the viability of threatened plants and animals throughout Queensland.

If we do not pass this bill, the cost to Queensland in terms of biodiversity, lost agricultural production and economic opportunity would be frightening. That is why the Liberal Party has come on side now that it is unshackled and unfettered from what otherwise would have been a

ramshackled coalition. That is why the Liberal Party and those members who are truly independent are going to support this legislation when it comes to the second reading vote in this House later today. This bill is the stark contrast between us—the people who care about Queensland's future—and the people who are welded and locked on to Queensland's past.

There is not a shadow of a doubt that in the next 20 years we cannot continue the level of tree clearing that we have carried out in the last 200 years. That is unsustainable. It is unproductive. That is why I invite all members of this House to think about these issues. We are concerned about the agricultural sector, we are concerned about the jobs, not just those in rural Queensland but the important jobs in regional Queensland—regional Queensland where there are tourist opportunities.

So let us take advantage of these opportunities. Let us look for sustainable development, sustainable industries. Let us in this House look to getting the balance right when it comes to the environment. I urge all members of this House to take advantage of the opportunities that this bill offers to build a stronger and sustainable Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine): Before calling the honourable member for Bulimba I welcome to the gallery the deputy principal of the Beijing Primary School and his delegation and the principal of the Warrigal Road State School in the electorate of Mount Gravatt.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.30 p.m.): I would like to say a few words in regard to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which is being debated today. I would like to remind members of the House why we clear land—why we do what we do.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr PURCELL: My roots in the country probably go back further than the member's, as the member conveniently forgets. My grandfather did not clear land with a bulldozer and a chain; he cleared with an axe. James Purcell was a Labor man all his life and he would be if he was alive today. Anybody who worked with their hands and their back in the scrub knew where their support came from.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr PURCELL: Who does the member think set up all the things that looked after the man on the land? Who does the member think set up all the wheat boards? Who does the member think looked after those people in the bush? I can assure members that it was not the people who are lounging around on the wrong side of the House now. It was Labor governments that understood workers and their needs.

My grandfather cleared land with an axe and a horse. He cleared it to feed his family. He had a large family, because it was good to have a large family. That meant that he had a large work force to help him with clearing land.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PURCELL: I can assure the member that the girls did their bit also. My aunties could bowl cricket balls and tackle better than my uncles. They were fearsome. When I went to school, we used to field our own sides in the small one-teacher schools where I went to school. It was the Purcells against the rest and we inevitably won, because the girls were with us.

We forget why we cleared land. We cleared land to make a living. We cleared land because in those days the government of the day encouraged people to go out and clear as much land as they possibly could. Australia was an emerging nation that needed produce to trade with, in those days, Europe and England—where our roots were in those days. The reason we are clearing now—

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PURCELL: I will go the 20 minutes. I will go 40 minutes if the member wants. I think that the reason we clear now is to take large tracts of land. Roughly about two months ago I was coming back from Emerald when I saw four dozers and two chains clear-felling side by side up hill and down dale over creeks.

An honourable member: Regrowth.

Mr PURCELL: It was regrowth. When I drove on a little bit further, the paddocks looked to me as though they had been cleared probably 18 months to two years earlier and had regrowth. But the paddocks had not had anything done to them. They were a mess. People could not graze stock on there. I could hardly walk through the paddock. We stopped and had a look. It was absolutely disgraceful what those people had done. That was not farming, that was not

management. Those people had just taken the dozers in there and destroyed thousands of acres of scrub for little economic benefit. It was certainly not farming, because it had been lying there for years.

An honourable member: Did you see any buffel grass?

Mr PURCELL: I could not walk across the paddock. There was that much timber on the ground, I could not walk across the paddock. There were no trees left in the paddock—not a one. They took every tree in the paddock. There was no buffel grass left there. There was hardly any space left on the ground for the timber that lay there. It was there for two years and the suckers were about twice as high as me. They were 12 feet to 14 feet high. It was regrowth. That is not the way to clear scrub.

This bill will stop that. I heard my colleague the member for Logan talk about dieback. I know the salinity problems that some people have in southern New South Wales and in some places in western Queensland.

Mr Seeney: Where?

Mr PURCELL: Obviously, the member gets struck deaf when he comes in here when members talk about the maps that have been produced. The salinity problems in western Queensland have been mapped for years. The member does not want to know about it. If we want to talk about good farmers and people who know the land, the member should talk to those in northern New South Wales and in some parts of Queensland where they are getting dieback—not from salinity but because there are not enough trees in the area to support the cycle of life of insects, birds and other things that grow naturally in the area. They all get on the few trees that are left and they kill those trees. Those farmers have large replanting programs that are subsided by the taxpayers of Australia at a cost of millions and millions to put back the trees that have been thoughtlessly taken out by bulldozers and chains.

Mr Seeney: When are they going to start on Bulimba?

Mr PURCELL: The member mentioned Bulimba. He should take a drive through Bulimba. There are probably more trees in my electorate than he would have in his. I can assure the member that people in my electorate are planting trees as fast as they can. The member should come and have a look at my yard. There are trees everywhere—much to my sorrow, when they get into drains and so forth—but they are there.

An honourable member: Any bulldozers there?

Mr PURCELL: Only in memory. We need trees for shade. Main Roads sometimes builds roads through people's properties and the National Highway changes its route and so forth. Members should find out the cost involved in taking trees off somebody's property. When trees are taken out by governments, $60,000 and $70,000 is spent on building shade for stock that no longer has any shade.

The members opposite cannot tell me that they agree with what their neighbours and some other people are doing in the bush by felling scrub and what they are doing to the watercourses and the environment. If they are fair dinkum about being farmers and looking after where they live and they want their son, their grandson and their great-grandson to be able to farm the land where they live, they would not be saying what they are saying here today. Those practices are not sustainable. The members opposite know that.

We do not want to reinvent the wheel. Members opposite should look at what is happening in other parts of this country. Those places are no different from Queensland. It is the same sun that comes up and it is the same sun that goes down. We should not have to continue to relearn things. We talk about rain. The members opposite should go and talk to the blokes who are getting a bit long in the tooth. They should talk to some of the blokes who I have been talking to in the past six weeks who are involved in country racing. Inevitably, those blokes have a bit of an age about them. They have been in the industry for a long time. When we get talking to them—not only about what is happening with their tracks but what is happening in their districts and how things have changed—they will bring up the weather and talk about how the rain patterns in their area where they have lived, some of them for 80 years or 90 years, have changed. What has changed in those areas in those blokes' lifetime is the number of trees. Enormous numbers of trees have been taken out. Everybody knows that trees recycle rain in large lumps. If the members want rain, they should not take out all their trees, because that is when they make a desert. Deserts have no trees. Not enough water falls in those areas to sustain trees.

If they continue to take the trees out, the deserts of this country—and, as everyone knows, the majority of this country is desert—will continue to encroach on our farming and grazing lands. I do not think anybody in this House has a problem with the clearing of land correctly for livestock grazing and for cropping, but we should not do what we are doing at the moment because we are doing it wrong.

Last year I had the opportunity to go and talk to some dairy farmers around Gympie with regard to some water problems they had. It was a bit difficult to get to the property I visited because it was up and back down a few lanes. The bloke met me at a road that we both knew and that I could get to, because some of the areas I was going to were not marked on maps. As we drove down the lanes to get to his place he was berating his neighbours upstream from him about what they were doing to their land. He had only 800 acres. His family had been there for many years and ran a dairy herd that had supported his family. His son is slowly taking over the property.

The owners of the farms around him had not left one tree standing in thousands of acres above him. All the creeks of course ran down through his place to the river. His creeks were silted. He had rubbish coming down because there was nothing to trap the water. It was cutting gullies into the very small acreage that he had which he and his grandfather had farmed very successfully for so many years beforehand. He had to put in place measures to stop the erosion of his creek banks because of the volume of water that was coming down and its pace because of what was done on the properties around him.

What does a good farmer who is doing the right thing do when those around him are destroying their place? They are only there to make a quick quid and to then get out. A lot of them have not been there too long. Two of this man's neighbours had only been there about three years. They wanted to value add—clear it and sell the property—because land prices in that area were growing fairly substantially and will continue to grow. They were not there to farm the land; they were there to make a quick quid. We could probably compare them with some of the developers in the urban areas around Brisbane where they put in no roads, no water, no power; they just want to carve up a block, get their quid and move on and let the purchaser, the councils and everybody else worry about the problems they leave behind.

If we do not have laws to stop that practice it will not cease; people will continue to do that. This legislation will help those farmers and graziers who have a love of the land and want to be able to say to their sons and grandchildren, 'This is your inheritance and it will be here for you for many generations to come. You will be able to successfully farm this area because we have looked after it for you.' Not too many years ago we used to say—and we all used to joke about it—that the worst thing a farmer could do would be to give his son the property because he would be giving something that he would not be able to pay off. It would be heavy with debt and he would not be able to make a living out of it. We do not want that. We want it the other way around, and we need them so badly. We need people in the bush and we need them to be able to make a quid.

This will probably raise some eyebrows on the other side of the House, but collectively I know about the help we are going to give to the sugar industry. We are going to put something like $600 million into the sugar industry to sustain it. That is a double-edged sword, but the sugar bill is coming up later and I will say something on that. However, we also need to make sure that what we are doing now is for the collective good. People on properties should realise that this bill is not being introduced to make their lives harder but to allow everybody to share in the wealth that we have in those bush areas so that in the years to come we can all benefit from it.

An opposition member: $150 million won't do it.

Mr PURCELL: $150 million will not do it?

Mr Mickel: You could go to the federal government to help you out.

Mr PURCELL: I do not know too many countries anywhere in the world—throughout Europe—that will pay people not to cut down trees.

An honourable member: They do all over Europe.

Mr PURCELL: They farm trees, yes, they do. But they will put people up against a fence if they start cutting down trees in certain areas because some of the trees over there have a history. People can tell you the history of that tree or scrub. It is the history of their family in some cases. In England they are trying to save trees and they are planting flat out—and England would fit

inside Queensland probably 40 or 50 times. They would love to have the opportunity that we have. We need to make it sustainable.

I think I should turn quickly to a favourite subject of those next door, that is, the hundreds of thousands of acres and square miles that we do not use in this country that should be used. It is a pity that those on the other side of the House do not do something about it. I am talking about the wasted land along our roads. Why do we not have tree-lined thoroughfares along our roads? The grass is taken from them; farmers let their stock out and they pinch all that grass. They think it is theirs. Why do they not do something about putting a few trees or a bit of something back in there? Then they could probably take a few more trees down off their land. If the thousands and thousands of acres or hundreds of square miles of trees that could be grown there were planted it would bring the rain back to their properties.

Hon. E. A. CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (3.48 p.m.): That is a hard act to follow, but I am going to give it my best shot. Queensland's irreplaceable biodiversity ranges from the unique coral reefs and rainforests of our far north to the mulga lands and desert landscapes of our western outback, all the way to the unique bushland that we are lucky enough to enjoy here in south-east Queensland. However, we know for a fact that all that is threatened. The science to prove that broadscale tree clearing hurts our natural environment is almost absolute.

Just last year 420 of the most respected ecologists from within Australia and around the world put pen to paper and signed the Brigalow Declaration beseeching the Premier and the Prime Minister to take this step. The Prime Minister has shown himself unwilling to listen to them, but the Premier of Queensland and this government have listened to them and we recognise that the time to act is now. To leave it any later would be lunacy and an act of negligence by a government that future generations would never forgive.

As we lose our trees salinity increases, water quality decreases, habitat for native fauna is lost and their numbers decline and pest animals thrive. By taking away what are truly the lungs of the earth, clearing contributes to global warming in the form of increased greenhouse gas emissions.

We have heard an enormous amount over the past two days, especially from members opposite, about thickening of vegetation and the corresponding thinning that is necessary. First, it is vital to give recognition to all those members of the regional vegetation management committees from all over Queensland from whose draft plans much of the groundwork for this aspect of the legislation has been drawn. Those dedicated committee members volunteered an enormous amount of their time and energy to develop the draft regional vegetation management plans. The government appreciates their efforts, particularly the rigour they brought to the task. These groups ensured that practical, on-the-ground experience and commonsense was blended with local knowledge and the best available scientific information to produce the advice they provided in the draft plans.

Those invaluable insights from the community itself have highlighted the need for recognition of thinning as an ongoing purpose in the legislation before the House today. There are areas in Queensland where the problem of thickening of remnant native vegetation has created serious changes in the local environment. Whether it is the consequence of farm management or of grazing, thickening is a significant problem for many, many land-holders. It can result in the loss of those open landscapes and their replacement with dense shrubs. Often this process results in a reduction in ground cover with a consequent increase in soil loss and, almost inevitably, erosion. This will eventually affect water catchments. It is a case of what becomes a problem in a small area has a negative impact on a wider scale.

For land-holders, the impact of thickening of vegetation is important. It not only represents a lost opportunity cost; it also represents costs in terms of the value of the land they manage. Thickening can result in an environment which is often vastly different ecologically from the original vegetation complex on which the land-holder depended. For that reason, the thinning provisions of this legislation are critical. Specifically, they are to ensure that regional ecosystems are conserved and that land degradation and potential loss of biodiversity are prevented.

These are all important considerations for land-holders who want to remain in business and who want to have viable properties to pass on to future generations. These are also the purposes of the legislation—to prevent land degradation and prevent the loss of biodiversity. That is why we are ensuring that land-holders' legitimate concerns about vegetation thickening are met not just now but also into the future.

This legislation recognises thinning as an ongoing purpose. This is clear and unambiguous. Unfortunately, there are some misconceptions floating around about thinning. Honourable members will have no doubt heard claims that land-holders' ability to carry out thinning would be detrimentally affected by this legislation. That simply is not true. Thinning as defined in this legislation is to allow the restoration of a regional ecosystem to its typical range of densities. Land-holders will be able to carry out thinning which will allow a reintroduction of the range of vegetation, including grasses, which were a part of the original complex of an area. It will result ultimately in a balanced and sustainable landscape which will provide the dual benefits of environmental stability and grazing productivity. That, after all, is what we need to ensure the present and future sustainability of our diverse landscapes here in Queensland.

Under the requirements of a specific code for thinning, land-holders who are applying for a thinning permit will need to describe how they want the vegetation to look when they have finished the work. This will demonstrate how the thinning they propose carrying out will ensure the re-establishment of a range more typical of densities and species across a small area. The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy will then examine this and assess it in the context of the broader landscape.

This legislation provides a fair and reasonable approach to the issues of thinning, but it does not simply end there. The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy has undertaken to review the thinning codes that will be in place at proclamation of this legislation after there has been feedback from land-holders out there in the real world. So it is fair and it is reasonable. There is nothing unreasonable in the thinning provisions of this legislation. Even so, land-holders are being given another opportunity to provide feedback to improve the thinning codes after a reasonable period of use for assessment.

Once this legislation is proclaimed, land-holders will be able to apply for thinning immediately. This will ensure there is minimal disruption to the good management of the productive native vegetation resources of this state. With that, I commend this bill to the House.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (3.54 p.m.): I, too, rise to support the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, brought to the House by the Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Robertson. This bill, which has been described by the Australian Conservation Foundation as 'a giant leap forward for Queensland', is certainly one of the most significant and most important pieces of legislation with which I will be involved in my parliamentary career.

This bill will end broadscale land clearing in Queensland by the end of December 2006. Importantly, indeed critically, it will also improve the relationship between the government and individual land-holders on the management of individual properties through the introduction of property maps of assessable vegetation. The bill incorporates $150 million of compensation for Queensland farmers.

Mr Johnson: You won't pay any compensation in the Murweh shire.

Ms NOLAN: This compensation package fills the gap and, indeed, very sadly has not been met by the member for Gregory's colleagues in the federal parliament who, despite the protestations of the National Party in this chamber, have absolutely refused to come to the party when it comes to compensating Queensland farmers. The federal government refused to come to the party in relation to the people it claims are its heart and soul, that is, the farmers of the rural areas of Queensland.

One only has to drive around western Queensland or get in a plane and fly over a part of that area to see the huge changes that have been made to the Australian landscape as a result of and since white settlement. While we did once in Australia see our landscape almost purely as a productive resource, we now understand much better the relationship between sustainable human life and the maintenance of our natural physical environment.

At the time the recent moratorium on broadscale land clearing in Queensland commenced, that practice was contributing 12 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions in Australia. As most people who have moved onto two legs understand, the greenhouse effect is one of the greatest threats to our continuing and sustainable life on this planet. This bill, by ending broadscale land clearing in Queensland, will deliver the single largest reduction in greenhouse gas emissions ever in Australia. In addition to the greenhouse impact, broadscale land clearing is the No. 1 cause of salinity, a threat to wildlife and a major cause of erosion.

Dealing with these environmental benefits really does speak for itself. The National Party and others have argued against this bill on the basis that it somehow removes what they see as people's inalienable right to broadscale land-clear on freehold land. The question of course is:

does anyone really have the right to damage the environment in which we all live? The answer to that is absolutely no. While some people might scrape themselves up off the earth to argue that broadscale land clearing with bulldozers and chains somehow does not damage the environment, I think most of us understand that broadscale land clearing in Queensland is fundamentally damaging to the environment. Having a permit in your hand does not mean that those bulldozers and those chains are not damaging the environment. One would think that even the members of the National Party could get their little heads around that little fact.

There has been opposition to this bill on a range of levels. Most recently, Agforce, the farmers group, sought to exercise its democratic right to represent its constituents' issues. Sadly, however, it has run arguments about the need for further consultation and it has run arguments about specific technical details of the bill to cover up for what is in fact its fundamental philosophical opposition to the bill. We all understand that this commitment was one of the major commitments of the Beattie Labor government in going to the last election. We all understand that, with the overwhelming majority this government won, there is a very clear mandate to bring forward the bill. Consultation, et cetera, will only serve to take away the choice that people have democratically made.

As I said earlier, the Howard government has welshed on an agreement to fund a part of the compensation for these farmers. The National Party has stood here over a couple of days now and argued that broadscale land clearing does not hurt the environment. The member for Hinchinbrook tried to say that trees were in fact causing the greenhouse effect in times of drought, which confounded me, I have to say. That these people can argue they are the defenders of rural Queensland when their own federal colleagues would have this bill go through with no compensation at all absolutely astonishes me.

This bill, with its environmental benefits and its comprehensive compensation package for farmers, really does speak for itself. It is a little ironic that this morning, in the condolence motion for Mr Charles Porter, the quotes that the Leader of the Opposition chose to use from Mr Porter were those that related to the need for political parties to change. Mr Springborg stood up here and said that that was the thing he had most admired in the late Mr Porter's contribution to public life over many decades. What he said was not that he admired Mr Porter's somewhat Right Wing perspective. What he said was that he admired the late Mr Porter's understanding that political parties have to change and that the issues change.

He used a quote about the era in which Mr Porter made his maiden speech being as different from that which had come before as the future would be from the time at which his maiden speech was made. It was a good quote. So how ironic it is that on the very day that Mr Springborg sought to say the thing that he admired about this man was his understanding that politics and people in politics have to change the National Party has spent all day arguing for the ideas of the past. I really think that position speaks for itself.

What we are seeing in here today is a bill that is absolutely fundamental for the continuation of sustainable human life and a sustainable economy in this state. What we have seen all day is the National Party trotting out a bunch of nonsensical, prehistoric, tired arguments about how things used to be and if only they were the same. Do National Party members like change or do they not? I think the answer to that is that they do not like change. They cannot change. They will not change. They have not changed and, as a result, like the dinosaurs they will wither away. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (4.05 p.m.): I have great pleasure in participating in the debate on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which is one of the most significant pieces of legislation this House will debate in this term. Throughout life we learn that we have to take some pain. We have to give up something for the greater good. I think one of the best examples of that in recent political time has been the gun laws. There has been significant bipartisan support—with a lot of hard work to get there—on gun laws. A lot of people, including sporting shooters—people who use guns for quite legitimate recreational purposes—have had to give up something they valued for the greater good; for the safety of the wider public.

The tree clearing debate I believe has lots of analogies to the gun law debate. There are significant numbers of people and families in this state who are going to take some pain. This government accepts that. There are families in this state who will be very anxious about their future and what this all means for them. I think some of the fear-engendering behaviour of conservative people in this state in relation to this bill has been irresponsible. Having said that, the

quite responsible and legitimate concerns have to be taken account of by this government and I feel that we are doing that.

In the case of tree clearing, it is very important that we take urgent and effective action now in order to have a sustainable future for the generation of children following us. There is no doubt about that. Every bit of research around points to that. There is no question about that and I do not think the National/Liberal parties are questioning that in any way. In fact, the Liberal Party is thankfully supporting us on this bill.

Our government has accepted that landowners do have legitimate concerns about loss of income or economic security issues and productivity issues on their own land. We do accept that there will be lots of fear and uncertainty. We are determined to provide the $150 million package to assist land-holders, and we are determined to get the cooperation that we need from the federal government even though we need to probably drag it kicking and screaming to the table. $150 million will enable land-holders to think about some new, creative ways of using land. There is nothing wrong with that. We all have to do that.

There are people in my area in the manufacturing industry who have to think about new ways of working, new careers, being retrained in new industries. It is happening everywhere. That is change; that is life. That is not new; that has been happening for many decades. The $150 million will also enable opportunities for industry groups to promote best management practices in sustainable agriculture, and that is a good thing. There will be money there for better management of native vegetation for land-holders who want to do that on their land. So there are a number of positive things that will come out of the $150 million compensation package.

A lot of issues have been canvassed in the debate. I am no expert on tree clearing. I do not want to go into the detail of the issues in this legislation. What I do want to do, though, is indicate to members in this House that tree clearing is not just an issue for the bush, it is not just an issue for rural people and land-holders; it is an issue for the whole state and for the whole nation. People in my local area might be wondering why a suburban member is getting up and having a rave about this issue. People talk to me about this issue. They are concerned. The local example that I have been working on is tree clearing on acreage on suburban land, and that may be a future issue we have to deal with because a lot of people are concerned about that.

The example I had was the great work of the Corbett family in Forestdale. A number of acres of land in a suburban residential area there were cleared, the timber was all stacked up and there was some burning off of that. They were worried about the immediate health risks from the smoke. They were worried about the loss of that vegetation in a high-density residential area.

People are worried about tree clearing in suburban areas just as they are worried about tree clearing in the bush. It is an important issue for all of us to consider. I am glad we have had a very lively and constructive debate on this issue. I commend the minister for his hard work. It is difficult to bring all the disparate stakeholders together to get some agreement on this issue. The minister, the Premier and other leaders in our team have done a very good job.

I urge members on the other side of the House to work with us on this and to work with their federal counterparts to get the compensation that people deserve.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: Those people will not go broke if the federal government works with us, does the right thing, supports the compensation package, supports their opportunity to have new and innovative ways of using land. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (4.10 p.m.): I rise in this debate to support the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 which has at the heart of its objectives the phasing out of broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation by 31 December 2006 and the protection of of concern remnant vegetation on freehold land. The outcomes will be a dramatic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the protection of our unique biodiversity.

I am the state MP for Aspley, a downtown Brisbane city seat. It is the heart of Queensland and the jewel in the crown. It is not a place that has necessarily got a lot of vacant land. The land we do have we feel very precious about. I belong to and represent one of those urban electorates that have been so derided in this debate primarily by the independent members and the One Nation member and, unfortunately, some of the new National Party members who have obviously forgotten that they are still desperately trying to win some urban seats. I suspect after listening to what some of them have had to say there is not much chance of that anyway.

I represent a seat that is full of people who have been absolutely crucified by some of the members opposite for having the audacity to support this historic legislation by voting with their hearts and their heads for a government that is prepared to show the courage to protect our environment now and in the future. Caring for our environment matters to the people of Aspley. It is a deep and considered caring despite what the members opposite say. It emanates not from a gullibility of popular politics as has been suggested by those opposite but from a deep commitment to a sustainable future and a preparedness to vote for that future.

I am offended by the attacks of those opposite on the urban electors in electorates such as Aspley. It disgusts me to be witness to the vitriol that spits and continues to drivel from their speeches. When people like the member for Nanango decide to be the chief condemner of uncaring urbanites they forget that many urban Aspley voters are from the country. Once upon a time Aspley was a farm area. It was considered an outlying suburb of Brisbane.

Dense urban population development only occurred about 40 years ago. Many Aspley electors indeed settled in Brisbane after living a life on the land. Many Aspley electors like me have a family heritage that finds its foundations in beautiful places like Wyandra, Charleville, Cunnamulla—all over Queensland. For those opposite to say that we do not understand or ignore the land is arrogant and untrue.

Indeed, as we struggle to live in our own environment, which is very difficult at times, we have made mistakes. We have urban sprawl, traffic, small lot housing. In the Pine Rivers shire we struggle with housing developments and koalas. I can tell members that Charters Towers is not the only place that is struggling with animals and people. We have problems with crows because we have cleared the land too much.

The mistakes that have been made in the south-east corner make those people who live in an electorate like Aspley extremely aware and extremely keen to understand the environmental policies of those parties who desire to lead this state. My election to this place did not need Greens preferences. I was elected on a primary vote. The Greens candidate in my area decided to give me his preferences. This legislation that this minister has put before this House was fundamental to that decision.

The people of Aspley have chosen a government that has an answer for their deep concerns about our land both in the city and in the country. It also chose a government that is a government for all of Queensland. They gave the Beattie Labor government the mandate. I commend the Premier and the minister for their courage. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (4.15 p.m.), in reply: I begin by thanking all members who have participated in this lengthy debate on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. When I introduced this bill, the first bill introduced in the new parliament fulfilling one of our core election commitments, I said, 'This bill delivers on a commitment which has been described as the most significant environment decision in Queensland's history.' They are not our words; they are the words of the people. What we are doing here today is truly historic. We are bringing to an end the continuing broadscale clearing of hundreds of thousands of hectares of remnant bush in Queensland.

It is fair to say that this has not been met with the agreement of all sides of this House. It is fair to say, however, a lot of nonsense has been spoken during this debate. The simple fact is this. This legislation delivers on an agreement—an agreement reached with the federal government in May last year.

I reiterate what this delivers to the Commonwealth, to Australia. It delivers, as John Howard requested of Queensland, 20 to 25 megatons of carbon savings per year—that is, carbon that would have been emitted—to assist the Commonwealth deliver on their commitments under the Kyoto protocol.

I recall the member for Tablelands saying that Australia has not signed up to the Kyoto protocol. That is quite right. The Commonwealth has committed itself that by 2008 they will deliver outcomes as if they were a signatory to the Kyoto protocol. That 20 to 25 megatons of carbon savings is not our figure; it was the Commonwealth's figure. That is what brought the Commonwealth to the table in May last year when they agreed to contribute $75 million out of the $150 million package for the phase-out of broadscale tree clearing by the end of 2006.

Why was it the end of 2006? Because the Commonwealth needs to have tree clearing in Queensland stopped in time for its Kyoto reporting requirements in 2008. That is why John Howard signed up to this deal. This is why John Howard also continues to require Queensland to stop the clearing of of concern vegetation.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: What has been held over our heads for the last two years in terms of Natural Heritage Trust II funding, worth $222 million at least to Queensland land-holders, is that we stop the clearing of of concern vegetation.

This package delivers on that. It delivers everything the Commonwealth required of us. It delivers on its greenhouse gas savings. It delivers on its requirements for the bilateral agreement with Queensland on Natural Heritage Trust II funding. To quote Warren Truss, the federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries—

It delivers $600 million a year to the Commonwealth in productivity savings.

They are his own words, yet what have we seen? The Commonwealth back out of the deal. And what have we seen, particularly with the National Party? A complete denial of the facts of the matter. Over the last 18 months the Premier and I have tabled letter after letter after letter from the Commonwealth—from the Prime Minister himself—in terms of the agreements reached. We even had the nonsense spoken during this debate that when we brought in the moratorium on the receipt of tree clearing applications in May last year the Commonwealth did not support that. I just happen to have a transcript from 19 May, the day after we brought in the moratorium on tree clearing, quoting Dr David Kemp, the federal Minister for Environment and Heritage. The question was asked of him—

Did the Commonwealth direct Queensland to introduce the moratorium?

Dr Kemp replied—

No, it did not direct the Queensland government. There was, however, a sharp increase in applications to clear land and it was inevitable that such a moratorium would have to go on in such circumstances. The Prime Minister wrote to Premier Beattie and indicated the Commonwealth government would support a moratorium in these circumstances on applications so that there could be a calm and clear period in which we could discuss the proposals that the Commonwealth and the Queensland government have been working on together.

From the federal Minister for Environment's own mouth, those opposite stand condemned for the dishonesty and the untruths that they have uttered right throughout this debate.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Let me turn to some of the contributions of members opposite. I think it is tragic in such an important debate such as this that the members opposite could not even be bothered actually reading the legislation, because what we had was just platitude after platitude after platitude. We had the extraordinary claim from the member for Warrego with respect to one of his constituents, a Johnny Jones, who was suffering as a result—and these are the member's own words—from the incursion of needlewood and condemned this government for not allowing him to clear that incursion. If the member had read the legislation, he would know that incursions of foreign species into the landscape can be cleared under this legislation.

I take the earlier interjection by the member for Warrego when he said that it cannot be cleared with chains. Again, if he had read the legislation he would know that, in terms of the restrictions on the use of chains, it refers to thinning. It does not refer to incursions of foreign species. It says it in the legislation. Also, he stands condemned not just because he has not read the legislation; he stands condemned because, whilst they have been carrying on for the last 12 months about the regional vegetation management process and how badly we have treated those committees, has he read one of those draft regional vegetation management plans? Has he read the one for his own area? Has he read it for the mulga lands? Has he read it for the New England Tablelands? Has he read it for the brigalow regions? Has he read it for the Mitchell grass downs? Has he read it for any of the other bioregions for which draft vegetation management plans were finalised? Clearly the answer must be no, because if he had gone through any of the regional vegetation management plans he would know that each and every one of these plans drafted by the community, of which he has been so supportive, contained recommendations that, for the purposes of thinning vegetation, broadscale clearing is not a suitable or appropriate practice.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Let me quote. I will just pick one at random. This one just happens to be the north-west Mitchell grass downs regional vegetation management planning area. It says—

Thinning does not include total removal of the understorey, parkland clearing that removes all vegetation except selected old trees, broadscale clearing and introduction of exotic species.

That is in every one of these plans. Had the member read them, he would have known that they do not contain recommendations that allow the use of chaining as an appropriate method for

thinning. These are the committees that he has been defending for the last 12 months while saying that we do not take any notice of them. Well, we have, because the codes that will apply under this legislation come straight out of those regional vegetation management plans.

The member for Warrego is hung by his own laziness, by his own lack of preparation. Let me talk about laziness for a moment, because we have heard a lot of nonsense spoken over a significant period of time about how green the National Party has become, how it has discovered the environment and how it has always been supportive of appropriate vegetation management. Let me tell members: for every piece of legislation that has been brought into this place since Labor came to government in 1989, those opposite have opposed it. They have opposed every single one! But what is the National Party's policy? It had the opportunity during the last state election to tell us what its policy was. What did it say? It said, 'We support appropriate vegetation management laws.' Full stop! Bang! Nothing else! The fact is that it is too lazy to either go to the people or to come into this place with a detailed vegetation policy.

Those opposite know it, because they know they cannot deliver. They know they do not support it. What they do support is the continuation of the vandalism of some land-holders out there who just do not get it. There are plenty of good land-holders out there, and I object to those opposite continuing to berate us and say that we are against farmers. That is absolute nonsense, because while I have been Natural Resources Minister in this state I have done nothing else but engage with land-holders face to face on their properties talking to them about these issues. If they had done the same, they would know what land-holders actually say. I can tell them that there is significant support for this legislation out there, because a lot of land-holders now say that enough is enough. They say, 'We've had our fair go in terms of development. We've had our fair go in terms of clearing. Enough is enough.' People who live in catchments, like those out the member's way where there is less than 30 per cent remnant vegetation, know what the science says. Every bit of good science says that when we start getting under that 30 per cent threshold of remnant vegetation we start going down the slope of long-term degradation. Every good bit of science says that, and the member opposite remains silent on this point because he knows that.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: But did he support us when we brought in the moratorium on clearing of any further vegetation in catchments of less than 30 per cent vegetation? No, he took us to the wire. Every step of the way he objected to it. The fact is that he is bankrupt. He is bankrupt in terms of having any sensible policy about long-term sustainability in this state.

I have heard some nonsense spoken today. Unfortunately, it actually came from the Leader of the Opposition who I actually thought, being a farmer himself, might have understood this stuff. What he was saying was that we can continue to knock down the trees and so long as we grow grass that will suck in the carbon and we will get the greenhouse benefits that we need by growing grass. What a load of nonsense! How can he possibly compare the sequestration abilities of a tree with a chunk of grass? Are those opposite so scientifically bankrupt? Are they so ignorant about what has been going on in this country in the last 10 years in terms of the greenhouse debate?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Yes, the member is on record as saying 'grow grass; it is good for greenhouse'. What an absolute load of nonsense!

Then the member for Hinchinbrook came in and, as the members opposite do, paraphrased some sort of study. That study says that some areas of the Wet Tropics may, in fact, become carbon emitters rather than carbon sinks. That was referring to the drought when the growth of trees slows, but we still have the regeneration on the forest floor. Because the trees have slowed their growth as a result of the drought, they become carbon emitters. What a genius! Does that mean that greenhouse science is flawed? Of course it does not! The member is an absolute scientific imbecile. I could go on in relation to this.

Mr ROWELL: I rise to a point of order. I object. That is unparliamentary. It is not called for. It does not reflect well on a minister of the Crown. He is an absolute disgrace when he has to sink to that level.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! The member has found offence. I ask the minister to withdraw.

Mr ROBERTSON: I withdraw. Over the past 12 months there has been a lot of politics in relation to this issue. A $150 million package has been put on the table, fully funded by

Queensland despite the fact that the Commonwealth picks up significant benefits. But there was just a chance that, after we made that election commitment of fully funding that $150 million, the National Party would awake from its slumber and say, 'Here is an opportunity to get some more money for our constituents. Now that Peter Beattie has put $150 million on the table, why don't we go down to Canberra to try to get the Commonwealth to contribute their $75 million on top of that? That way we would have $225 million for our land-holders because, goodness me, we have been saying for a long time now that $150 million is not enough. So if we got $75 million and added it to the $150 million, that might actually be a good outcome for the people we represent.' But did they do that? No, they did not! Because they would rather play politics than actually deliver for their constituents. Rather than doing the hard yakka and going down to see John Anderson, David Kemp and Warren Truss, they sat there mute and absurd while the chance of $75 million extra for Queensland went begging.

I attended the ministerial council meeting for natural resources ministers and spoke to Truss and Kemp about this matter and pleaded with them. I said, 'If you are fair dinkum, you have all of these benefits for nil consideration. What about stumping up for Queensland with the $75 million, Warren? That would be good.' He laughed at me. He thought that it was a great joke. So the Commonwealth would rather take the benefits for nil consideration—in selling out the land-holders all along—so come the federal election they could point to the Queensland government and say, 'They're the bad guys. We had nothing to do with it.' They are all care and no responsibility.

I appreciate the support from the state Liberal Party, I really do. But as I said, it is all care and no responsibility. The fact is that the Leader of the Liberal Party knows that his Prime Minister and his Environment Minister got the outcomes that they wanted. They got their 20 megatons to 25 megatons of carbon reduction. They got their protection of of-concern vegetation. They got everything they wanted when they sat down with us 18 months ago to start negotiating this matter and they have walked away with $75 million in their kick for the forthcoming federal election. I have been in negotiations in this role and as a union official for about the past 20 years. Frankly, I have never seen a more dishonest bunch than the federal government.

Mr Quinn: You walked away from it.

Mr ROBERTSON: We walked away from absolutely nothing. We were always prepared to discuss it with the Commonwealth. It was the Commonwealth, at the insistence of Agforce and the Queensland Farmers Federation, that took us out of the equation while they worked the stuff out over there. Agforce had its chance to put its issues up to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth came back to us and said, 'Well, guys, what do you think?' We said, 'We don't think it can work.' They did their own figures and said, 'You're right. It can't work,' but a whole political deviation strategy was put in place so that the Commonwealth came away clean. It was just grossly and absolutely dishonest every stretch of the way. But for the Leader of the Liberal Party to put up his hand and say, 'This is good for Queensland' and say that he would be voting with us—and, yes, he got a nice little pat on the back from the Greens, good on him—at the end of the day, it has been all care and no responsibility. I have to say that it is very, very shallow.

The other thing the members opposite carry on about is this alleged DPI report that said that this legislation will cost $900 million. The members opposite will never say that that report refers to the impact of thickening. It does not actually relate to what we are trying to do with phasing out broadscale clearing. If the members opposite had actually read this legislation, they would know that we have addressed the issue of thickening. So what is the economic impact? According to the recommendations coming from the regional vegetation management committees that were made up of land-holders themselves as well as local government groups and some environmentalists, appropriate thinning codes should not include broadscale clearing. So as the members opposite had been asking us to do, we listened to those committees and we adopted their recommendations. As a result we will now have in place thinning codes across the 20 or so bioregions in this state that are regionally relevant according to the recommendations of these committees. So when the members opposite start going around the place saying, 'Whoa, hang on, vegetation is thickening all over the place and there is this huge economic impact according to some report that we have seen—it will cost $900 million,' we solved it. We addressed it. We have fixed it. We fixed it according to the recommendations.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Do I have to wave these things to the member again? I will actually blow them up for the member for Warrego so the print is big.

A government member: They can't read.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will actually have diagrams for the member. I appreciate that the members opposite may not be able to read.

Mr Mickel: Colour them in.

Mr ROBERTSON: Yes. I will actually do a bit of join the dots, if the member likes, because all of these regional vegetation management plans were drafted by the people the members opposite have been calling on us to listen to. We have listened to them. We have adopted their recommendations and we are getting criticism for that. You just cannot win with these characters. That just demonstrates, in a policy sense, exactly how bankrupt the members opposite are.

As I said earlier today, the day that the members opposite come up with a vegetation management policy—apart from saying 'We care about vegetation'—is the day that everyone in this place will be bowled over. It has never happened in the last 20 years and it will not happen. It is glib and it is without substance. The members opposite know that they cannot deliver, because they are not prepared to do the work. They are not prepared to invest the intellectual capital that they need to come up with a sensible, sustainable vegetation management policy.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. The minister has nine minutes left for his reply. He has spent most of his time abusing everybody. He has not covered the substance of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr HOBBS: There are a lot of people here who want to hear about the bill and we need to hear it.

Mr ROBERTSON: I have had to cop abuse for two days. Fair go!

A government member: He called you a dill.

Mr ROBERTSON: He called me dill? I bet that stretched his repertoire of insults.

Mr Hobbs: If the cap fits, wear it.

Mr ROBERTSON: The problem is that if that is the best that the member for Warrego can do from his intellectual repertoire, I will just have to cop it. But in return I say to the member that when his IQ reaches 50, I would sell, because it is never going to get any higher.

Mr Hobbs: Tell us about the bill.

Mr ROBERTSON: I am happy to tell members opposite about the bill. I am happy to tell them about the science. During the debate we heard a lot about science and how crook our science was, despite the fact that, in terms of the Brigalow declaration, 420 scientists from throughout Australia endorsed what we were doing. I appreciate that, when it comes to these kinds of matters, 15 members of the National Party will put up a good fight against 420 of Australia's best scientists. I am prepared to concede that, but the fact is that when the members opposite talk about science, they have absolutely nowhere to go. The members opposite talked a lot about the salinity maps—that old hoary chestnut. As I mentioned, I just came back from a natural resources ministerial council meeting where the Australian Academy of Science endorsed Queensland's salinity hazard mapping process.

Guess who signed off on that report? Warren Truss! Warren Truss thinks our science is good. The Australian Academy of Science thinks our science is good. The only ones who do not are the 15 geniuses over there. It is a fairly difficult—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: It has not. The same science that delivered those salinity hazard maps two years ago were the same ones that the Australian Academy of Science just ticked off on. The member should be embarrassed because of the continuing nonsense.

I might just mention Cubbie because that is the other favourite one. I do not know if the member knows what is going on out there. I can tell him that when it hits the papers he is going to be eating crow in terms of all of the abuse, dishonesty and lies that he has meted out over the past couple of years. I cannot wait for it to happen because members opposite will have mud all over their collective and individual faces.

This has been a good debate from this point of view, because a majority of members have stood up in this place understanding exactly where it is we are going and what it is that we are doing. We are taking a long-term view. We are making the hard decisions now for the future of Queensland.

I know that opposition politicians, particularly with the media, criticise governments for having a view only about the next three years. As one of the members said, this is about the next 50 years because future generations will, in fact, thank us for what we do today. This is about ensuring that our landscape remains productive. It is about ensuring that we protect our valuable biodiversity. It is about delivering on our commitment to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

I have heard a number of members on the other side ask why it is that the land-holders are copping the burden of greenhouse gas reductions. Again, they must have been asleep at the wheel, otherwise they would know that we have in place in this state an energy policy under which by the end of next year 15 per cent of our energy needs will be met from non-coal sources, for example from gas—and in particular coal seam methane gas. That is why we are converting the Townsville plant to a gas-fired power station, fired up by coal seam methane, which would have been previously vented into the atmosphere. That is why by the end of the reporting period two per cent of our energy needs will be met from renewable resources. That is why yesterday I introduced the Geothermal Exploration Bill to deliver up a technology which generates significant power for zero emissions. Right across corporate Queensland and right across corporate Australia companies are doing their bit, or at least should be doing their bit, in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Land-holders are not copping the burden for Kyoto; everyone is copping the burden for Kyoto.

Mr Hobbs: That is not true.

Mr ROBERTSON: They are. Does the member think that delivering gas is as competitive as burning coal in our power stations? Of course it is not. But who picks up the tab between the price of electricity generated by coal as distinct from the price of energy generated by gas? We do—the taxpayers do. Around $90 million a year goes into that to support the uniform tariff in this state. They are the simple facts.

Mr Seeney: Rubbish!

Mr ROBERTSON: I see the opposition spokesperson for energy—he does do energy as well?—is saying, 'Rubbish!' I invite him to actually ask me a question during question time about this. Bruce and Mr Messenger might be interested in this. Do they realise it has been 510 days since Jeff Seeney has asked me a question in this place? That is how much he cares about natural resource management issues in this state. That is how much he cares about energy issues in this state. That is how much he cares about mining issues—in fact, when it comes to mining issues I think it has been a bit longer than that. It has been around 700 days since he asked me a question about mining, and he wants to suggest that I am talking rubbish. He has had 700 days to find me out, but not once has he stood in this place and asked me a question. It has been 510 days on natural resources, 700 days on mines. This just underscores how bankrupt this mob is, how lazy they are when it comes to natural resource management, how reliant they are on platitudes and how committed they are to their long-term natural resource management policy of deny, deny, deny.

Question—That the bill be now read a second time—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 64—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E. Clark, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, J. Cunningham, English, Fenlon, Finn, Flegg, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, McArdle, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Quinn, Reeves, Reilly, Reynolds, N. Roberts, Robertson, D. Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, C. Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wellington, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Nolan

NOES, 20—Copeland, E. Cunningham, C. Foley, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Lee Long, Lingard, Menkens, Messenger, Pratt, Rickuss, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg. Tellers: Hopper, Malone

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Committee

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) in charge of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN: As this is the first sitting of the Committee of the Whole House, I would like to remind members that time limits for members other than the spokesperson on the matter have been changed. Members will be able to make one contribution of 10 minutes duration or two contributions of five minutes duration. Unless a member indicates that they will make a 10-minute contribution, the chair will presume that that member will be making two five-minute contributions.

When I was in the chamber during the minister's reply to the second reading debate I noted a high level of heat being generated. I suggest that people think about having a cold shower or just relaxing, because I do not think it is healthy debate when we get personal invective or such emotion in debate. I ask members to use some objectivity in debating the very important clauses of this bill.

Clauses 1 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr SEENEY (4.55 p.m.): Mr Chairman, at the outset I endorse your remarks that the Committee of the Whole House can be productive. I believe it is unfortunate that the minister chose in his reply to the second reading debate not to respond to many of the points raised during the debate but chose to spend his time hurling insults across the chamber. I say to the minister that, given the division that occurred on the second reading of this bill, there is now a responsibility on both of us to ensure that the stakeholders who will be affected by this bill clearly understand the government's intent in relation to some of its complexities.

I would like to use the committee stage to get a clear understanding, not just for me and my colleagues but also for the stakeholders who are involved in the management of natural resources in Queensland, of the government's intention in relation to the more complex parts of this legislation. So the minister and I should put aside that personal invective, which we can both engage in for our own amusement but which will not achieve anything for the people out there who have to live with this legislation.

One of the things that has been apparent in debate on pieces of legislation dealing with vegetation management that have progressed through this House previously is that there has been a huge gulf of understanding between what we hear at a political level and what actually happens on the ground, out in the far-flung regions of Queensland. In consideration of the clauses of this bill I want to look very closely at some of the main issues and get on record the government's intention, not with the intention of challenging it—the vote we have just had indicates that that is not terribly productive—but because I want the people who will read this debate to understand the government's intention.

Clause 6 sets out the purpose of the act. The bill lists a whole range of purposes. I guess all of those are as we would expect, except that some are not there. I would have thought a purpose of this act would be to achieve sustainable management, to ensure sustainable development or some such comment. The old Land Act certainly took that approach. The only Land Act recognised a number of objects of significance with relevance to land management and land-holders in particular. It included consideration and balancing of the different economic, environmental, cultural and social opportunities and values of the land; allocating land for development to facilitate its appropriate use that supports economic, social and physical wellbeing; consultation with industry and community groups as an important part of the decision-making process; consistent and impartial dealings; and efficient, open and accountable administration. They were all listed as purposes of the Land Act. One purpose of the Land Act was to allow the development of land. Those purposes listed in the Land Act and removed by this legislative process certainly are not reflected in the purposes set out in this bill.

That raises a question about the government's intention with regard to those great areas of leasehold land in particular. Is the government interested in achieving sustainable management regimes in those areas? Is the government going to allow development in those areas? If so, why is it not listed as a purpose of this act? Why has it been so deliberately removed?

Mr ROBERTSON: There has been a lot of discussion on that particular point over the last number of weeks. I think it is fair to say that it really does not serve any purpose to have those particular clauses relating to economic, social and environmental sustainability in an act such as this, because the purpose of the act is quite clear. Subclause (1) states—

The purpose of this Act is to regulate the clearing of vegetation in a way that—

(a) conserves the following—

The clause then sets out a number of paragraphs.

That is in fact the purpose of the act. It does not stop economic development but it controls economic development in a way that that economic development cannot offend this purpose of the act, which is about phasing out broadscale tree clearing by December 2006. That is the purpose of the act. There can be nothing clearer than that. In terms of how land can be further developed through the IDAS system and through IPA, that is where issues of long-term economic

sustainability or economic development are more appropriately put. It is a drafting issue. It is of no real consequence in terms of affecting the remainder of the provisions of this act. Arguably, it is symbolic.

I heard one argument over the last couple of days that because IPA sits above this act the provisions of IPA in terms of the purposes of the act should be reflected in this act. Well, no, that is not correct. How development proceeds under IPA is as a consequence of this act and other acts. This act sets the broad framework from which IPA and the IDAS systems that underpin it operate. It was a decision taken by government that that wording that appears there is appropriate given the fundamental purpose of this act is to stop broadscale tree clearing or phase it out by December 2006.

Mr SEENEY: I take it from that response that there is no deliberate intent or there was no deliberate motive in removing such things from the Land Act as a statement in the purpose of the act that said 'to allow the development of land'.

Mr Robertson: I think it is best to describe it as an evolutionary thing.

Mr SEENEY: I put it on record that the minister has assented to that suggestion that there was no deliberate strategy to do that, and he can stand up and correct me if he likes.

Mr Robertson: Let me think about it for a minute.

Mr SEENEY: The minister can correct me if he likes, but he needs to make the position very clear that that was not done with any intent. I took that from what the minister said but I believe he needs to confirm it.

The other issue that I would like to pursue in the consideration of this clause relates directly to the purposes of the act and the consequences of achieving those purposes. As I said in my speech during the second reading stage, the whole question of compensation is not addressed in a particular clause in this bill, but it certainly flows on from the achievement of these purposes listed here because it is in the achievement of these purposes that economic penalty will be felt by the people who are affected by it.

The minister mentioned that in the summation of the second reading debate but he never addressed any of the issues that were raised by speakers especially on this side of the House in regard to the uncertainty about how that $150 million will be distributed or used to compensate or assist the people who are impacted by this legislation. I have heard a number of comments in other forums from the minister and other members of the government that this should not be seen as compensation as such but as adjustment assistance. The Premier answered a question in which he talked about assisting people to establish feedlots and things such as that.

Could the minister for the benefit of the House give some indication about how this money is going to be allocated? A whole range of questions is exercising the minds of the people who are going to be affected by the achievement of the purposes of this act that are listed there. I think this is a good opportunity in this debate at the committee stage to address that issue, and I ask the minister to do that.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will do it to the best of my ability. Unfortunately, I did not bring the document into the chamber that would have allowed me to give the member a detailed answer about this. We have had these kinds of discussions before on a couple of previous bills where money has been involved. As is the right of an opposition holding the government accountable, the opposition has sought clarification or assurances that the money we are talking about appears somewhere. It has sought that it appear in acts. I appreciate the argument. I am not knocking the argument. But I think it is fair to say that we went to the people of Queensland with a very definite policy—a two-part policy: (a) phase out broadscale tree clearing of remnant vegetation by December 2006 and (b) fully fund a $150 million adjustment package.

That is an election commitment and that $150 million will be reflected in the forthcoming budget, where the first allocation would appear for this adjustment assistance program. We will be rolling that out over a number of years. So we committed publicly to $150 million. The people of Queensland will hold us accountable if we do not deliver on it. It will be a core broken promise if we do not deliver on it.

To provide the member with a degree of certainty that he might be seeking, last Monday was the first meeting that was held with stakeholders such as Agforce and QFF about how that $150 million package would be structured and delivered. In principle, we would be looking at splitting that package—and in fact we announced this—into three allocations. The first allocation, I hope, is $8 million which goes to organisations to roll out best practice management programs.

So a form of extension services to the membership of those organisations to help their members and others adopt new practices that would accord with what this act is trying to achieve.

The next allocation is $12 million, which is for incentives—bush tender incentives. The member might know of the bush tender program that has been running in Victoria. We would be looking at starting a similar kind of program pretty much based on the Victorian system but, we think, improved—the member might expect us to say that but we think it would be improved—whereby land-holders will be able to put in a bid for financial assistance for protecting or locking up areas of environmental significance on their properties. That would go through a tender process similar to what we see in Victoria whereby the state gets maximum bang for its buck from the tender process.

The bulk of it—$130 million—will go to extreme cases of having to purchase properties which have been rendered absolutely economically unviable, and working back from that extreme position to other forms of direct cash adjustment to assist them to adjust by embracing new businesses on their properties. Off the top of my head, they could convert to a feedlot in appropriate circumstances. We will provide them with assistance to diversify their operations. In a broad sense, that is how we are looking to roll out this package. It is very much subject to consultations with Agforce et al. to meet the needs of their membership. We do not a have a definitive, written-in-blood system. We very much want to hear from land-holder organisations as to how best to put this package together.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I note that the member for Gladstone is wanting the call. I will allow them to finish this issue before I involve the member for Gladstone.

Mr SEENEY: I think that is probably the best way to approach it. The minister will understand that there is a huge degree of uncertainty and, it is probably safe to say, scepticism about the distribution of that $130 million that he referred to in his answer especially with regard to properties in the more remote areas where the development of options that would qualify for adjustment assistance, to use the correct term, are fairly limited.

I have a couple of issues that will indicate the way that the minister is thinking and the way the government is heading. At what sort of level does the government envisage a land-holder would have to be impacted upon to qualify for the buy-out portion of that funding? Would it have to be a 100 per cent affected property or is there an opportunity for assistance for somebody who has a property that is quite seriously impacted upon?

I understand the difficulty with this. Who is going to make these decisions? Has the minister made any decisions about how these applications for assistance are going to be considered? Is a tribunal going to be set up? Will a group of people be charged with distributing this money or overseeing the distribution of this money or is it going to be done by you, as the minister? There is whole range of questions that we obviously do not have time to go into today. Can the minister give us some directional indication about the way the government is heading in terms of the distribution of this money that is so often talked about?

Mr ROBERTSON: We understand the sensitivities associated with this. The last person who should be distributing the money is the minister. I can give members a guarantee that that will not be the case. The details are still being worked out. Of necessity we will almost have to take an individual by individual approach to this issue because everyone's circumstances are going to be a bit different.

We envisage rolling this out with QRAA, the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority, because we believe they have the skill sets to be able to handle these matters. They roll out these kinds of assistance programs in other industries for other purposes so we will be relying heavily on QRAA to deliver this once the framework has been finalised, following consultation.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: QRAA is independent.

Mr Seeney: So QRAA will make the decisions?

Mr ROBERTSON: In terms of dealing with the individual land-holders and making the assessments of the impact. They have the skill set.

Mr Johnson: Are you sure about that?

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: As Marc would know, they do it in the sugar industry.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Okay. I am informed that QRAA is the best organisation with the skill set to do those individual assessments to roll out that package.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: In relation to the purposes of this act, there has been opinion generated that indicates that the purpose of this act is inconsistent with the IPA. I would be interested in the minister's view on that matter. Where there is inconsistency, which act will take precedence?

Mr ROBERTSON: I referred to that before. I assumed the legal advice the member is talking about is the legal advice that Agforce organised. I met with Agforce yesterday, as did the Premier and senior officials from my department and the Premier's department, to consider exactly that point. I replied to the member for Callide along these lines earlier. In terms of development opportunities, this act sets the boundaries upon which IPA would operate. The development opportunities that come out of this bill go over to IPA where the IDAS system would operate.

There was some concern expressed that, by virtue of not putting in specific verbiage related to economic sustainability et cetera, somehow that would deny the use of the provisions under IPA. That is not the case. The member will see later in the act specific references to IDAS as the system that would be followed in terms of pursuing development opportunities as they are limited by this act. I actually wrote back to Agforce today. We indicated that we would get back to them in 24 hours. We did that. We sent them the letter explaining this position. We trust that they are satisfied with that response.

Mr HOBBS: I have a number of points I would like to raise with the minister tonight. In the minister's response to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition he talked about the fact that this clause does not refer to good land management practices; it refers only to the environment. It impacts very strongly on the environment. The minister mentioned the fact that it has been brought to his attention that maybe it is not IPA compliant. Now the minister says he thinks it is. The reality is that a balanced decision under IPA cannot be made if there are conflicting powers in that clause. Because it is focused purely on the environment there is no room to move in an IPA assessment to take into consideration good land management practices. I predict there will be challenges to that in the future.

Another important part that we should work our way through is (g). It says that the purpose of the act is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Why would the government not take part in the greenhouse assessments of what 'greenhouse' really means in Queensland? The scientific evidence about specific species of trees is not there. For instance, is a mulga tree compliant? Is a mulga tree a greenhouse compliant tree? If the minister could answer that question I would be interested in the answer.

I also point out that the minister in his summing up referred to grass. He berated the Leader of the Opposition by saying that grass is not a greenhouse sink. Richard Golden had his property assessed by the Australian Greenhouse Office and it found that his developed property was a far better greenhouse sink now than it would have been in its natural state. That is clear evidence. This is why there is no trust out there. The government is not using genuine science. All it is using is words and, shall I mention the words: l-i-e-s—

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Chairman, I raise a point of order.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think spelling the word out does not make it parliamentary.

Mr HOBBS: They are lying, but I will withdraw it.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Chairman, we started off this debate with some very fine words from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition about conducting this debate in a civil way. I hope this will be the only breach of that commitment tonight.

Mr HOBBS: You have not seen a thing yet. Sit down and take it. This is a genuine argument.

Mr Robertson: Don't call me a liar, then.

Mr HOBBS: We would like an answer, Minister.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Can I suggest that you start this part of your contribution again?

Mr HOBBS: We will start again. That is really good. Can the minister tell us why the state government would not be part of that study into greenhouse impacts in Queensland? Can he also tell us if in fact the mulga lands of Queensland are a positive greenhouse sink?

Mr ROBERTSON: There are a number of issues. Firstly, I did not say during the debate that grass is not a greenhouse sink.

Mr Hobbs: You did.

Mr ROBERTSON: What I said was in relation to what the Leader of the Opposition said—that is, that it is okay to replace trees with grass because grass is a greenhouse sink. What I said was how could he compare the qualities of grass versus trees in terms of their carbon sequestration abilities. That was No. 1. Secondly, the reason we did not participate in the trial is that we were not asked to. Thirdly, in terms of the science that underpins our greenhouse calculations, that is based on advice from the Australian Greenhouse Office.

Mr HOBBS: The minister has not told us why the government would not participate in a genuine effort to gather the science in Queensland—that is, to go out on the ground and prove it. The minister also has not answered the question in terms of locking up this country in Queensland. Also, he still will not answer the question as to whether the mulga lands is a carbon sink. As he would be aware, the mulga lands is a very large area and there is evidence around to say that the mulga lands may not be a genuine carbon sink. If that is the case, why are we locking up this country that is not a carbon sink? I am asking a simple question, Minister. Does the minister know if in fact the mulga lands are a positive carbon sink?

Mr ROBERTSON: The simple answer is no.

Mr Hobbs: Then why are you locking it up?

Mr ROBERTSON: What I do know is that if we do not lock it up—that is, if we continue to knock it down—what used to be a carbon sink becomes a carbon emitter, because the mulga gets either eaten or it deteriorates and all the—

Mr Hobbs: It grows again.

Ms Nelson-Carr: He's just not answering the way you want him to answer.

Mr Hobbs: He doesn't know. It grows.

Mr ROBERTSON: Yes, and it continues to be knocked down and consumed and deteriorate. That is what I said. I do not know whether it is a sink or not.

Mr Hobbs: Then why are you doing it?

Mr ROBERTSON: We are not doing it because, again, if the member had bothered to read the draft regional vegetation management plan for the mulga lands and if he had read the legislation, he would know that the harvesting of mulga for fodder purposes is permitted under this act. So it becomes an irrelevant question. We are not locking it up. It is continuing to be used for fodder purposes. The recommendations of the regional vegetation management plan will inform the codes as to how they actually harvest the mulga for fodder purposes. As to whether it is a sink or not is irrelevant to the debate. I wish the member for Warrego would read the bill. I wish he would read the regional vegetation management plans. I wish he would inform himself a lot better before he comes into this place.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Because we were not asked! That is the second time.

Mr JOHNSON: I draw the minister's attention to the fact that there are some very contentious issues that have to be answered here. They are relevant questions to the legislation, and I believe that they should be asked and answered here today. It is all very well to introduce legislation—

The CHAIRMAN: Is the member speaking to clause 6?

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, I am, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, well, I ask the member to refer his comments to that, please.

Mr JOHNSON: Okay. It is all very well to introduce this legislation, but nowhere in the legislation is there the true meaning of terms like 'regrowth', 'remnant vegetation' and the like. The second point I want to touch on is the thinning point. The policy should be consistent with tree density at European settlement. There is no mention of that in here at all. The member for Warrego has touched on scientific studies, as has the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The real issue here is that there are scientific records out there, but they have been treated with contempt. Bill Burrows's records have not been taken into account at all. There are techniques and scientific tools that prove this. Why isn't the minister adhering to this scientific information?

Mr ROBERTSON: In relation to the first question, the member for Gregory will find the definitions of all of those terms either in the existing Vegetation Management Act or, where they have been changed, in this bill. Secondly, I am satisfied that the science that underpins this

SLATS data, et cetera, is sufficient for the purposes of this bill. The fact that over 200 of Australia's most eminent scientists support this action I think is proof enough that there is a strong scientific basis for what we are doing.

Mr JOHNSON: I would have thought that Dr Bill Burrows is one of those eminent scientists. However, I draw the minister's attention to subclause 6(3)(d) on page 9 of this legislation which says 'prevents the loss of biodiversity'. Another aspect to this legislation is the purpose of subclause 6(3)(d). The minister might like to explain that, because an aspect of this legislation as to the importance of ongoing management is a very contentious issue. There is no mention at all of encroachment or thickening vegetation or old regrowth. The minister might like to elaborate on those aspects of this subclause, because I believe that that is what this is all about.

Mr ROBERTSON: The member will find that later on in the act there are references to encroachment and references to thinning. What was the other one?

Mr Johnson: The other one was old regrowth.

Mr ROBERTSON: There is no existing definition of 'old regrowth'. There are clauses later on in the bill that the member may wish to speak to in order to pursue that argument further. It is probably not relevant to this particular section.

Mr ROWELL: I just want to make a comment on QRAA. I thought that it was important that I make a contribution on this issue, because what happened with sugar industry money was that it was a loan. This will be quite different to what the minister is proposing in terms of QRAA's role. What we found is that the parameters were far too tight and far too difficult to access funding. If the minister is going to use QRAA as a medium to distribute this money, it will be essential to set parameters that can be achieved by those people who need the funding. That is what we found, because very tightly controlled funds are of no benefit to anybody. Out of the $10 million, as I recall, only $60,000 was actually loaned out to people who were desperately in need of this money. I would ask the minister to comment on that.

There is one other issue I want to raise, and that deals with what I said about the canopy crane in the Daintree. It was interesting to see what came out of that. I am not saying that certain areas will not act as carbon sinks, but there can be a reverse process under certain climatic conditions. I was a bit disappointed that the minister berated me for what I had to say on that issue, because I think it is very important that under certain conditions we can get a situation where carbon dioxide is emitted by trees. I raised that issue because I was wondering if other significant studies, other than what has happened in the Daintree area with the canopy crane, have been carried out on the types of conditions that they referred to as far as carbon dioxide being emitted.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will just deal with the second matter first. I understand that trees in fact do emit carbon on a fairly regular basis. I understand from my junior science course that they actually emit carbon every night. So there you go. The first matter is in relation to QRAA. The skills set in terms of assessment is what we are after. I take on board what the member said about his particular experience. I do not have first-hand knowledge of that. We will follow it up if there has been a problem with how they have operated in the past. But I am informed that the kind of skills set that we need to assess economic impact on people is that which we find with QRAA. I understood that QRAA has standing in rural Queensland in terms of the work that it does, but I will follow up on that particular matter. I in fact have a vague recollection of the member raising that matter in this parliament a couple of years back, if I remember rightly. We will check on it, member for Hinchinbrook.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Progress reported.

NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (5.30 p.m.): I move—

That this House convey its concerns to the Prime Minister in relation to the impact of national competition policy and privatisation proposals on Queensland business and industry and the devastating effects being felt by Queensland farmers.

The concept of a national competition policy was introduced as part of the Hilmer reforms in 1995. The principle of NCP came from the belief that creating a competitive market would mean that

consumers would have a wider choice and lower prices. The broad principle underlying NCP is that restrictions on competition should be removed unless they can be shown to be in the public interest if retained. In other words, an industry must not be affected adversely by this national competition policy because if it is, then allowances must be made to retain the restrictions to protect the industry.

Based on this broad principle, it must be recognised that NCP has been forced on too many industries with no regard being given to this very basic broad principle of public interest and that ignoring this principle has resulted in enormous losses and hardships to industries and individuals alike. Fred Hilmer himself stated at a business function held in Brisbane on 22 August 2003—which is not very long ago—

> If I had my time again, I would have liked to have taken an extra year for the second phase of the policy, which was to look at the social implications of what was proposed. It is an area where there should have been more done.

This man believed very strongly in national competition policy. He is the architect of the philosophy of it and he has concerns about the social impact of NCP and privatisation on industry and communities. He was prepared to take a little more time. So why can we not take time to revisit the true effect of this concept? Why can we not recognise the truth of what has happened and honestly say, 'Hey, something has gone wrong'? The outcome of NCP for industry has not been what we all thought it would be. Why do we not demand that all governments reinstate restrictions where NCP has proven to have failed the public benefit test?

NCP has been a failure for many industries and it must be recognised as such. The concept may work extremely well on paper but, as is often revealed, what works on paper does not necessarily work in the field. Other speakers will rise tonight to support this motion and it will be hoped that they can prove and show how history has revealed that there is a definite public interest in retaining or reinstating the restrictions in many areas. Tonight I will speak specifically about the dairy industry, but there are many industries subject to NCP and I will not name them all. Some of those subject to NCP and privatisation are the sugar industry, optometrists, the grain industry, occupational therapists, the egg industry, dentists, the dairy industry, chiropractors and osteopaths, the child care industry, real estate agents and architects. Like I said, that is not a list of all the industries and I am not saying that all should be exempt, but there are some that definitely fit that category.

Recently chemists have been challenged by Woolworths, which seeks to sell goods in competition to them. Chemists have been exempted from NCP because they have been able to prove not only that NCP would be detrimental to their business but also that NCP would not be in the public interest. That could be proved today in the case of many industries that are suffering at the moment. It is indisputable that in some arenas where NCP and privatisation have been embraced it has been found to be beneficial. However, in moving this motion tonight I am asking this government to recognise that enormous damage has been done to some industries in Queensland. It is essential that this government conveys this negative and detrimental outcome to the federal government. To not do so is to cast aside our responsibility and shows that this government has willingly failed to protect the interests of these now struggling industries and failed to stand up for the people who are suffering because of this poorly applied and flawed policy. It is a fact that NCP has failed many rural industries in particular and the value-added industries that rely on those affected industries.

The belief was that NCP would create competition in the marketplace but, as history has shown, the opposite has a tendency to occur. Instead of more competition we have seen less as multinationals have swallowed up the competition and the market has ended up with one or two major players whose eventual aim is to eliminate all competition. In a conversation with a Woolworths manager in which NCP was debated, the following comment from that manager impacted heavily on me—

> Woolworths' aim is to be able to access 100 per cent of the disposable dollar.

That was frightening. I do not believe that that was what Fred Hilmer was intending and I do not believe that that is in the best interests of the public.

I would like to refer to the agenda paper by Fred Argy, a former government policy adviser, a visiting fellow at the ANU and adjunct professor of the University of Queensland on NCP. He states that some economists believe that reforms such as NCP make little or no contribution to economic efficiency. The Hilmer report, which led to the implementation of NCP, recommended that there would be extensive benefits from competition. As reality has shown, he was wrong.

Perhaps it would be beneficial if I show this document. There is a map in this document

which is from the report resulting from the Productivity Commission's public inquiry. It is titled 'The impact of competition reforms on rural and regional Australia'. It was released on 14 October 1999. The figures show that NCP affects rural areas adversely with the Wide Bay-Burnett, the Darling Downs, the south-west and the central west all showing a loss in employment. One in four people now work in part-time jobs. Is that what this or any other government was aiming for? This report reveals quite clearly a negative impact, which indicates to me that the estimated regional impact of NCP on rural communities was known and should have been subject to a community benefit test. That would have indicated that maintaining restrictions and opting not to adopt NCP for rural industries would have allowed the state government a way to protect our local industries.

This map shows pretty clearly where the major impact on communities was estimated to be. If members can see this map, they will see that it shows only rural areas, nothing on the coastal strip. I would hate to think that the government's sentiment is akin to, 'We're all right, Jack. So there's nothing to worry about'. This motion gives the government the opportunity to show that this is not the case.

The Minister for Primary Industries often stated to me in this chamber on the occasions when I asked him to fight against dairy deregulation and to fight for the dairy industry that it was the Victorian dairy farmers who pushed for deregulation and that he had no choice but to sign off on deregulation for what most of us believed was a minuscule amount. The sad thing is that all that deregulation of the dairy industry did was to send hundreds of dairy farmers to the wall and those who remain, based on the current farm gate price, are working for next to nothing. Now the Victorian farmers are screaming that they are going broke through dairy deregulation.

So I seriously ask this government and the minister—and I do not want to put anybody offside—why cannot the public benefit test be applied now? We have tried NCP on the dairy industry and that industry has been decimated. In that case, no aspect of NCP has worked. So let us at least try to correct a bad situation. Let us tell the feds, 'We gave it a good go, but it is not working in our rural areas. The Victorians no longer want it. We do not want it. So let's revisit the situation.' It has been reported that John Howard himself has said that if adverse effects can be shown with regard to the dairy industry or any industry then we will revisit it. Let us keep him at his word.

The principle of NCP that cost reductions should pass on to the consumers has also failed. Farm gate prices have been reduced roughly from 55c to 25c since NCP was introduced, but the big three retailers increased their profit margins without passing on these savings to the consumers as promised. As we can see, as was recently shown in Brisbane when the dairy farmers protested outside Woolworths, they are still pushing for greater profits. Their most recent efforts can be seen in their intention to push the price to farmers down by another 30 per cent. Nobody can survive on what these dairy farmers are suffering at the moment.

I must admit that when I listened to the news last night and I saw the farmers protesting I was quite proud of them because it is very rare that farmers, who are very placid people, come together to fight for what they believe in. They have been crucified and now they are hitting out. I must admit that a little bit of the rebel in me—and there is a bit—cheered the fact that the young boy who was about to be arrested, handcuffed and thrown in the car was finally let go and wisdom prevailed.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mrs PRATT: I did. I had that little cheer inside me. Anyone who will stand up and fight when they know that they are at the wall has to be commended.

Time expired.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.40 p.m.): I second the motion. NCP and privatisation seem to be on the lips of many in government—elected members as well as those working in bureaucracy. I have been—and will always remain—of the view that strategic infrastructure should remain in public ownership. That includes the railways, Australia Post, Telstra, power, water, the ports—those essential services necessary for the comfort and the needs of the population of a country.

The area that I want to touch on today is Telstra. Some federal representatives say that Telstra will not be privatised until country services are brought up to standard. What is 'up to standard'? Even if it does reach the standard at one point in time, technology constantly changes and it will not be long before those areas that are more expensive to service will be left lagging behind in terms of availability of technology—and up-to-date technology at that. Those people in rural and regional Queensland will be left to pay in a user pays system.

It is no use the federal government saying that a caveat can be put on private owners to ensure that services are provided at a reasonable cost to all consumers in Australia. I have been through an experience in which I was told there would be no impact on the community because of the sale of a certain entity. But the reality was that later on when there was an impact and I complained, I was told quite bluntly, 'It is a private company now. There is nothing we can do.' So I have a huge level of scepticism in terms of the ability of the federal government, irrespective of who they are, to protect the consumers of Australia, particularly in the area of these essential services.

Forty-nine per cent of Telstra has already been sold off. It is my belief and the belief of many people that this should never have occurred. However, the government for political reasons as much as anything retained 51 per cent, which at least is a majority share. If Telstra is privatised totally, rural and regional Queensland will pay in the long run.

When a rural consumer applies to have power connected they are looking at having to spend something like $10,000 to $15,000. That is a commodity that most of us take for granted—not in the amount we can consume but in its availability and affordability in terms of primary connection. Now we have progressed down this path where rural consumers—even marginally rural—

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The minister is right. I applaud the Beattie government for that. That is the uniform tariff. However, I am talking about the connection fees. The member for Nanango said that it can cost $27,000 for connection in her area. It just depends where people live geographically.

The basic communications offered by Telstra are an essential service for the people of Queensland, particularly since we live in a decentralised and diverse state. They are talking about making a lot of medical services accessible by the telephone. The availability of modern technology at an affordable price and in an acceptable time frame will become essential for the people of Queensland.

I am calling on this parliament to let the federal government know that we as Queenslanders are not happy with proposals to sell Telstra—to completely privatise it—that it will not provide appropriate protection for the community here in Queensland in terms of accessibility to services and that there is no proven way to legislatively provide in the long term and on an individual basis the necessary protections to ensure that this essential service is made available to the community of Queensland into the future at an affordable rate.

Just to indicate the way that the federal parliament is going, a lot of the Australia Post vehicles have the word 'Australia' removed from their signage, leaving 'Post'. If that is an indication of intended privatisation down the track, it is reprehensible and should be rethought. We need to keep these critical infrastructure in public ownership to protect the public safety, public wellbeing, public affordability and public accessibility. I support this motion unequivocally.

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (5.45 p.m.): I rise to support the motion before the House. In most cases competition is a good thing. Competition can help to grow our economy, provide more jobs and provide lower prices for consumers. However, it does not follow that all competition will necessarily boost living standards or protect the community. The reality is, unfortunately, lost on the federal government's competition commissars at the National Competition Council—that is what they are.

The NCC is all about driving competition for its own sake and that alone. It does this through the threat of reducing national competition payments. The federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, who is keen to take money off the states at every opportunity, simply rubber-stamps the NCC's recommendations and of course pockets the money. Appeals to Mr Costello to consider the public benefit simply fall on deaf ears. I have achieved one change through COAG in terms of the need to consider the public benefit when it comes to competition. Unfortunately, the NCC does not necessarily want to follow the rules because it does not like the amendment that I achieved through COAG.

On 8 December 2003 the federal government indicated that it would be reducing Queensland's competition payments by around $58 million in the 2003-04 year. These penalties were driven by the NCC's insistence that Queensland introduce full retail contestability in electricity. A necessary consequence of this would have been much higher prices for electricity consumers in regional Queensland.

Let us be really clear: the National Party and the Liberal Party at a federal level through the NCC principles support increases in electricity prices in Queensland in each one of the regions and in the south-east corner. Let there be no argument about it. As well, we lost money because Queensland would not deregulate its liquor licensing arrangements to make alcohol more widely available through supermarkets. We lost money because we do not agree with that principle as it would affect jobs in the hotel industry. Again, the National Party and Liberal Party support that. Thirdly, we did not support Queensland deregulating the health professionals, including pharmacy, fisheries and the taxi and hire car industry. Other than a minor change on electricity, which should actually benefit small business, Queensland considers the NCC's demands totally unacceptable and without justification.

Queensland will continue to stand up for the public benefit and take the fight to Canberra. We have lost around $58 million as a result. Do I hear anything from the National Party or the Liberal Party about it? No! Is it not strange that the government ends up supporting an Independent's motion in this House because we are the only ones who can see the benefit for Queensland? Although there are 20 members of the National Party and the Liberal Party, there is only one of them in the House for this debate. We have one member present from the National Party and the Liberal Party. They are hiding from this debate and they are hiding from the loss of $58 million. It is their responsibility.

While we are talking about economic issues, let me broaden this debate. I notice that yesterday the Victorian government announced some catch-up strategies in relation to a sort of minibudget, I guess. It is a bit like the AFL Premiership: Queensland still holds the title. I will go through the big ticket items in terms of business costs announced yesterday by Victoria.

Victoria plans to reduce WorkCover premiums to just below two per cent in 2004-05. This will make them the second lowest in Australia. Guess who has the lowest? The lowest premium in Australia, by a fair margin, will still be in Queensland, with a premium of 1.55 per cent. Victoria will reduce its highest marginal land tax rate, which kicks in at $2.7 million, from five per cent to three per cent. In Queensland, the rate of 1.8 per cent applies above $1.5 million. We are still the best. Victoria's rate of payroll tax remains above that paid by Queensland—5.25 per cent in Victoria versus 4.75 per cent in Queensland.

Business and more small businesses are caught in the tax net in Victoria because its threshold is lower—$550,000 in Victoria versus $850,000 in Queensland. Potential first home owners in Victoria are also still waiting for some stamp duty relief, which we are implementing here. Victoria also plans to increase its land tax threshold to $175,000 and reduce its top marginal land tax rate to three per cent by 2008-09. Its land tax threshold for companies is now slightly less than in Queensland—it is $170,000 here—however for individuals our threshold is still much higher, effectively $275,997. When it comes to competition, Queensland leads Australia.

Hon. P. T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (5.51 p.m.): I join the Premier in supporting the Independent's motion today. National competition in this country is a study in contrasts. It is a study in winners and losers, successes and failures, haves and have-nots. Most of all, it is a study in hypocrisy. It is a study in the hypocrisy of a federal government that is all for competition except when it affects it politically—a federal government that is all for competition in rail, bottle shops, taxis, electricity, industrial relations, waterside workers, you name it. These are all state areas in which the federal government is happy to slug us. But when it comes to federal areas where it might be held politically accountable, such as pharmacies and newsagents, suddenly there are overwhelming arguments not to have competition.

I do not dispute what the federal government has done in relation to newsagents or pharmacists—I agree with that—but it demonstrates absolute hypocrisy on the part of the federal government. When it comes to anything we regulate it is happy to knock the money off us so we are forced into a position of choosing between the $58 million and all the schools and hospitals that could be built and the government. But the federal government does not fine itself $58 million for its decisions on pharmacies and newsagents. It does not give us that money back to spend on competition policy.

I agree with the others. I agree with what they have said about the real concerns we have in relation to competition policy. I have to say that I am not opposed to competition—I do not think anyone here is—but not competition for competition's sake. Let us look at electricity. An amount of $36.6 million was taken from the Queensland taxpayer because we did not agree with FRC in relation to electricity.

Let us look at the record. Queensland has the second lowest electricity prices in Australia in the most decentralised state. The average bill amount is $825. No matter where people are in Queensland they pay that uniform tariff. I had the Victorian energy minister say to me once that we should go down their path. Why? We have the second lowest price and it applies anywhere in Queensland. The Victorian energy minister said the same thing to the current minister. We would have to have rocks in our heads to go down that path. Do we want to learn from Victoria's experience with privatisation? Kennett thought he was very smart by getting double the value of the electricity industry when he sold it, but he fundamentally wrecked it and Victorians are paying the price for that now in terms of instability in electricity supply. We all know the Loy Yang story.

There are good aspects to competition in electricity. I will not say otherwise. At the wholesale level there have been significant gains. The wholesale price of electricity has dropped. That is important because it makes our industry more competitive. We depend on cheap and reliable electricity in this country, so that is good for us. But do people think that the average Joe who operates a fish and chip shop, a small business or a household will negotiate for their electricity prices like Comalco can? I do not think so. I think they need the protection of the uniform tariff.

I refer to my own area of transport. We have some 3,000 taxis and three million people in this Australia's most decentralised mainland state. We have a pretty good taxi system, by and large. We have times, on New Year's Eve and at Christmas, when people have to wait for taxis. But do members know what the economic rationalist solution is to that? It is for anyone who wants to operate a taxi to do so at any time.

What about these people in small business—they are people the Liberal Party purports to represent—who spend $200,000 on a taxi licence? Do we finish that overnight and say 'bad luck'? Often they have retired with superannuation or an investment. Do we say that that investment just goes out the back door for the sake of economic rationalism? I would like to see the superannuation of the National Competition Council put at risk in the same way. These unelected people who are not accountable are making those sorts of rules.

There is room for reform in relation to taxis. That is what the Queensland government is doing. For example, it is working with the taxi industry to look at temporary licences for times such as, say, the Olympics Games and other peak periods that do not jeopardise the variability of the industry. There is no such thing as a free lunch. In Auckland the taxi industry is decimated—higher prices, poor service, long wait times. If people are in a rural or regional area no-one picks them up. We do not need that to save a few cents in taxi fares. It is not a smart economy and it is not good socially. What did we wear for that? $15 million! Again, what did the federal government do in relation to pharmacies and newsagents? Nothing, because they are its political responsibility.

I would like to give an example of how this issue affects my electorate. In the electorate of Lytton, a working class area, we used to have a Medicare office and Medibank Private. We also had an MBF office. There was one down at Capalaba as well. What did we do in the name of economic rationalism? We closed the Wynnum Medicare office because Medicare and Medibank Private had to be structurally separated. So Capalaba has a Medicare office and a Medibank Private office in the same shopping centre just 50 metres from each other. In the name of economic rationalism there is no office in Wynnum, and the MBF office then closed down because Medibank Private was not there to compete against it.

Time expired.

Mr CHRIS FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (5.56 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Nanango. I would like to focus on the social justice issues of this particular policy. Graeme Samuel, the president of the National Competition Council, said that whether you are a doctor or a lawyer, whether you own shares in a power company, own a bottle shop, work on a wheat farm, ever catch taxis, like to shop on weekends, have gas heating in your home, have sugar in your tea, have milk in your cereal—whatever it is—you will be affected by areas of national competition policy.

The reasoning for the establishment of national competition policy was the perception that the next century would bear witness to an increase in competitive pressure placed on Australian exports into what would be a more open, contestable or competitive world economy. The goal of competition policy was viewed by the committee of inquiry chaired by Frank Hilmer as being about creating incentives to invest and produce efficiently and a realisation on the part of governments as to the costs and benefits of creating those incentives. However, there are some reservations. The committee recognised that competition might not always be effective in achieving this end or

that it might lead to conflicts with other social goals. There is no truer statement than that. As a result, the committee reported that the formulation of a national competition policy would require the making of political decisions and that trade-offs between different groups would need to be made.

One of my criticisms of the national competition policy is that it produces economically efficient outcomes only under certain market conditions. These conditions include a large number of sellers and buyers, a perfect knowledge of all parties, no natural monopolies and no externalities such as environmental costs. If these conditions do not exist, market failure will be the end result. No even perfect competition will result in equity, social justice or environmental objectives.

One of the interesting things is that it is accepted that one of the main beneficiaries of an effective competition policy will be the consumer. However, this will not be automatic and not all consumers will necessarily benefit. For instance, a 1995 report by the Industry Commission indicated that the estimated $1,500 per annum that the consumer would gain as a result of the implementation of the competition policy would not in fact be shared across all households. This is the whole principle of the dislocation of social justice by this particular policy.

Another major criticism of the reforms recommended in Hilmer's report is that there is a lack of economic theory that can be used to predict outcomes in areas where anticompetitive behaviour, such as predatory pricing and cross-subsidisation, is in evidence. Economic theory does not claim that markets, even if perfectly competitive, will produce equity, social justice or environmental objectives.

Australia is a financial minnow, and the last time I checked a map we are an Anglo-Saxon enclave in the middle of South-East Asia. If we continue to starve small business people, especially farmers, out of business then we take a very short-term decision as farmers feed us all. It is worthy to reflect on the fact that our entire population is just about the equivalent of some of the largest cities in the world, and therefore it is very hard for us to compete on a level playing field without massive social dislocation. In fact, in recent days Premier Bob Carr wrote to the Prime Minister, John Howard, knocking over the deal on deregulation of pharmacies because he realised the wisdom of that decision, even though in large part that decision was made to satisfy the whole national competition regime.

I think it would be wise for other states to look particularly at the social dislocation that this causes to time-honoured practices and family businesses which are just floating out the door, with the ensuing social costs that come from those issues. I congratulate the member on this notice of motion. It makes good sense to me.

Mr ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (6.01 p.m.): The Beattie government believes in genuine reform that means real benefits for Queenslanders. We believe in supporting competition where we think there are economic benefits to be enjoyed by consumers. Some have accused Queensland of being antireform because of our decision to defer the introduction of full retail competition in our electricity market. Quite simply, they are wrong. If net benefits can be demonstrated, we will take the steps to make sure they are realised, but Queensland will not be railroaded into full retail competition by the National Competition Council's threats to penalise Queensland to the tune of millions and millions of dollars if we do not go down the path that has palpably failed householders in other states. We will not bow to the threats of $60 million in penalties for the next three years if we do not, because we have seen what full retail competition in the electricity market has done in other states. As members will recall in answer to a question in this place this morning, I highlighted the case of South Australia which, having introduced full retail competition for domestic consumers, saw the price of electricity increase by 25 per cent in one year.

There is no evidence that suggests that opening up the household electricity market to full retail competition now would add to economic growth or would be good for Queensland's electricity users. On the contrary, it has great potential to harm particularly Queensland's rural and regional areas. I am pleased that the member for Burnett is here today because an assessment has been made—and these are not new figures; they were presented to the parliament by my predecessor, Paul Lucas, last year when he was Minister for Energy—of the impact of full retail contestability on rural and regional Queensland.

If we assume that an average user in Brisbane pays around about $825 a year for their electricity usage, if we remove full retail contestability, the people of Brisbane benefit. On average, their electricity bill would decrease to $732—a saving of $93. But applying the same figures to

Bundaberg, what is the impact on the Burnett? An increase in electricity prices of on average $105 a year. In Kingaroy, in the electorate of the member who moved this quite appropriate motion tonight, the price of electricity would increase on average by $123 a year.

But that is not the end of it. If we go to more remote areas of Queensland such as Winton, the impact is a phenomenal $1,220 a year on average. At a time when the federal government is talking about regional development and the need to get people to go out into regional areas to live and create jobs, they are prepared to slug those very same people with increases of the type that I mentioned—Winton, Charters Towers, Hughenden, Georgetown, Normanton and Cooktown. There would be a $1,235 increase on average in electricity prices for the people who live in Cooktown.

That is the impact of national competition policy. That is the impact that the federal government—the federal National and Liberal parties—is prepared to impose on rural and regional Queenslanders. That is why we reject full retail contestability of electricity in Queensland. Despite that principled stand about saying no matter where a person lives in Queensland they should pay the same electricity price, we get penalised by the National Competition Council $20 million a year for the next three years. $20 million gives you a pretty good school in the electorate of Burnett. That is one less school each year that Queensland can fund because of competition payments that are withheld from Queensland by the federal government's National Competition Council.

It is about time members opposite, that is, National Party and Liberal Party members—particularly in the lead-up to this year's federal election—make a stand. One thing I can assure those members of is that this information will be getting out. We will be holding the federal coalition government to account. Whilst they continue to penalise Queensland $20 million a year in our defence of uniform tariffs throughout Queensland, we will continue to do that. The only option is significant increases in rural and regional Queensland electricity prices.

Time expired.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (6.06 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate and support the motion that calls on this, the 51st Parliament of Queensland, to convey its concerns to the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Howard, in relation to the impact of national competition policy and the privatisation proposals on Queensland's business and industry and the devastating effect being felt by Queensland families throughout the length and breadth of this great state of Queensland.

This is a very significant motion and it is very significant in terms of timing during the life of this, the 51st Parliament. This is the first motion for the 5.30 spot on the *Daily Program*—the very first motion that we will be debating during the next three years of this, the 51st Parliament, and what better motion do we have than the issue of national competition policy and privatisation?

I will pick up what the previous speaker just spoke about: the challenge to the federal government—the challenge to the federal Liberals and the federal Nationals. Listen to what we have to say because tonight we have a chance for the local Nationals and the local Liberals in Queensland to join us, the Independents, and the government in sending a very clear message to Mr Howard, to Mr Anderson and to all those federal politicians in Australia that we in Queensland have a very real concern about this issue of national competition policy and privatisation.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank the National Party for allowing the Independents to move this motion during the spot which has traditionally been allocated to the National Party. In one breath I am saying: Nationals, Liberals, join us; join the government. At the same time, I say thank you for allowing us to move this very important motion here tonight—the most important motion in the 5.30 spot during the life of this, the 51st Parliament.

I thank the Premier for joining us, without moving a political amendment, without playing politics. We appreciate that, because quite clearly we know how the numbers stack up in this House. We appreciate that he has not tried to play politics by moving a minor amendment which will not in any real way detract from the intent of our motion.

I do not intend to take up any more of the time of the House because it has already been said here tonight, but I do ask the Nationals and the Liberals to please join us in sending a very clear message to the federal parliament. There is no better time, as the previous speaker said. We have a federal election around the corner. This is a challenge for the federal Liberal and National government and for the alternative federal government to tell all Queenslanders and all

Australians what their view on this issue is because it certainly is a contentious issue. I commend the motion to the House.

Hon. M. M. KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (6.09 p.m.): I am pleased to support the motion moved the member for Nanango. An area where Queensland is significantly affected by competition policy is the sale of takeaway liquor. All Queenslanders are being penalised a massive $7.3 million each and every year by the federal government for the Beattie government doing what is right. Those millions of dollars could be spent on new schools, more teachers, more health services and more police for regional and rural Queensland. Instead, it goes straight into the federal government's coffers.

We make no apology to the National Competition Council or the federal government for doing what is right for Queensland. We made a number of NCP concessions as a result of our review of the Liquor Act. To have bowed to the NCP edict in respect of takeaway liquor would have had devastating effects. In particular, adopting national competition policy principles for takeaway liquor would have delivered a killer blow to regional and rural Queensland.

Giant supermarket chains would have devoured trade at the expense of pubs and clubs in hundreds of communities. Countless jobs would have been lost and pubs and clubs would have been forced to shut their doors. Instead, the Beattie government did what was right four years ago—and it remains right—when cabinet endorsed a policy that takeaway liquor sales remain the domain of hotels and clubs in Queensland. The decision was taken in the best interests of the Queensland economy and Queensland communities. It was the right decision then and it remains the right decision to this day.

The NCP review, by an independent panel, examined anticompetitive aspects of the Liquor Act. Under national competition policy, provisions deemed anticompetitive could be retained only if it could be demonstrated that they were in the public interest. It was recommended that supermarkets not be allowed to sell takeaway liquor in their stores. Cabinet accepted the recommendations relating to takeaway alcohol sales. The government was not prepared to let the supermarket chains devour competition in smaller centres.

Hotels and clubs, as honourable members realise, represent a considerable collection of small business ventures throughout Queensland. They are a major provider of employment and, importantly, supply a vast range of other services including entertainment, food and accommodation. They also rely heavily on the takeaway liquor market as one of their primary sources of income. The government was convinced that there would be no negative impact pricewise in retaining the status quo. Altering the structure of the market would have had a huge impact on hotels, forcing many to close with a resultant negative public interest impact, not to mention the impact on communities.

Pubs and clubs in country areas, as those who represent those areas know full well, are the social hub of towns and regional cities. As I was reminded at the Clubs Queensland Achievement Awards on Saturday night at the Convention Centre, clubs contribute greatly to their local communities, not just through the provision of entertainment, meals and other services, but, importantly, through generous sponsorship of community events, sporting teams, sports events and the like. They really are the heart of their communities.

Had we abided by the NCP edicts, we would have allowed supermarkets to kill off pubs and even clubs across the entire state all under the guise of national competition policy. We were not about to do that. We were not about to rip the heart out of hundreds of communities around Queensland.

Every year we continue to pay the price for standing up for regional and rural Queensland. Some $7.3 million is paid into the federal government coffers each and every year. That is what the federal government thinks of regional and rural Queensland. Regardless of where members live, I am proud that the Beattie government is a government for all Queenslanders. We support the motion moved by the independent member and we send a strong message to the federal government that the National Competition Council's $7.3 million levy on Queensland is not fair and not right.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (6.13 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Nanango and I am pleased that this motion is also supported by those opposite. National competition policy is the result of the Hilmer report into competition initiated in the Hawke-Keating years. It has been warmly embraced and implemented by the conservatives since they took power federally some eight years ago—a time when all states signed up to this. Both sides

have invested political credibility in this policy. It is a pity they did not invest that credibility into the wellbeing of Queenslanders and Australians.

This is a vitally important issue. National competition policy is insidious with its talons reaching into the most unexpected of places and with the results for entire industries in this state which are nothing short of catastrophic. In my electorate and across Queensland many farmers are facing enormous pain. The sugar industry is suffering terribly under the effects of deregulation. Fruit and vegetable growers are at the mercy of the massive market power of the giant retailers.

Under national competition policy my electorate lost a $60 million per year tobacco industry with no useful help from the state or federal government. These are just some of those suffering under this policy. The dairy industry has also been hit hard. When Victorian farmers were deregulated, national competition policy forced Queensland farmers to do so as well. Families were devastated. There are fewer farms. The remaining ones are struggling with lower farm gate prices and the consumer is worse off.

National competition policy is just one plank in a broader viper's nest of theories and treaties and agreements generally called economic rationalism. It is the same place we find things like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the General Agreement on Trade in Services. These are the same ideas that drive things like the sugarless free trade agreement with America. It is the basis under which our locally owned corner stores, neighbourhood butchers and so on are obliterated by so-called fair competition from the massive retail chains which take profits away from small business people and locals and put them in the pockets of mega salaried executives and institutional shareholders.

Today we have farmers being told that, in the face of first world cost inputs, they must compete with Third World prices of imports and with the massive subsidies provided by other nations. One can only wonder what the urban intelligentsia who are so quick to defend these theories would say if, for example, we were able to access lawyers from Uganda at Ugandan fees in open competition with members of the Queensland Bar Association or medical doctors from India or Pakistan or Cambodia at Indian or Pakistani or Cambodian prices in competition with the AMA. That is what we expect farmers to do under this free trade economic rationalist mantra, but not our professionals yet.

A government member interjected.

Ms LEE LONG: I have mentioned the solicitors. Our state and federal governments, ALP and coalition, do not expect imported fruit and vegetables and so on to be produced under the same workplace health and safety or environmental requirements they place on our own local farmers. It is, I believe, impossible to separate national competition policy from the interwoven mess of agreements, treaties, memberships and so on which are built up around the economic rationalist position. The fact that it is entrenched does not mean it is correct.

The Beattie government's 2020 health projections show where we are going under the influence of these policies. In a few short years we are expected to be a state with slowing work force growth, with workers expected to have an average of seven different careers, more of us finding only casual or part-time work and having to accept the associated lower levels of income and job security. On this government's own predictions there will be less job security, less long-term career prospects and less in wages. Clearly, not even the most wishful of members can call that a bright future.

Yet time after time we see both sides of politics continuing to pursue these flawed theories because both sides have chosen to accept the theory and ignore the reality. For example, national competition policy drives water reform through the National Competition Council policy assessment framework for water reform. Through that framework, obligations are imposed on us based on the 1994 Council of Australian Governments strategic framework. For example, if Queensland wants to the build a new dam it would first have to go cap in hand to the National Competition Council for their approval. The move to water titles and the resultant trade in water are the results of national competition policy. In any competition there is eventually only one winner. In this competition I fear it will not be the people of Queensland.

Time expired.

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (6.18 p.m.): I rise to support this motion. Agriculture in Queensland has certainly undergone significant reform over the last 20 years. It is untrue to claim that national competition policy has driven that change which has occurred across almost all sectors, including agriculture, horticulture, grain, meat processing, eggs, sugar and dairy. To a large extent, these reforms were driven by

industry. Indeed, a number of the reforms predated NCP. Almost all of that reform has been driven by industry rather than national competition, although a key exception to this is the case of the dairy industry.

In saying the dairy industry is the exception, national dairy industry deregulation did not come about because of Queensland's implementation of the NCP. The first piece of legislation I introduced into this parliament as minister enshrined farm gate regulation of the dairy industry for a further five years. I am pleased to say that this legislation was unanimously supported by members on both sides of the House. However, the NCC was not happy with our legislation in 1998 to retain farm gate regulation and foreshadowed that a possible penalty of $98 million could apply to Queensland.

So why did national dairy industry deregulation occur? This is where I believe the motion correctly targets the Prime Minister. The massive Victorian dairy industry seized on the Victorian government's application of the public benefits test under the NCP. Then the Commonwealth moved in to coordinate industry deregulation nationwide, abandoning the domestic market support arrangements. The Commonwealth agreed with the Australian Dairy Industry Council to facilitate deregulation and implement a consumer levy funded restructure package. At the end of the day, Queensland had to be dragged kicking and screaming into this deregulation because Victoria was going to deregulate with or without the package.

I turn to an incident that occurred yesterday. Dairy farmers protested outside the Woolworths supermarket at Chermside. Whether or not members agree with the protest of the dairy farmers, they should all understand that the dairy farmers did have a point. Let me explain that point quite simply. There appears to be a price difference of up to 30 per cent between home and processor branded ordinary milk. For example, this morning one could buy a one litre carton of branded milk for $1.52 and a one litre carton of unbranded milk for $1.09. That is the problem. Members should remember that on both of those one litre cartons of milk, consumers also pay an 11c a litre levy. The issue that I believe exists for our dairy farmers, and why I believe they rallied outside Woolworths, is that milk processors are tendering extremely low prices to win major supermarket contracts. When the supermarkets receive those very low prices, basically the processors pass on those reductions in costs to the farmers.

As we all know, in November last year Roger Corbett turned up in Queensland and visited dairy farms in the Gympie region. At the time he said that we needed a national summit on the dairy industry and he undertook to discuss this issue with the Prime Minister. I have heard nothing on the progress of Mr Corbett's undertakings. Therefore, I will write to him to see what progress he has made with the Prime Minister.

The second part of the motion deals with privatisation. At the 2001 federal election, John Howard promised, on behalf of the Liberal and National Parties, that not another share in Telstra would be sold until services in the bush were fixed. He said—

Our policy is that we won't sell another share in the carrier until such time as we are completely satisfied that everything in the bush is up to scratch.

More recently, the leader of the Queensland National Party promised that the National Party would not support the full sale of Telstra. He said—

There must be a view in the community that telecommunications services have reached a satisfactory level and there is sufficient confidence that those levels would be maintained and improved in the future. But that point has NOT yet been reached, and consideration of the sale of the remainder 51 % of Telstra is not on our agenda.

The people of Queensland know that the National Party has sold out rural and regional Queensland on Telstra. Rural and regional Australia does not want the full privatisation of Telstra. I believe the National Party is having difficulty in finalising the Senate ticket simply because they cannot find a person to support the full privatisation of Telstra.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 6.24 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumption of Committee

Resumed from p. 323

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) in charge of the bill.

Clause 8—

Mr SEENEY (7.30 p.m.): Clause 8 redefines what is 'vegetation' in relation to this legislation and the other statutes that have already been passed, because it replaces that definition. Obviously, in terms of the definition of 'vegetation' in a bill that is dealing with vegetation management, it is critically important for us to have a common understanding of what 'vegetation' is and why a change has been made.

As I read it, the biggest change to the definition appears in subclause (b) where vegetation is defined as any plant other than—

(b) a plant within a grassland regional ecosystem prescribed under a regulation.

That raises a number of issues that I believe are worthy of clarification. Firstly, I suppose the plants that the minister is anticipating prescribing under a regulation are native vegetation. I expect that would be so, but I seek confirmation of that because if they were invasive, noxious species then they obviously would not be covered by the vegetation management legislation anyway. So am I correct in assuming that this clause allows the minister to prescribe a regulation that excludes a particular species from the control of this legislation if that species is within a grassland regional ecosystem?

That raises the other question, though, of the invasion of those grassland regional ecosystems by other native species. Would it not be fair to assume that once a particular ecosystem was identified as a grassland regional ecosystem, then all native species that invade that grassland regional ecosystem should be able to be controlled without the necessity of prescription by regulation, as this part of the clause seems to indicate is necessary? I would not like to think that we are putting in place a situation here where every species that invades or encroaches upon an ecosystem that has been recognised as a grassland regional ecosystem needs a regulation to enable its control. That is my fear in reading the change that the minister has made to the definition of 'vegetation'. I seek clarification of the government's intent in regard to the change of this definition.

Mr ROBERTSON: Fundamentally, the member for Callide is correct. The purpose of subclause (b) is so that we can prescribe native grasslands as we would understand them in the landscape. The concerns that the member expressed with respect to non-native species would be handled under the encroachment provisions and, therefore, can be dealt with—

Mr Seeney: Non-native species?

Mr ROBERTSON: Yes, non-native species are not caught by this legislation. As the member mentioned, they are caught by the acts relating to pest management.

Mr Seeney: That is right. But what about native species?

Mr ROBERTSON: The member will have to explain that to me again.

Mr SEENEY: I thank the minister for confirming that the situation in regard to non-native species is as I expected it would be. What I am trying to get clarification of is the situation with native species that encroach upon a recognised grassland ecosystem. The way I read this particular definition, it allows the minister to prescribe a regulation that excludes a particular species from the exercise of this legislation so that it can be controlled.

I am suggesting to the minister that it would seem unnecessary to prescribe in a regulation every situation where a particular native species is encroaching upon a recognised grassland ecosystem. The question is simple: does that mean that if a grassland regional ecosystem is recognised, then the management of those encroaching woody plants is assessable or non-assessable, given that they are native species? We have established the situation for non-native species but, given that they are native species and they are encroaching upon a grassland ecosystem, are they assessable or non-assessable?

Mr ROBERTSON: They are assessable. I went out and inspected this particular area in the Mitchell Grass Downs with the encroachment of gidgee into the grasslands that have traditionally never had a gidgee incursion in there. Yes, it would be assessable, but under encroachment provisions of this legislation we can actually deal with it. As I responded in a somewhat vigorous fashion to the member for Warrego, using the gidgee example, it may be appropriate, or it is not forbidden under this legislation to be able to chain that gidgee out of the landscape. So that is the difference between encroachment and thinning, which this bill makes a distinction between.

Mr SEENEY: I do not want to labour the point; I just want to confirm my understanding. In that situation, even though it is recognised as a grassland ecosystem, it is still assessable? We

still require an application for an encroachment control permit, or a similarly termed permit? The fact that it is recognised as a grassland ecosystem does not make it non-assessable, but I take it from the minister's answer that he would expect that such a permit would be forthcoming and that the control of that encroachment would be able to be done with tractors and chains.

Mr ROBERTSON: I hope that I have got this right.

Mr Seeney: So do I.

Mr ROBERTSON: In some cases, the encroachment into grassland areas of other vegetation—woody vegetation—would be assessable, but in other cases not assessable, depending on the species that we are talking about and the regional ecosystems that we are talking about. That would be determined by regulation to give clarity in regard to achieving the purposes of the legislation. I do not want to re-enliven that debate, but because this legislation is trying to be regionally ecosystem specific, we need to have different provisions for different regional ecosystems, depending on the circumstances that exist. So in some cases it will be assessable, in other cases it will not be assessable, depending on the nature of the incursion on grasslands.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like honourable members to note the presence in the public gallery of members of the Daisy Hill Toastmasters from the electorate of Springwood.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—

Mr SEENEY (7.39 p.m.): Clause 10 is quite an extensive clause and it is an important clause because it deals with the preparation of the regional vegetation management codes. Of course, as I and a lot of other people have mentioned in this debate before—and it is almost self-obvious—it is upon the effectiveness and the integrity of these codes that any success that this legislation can achieve will be based. It is important that we understand what the government is intending to do with the regional vegetation management codes, the development of those codes and the exercise of those codes in the whole process.

This clause starts off by omitting the previous part 2 of division 3 and inserts a whole new division 3, which relates to regional vegetation management codes. I note that later in the bill clause 27, also in the transitional provisions, deals with this issue of regional vegetation management codes.

The minister has said in his contributions here that these codes are going to be based upon the regional vegetation management plans that the voluntary groups drew up. I am not aware that any of those plans were actually finalised in the process, that they actually went past the draft stage and went back to the committee and were actually signed off by the committee. Perhaps the minister could enlighten me. Perhaps he could tell me how many of those regional vegetation management plans actually completed the process of being put together in draft form, considered by him, presumably, as the minister and his department and were signed off by the committee. I am not aware that that has happened. Perhaps he can enlighten us.

Be that as it may, if these regional vegetation management codes are going to be based upon those drafts as they were prepared by the committees and have been obviously put together by his department—I do not want to get too far ahead because I have a series of issues; that is always the problem with these large clauses—perhaps the minister can enlighten us about that. The question then, of course, is that when these codes are developed from those regional vegetation management plans, do those committees have a role? Does the minister envisage a role for those committees in the consideration of the codes that are derived from the work that they have done and that he has said are the basis of those codes?

The other issue that I would like the minister to address is the difference between the codes that are going to have to apply for applications that are being considered now. I presume that they are being considered under the existing regulations. Once the new applications are called—shall we call them the ballot applications; the applications that are going to be balloted for—I have heard the minister talk about the fact that a code is going to be developed for the consideration of them. Obviously they are for remnant vegetation and that code will expire on 31 December 2006. The code that will be in place after that will have to be different again in my view because that code that goes on in the long term will deal with such things as thinning, encroachment and those things that are assessable and allowable under the act. Obviously, the clearing of remnant vegetation, which will have to be dealt with between now and then, will not be

allowable past that date. That clearing of remnant vegetation between now and then is of two distinct types in terms of the administration. It is for the applications that are in the system now and for the ballot applications. So there is a whole range of issues there that I would like the minister to enlighten not just me but also the people who have an interest in this area on how he believes, first of all, the formation of these regional vegetation management codes, the role of the committees and the system of the codes is going to work.

Mr ROBERTSON: That must have been the longest question in history. Dealing with the work of the regional vegetation management committees, I point out that all of the bioregions where they had regional vegetation management committees completed their work to a particular stage. Three went through the full process, and they were the Southern Downs, the mulga lands and the New England Tablelands.

Mr Seeney: You have signed off on those?

Mr ROBERTSON: No, just bear with me. The process is that they develop their plan as a committee, receiving input from my department, the EPA—a whole range of different inputs go into the draft plan. Those draft plans then come to me as minister for sign off and assessment by my department. Under normal circumstances they would then go out for a period of public consultation and take in further opinions, views, et cetera, before they are finalised. Three committees completed that whole process: New England Tablelands, mulga lands and Southern Downs. The remainder bar one, which was Cape York—so put Cape York aside for the moment—completed their work up to the stage of sending me their draft plans for assessment. Indeed, they are published on the departmental web site.

But they have not completed the next phase of the process, which was going out to public consultation for final sign off. The reason was that, because of the active negotiations that were going on with the Commonwealth and then subsequent to that a consideration of where we then go next including leading up into the election campaign, et cetera, I deemed it not appropriate to release those plans for public consultation because that process may well have been at odds with the path that we were heading down. Nevertheless, the substantial part of the work done by those regional committees had been completed to the draft plan phase for my consideration.

Those draft plans will form the basis of the interim codes about which we are currently engaging stakeholders for one purpose and that is to, as the member rightly points out, handle the remainder of applications under the 500,000 hectare cap, which we believe will be anywhere between 200,000 to 300,000. So they will be interim codes—

Mr Seeney: The ballot?

Mr ROBERTSON: The ballot applicants, yes—which those ballot applications will be assessed against. Then there will be a second round, which will have a much longer time to consider and involve stakeholders for the final codes post the exhaustion of the ballot.

It is not correct to say that the final codes will apply post December 2006 because in the interim we will be taking applications under the provisions of this bill that will need to be assessed by codes that do not relate to the clearing of remnant vegetation. So just forget about the 2006 time frame. There will be a need to finalise codes to handle new applications other than applications for the clearing of remnant vegetation. That is the process that we envisage. Currently, we are in active discussion with stakeholders about the interim codes because we need to get them in place so that we can go forward with the ballot in the time frame that we want.

A future role for regional vegetation management committees is something I am still giving consideration to. The problem is that in many cases the composition of the existing regional vegetation management committees has changed. People have moved, they have passed on, they have resigned. In some cases they have really passed on, on a permanent basis. Simply resurrecting those committees is not logistically possible.

I am still giving consideration to whether there is an ongoing need for regional vegetation management committees. The reason I am giving consideration to that is that in the interim what we have seen, under both the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, are these regional NRM arrangements which are now receiving significant dollars from both the Commonwealth and the state governments and which are developing their regional natural resource management plans.

What I do not want to create is separate bodies involving the community that may in fact clash on issues. I am giving consideration to how those regional committees can deal with vegetation matters, reflecting on the significant experience and knowledge that a lot of these

people who served on regional vegetation management committees have, and whether there is a role for them to play. I have not yet made up my mind on that matter. I do not have a blind spot to them having a reformatted ongoing role, but I just have not yet made up my mind. Probably I will not be doing that until I see the regional natural resource management plans and see what they bring out in terms of priorities for investment in the regions.

Mr SEENEY: That is very encouraging. I certainly encourage the approach the minister spoke about in relation to the other bodies that are already there. This raises a question of the ongoing status of these codes into the future. This bill contains a section that deals with minor or stated amendments of regional vegetation management codes. I refer to variation of the codes and the consultation process, however the minister finally decides to put it in place. I hope it will be in place in some form or another. Surely there is a need for a mechanism to allow those codes to evolve as the knowledge base in the local area increases, as the effects of the clearing regime become apparent, or whatever.

The way this particular clause reads, there is no mechanism there except for the minister to prepare a new one, except if, under proposed section 15, it is a minor or stated amendment. I would be concerned if the minister was not planning for some sort of mechanism to allow regional vegetation management codes to evolve, to be 'living documents' that take account of evolution in the administration of the act and take account of that input from those regional natural resource management groups that have an ongoing role and that will be evolving and developing over a period of time. How does the minister envisage those regional vegetation management codes being changed over time, given the evolution and the development of the skill base and knowledge base that hopefully the minister will tap into?

Mr ROBERTSON: I have not turned my mind to looking that far into the future. I am concentrating purely on the next 12 months. That is, because of the time that is available to us to finalise the interim codes there is an opportunity to go out to public consultation on that. However, in relation to the development of the second round of codes there will be an opportunity to seek public input. That is why I put that particular section in the clause—that is, proposed section 12(1), which states—

(1) Before approving a regional vegetation management code, the Minister may seek appropriate public input ...

It envisages that there is an ongoing role for public input beyond just the stakeholders. We will be looking at doing that post the finalisation of the interim codes, when we have around six months to do the next codes. That will enable us to widen the consultation group. Frankly, I have not thought beyond that but, importantly, there is nothing in this legislation that would stop the minister of the day reviewing them.

I think the member makes a valid point in terms of ongoing knowledge. The only problem with that ongoing knowledge is that it might produce outcomes that he may not like, so we need to be a bit careful about that.

Mr Seeney: That might work both ways.

Mr ROBERTSON: Exactly right. Importantly, there is nothing in the bill that stops the minister of the day reviewing the codes and seeking further input to a future round.

Mr HOBBS: With much fanfare, in his reply to the second reading debate the minister waved around the regional management plan for the mulga region and said that three had been signed off. I have just been on the phone. Would the minister be able to provide the minutes that show that plans for the mulga lands have been signed off by the stakeholders? My information is that they have not been signed off. They have not had an opportunity to do that. It would be very interesting to know why the minister is saying that they have been signed off.

Mr ROBERTSON: Obviously I do not have those minutes here. I have just been informed that a briefing note actually came to me yesterday—I have not got to it—that apparently gives me the permission to provide that documentation, so I am happy to get it to the member. I am informed, however, that in terms of the mulga lands that process was finalised. I do not know what information the member has or who he has spoken to, but the information coming to me is that that plan is finalised and has been signed off by the regional vegetation management committee.

Mr HOBBS: I thank the minister. It has not. The minister might recall in relation to the Western Downs that the original plan was to in fact lock up a part of the Gurulmundi toxic waste dump area. There was a report at the time the dump was put there which stated that there were no significant environmental issues with this area, yet this plan showed significant environmental

interest in this area. That is another inconsistency. I would like the minister to respond in relation to that.

I wish to cover a number of other issues. In terms of ministerial discretion, it seems as though these plans come to the minister. When the code is developed, the wording of those codes is changed and the meaning of those original plans is changed. I understand that even the last couple of codes that have been put together are significantly changed from the general intention when they were put together by the stakeholders. I flag that issue now. I say to the minister that he must be consistent when he brings these codes out. I ask the minister to take that on board to make sure there is some consistency. In fact, it would be really good if those codes could go back to the relevant regional groups, even if they have signed off on them in the first instance, to make sure the wording is consistent with the original intention. That is a very important issue.

The minister has talked about public input. That is fine. We have to have public input on all these issues, but it has to be genuine and it has to come right through to the very end. Yes, there has been consultation and, yes, regional groups have had a lot of input. But, at the end of the day, if the significant parts of that input are ignored, we are wasting the time of the people who are putting all their effort into it to make sure they have the best possible plan that they can.

In summing up, if the minister could provide those minutes where those regional vegetation plans have been signed off by the stakeholders, that would be good. Also, could he assure us that his ministerial interpretation, when the codes finally come, will exactly reflect the opinion of the stakeholders?

Mr ROBERTSON: I have already indicated that will be made available to the member. The member for Warrego has been a minister of the Crown. I know where he is coming from, but he knows as a former minister of the Crown that ministerial discretion is necessary.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Exactly. He had community groups and planning groups working under him for a whole range of purposes, and he knows that often the work that was delivered to him, whilst good in intention and representing their best endeavours—and not necessarily lacking in quality either by any stretch of the imagination—nevertheless needs to be rewritten in order that it reflects the purposes of the legislation of the day. He knows that needs to be done. He knows we cannot adopt plans that may be in conflict with the legislation of this parliament. To that extent, rewording is necessary so that the plans, because they will become statutory instruments, are legally defensible.

That is what has happened to a number of those plans. The wording changes had to be made not to take away the intent of the committee's recommendations but to ensure, because they were potentially going to be statutory instruments, they were legally defensible and in appropriate language, and that is what has occurred in some of the cases. But otherwise there is no agenda by me to change the work that they have done. As I said, by and large it represents good-quality work, but it just needs to be rewritten in legalese in order to make sure they are defensible should they become statutory instruments.

Mr SEENEY: I would like to follow on from what the member for Warrego was talking about because I think what he was saying reflects a pretty broad based concern in the general community that there has been a tendency to change the rules at a local level—at a departmental level. I would hope that once these codes are established as statutory instruments, which is how the minister referred to them, they will not be easily changed.

That is what I was driving at before. I was trying to get the minister to put on record the process that he believed was appropriate to bring about those changes. I think it would be a better situation if there were a defined process that had to be followed before those codes were able to be changed. It would take away that certainty that has probably been engendered by the fact that the rules of the game have been changed or differently interpreted. When everyone has a statutory instrument that clearly sets out what the regional vegetation management code is going to be for that particular area—and it is a statutory instrument; it is published according to the process that this clause sets out—then everyone knows the rules of the game. They are legal documents and they are statutory documents. If they are going to be changed, then there needs to be a process that people understand that clearly sets out the rules of how it is to be changed.

I do not believe that type of situation has existed until now, but there is no point arguing about whether it has existed until now. What we are interested in doing is getting an assurance from the minister that that is the sort of situation that this bill will engender; that it will bring about the establishment of statutory codes that have a basis in law that cannot be changed, that set

the ground rules for everybody involved in the process so that everybody knows where they are and what the ground rules are. If those ground rules are to be changed, then there is a defined process to change those rules.

Mr ROBERTSON: I would draw the member's attention to proposed section 15 of the legislation—'minor or stated amendments of regional vegetation management code'. That gives me as minister the power to amend the regional vegetation management code without complying with the previous proposed sections—that is, proposed sections 11 to 14. So if they are not minor—and 'minor' is defined by (a) and (b) of that proposed section—then the bill provides for the issuing of a new code which must go through the public notification and consultation process outlined in proposed sections 11 to 14. It gives me the ability to make minor adjustments, but anything major becomes a new code.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—

Mr SEENEY (8.06 p.m.): Clause 11 deals with the preparing of a declaration for a stated area; that being, in the terms used in the bill, either an area of high nature conservation value or an area vulnerable to land degradation. Can I acknowledge at the beginning that the minister certainly needs to be able to make those declarations. I have no problem with that, and that is an essential part of any management regime—that we recognise those particular areas or areas where intervention is needed for the reasons of there being a high conservation value, or a particular problem, or a potential problem with a particular situation with land degradation. However, I guess the concern in this particular clause comes in proposed section 16(2), which states—

... a person may request the Minister to prepare a declaration mentioned in subsection (1).

That obviously means that anybody can make a request for any area, and to my mind it is very dangerous to have a subsection like that in this proposed section.

I would have thought the fact that the minister has the power to make these declarations—and, as I acknowledge, so he should—would have been enough for any reasonable situation or any situation at all to be handled. Why was it necessary to put in this subsection (2)—to suggest that any person may request the minister to prepare a declaration mentioned in subsection (1)? Would it not have been reasonable to expect that if somebody had a concern they could bring it to the attention of the department or to the minister or to one of the many members of this House, which is the normal process? Then that issue would have been brought to the minister's attention. The inclusion of subsection (2) in this proposed section opens the door for third-party intervention—the type of third-party intervention that I know the member for Hinchinbrook has expressed considerable concern about in this place, and quite rightly so with some of the situations that have arisen where third-party intervention is not only possible but is encouraged.

It would appear to me that this subsection actively encourages third-party intervention. That is not a course of action that I can support. That is not a course of action that I believe is necessary. That is a not a course of action that I see as necessary in this particular clause.

We will now go on and look at what happens after that third-party intervenes, for want of a better term—that is, after a person requests the minister to prepare a declaration under proposed section 16(2). It says that the minister must 'consult with the following entities in preparing the declaration,' assuming that the minister decides to make the declaration. He needs to consult with an advisory committee established to advise the minister about vegetation management.

There are no details on who constitutes that advisory committee and to what extent that advisory committee would operate. Is the minister envisaging that he is going to get so many of these requests to prepare a declaration that an established advisory committee is going to be necessary all the time or is he going to bring together an advisory committee for each particular situation about which he receives a request to prepare a declaration? Curiously enough, subsection (b) says 'each local government whose area is affected by declaration'.

Does that mean that these declarations that the minister is envisaging involve areas that are quite large? My reading of that makes me suspect that the minister is envisaging that quite large areas will be subject to these declarations? Are we talking about entire catchments, are we talking about particular ecosystems or are we talking about relatively small areas that deserve this type of declaration or are in need of this type of protection?

I fear from the wording of subsection (b) that it is probably the former rather than the latter—that is, that the minister is expecting to use these declarations for quite large areas encompassing at least one or more local government areas. That is of particular concern because of some of the scenarios that I can envisage given the philosophies that I have heard expressed in this place. It certainly causes me concern about the whole operation of this particular clause. I seek confirmation of why it is necessary to include in this clause a subclause which actively promotes a third-party intervention strategy that we are philosophically opposed to and what the minister's expectations are in regard to the advisory committee and the size of the areas that may be declared.

Mr ROBERTSON: In relation to subsection (2), that simply reflects the existing set of circumstances. There is nothing encouraging about it. I already receive applications from members of the general public to declare areas of high nature conservation. All that does is reflect the existing circumstances.

Mr Hobbs: Why do you want to have it?

Mr ROBERTSON: Because we are trying to draft legislation that reflects what actually happens in the real world. That is simply it. That is all it is there for. Proposed subsection (4)(a) is word for word the current provisions in the VMA. Proposed section 16 (4) says, 'The Minister must consult with the following entities in preparing the declaration' and 'an advisory committee established to advise the Minister about vegetation management'. That is all it says. It also says, 'each local government whose area is affected by the declaration'. That is what the current provision says. That has been taken over into the proposed new section.

Mr Seeney: How do you envisage it?

Mr ROBERTSON: Under current circumstances. Nothing has changed. The wording that appears in the existing VMA will appear in the new act. So nothing has changed.

Mr SEENEY: There are two distinct issues. I will deal with them one at a time. Firstly, there is the notion of encouraging third-party intervention and third-party involvement in the process. The minister has attempted to explain proposed subsection (2) by saying that it reflects what happens in the real world. If that explanation had any credibility, then this proposed subsection or a subsection like it would have to be in every clause in this bill and in every bill that this House considers.

People can write to their local member and write to a minister and bring to their attention particular situations. In fact, they do it every day, as I am sure the minister is aware and every member of this House is aware. People do that every day. The inclusion of that proposed subsection in this clause is something more than that. I do not accept the minister's explanation.

As I said, it is reasonable to interpret the inclusion of this subsection as an encouragement for third-party intervention. It is an encouragement for intervention in this relationship between the government and the land-holder by other parties who may or may not have a reasonable claim to being a stakeholder in the particular situation that is being addressed by the declaration.

I say to the minister quite unapologetically that we on this side of the House are philosophically opposed to this concept of third-party intervention. The relationship between a land-holder and the state, the land-holder and the government should be sufficiently robust to be able to deal with any particular situation without the intervention of other parties. To provide an opportunity to provide an active encouragement in this subsection for that third-party intervention is something that I cannot accept and that I will not support.

The other issue relates to proposed subsection (4)(a) and the advisory committee. The fact that it is lifted from the Vegetation Management Act 1999 does not answer the question that I put to the minister. The fact that he has tried to answer it by telling me that it was lifted from that act raises a number of other questions.

Since that act was passed in this House in 1999, has the minister established any advisory committees to advise about vegetation management and have they considered any issues such as this? Perhaps that will give us an insight into how the minister sees these advisory committees working in the future. I am certainly not aware of the establishment of any such advisory committee. I would be particularly interested in how the minister envisages those advisory committees being established in the future and the term of the appointments to those advisory committees and the type of people whom the minister will appoint to the advisory committee.

They are critical to the integrity of these declarations that, as I acknowledged, the minister needs to make. It is critically important that if there is going to be an advisory committee advising

the minister of the day about those declarations, then those advisory committees have to have certain integrity and a certain knowledge base and a certain ability to be fair, even handed and independent to some extent in that relationship between the land-holder and the government.

In summary, I certainly do not accept the minister's explanation about subsection (2). We will continue to oppose the concept of the active encouragement of third-party intervention in the relationship between land-holders and the government. I believe there is some responsibility to further enlarge on the issue of the advisory committee and what the government intends to do or what the government's intention is in the establishment of those advisory committees. In his previous answer the minister did not touch on the nature of these areas that are to be declared. I invite the minister to do that again.

Mr ROBERTSON: Without wanting to be provocative, I am flabbergasted by the member's comment that he is not aware of any advisory committees established to advise a minister about vegetation management. For the past six years or so, there has been in existence a ministerial advisory committee on vegetation management made up of scientists and stakeholders. In fact, a very well-known and very hardworking representative of Agforce by the name of Gus McGowan sits on that committee. I am flabbergasted that Gus has not been in contact with the member to discuss the work that he has done on the ministerial advisory committee on vegetation management.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: The two members opposite must be the only people he has not spoken to about vegetation management issues.

The other round, of course, is the regional vegetation management committees. They are established under this section. Not only do we have the ministerial advisory committee on vegetation management, but we also have over 20 regional vegetation management committees advising me on vegetation matters under that clause.

The second issue is this: it was the regional vegetation management committees that actually handled applications by individuals to declare areas of high nature conservation value. Because those regional vegetation management committees do not have a defined future, as we talked about earlier, it was necessary to take the role of the regional vegetation management committees in terms of receiving public submissions on applications for declarations of high nature conservation value into this legislation so that it was quite clear that the existing set of circumstances in terms of the minister via the advisory committees receiving applications for declarations of high nature conservation value would continue. To that extent, nothing has changed.

Mr SEENEY: I knew it could not last. We were doing so well, weren't we, but I knew it could not last. The minister could not help but give a frivolous and facetious answer to a serious question.

Of course I am aware of the ministerial advisory committee. Of course I am aware of the regional vegetation management committees and, of course, the minister knew that I knew of the existence of those committees. However, it disappoints me that the minister still has not given us an answer on whether or not they are the committees that will consider the issue of declaring a stated area.

Obviously the regional vegetation management committees will not be the committees that consider any application for such a declaration because, as the minister has conceded, they do not have a future and they probably do not exist now in all reality. That leaves the ministerial advisory committee, of which the well-known Gus McGowan is obviously a member. Is it the minister's answer that that ministerial advisory committee will be the committee that considers these applications for the declaration of stated areas? I would like an answer rather than this nonsensical, facetious stuff that, unfortunately, we have slipped down to.

Certainly the minister has not made any attempt to answer the second part of the question, which is about subsection (b), the envisaged size of these declared areas and whether or not they will be areas that extend across more than one local government area. I think that, in the consideration of this clause as part of this bill, the parliament deserves some sort of an indication from the minister about what his government envisages.

Mr ROBERTSON: I think we have exhausted things in relation to the role of committees established to advise the minister of the day on vegetation matters. We have talked about it in previous clauses. I think members can gauge my intentions with respect to that.

MACVM continues to exist. As to its future, I do not know what its future is. These are matters that I am currently considering, as I indicated with respect to the future of the regional vegetation management committees as they are currently structured and what they might look like in the future. There is a degree of uncertainty because I have not made up my own mind for the very sound reasons that I outlined before with respect to the regional arrangements.

Secondly, yes, it is possible that applications to declare areas of high nature conservation value could go across more than one local government boundary. I am aware that one application that has been sitting with us now for some time for the Sunshine Coast goes across a number of shire and city council boundaries, including Noosa and Maroochydore, and I think it may extend down to Caloundra. In clauses such as this, we need to contemplate the fact that not all shire councils in this state are reflective of the large ones out in western Queensland. We also have to take into account the smaller councils by area such as the four or five that would make up the Sunshine Coast.

Mr ROWELL: One of my major concerns with this particular clause is that a couple of current acts already give considerable concern to people who are on the land. There is the Environmental Protection Biodiversity Bill at the federal level and we have a very similar one involving the EPA at the present time in Queensland.

The concern of property owners is that this really gives people with frivolous and vexatious complaints the capacity to make it very difficult for people in rural areas. Putting something in legislation that actually gives them the imprimatur to carry out what they perceive is required certainly makes it very difficult for land-holders. I think the reason that the issue been raised in this clause is that we are seeing too much of it. I am well aware of some difficulties that people have faced with this type of legislation and other types of legislation, in both the federal and state arenas. We certainly do not want to expand on it any more than is absolutely necessary.

Of course, with the groups that the legislation is setting up, there will always be some concern for some people and I do not know whether it will go to the point where they can be taken to court by a third party. I do not know whether the minister is going to go quite that far. It certainly does allow for the possibility that that might happen. I think the cost to the land-holder in time and certainly court costs can be quite considerable. It is really very difficult for the land-holder to run a farming operation if he has this type of thing around his neck. The cost is prohibitive as is the time involved. The uncertainty it creates about what he can do on the land is something that the minister really needs to take into account.

The issue that has been raised here is that we do not want to double or triple dip into this area any more than we need to. If one is managing an area and there are groups—whether they represent councils or whatever —making sure that what one wants to achieve can be achieved, I do not think there is any further point in having other people involved simply because they have something against the property holder and they may want to bring something forward to make life difficult for him.

Mr ROBERTSON: I appreciate the comments of the member for Hinchinbrook in relation to this particular matter. I do not think that it is something that we can explore currently. Perhaps it is a debate for another day. It is a difficult area. I acknowledge the concerns and experiences that the member has had in particular with respect to the areas of high nature conservation process. However, all I can do is acknowledge that at this stage. Maybe at some stage in the future there will be further opportunities to pursue those issues.

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

AYES, 56—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, E. Clark, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, J. Cunningham, Fenlon, Finn, Flegg, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Langbroek, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Male, McArdle, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Quinn, Reilly, Reynolds, N. Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, D. Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Stuckey, C. Sullivan, Wallace, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Reeves

NOES, 21—Copeland, E. Cunningham, C. Foley, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Lee Long, Lingard, Menkens, Messenger, Pratt, Rickuss, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Wellington. Tellers: Hopper, Malone

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clauses 12 and 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—

Mr ROBERTSON (8.37 p.m.): I move amendment No. 1—

1 Clause 14—

At page 16, lines 29 and 30—

omit, insert—

' '(2) The application must—

(a) be in the approved form; and

(b) state the information prescribed under a regulation; and

(c) be accompanied by the fee prescribed under a regulation.'.

Prior to speaking to that amendment I also table the explanatory notes for the amendments to be moved in the committee stage by me. Amendment No. 1 amends clause 14 to insert a head of power to prescribe a fee under regulation for an application for a property map of assessable vegetation.

Mr SEENEY: In essence, I am not opposed to this amendment that the minister has moved because I think it gives more detail to clause 14. One of the things that I wanted to do in the consideration of clause 14 was to seek a whole range of detail from the minister, because clause 14 deals with the establishment of property maps.

At the outset of the consideration of this amendment to the clause, I would say that this area of the establishment of property maps is something that I believe is long overdue and is one of the good things about this legislation. It certainly is a major improvement on the mapping system that has caused so much consternation, so much anger and so much frustration since the vegetation management regime was first put in place in 1999.

I will talk more about some of those other details when we consider the clause itself. In the consideration of this amendment No. 1 that has been moved by the minister to clause 14, as I understand it the amendment inserts within clause 14 a requirement that 'the applicant must be in the approved form'. I think there is a bit of a typo there that I had not realised until now which the minister might like to fix up. 'The applicant must be in the approved form' should be 'the application must be in the approved form', surely.

Mr Robertson: I have 'application' here, but if your version turns out to be the more accurate—

Mr SEENEY: The version I have is 'the applicant must be in the approved form'.

Mr Robertson: That should be appropriate, too, I would have thought.

Mr SEENEY: That raises all sorts of questions about what is the approved form of an applicant. I will assume that that should be 'the application'. The amendment requires the application to be in an approved form and state the information prescribed under a regulation and be accompanied by the fee that is prescribed under a regulation.

I seek from the minister some sort of an indication about what would be involved in subclauses (b) and (c). I am looking for an indication rather than complete information, because I appreciate that at this stage he probably has not made those decisions. What sort of information would he envisage would be required at that stage of the process, given that the process that we are talking about is the preparation of an individual property map and we are putting in an application for one? What sort of information would be required under the terms of this amendment at that application stage for the applicant to put forward? I understand that that is going to be prescribed by the regulation.

Similarly with the cost, the minister is saying that the cost is going to be prescribed by the regulation. I do not think it is good enough to blindly accept that this amendment is going to put into the clause a requirement for that sort of detail without giving any sort of indication of how much that detail is. I think the minister should take the opportunity to do so before we consider the amendment.

Mr ROBERTSON: Generally speaking, in relation to the information that the member would be seeking in terms of the application for a PMAV, a lot of that information is already prescribed in the remainder of the bill. He is looking for information such as the boundaries—and do remember that in terms of the preparation of a PMAV people would be engaging consultants or people authorised under this legislation to assist in the preparation of those applications. So in terms of determining areas such as remnant, regrowth, et cetera, all of that information needs to go into one of these PMAVs—the boundaries, watercourses, et cetera. As I said, a lot of that information would be already outlined in other sections of the bill or the principal act but will be consolidated into the regulation.

In relation to the fee, we are envisaging that the fee that will be struck will be the same fee as if people were applying for a tree clearing permit, which, as I understand it, is around $270. As the member would appreciate, that application has to be assessed and often that assessment

would require ground truthing or on-ground verification. Hence, we are striking it around that same rate.

Mr SEENEY: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that. I think the second part of the minister's answer at least is reassuring. I do not fully understand, though, what the minister is referring to when he says that the requirements for a property map are listed in other sections of this clause.

Mr Robertson: Not listed. I was saying that you would gauge from other provisions of the act the kind of information. I was not talking in a prescriptive way.

Mr SEENEY: Is my understanding correct when I take it from what the minister has said that if a land-holder is to make application for a PMAV—a property management assessment of vegetation—map then that work needs to be done first? The work of establishing the regional ecosystem boundaries on the property needs to be done—all of that work needs to be done under the terms of this amendment, whether it is done by taking those boundaries from the existing mapping system or some other way, but all of that work is done. The minister mentioned something about authorised officers under the act, but surely the land-holder can put forward that application and that application is then considered by the officers. Is that the way it would work? How does he envisage it would work?

Mr ROBERTSON: The member may have misinterpreted what I said. I was not talking about authorised officers. I was talking about a form of accreditation for people to assist. For example, if the member wanted to do a property map of assessable vegetation for his property he could either do it himself and put that application in for assessment by the department, or he could bring in an accredited consultant to do that work for him in the knowledge that the person he brings in is sufficiently knowledgeable of the act and the requirements of the department to do the job for him. So it was not authorised officers; it was accredited consultants or persons to help him do that work.

In relation to the second matter, yes, the regional ecosystem maps are one of the things that would form the foundation of the PMAV and you would build on that. I hope I have got this right. The regional ecosystem maps are at a scale of 1:100,000. By putting further layers on top of that foundation map we would probably bring the scale down to about 1:10,000, which allows far more detail to appear on the map such as where the firebreaks are, et cetera. So for the purposes of long-term certainty, at the time that that PMAV is endorsed by the department to the maximum extent possible, that map would reflect the reality of the property. It is a combination of existing information through regional ecosystem maps, et cetera, plus new information that drills down even further, plus the ground truthing that would occur as a result of the assessment of the application. That gets over the problems we have had with boundaries, et cetera.

Mr SEENEY: Absolutely! I acknowledge that those sorts of problems exist. I have two very quick questions. I assume—and I seek confirmation—that the boundaries of those ecosystems will be GPS plotted whereas previously they were not; they were just a mark on a map. It does not matter what it was before. I seek an assurance that they will be GPS plotted.

I seek further confirmation about accredited people. Does the minister envisage that his department will accredit consultants? Will there be a list of accredited consultants to do this work? How does the minister envisage that process will work? Are there avenues for individuals or firms to make application to become accredited consultants to carry out this work on behalf of land-holders?

It just occurs to me that if a land-holder can do it himself then why can he not get his neighbour to do it for him? Why does there need to be a system of accreditation? The minister said that I as a land-holder could either do it myself or get an accredited person to do it. To what extent is that process of accreditation going to limit the involvement of other people?

Mr Robertson: 'Limit the involvement of other people'? Give me an example.

Mr SEENEY: In preparing a PMAV application for an individual land-holder, a land-holder can do it himself—I acknowledge that and I acknowledge that the minister said that—but I am curious about the system of accrediting consultants to do it. Can he get the local stock and station agent to do it? Can he get his brother-in-law who is a surveyor in Sydney to do it for him? It is only an application, isn't it? It still has to be approved by the department, and the department is obviously going to come and check in some way. Or is the department going to accredit a group of consultants and then accept the work that those consultants do? That may well be an option, too. I am not opposed to that as an option. I am just asking for confirmation about how the minister sees this system working.

Mr ROBERTSON: Going to the accreditation issue, what we are trying to do is provide certainty. Technically, anyone can do a PMAV. The member could do it. He could get the member for Warrego to do it for him. The simple issue is that if he wants it done properly and done quickly it may well be in his best interests to engage a 'consultant' who has been through the regional ecosystem training we offer.

I understand that people are already going through that training to become accredited. There will probably be a future round of expressions of interest. We have not settled on that yet. We are trying to get a number of people through the system now so they can go out and offer their services so that land-holders are safe in the knowledge that if they do go down the path of wanting to employ someone to do the job they know they have been through the training. And that provides a signal to the department that the application it is getting is probably going to be something that can be easily done. That is where we are coming from. It is not mandatory, but it is a service, if you like, that we think land-holders will probably want to pick up.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HOBBS: Proposed section 20B states—

20B When chief executive may make property map of assessable vegetation

(1) The chief executive may make a property map of assessable vegetation for an area if—

(a) a development approval for the area has been given …

For instance, fodder harvesting approval may have been given and yet the chief executive only 'may' issue a property map. That seems pretty inconsistent. If in fact someone has gone through the process—he has used the accredited consultant or whoever the person may be and has all the ticks—the chief executive 'may' make a property map assessable. The proposed section should read 'the chief executive shall make a property map'. Particularly in relation to fodder harvesting, people do not need to deal with any procrastination.

I refer again to the issue of thinning and clearing of encroachment. In his reply to the second reading debate the minister made much to-do about it. Thinning is the action whereby people cannot use a chain between two tractors, bulldozers or other traction vehicles. The minister talked about encroachment and about Johnny Jones. I mention the situation where there is encroachment but not into a previously cleared area or natural open area. That encroachment may be into an area with other species. The concern I have is that it may come under the category such that people cannot actually use a chain. Can the minister give an assurance that, in a situation where there is genuine encroachment, even though there may be a variety of species out there, chains can be used?

Mr ROBERTSON: I cannot give the member for Warrego that comfort tonight. I do not think any reasonable person could expect the minister to make a definitive statement based just on the cursory conditions that the member outlined. That would not be appropriate. The simple fact is that we have an assessment process. We have a process of developing regional codes. Any situation such as he outlined would be assessed by the regional codes and the outcomes would be determined appropriately. It is not for me to offer my opinion as to the likelihood of success or otherwise of a situation such as that.

In relation to the other matter, proposed section 20B describes the circumstances in which the chief executive may make a PMAV. Firstly, a PMAV may be made where approval is given for clearing that is for the ongoing purposes of fodder harvesting, thinning, clearing of encroachment or control of non-native plants or declared pests. A PMAV may also be made where the chief executive officer is notified of a native forest practice.

A PMAV may also be made where approval is given for clearing of regrowth on leases used for agriculture or grazing. A PMAV may be made for a declared area and for the areas with commercial timber values. Furthermore, a PMAV may also be made for an area of vegetation that has been unlawfully cleared or is subject to a compliance notice or enforcement notice that requires vegetation to be restored. This applies whether a conviction for a clearing related offence occurred under the VMA 1999, Forestry Act 1959, Nature Conservation Act 1992 or EPA 1994 which also contain offences related to tree clearing.

I think it is fair to say that, whilst the member is concentrating on the term 'may', that is a common term that appears right throughout just about every act of this parliament. I do not think it is a matter of substance to argue the case between 'may' and 'will' in a circumstance such as this. The simple fact is that if there arose a dispute under that clause whereby the chief executive

was seen to be not acting appropriately, such decision would be judicially reviewable, as most decisions of government and in particular CEOs or other officers of departments are currently.

Mr SEENEY: I want to explore this area of the creation of property maps for assessable vegetation a little more, because I think it is a critically important part of this legislation. As I said before, it is one of the good parts—one of the parts that I agree with—and I think it will go a long way towards solving some of the problems that have existed with the administration of the vegetation management legislation until now. But it puzzles me a bit when I read the clause as to the way this particular clause sets out how these PMAVs are to be created. It is probably better to talk about it in broad terms rather than looking at the actual wording of the clause.

Is it the minister's understanding and intention that the chief executive can make a property map of assessable vegetation for a particular land-holder without his or her agreement? Proposed section 20B(1)(b), for example, looks at when an area becomes a declared area. I would take it that in that particular circumstance a land-holder would not necessarily have to agree with the PMAV that the chief executive made. Let us assume in that situation the land-holder did disagree with the particular boundaries defined on that PMAV. What is the avenue of appeal or the avenue for that land-holder to seek some justice for the review of those boundaries on that PMAV that the chief executive has made without his or her agreement?

Similarly, I take it that the same issues apply to proposed section 20D. From the reading of that proposed section, the chief executive may replace a property map of assessable vegetation for a previous area. Once again, it does not appear to me that that requires any agreement from the land-holder. The section lists a whole range of situations where they may replace the map, and one of them is for any reason that the land-holder agrees to, but the land-holder essentially does not have to agree to the replacement and does not have to agree to the boundaries. There must surely be some avenue of repeal or avenue of review for the reconsideration of those boundaries on the PMAV if the land-holder does not agree with the map that has been made by the chief executive.

Similarly, when the land-holder seeks to have a PMAV made, goes through the process that we were talking about before in terms of the minister's amendment and puts in an application, what happens when the department has a different opinion about where the boundaries of the particular vegetation communities are and about what constitutes remnant vegetation and what constitutes regrowth? Could the minister outline what the appeal mechanisms are in that situation and the time frames that would be applicable to those situations? What sort of time frames are we talking about, given that the establishment of these PMAVs is particularly important to some later clauses in this legislation? The time frames will be important.

Mr ROBERTSON: Yes, there are specific circumstances where the chief executive would make a PMAV without the owner's consent. Take, for example, a person convicted of clearing vegetation illegally. Because we have debated this exhaustively in the past, the member would be aware that certain provisions that we brought in last year meant that vegetation arising on land that has been illegally cleared does not get determined as regrowth. Therefore, it cannot be cleared again. It takes away the economic benefit of illegal tree clearing. So, in that case, the chief executive or the authorised officer under the delegation powers would construct a PMAV that records that area that has been illegally cleared so that it does not fall within category X as has been described. So that is one case.

The other case that I just saw would be where it becomes a declared area, but that is only after the whole process of going through the declaration of an area of high nature conservation has been completed, where the land-holder has had many opportunities to voice concerns or opinions before the declaration is actually made. Once that declaration is made, obviously that has to be recorded in a PMAV. So they are a couple of examples where the chief executive would have the power to make a PMAV without necessarily having the owner's consent.

Taking that further, those matters would be appealable. We talked about this as a result of discussions I had with Agforce well over a year ago now about trying to get a more user-friendly appeal system in place. We are looking at establishing an internal tribunal. 'Tribunal' sounds a bit high minded. I prefer the term 'referral panel'. The process that we are putting in place is that, upon request, the decision is reviewed internally. Then the applicant or the complainant is advised of the internal review of the original decision. If he or she is still unhappy, it can go to the next stage, which is this more user-friendly tribunal that I refer to as the referral tribunal which would be made up of lay people experienced in these matters. If the land-holder went down the path of that lay tribunal, they would not be entitled to legal representation.

What we are trying to do is provide the opportunity for greater transparency in decision-making processes, making it more user friendly without having to necessarily go down the adversarial road of courts. Of course, that is available if land-holders want it. So that is still being put in place, and a lot of that will be by regulation and policy which people will be able to avail themselves of.

Mr SEENEY: The other question I asked the minister about was a draft. As I understand it, he has suggested he is going to put in place a negotiated review. If there was a disagreement in the first instance, there would be a negotiated review at that first level before going to the tribunal

Mr Robertson: No, an internal review which you find right across the public sector.

Mr SEENEY: So a land-holder who was aggrieved by the initial decision could apply for an internal review?

Mr Robertson: That is right. In the first instance.

Mr SEENEY: But surely it would be a much better situation if there was a draft that could be negotiated or considered by both parties rather than going directly into this review appeal mechanism. Be that as it may, I think it is important that there is a clear indication that it is a three-step process. I presume a person can still go to the court after the tribunal. I will ask the minister to confirm that my understanding is correct that there is that three-step process in a situation where a land-holder is aggrieved with the PMAV that the chief executive or his delegated officer has drafted for his particular property.

Mr ROBERTSON: I perhaps misled the member earlier on. There is a distinction between how we determine matters that come under the IDAS system under the IPA and how we deal with matters related to the construction of PMAVs. For the purposes of PMAVs—because it is not a matter under the IDAS—the first process, which I outlined, is the internal review done by a third person. It is not the same person reviewing his or her own decisions; it is done by another person.

Mr Seeney: Within the department.

Mr ROBERTSON: Within the department. I have seen a number of decisions overturned through that process. The second path is to then go to the tribunal that I was talking about. Because it is not under the IDAS the third process is to go to judicial review, not to the Planning and Environment Court. That is the distinction between PMAVs.

Mr Seeney: The application will be under the IDAS?

Mr ROBERTSON: The application for the PMAV is not.

Mr SEENEY: I accept the explanation that the minister gave in relation to the drawing up of the PMAVs which, as he quite rightly says, are not under the IDAS. But then we have a different situation with applications for vegetation management. If an application is made for vegetation management, the path would be different, I take it. Is it still envisaged that we would have the tribunal process? So it would be a three-stage appeal process.

Mr Robertson: Yes.

Mr SEENEY: Would those appeals be time limited? This is going to be important in terms of the applications in the system now and the applications that are going to be received that we will call the ballot applications. Everything has to be done by December 2006. A cynical, untrusting person could suggest that if the time frames are not defined, then this whole process could be pushed out and made long and convoluted so that applications either would not be considered in time to be exercised by 2006 or would be left with such a small amount of time at the end of 2006 for their exercising.

It is important to outline the time frames for these appeal mechanisms given that we are working to a drop dead date of 31 December 2006. What sort of time frames does the minister envisage? In my experience it is the department that takes the time in these things rather than the land-holders. I think it is important that there is some sort of indication of the time frames involved.

Mr ROBERTSON: The member is right to this extent. This is getting away from this clause a bit, but I will deal with it briefly. We recognise that applications under the ballot are time critical because we want to give land-holders the maximum possible time to use their permits before the December 2006 deadline. PMAVs, however, are not time critical because they are an ongoing issue. We would envisage that, in terms of our internal appeal processes, standards would be set that would be appropriate to give a degree of certainty.

We are looking at a tribunal made up of three people out of a larger group of, say, 20 individuals—after we settle on the qualifications of those people. We think that would reduce the time for the hearing of appeals to the tribunal by virtue of having a pool of people from which we can draw three individuals at any particular time.

Mr ROWELL: I wanted to raise an issue related to section 20B and unlawful clearing. It includes clearing of vegetation by a person in contravention of a tree clearing provision under the Land Act 1994 as enforced before the commencement of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Act. I understand that many offences, if not all offences, will probably come from the Integrated Management Act. Could the minister advise what types of land are excluded in the definition of freehold land in the bill?

Mr ROBERTSON: No freehold land is excluded. This legislation encapsulates all freehold land. Unless the member can give us an example, I am not too sure I can help him.

Mr ROWELL: We were taking about the Land Act, and not any other act, and unlawful clearing. Is the minister saying that, under the Integrated Planning Act, nothing is excluded as far as clearing is concerned?

Mr ROBERTSON: I am struggling to understand. If the member for Hinchinbrook wrote to me about that I would be happy to help him that way. I am not too sure we are communicating particularly well on this issue tonight. I am happy to answer the question if the member wants to write to my office about it.

Mr ROWELL: Where are the actual penalties going to come from for the offences? Under the Integrated Planning Act? Could the minister please fill me in on that?

Mr ROBERTSON: Under this provision, all offences will now come under the Integrated Planning Act, but there are matters that are still in the system and have not been determined that would need to continue under the provisions of the Land Act as if this act did not have force because they are pre-existing offences.

Mr Rowell: That is right. That's what I wanted to know.

Mr ROBERTSON: I am pleased to be of assistance.

Mr Rowell: Which are they?

Mr ROBERTSON: What does the member mean?

Mr Rowell: Of the pre-existing offences, which offences are you talking about? What are you talking about? What are you referring to?

Mr ROBERTSON: For offences that occurred last year, the Land Act still applies. They may not have been brought to finality. They may still be being investigated, or heard, or whatever. Until they are exhausted, the old provisions of the Land Act must continue to apply. That is the standard way of approaching any kind of legislation that gets renewed. Matters that are already in the system have to be determined under the pre-existing act.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 15—

Mr SEENEY (9.21 p.m.): Clause 15 is quite an extensive clause. It deals with the provisions for making an application that eventually will end up under the planning act. There is a whole series of subsections there. We did begin to deal with this in the previous clause when we pursued the issue of the establishment of the property maps and the process that would be involved there in terms of application and appeal.

It is valuable that we go through the process of application and appeal for the particular clearing applications that are referred to in clause 15 because, once again, as we mentioned when we touched on this in the previous clause, it will be particularly important especially for those applications that we have been referring to as valid applications. It will also be important for applications for things like thinning and encroachment, which are new areas that have not been part of the system up until now and certainly need to be. As I said before, I welcome that.

The first part of clause 15 omits the old section 22A and inserts a new section which outlines that, despite the planning act, if the vegetation clearing application is not for a relevant purpose, then the assessment manager must refuse the application. I take it that that is the mechanism which will refuse applications for the clearing of remnant vegetation after 2006. It will mean that that is not for a relevant purpose and, therefore, the assessment manager will have an obligation

under this act to refuse that application. I take it that that is what the inclusion of that section does.

Mr ROBERTSON: I might need to clarify that.

Mr SEENEY: Please do. Subsection (2) sets out what the relevant purposes are. There is a whole range of those which are fairly straightforward. Subsection (f) deals with vegetation clearing applications that are made for fodder harvesting. Subsection (g) deals with thinning and (h) with the clearing of encroachment.

I would like the minister to outline the appeal processes where an application is made for fodder harvesting and a land-holder feels aggrieved. I note that subsection 22C refers to 'Modifying Planning Act effect of appeal rights on ongoing applications', and so on. Rather than going through those subsections one at a time, I am interested in confirming the situation that exists in relation to applications under this act for such things as fodder harvesting, thinning and encroachment where the land-holder disagrees with the decision of the department. As I said, we touched on this when we outlined the process that was involved with the property maps of assessable vegetation. We need to know what the process is going to be and we need to know what the time frames will be, particularly in relation to those ballot applications.

Also within this clause is section 22G, which deals with regions and ballots. Obviously this will be very important when it comes to balloting for the applications that will be received over and above the cap. 22G states—

(1) A regulation may prescribe—

(a) the regions of the State for which a ballot must be conducted; and

(b) the way, and the time at which, each ballot must be conducted; and

(c) the clearing allocation for each region; and

(d) the matters a broadscale application must contain.

I am interested to know how that ballot is going to be done. It is a completely separate question, of course, from the question about the application and appeals process, but it is all contained within the one clause.

I am interested to know the time frames for the ballots. When does the minister believe those applications need to be in? When will the ballot be conducted, given that all of those applications are going to be forwarded on 31 December 2006? Subsection 22G(1)(c) talks about a clearing allocation for each region. Are we talking about bioregions or geographical regions? Are the allocations of those balloted applications within those regions going to be dependent on the amount of remnant vegetation that remains in the regions or is it just a straight out allocation across the regions? Similarly, with individual properties, are individual allocations going to be made on the basis of remnant vegetation remaining on individual properties or is it just a straight out luck of the draw situation?

I do not know whether the minister's department has considered those questions yet, but between now and when the ballot takes place somebody has to make those decisions. The people who are involved in this particular situation are keen to know some answers.

Mr ROBERTSON: On the matter that I said I would clarify, the member mentioned provisions that start as at 2006. The provisions do not start as at 2006. They start once this act is proclaimed, except for those applications that will come out of the ballot. For every other matter to do with vegetation management, they will commence upon the proclamation of this act. That was about appeals.

The second matter related to how appeals are handled. For ongoing applications, the first stage is a negotiated decision. The second stage is a tribunal. I was just reminded why we use the term 'tribunal'. We are using the provisions of the Integrated Planning Act, which are quite specific in terms of the terminology. For the purposes of establishing a tribunal, I take on the powers of the minister who has primary responsibility for the Integrated Planning Act. They then come to me for these particular purposes, which is why we talk about a tribunal. It goes on to talk about panels and so on under those provisions. Once it has gone through the tribunal process, matters of law can then go to the Planning and Environment Court. So that is how we would be handing those matters.

Mr Seeney: Time frames for that appeal process?

Mr ROBERTSON: We cannot control the Planning and Environment Court, as the member is aware, but, again, a similar answer applies to what I said before about putting in place appropriate time frames that we would find under the IPA.

We have not finalised our position on how the ballot will be conducted for the very reasons that the member outlined. They are all relevant questions that we need to make a determination on. We are engaged with Agforce, as the member would expect, in getting their suggestions. At the extreme, a problem could be that we may get one application for 200,000 hectares in south-east Queensland.

Mr Seeney: That is right.

Mr ROBERTSON: We are trying to put in place a provision that is equitable, or is at least seen to be equitable, whereby the maximum number of people succeed in the ballot but at levels that are actually of value to them. Do we want 20,000 successful applicants who each get 10 hectares to clear? Again, that is crazy. So we are engaged with the stakeholders to try to come up with what is the best or fairest system. Obviously, that will have to be finalised by the time this legislation is proclaimed, because we want to get out there, as I said earlier, as soon as possible to run the ballot so that by September that ballot can be conducted. So applications are called for, preliminary assessments are made, they go into the ballot process and, come September, they are drawn. Basically, that is about trying to give two years for successful applicants to use their application.

Mr HOBBS: I want to ask a question about fodder harvesting applications. It is mentioned in the bill, so it is relevant. As the minister would be aware, there have been a few scary situations that have emerged for people making applications for fodder permits. At one stage they just could not get them. I think that the process was speeded up and the situation improved. However, we do not ever want to have that situation again, because people could be in a situation where they have to feed their stock, the permit has not come through and all of that sort of business. Is there a plan to ensure that there is a very quick turnaround for applications for fodder permits?

Mr ROBERTSON: The answer is yes. We are looking at a turnaround time of two weeks or 10 working days for those types of applications, appreciating the urgency of it.

Mr SEENEY: In respect of the ballot applications, does the minister foresee a situation where a number of people who are successful in that ballot application process could have a very limited time in which to exercise those permits, given that we have to go through a process of considering the existing permits and taking all of those through their subsequent appeal processes before we arrive at a situation where we know for sure the portion of the 500,000 hectare cap that is available for so-called ballot applications? It appears to me from the information that the minister has been giving us that if a significant number of the applications that are currently in the system proceed through the appeal process and take some time in doing that before we arrive at just what portion of the cap is available for ballot applications and then we consider the applications that are received, presumably by the time of the ballot, and then go through the appeal processes for those applications, we are very quickly running out of time for the successful people to exercise those applications before the drop-dead date of 31 December 2004.

That is why I have been trying to press the minister tonight to give some sort of indication of the time frames. Once again, it seems to me that somebody who was cynical and untrusting could suggest that the situation could be engineered whereby permits were being issued late in 2006 with no time left at all in which to exercise them.

The other essential element of that is the preparation of the codes, because it is almost impossible to draw up an application until those codes become available. Until we know what the codes are, it is almost impossible to put together an application that is going to have a reasonable chance of success.

So from my reading of the situation, two processes have to happen. The department has to get those codes in place. Given that the minister and I have often discussed the degree to which the department is underfunded and underresourced, I wonder whether or not the capacity is there to get those codes in place in a relatively short time frame. The second process that has to happen is that all of the applications that are currently in the system have to be assessed and taken through the appeals process before we get to the point where we know how much of that 500,000 hectare cap is available for ballot applications. Then the ballot applications have to be considered and taken through the appeal process in such a time that will allow the successful

applicants to exercise their applications by 31 December 2006. I think that the minister has set a very difficult time frame for the officers of his department to meet. I wonder whether or not he should be seeking to address the chronic underresourcing that we have talked about so often to ensure that the department can address that time frame.

Mr ROBERTSON: On behalf of my department, all I can say is that we thrive on challenges. We cannot get enough of them. In relation to the applications that are currently in the system, I am informed that the assessment of them will be completed before the ballot, which is scheduled for September. So the determination of what is available under the cap will be there. In relation to the interim codes—

Mr Seeney: What about the appeals?

Mr ROBERTSON: I am informed that we will be in a position to assess what appeals are likely to be going forward. In relation to the interim codes, they will be completed by the time of the proclamation of the act. For the ballot, those interim codes will be finalised so that people can start framing their applications with the knowledge of what the codes provide for.

The third matter was in relation to the successful applicants arising out of the ballot. I mentioned before that our intention is to give them the maximum time possible to utilise their successful applications. That is why we are sticking to some very tight time frames. We believe that, whilst most successful applicants will have around about two years to exercise their permit, having gone through a truncated appeals process, we believe that the minimum time that a successful applicant on appeal would have is around about 18 months. In relation to those people who are unsuccessful in the ballot, there is no appeal to that. So they are the kind of time frames and procedures that we have in place. We acknowledge that as much time as possible should be given to successful applicants. There is no intention to be smart about it by stretching the process out so that we can grab back a few thousand hectares. No, that would be a breach of faith and that is not what we are about.

Mr HOBBS: I just want to get this clear in my mind. I think we have covered some of this before. In relation to a fodder harvesting permit, if that is knocked back—

Mr Robertson: A what?

Mr HOBBS: The fodder harvesting permit—I assume the process is that the applicant goes for internal review. Would that be right?

Mr Robertson: Yes.

Mr HOBBS: What is the next step if they still disagree?

Mr ROBERTSON: The next step following the internal review would be to go to the internal tribunal and, following that, on a point of law to the Planning and Environment Court.

Mr ROWELL: What we have just been talking about is a very long process for a person who is very dependent upon the use of the fodder. I am familiar with—

Mr Robertson: No. We gave a commitment to turn it around within 10 working days—application to grant.

Mr ROWELL: But then there is an appeal process, internal review and so on. It does become a fairly lengthy process.

Mr Robertson: That is based on the quality of the application.

Mr ROWELL: I can understand what the minister is saying, but for anybody who has to deal with feeding stock—mulga or whatever it might be—it is imperative. Is there any way that the minister can speed up the process even more than what he is contemplating at present? Very often drought comes on people at very short notice. They need time to put in their applications. They need time for those applications to be processed. If they have to go through an appeal process it could take nearly a month or six weeks before they actually get the okay. Is there any way that can be sped up? That is what I am asking in the interests of people facing a difficult situation and are dependent on this.

I know there are areas throughout the state, such as where the member for Warrego and the member for Gregory come from, where in the event of a drought coming on it starts to dry out very quickly. Previously they were able to go out at fairly short notice and start lopping trees or whatever the process was. I do not know that they will be able to push them. That is another interesting thing, too. When we are talking about fodder harvesting, can they actually push trees? Do they have to cut them? What do they do in terms of that process? Is there anything

documented or is there anything with which they have to comply as far as harvesting fodder is concerned?

Mr ROBERTSON: I say to the member for Hinchinbrook that drought does not just occur. There are plenty of signals out there that would advise a land-holder, I am sure. I am not in a position to tell anyone how to manage their land. I would imagine that most land-holders would pretty much know that they are getting into a drought situation, so they would prepare for that.

We are providing for a level of certainty that has never existed before, that is, we are guaranteeing turnaround times from time of application to receipt of how that application has been considered—two weeks, 10 working days. As I said, how that matter goes from there in terms of IPA time frames, that is a reasonable time frame, and I cannot control the Planning and Environment Court's time frames. That is way outside my powers.

Quite frankly, the success of an application is dependent to a large extent on the quality of the application. By providing a specific code for fodder harvesting, as has come out of the regional vegetation management planning process, and the fact that land-holders can use accredited professionals to assist them in applications, the best advice I could give to any land-holder is to make sure their application is the best possible application in the first place because that reduces the likelihood of rejection. That is the best advice I can give them. I am not being critical, but I have seen some of the applications that come in and I do not know how my department actually does consider them because they are of such poor quality that it makes it difficult for anyone to actually assess what is going on. That is why I encourage land-holders—and I hope the member does the same—to put in the best possible application. The best possible application helps my department do the best assessment to achieve the greatest degree of success.

Mr SEENEY: The minister was talking about codes for fodder harvesting. It prompted me to ask a question regarding the exclusion in the thinning provision of tractors and chains. That exclusion for the use of tractors and chains applies only to thinning, as I understand it, in this legislation. In terms of fodder harvesting, surely land-holders will not be subject to the same exclusion that applies to thinning from the use of tractors and chains for fodder harvesting. Can the minister confirm that that provision relating to tractors and chains applies only to the thinning clause in this bill and not other applications?

Mr ROBERTSON: There is nothing in this act that provides for a blanket ban on the use of tractors and chains. However, because there are different ecosystems carrying different kinds of fodder, the regional codes based on the regional vegetation management plans would determine the appropriateness of where chains would be used or not used.

Mr JOHNSON: I make reference again to the fodder harvesting section of this clause. It seems to me that the minister is a little bit hazy—I am serious about this; this is a very serious issue—about the harvesting of mulga. I am talking about mulga here. Probably nobody in this House would have had more experience with fodder cutting of mulga or pushing of mulga for feeding of stock than I have. From 1965 on till I came into this place in 1989 probably nobody pushed more mulga trees or cut more mulga trees than I did. I said in my contribution in the House yesterday that I saw mulga country pulled with a ball and chain back in 1965. I have seen Yarranvale south of Calladi virtually wiped of every mulga tree when Elsinora had cattle there in 1965.

I have to say to the minister that that country has come back and responded better than ever. You cannot clear mulga country totally. Just before Christmas a constituent of mine at Morven made representation to me about concerns he had with the departmental officers in Roma. He could not get a fodder permit. When he did get the permit he was told that he could only cut one in four trees. One in four trees is absolutely ludicrous.

This evening I am saying that I believe that there are people in the minister's department who are not familiar and not understanding of what the fodder harvesting of mulga is all about. This is a pretty contentious issue. The member for Hinchinbrook has just touched on it, as has the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister. I take on board what the minister is saying about a 10-day turnaround for a fodder permit. That is not a problem because, as the minister knows, drought does not come on overnight. You would know if you have to push scrub or cut scrub or whatever. No-one ever wants to push the damn stuff because it is a costly exercise, but at the end of the day it has to happen.

Do the minister's departmental people realise that this is a type of Acacia mulga and that it will grow back? I can guarantee that. I can take him to Quilpie and show him where we have

pulled thousands of acres of mulga country and it has come back well. If people have to feed a heap of cattle—and cattle eat a fair bit, as do a lot of sheep—cutting one in four trees as his officers authorised my constituents is just ludicrous. I just feel that there are probably people in the department who have to be more aware and more understanding of what this is all about.

Mr ROBERTSON: If there is anyone in my department stationed in western Queensland that Peter Voller has not got to, I will get on the phone to Voller tomorrow and ask for a 'please explain' because he has not been doing his job! I mean that in the nicest possible way.

Mr Johnson: I am serious about this.

Mr ROBERTSON: I am, too. I would not for one moment seek to debate with the member for Gregory how you manage mulga, by any stretch of the imagination. I am a new chum when it comes to this stuff, but I do know it is an acacia, I do know it regenerates and I do know it is a valuable resource. I think I proved that during the drought, when I did make additional resources available for the assessment of fodder permits so that they did get a quicker turnaround. I am sensitive to those issues.

All I can do in relation to the concerns of the member for Gregory is refer him to the mulga lands regional vegetation management plan, which has been generated obviously by people in his area. This is what will form the basis of the code for harvesting of mulga. I am not trying to be half smart here, but this plan does contain the following section with respect to thinning within remnant vegetation—

Thinning within remnant vegetation—

it is referring to mulga—

does not include total removal of understorey and midstorey species, clearing that completely removes one or more native species which are components of the ecosystem, selective or part land clearing that removes all vegetation except selected old trees and broadscale tree clearing.

Clearly, the management practices that will be part of the code for mulga harvesting will be within the context of the recommendations coming out of the mulga lands regional vegetation management committee.

Clause 15, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 16 and 17, as read, agreed to.

Clause 18—

Mr ROWELL (9.52 p.m.): There is some concern about the training of officers with the Department of Natural Resources who have to obtain warrants and execute them on land-holders with registered land under the Vegetation Management Act. I am aware of a few instances in north Queensland of land-holders having a pretty difficult time. I think it comes from the lack of training and understanding about warrants and what they really mean. Basically, I am requesting a better level of training and understanding of those officers who have to go out and issue warrants to people for infringements that may occur under this act and the amendments being put forward.

Mr ROBERTSON: I note what the member for Hinchinbrook has said. If he has specific examples, I invite him to write to me about them. They will of course be investigated and followed up with him. I note what the member puts forward.

Clause 18, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 19 to 26, as read, agreed to.

Clause 27—

Mr ROBERTSON (9.54 p.m.): I move amendments Nos 2 and 3—

2 Clause 27—

At page 28, line 26, 'This section'—

omit, insert—

'Subsection (2)'.

3 Clause 27—

At page 29, after line 9—

insert—

' '(4) The Minister may approve a regional vegetation management code for Cape York Peninsular based on the local guideline for Cape York Peninsular previously approved by the Minister under the *Land Act 1994*, section 272.'.

Amendments agreed to.

Mr SEENEY: Clause 27 inserts a new part 6, division 2—'Transitional provisions for Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Act'—this bill. I am interested in these transitional provisions in terms of existing applications. Proposed sections 76 and 77 make it clear that existing applications will be considered under the existing regime. I think that is a fair summation. I seek clarification of that. I am pretty sure that is the way that reads. It is quite clear that existing applications will be considered under the existing regime. It only relates to the applications that will be received after proclamation of this act, because currently under the moratorium the department is not receiving any applications, as I understand it. So it is only when the department starts receiving applications from this time forward that they will be considered under the changes that are being made by this bill.

The other part of this clause I refer to relates to what may be approved as codes, in proposed section 75. I am a bit puzzled about why that is worded in the way that it is. It basically says that the minister can turn anything he sees fit into a code. I think that is probably a fair summary. Why is proposed section 75 worded in that way? What sorts of situations was the minister envisaging when paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) were drafted—they basically allow anything to be approved as a code—given the discussions we had earlier about using the regional vegetation management plans as the basis for the codes? Is there some situation the minister envisaged in which this particular provision would be necessary, given that he has at some length explained the integrity of those regional vegetation management plans?

Mr ROBERTSON: In relation to the first question the member is correct on both counts. Proposed section 75 simply brings forward the draft regional vegetation management plans to form the basis of the codes. It is an enabling clause.

Clause 27, as amended, agreed to.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.00 p.m.): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Hinchinbrook Electorate, Fire

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.00 p.m.): The tragic loss of life resulting from a house fire in the Hinchinbrook electorate's Feluga area on the morning of Saturday, 11 April is simply incomprehensible. This was a family that was held in high regard throughout the Tully district, and the death of John and Janelle Frazer and their daughters, 18-year-old Sarah and nine-year-old Julia, has rocked the small farming community. Newspapers are reporting a possible case of murder/suicide.

Day by day the increasing difficulties being faced by many families in areas such as Tully are mounting due to the downturn in the sugar industry and uncertainty of the application put forward by the Philippines to import bananas into Australia. The effects of both these industries and the people involved provides limited confidence for the future, placing an enormous amount of stress on those who are depending on them. The seriousness of the situation is brought home when such a tragedy occurs and when organisations such as Lifeline can be quoting figures in the vicinity of 35 per cent with regards to calls and callers from the regional and rural areas of this particular area in north Queensland.

It is a catastrophe that such enormous pressures have the capacity to lead to terrible circumstances such as that which occurred last Sunday week. The fact that a series of adverse events can take precedence over life itself is simply tragic. I recall growing sugarcane back in the mid-1980s, when the sugar industry was faced with low world prices. The prospects were bleak. At the time I had witnessed the demise of tobacco at my farm in Ingham which was a major source of the family's income. This, coupled with the depressed state of the sugar industry and the fact that I was the family's sole breadwinner, meant that the struggle for survival was an enormous burden to bear.

Being aware of the current situation that exists within the sugar and banana industries, I have left no stone unturned in lobbying to maintain their viability. This is particularly necessary for communities such as Tully, where sugar and bananas are basically the lifeblood of that community. It is extremely important that parliament recognise the pressure that people face at

this present time to have to fend for themselves. It is a very difficult situation which they now face in both those industries, possibly not being able to survive in many cases—

Time expired.

Moorooka State School

Mr FINN (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (10.03 p.m.): A number of very important events occurred in the year of 1929, several with worldwide impact. Most importantly, the stock market crash and the onset of the Great Depression had a massive impact on the quality of life in Australia and around the world. 1929 also saw the Kellogg-Briand pact come into effect. This pact was a treaty between several nations, including Australia and the United States, that provided for the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy.

In Australia, 1929 saw the election of the Scullin Labor government and a Queenslander led a Kangaroo Ashes tour for the first time. In my small patch of the world, 1929 saw the opening of a state school on Beaudesert Road in Moorooka. The Moorooka State School opened with 139 students, and by the end of the year enrolment had grown to 230. The school continued to develop as the inner south side population continued to grow. By 1948, enrolments had grown so significantly that the school had to use military huts as makeshift classrooms.

In 1959 an infant school opened and operated until 1983, when the state school and the infant school were amalgamated. The next few years will see further change with the introduction of a preparatory year as this government rolls out a program to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of all Queenslanders. This year the Moorooka State School celebrates its 75th anniversary, and today the school has an enrolment of 426 students, including students from many cultural backgrounds. In recent times the school community has been enhanced by the arrival of student refugees from African communities. These students come to our community with many special needs, particularly in relation to language difficulties, and I was pleased to work with the Minister for Education recently to assist the school with the employment of a full-time native speaking teacher aide.

Recently I attended the first major event of the 75th anniversary, a bellringing ceremony attended by several founding students from 1929 and 1930. There are not as many of them left as there were then. Mr Tom Price, a founding student who has worked very hard to research the history of the school and the local area, addressed the assembly and a roll call of founding students was held.

Throughout this year the school is holding a number of events which celebrate the cultural history of the previous 75 years—for example, a swinging sixties event, a seventies night with white suits and black lycra, and a 1980s bad hair and shoulder pads night, which I hope the Minister for Education is attending.

I congratulate the school on celebrating its 75th anniversary. In particular, I recognise the efforts of the principal, Mr Tony Warren, vice principal Ms Nicole King, Mr Tom Price and other founding students, the Parents and Citizens Association, and the current staff and students who have ensured this anniversary is celebrated. The celebration of historical anniversaries is important. Over the course of this year, students, staff and the broader school community will learn about the development of the local area and benefit from the lessons of the past. I pay tribute to the school's efforts and I wish it well for the next 75 years and beyond.

Police Awards, Gold Coast

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (10.06 p.m.): I recently had the pleasure of attending the south-eastern region police service medals and awards ceremony. This was held at the Ashmore Police Citizens Youth Club. Present at the awards were Commissioner of Police Bob Atkinson, and Assistant Police Commissioner David Melville. A number of Surfers Paradise officers received awards. Officers receiving national medal and class were Sergeant Matthew Maloy, Senior Constable Paul Glock and Senior Constable David Joachim. An assistant commissioner's award for merit went to Inspector Jeff James for his exceptional work during the schoolies festival.

An assistant commissioner's certificate also went to Constable Deryck Taylor for his excellent work. Other recipients of assistant commissioners' certificates were Inspector Ken Fox, Senior

Sergeant Bruce Tracey, Senior Sergeant Joe Joyce and Administration Officer Donna Wright. What this shows is the very good work that police officers on the Gold Coast and, in particular, in Surfers Paradise have been doing. It is also a credit to David Melville, who has also been doing very good work at Surfers Paradise Police Station since he came halfway through last year and said that he was determined to clean up the image of Surfers Paradise. His team on the Gold Coast does an outstanding job and they unfortunately do so under a great strain.

I say this as a follow-up to a contribution I made in my maiden speech a month ago. The Gold Coast and, in particular, Surfers Paradise work with too few officers for the job that needs to be done. We have up to five fewer police officers per 10,000 people than other northern centres. As one of the officers who received an award was rewarded for stellar work during schoolies, I feel it is apt to discuss police shortages. Schoolies is the main event along with Indy on the Surfers Paradise holiday calendar. These events, however, come along with weeks of holidays and long weekends every year. The point is that our population swells significantly at certain times of the year. Whilst we have hardworking officers, we need more to ensure the safety of local residents and holiday-makers alike.

Congratulations once again to those officers who received awards and well done to Assistant Commissioner David Melville and his team on some outstanding work.

Cairns Regional Group Training, Annual Awards Night

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.08 p.m.): Last Friday, 16 April, I was privileged to represent the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations at the annual awards night of Cairns Regional Group Training when the achievements of their apprentices and trainees were recognised and rewarded. The evening was particularly special because it was also the 20th anniversary of CRGT, which has been headed by outstanding CEO, John Windsor, who began his employment with the organisation 20 years ago to the day. During those 20 years the number of CRGT apprentices and trainees has steadily grown to its current level of 1,042, making it the second largest group training organisation in Queensland, thereby living up to its motto 'From little acorns giant oak trees grow'.

Some of the significant milestones in the 20-year history of CRGT include its entry into the specialised field of indigenous employment in 1990. Today, 16 per cent of CRGT apprentices and trainees are indigenous, working in companies in Cape York and the Torres Strait as well as the Cairns region.

In 1993 their retail skills centre was established in response to industry needs and is recognised as one of the most successful training centres in Australia. CRGT initially operated out of various leased premises but in 1998 Cairns TAFE college provided land on their campus at peppercorn rental and a purpose-built administration centre was constructed and later extended to accommodate training programs.

In 2002 CRGT expanded its operations and acquired funding to run the government's Get Set for Work Program and most recently offered a talent identification program to high school students in conjunction with a vocational partnership group to prepare young people for school based vocational training and work. I acknowledge work of the founders of CRGT including the early board chairmen, Chris Johnson, Chris Bollen and Frans Hamer, and the current chair, Les Maunder. The current general manager, Morrie Cunningham, was also a key member of the steering committee that established the successful regional training organisation.

The major accolades of last Friday night were reserved for CEO, John Windsor, the driving force behind CRGT who has announced his intention to retire in October of this year. Over his 20 years John has helped to transform the lives of more than 10,000 young people who have passed through the doors of CRGT. He has supported hundreds of businesses, large and small, in their training endeavours and thereby strengthening the skill base of our industries and contributed significantly to the economic development of far-north Queensland.

I have known and worked with John in various roles over most of the last 20 years and I am proud to count him as a friend. My parliamentary colleagues Warren Pitt and Desley Boyle, who were also present at the award night, join me in congratulating John and wishing him and his wonderful wife, Norma, all the very best for their future together in retirement. His legacy will live on and I am sure that CRGT will clock up another successful 20 years as the giant oak tree continues to grow from the acorn that he nurtured so well.

Water Supply, Burdekin Electorate

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (10.11 p.m.): The Bowen Basin coal fields, and the communities supported by it within my electorate of Burdekin, are facing a serious water supply crisis. The Eungella Dam, which supplies this area, is at 24 per cent capacity, with supplies not expected to last another 12 months. The Bowen Basin coal industry and other industrial developments are under serious threat. The coal mines in the northern Bowen Basin produced more than 87 million tonnes in 2003, generating wealth in excess of $6 billion for Queensland. This has increased from 49.9 million tonnes in 1996, and this has been a 75 per cent increase in seven years.

The Eungella Dam supplies coal developments that currently generate in excess of $3 billion annually. The Collinsville Power Station and an urban population in the towns of Collinsville, Moranbah and surrounding areas get supplies from the Eungella Dam. Water is essential for the mining process. It is also essential for the generation of power. The availability and reliability of water is an important component of any investment decision to establish or reinvest in a mining operation.

Total water use for industrial purposes in this area has increased from nearly 22,000 megalitres in 1998-99 to nearly 32,000 megalitres in 2002-03. That is a 45 per cent increase over five years. During the same period, coal tonnages mined have increased by only 36 per cent. So water use is growing at a faster rate than coal tonnages mined. At current rates of expansion, the coal industry's water needs could approach 70,000 megalitres per year within 10 years. This is well in excess of the capacity of the current water supply system.

It seems apparent that Eungella Dam cannot currently supply its allocation of industrial and urban water at the reliability levels demanded for such high priority uses and also provide for future growth. Eungella has 87 per cent allocated to industrial and urban use. However, the ability of Eungella to supply high priority water at the current allocation rate is questioned. It is estimated that the current water supply in the Eungella Dam could last for 12 months only with careful monitoring. What is going to happen then? Further to the many representations made by the Bowen Collinsville Enterprise, I urge the government to consider without delay the construction of a new water storage to supply the Bowen Basin mining industry, to supply the 20,000 hectares of prime agricultural land at Collinsville and to supply the expansion of the power generation industry within that region.

Education and Training Reforms for the Future, Toowoomba

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (10.14 p.m.): Community partnerships are a cornerstone of the ETRF process and the Toowoomba district board are working hard to achieve effective community engagement particularly with young people. Already there are over 70 people involved in numerous working groups and reference groups informing the board and participating in ETRF in Toowoomba. These people come from a variety of backgrounds—various state and Commonwealth departments, group training organisations, TAFE and schools, both state and private, commerce and industry, various departments of the University of Southern Queensland and community organisations and service providers. The list is exhaustive.

The Queensland Youth Charter sets the Queensland government's benchmark for engaging young people in government decision making. The charter is based upon the right of a citizen to participate in the process of governance. The Toowoomba district ETRF board is actively committed to engaging young people in the ongoing development of the District Youth Achievement Plan and the implementation of the ETRF in the Toowoomba district. The board recognises young people as key stakeholders in ETRF and as clients of education services. This is evidenced by the actions of the Toowoomba district board.

Toowoomba is setting the benchmark for the state in engaging the community in the ETRF process. The board recognised the need for local young people's input to successfully: identify relevant and appropriate local initiatives; learn more about ways of building Year 10 as the transition to the senior phase of learning; develop meaningful senior education training plans; and ensuring the inclusion of young people's priorities and ideas into the District Youth Achievement Plan.

In recognising the principles of the Queensland Youth Charter, the Toowoomba district board engaged the services of the Office of Youth Affairs' Regional Youth Affairs Officer (South West), Mrs Rebecca Hand, and Toowoomba City Council Youth Development Officer, Mr Darryl Bates, to develop a youth engagement strategy. As a result of this strategy our young people's reference

group formed comprising some 36 students from 15 of the 18 schools in the district. The first of a series of two-day interactive forums was held on 27 and 28 October 2003 at the Emu Gully Adventure Camp and facilitated by Rebecca Hand and Darryl Bates.

The input provided by the young people who attended this camp has been invaluable to the board in the implementation of ETRF, and the young people's reference group continues to provide important input. Congratulations to Rebecca Hand and Darryl Bates on their brilliant and hard work, and Tracey Warry, ETRF adviser for the Toowoomba district.

Silverton, Property Dispute

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.16 p.m.): A ludicrous situation has arisen between a property owner and water resources concerning property access at Wivenhoe Dam. The property called Silverton is made up of seven blocks only one of which fronts the Esk-Kilcoy road. The block is lot RP 149047. A portion of the block was resumed at the time Wivenhoe Dam was constructed, but no problems ever arose with access until recently. At the time of resumption the land-holder, Ron Henry, had access through the resumed land and it was his belief that this was a permanent arrangement that would allow access for future owners of the land.

The new owners, however, found out at the time of purchasing Silverton in 2000 that it was not the case. The resumed land is now leased from water resources and this land will be used very soon for the sewerage treatment plant for Somerset Dam. Mr and Mrs Harrison have been informed that they will lose their only access to their home.

Originally the Silverton house and outbuildings were situated on the part of the land that was resumed. The house was removed after the resumption but not the outbuildings. The dairy was built around 1917 and the Harrison's feel that the original hut was built before then as there are roman numerals carved into one of the slabs of the dairy. Access going back to the early part of the 20th century was always through this particular lot.

During Ron Henry's ownership he made a number of improvements to the property that included stockyards, sheds and extensions to former small residences in which he lived for 15 years. Power, town water and the phone were connected during his ownership. Access to the property, house, sheds and cattleyards always occurred through this block. One of the maps of the area clearly depicts access to the original homestead and the cattleyards from the Esk-Kilcoy road through this block.

The original intention at the time of resumption was not to land-lock these land-holders. The law at the time and the formalisation of agreements appear to have been of low priority. This can be demonstrated as Frank Jacobson from DMR writes of the existence of a gentleman's agreement—a handshake—that enabled the road that traverses the forestry track to the Main Roads tower.

At the time of purchase the Harrisons were shocked to find that their access was not formalised. After much effort they still do not have legal access to their home through the resumed piece of land—access that had been there for approximately 87 years. This is an untenable position for the Harrisons and I implore the government to look into this to ensure that legal access is granted to their home so that they are not left to continue the uncertainty of their current predicament.

Perhaps the minister can point the Harrisons in the right direction to gain permanent access to Silverton. The leases held by the water corporation are very extensive and it is of concern that other land-holders may find themselves in similar situations to the Harrisons when they purchase their land from the present land-holders. I feel the matter should be amended immediately and I ask that every effort be made to do so.

Time expired.

Gab Titui Cultural Centre

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (10.20 p.m.): Last Friday I had the privilege of attending the opening of Gab Titui, otherwise known as the Thursday Island cultural centre. The centre was officially opened by the member for South Brisbane, Anna Bligh, in her capacity as Minister for the Arts, and the federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Amanda Vanstone. Also attending the opening was the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Liddy Clark.

The Gab Titui Cultural Centre is the result of a partnership between the Torres Strait Regional Authority and the Queensland Heritage Trails Network, which in itself is a partnership between the Queensland and Australian governments. Some of the exciting features of the centre include interpretative displays, a gallery for historical artefacts, a workshop space for local artists, educational groups, and community events and a cafe. The centre's interpretative displays will showcase Torres Strait Islander culture, history and art through exhibitions and multimedia.

The Torres Strait people have played an integral role in establishing Gab Titui through the cultural centre steering committee. The committee is comprised of community representatives who have guided the process from concept stage to completion. The Gab Titui Cultural Centre cost $3 million to complete, with both the Australian and Queensland governments contributing funds.

There were some mixed feelings at this opening because, while everyone is happy that Gab Titui is now a reality, there was some sadness that the late Ephraim Bani could not be there to see his vision come true. A keeper of Torres Strait Islander customs, Ephraim Bani is recognised throughout the area as the visionary behind the Gab Titui Cultural Centre.

The word Gab Titui represents both eastern and western language dialects of the Torres Strait. 'Gab', from the eastern island groups, is interpreted as journey and 'titui' from the western islands reflects stars or light. Thus the meaning of Gab Titui is journey of the stars.

The opening of the centre was marked with a festival. The headline act for the Friday night concert was Torres Strait Islander Christine Anu and included traditional dancers and singers from all over the region. There was also a market, an arts-in-action session, a model canoe boat race, a community tug of war and a church service.

Continued community input will be essential now that the centre is opened to help guide the activities, events and programs it offers, ensuring that Gab Titui remains proactive in addressing the cultural needs of the Torres Strait community while maintaining the community's momentum in establishing cultural revival.

The centre will provide significant employment opportunities, not only for those people working there but also for people supplying art, crafts and programs to the large number of visitors who will call into the facility. I also commend the TSRA, especially the chair, Mr Terry Waia, and the CEO, Mr Mike Fordham, for coordinating the government agencies and community groups that worked to create this first-class facility.

Bundaberg and District Health Service

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (10.23 p.m.): After much community consultation and personal observation, I have unfortunately come to the conclusion that the Bundaberg and District Health Service is in a deep crisis. If urgent action is not taken soon by the new Health Minister, patients will unnecessarily and prematurely die. This is because work standards, understandably, are wont to slip when morale among specialists, general medicos, nurses, mental health staff and cleaners is at an all-time low.

Since 7 February I have had a steady stream of dedicated, talented and hardworking health professionals in my office, on the phone and writing to me. Those health professionals say that if and when they speak out on fundamental issues of patient care, staff safety, security, cost cutting or hygiene they are bullied, intimidated and personally vilified by Queensland Health management. This is not good enough. It is a disgrace.

Unfortunately, I believe that in the Burnett and Bundaberg region patients are unnecessarily dying while they are waiting to get on waiting lists. They are unnecessarily and prematurely dying because they are being prematurely discharged. They are unnecessarily dying because of the systemic and chronic mismanagement of Queensland Health under the previous Health Minister. They are unnecessarily and prematurely dying because the Premier failed to replace that Health Minister when it was plainly obvious to all that his minister had lost control of her portfolio.

Recently I detailed the long list of problems with the management to the Health Minister. I call on the honourable member for Sandgate to launch a full and open inquiry into the management and operation of the Bundaberg and District Health Service. Importantly, he must guarantee that any Health employee who comes forward to share their experiences must not be subject to any form of intimidation or harassment. If the minister listens to his workers carefully, he will hear a list of complaints and allegations which is huge and covers virtually all aspects of

operations at the hospital from unclean operating theatres to patients being forced to leave the hospital before it was safe to do so.

Questions that need answering include: why have so many specialists resigned from the hospital in the past year? Why are senior staff at the mental health unit so critical of the management? Why has the current member for Bundaberg not spoken out about this health crisis and why did the former member for Burnett not speak out for his people?

St Mary's School, Laidley

Mr LIVINGSTONE (Ipswich West—ALP) (10.26 p.m.): In recent weeks I had the pleasure of opening stages 3 and 4 of St Mary's School in Laidley. The facilities master plan represents a significant milestone in the history of the school. I am certain that years 4 to 7 students and their teachers appreciate the extra space and smarter look of their new and refurbished classrooms. These new facilities not only gave the school a face-lift; they also inspire immense pride in the community which uses them.

I am pleased that this government was able to contribute approximately $267,000 towards the cost of the stage 3 refurbishment. This government has a strong working partnership with schools in the non-government sector and we are pleased to support the great work of schools like St Mary's. This school has undergone a significant renewal since 2000. In addition to the new and upgraded classrooms, the school has added a resource centre and student amenities. This modernisation, importantly, has allowed the school to meet enrolment demand while remaining a close-knit institution where each student receives quality learning support in a caring, nurturing environment.

The government's vision for education in the Smart State parallels the vision of St Mary's School. We want to prepare students for the world so they can take their place in a society that values social justice and equality of opportunity. The state government is currently implementing reforms across all levels of schooling, from the early years right through to the senior years and beyond. A universally available full-time prep year program will be introduced in 2007. This will give students a better start to their education and lay the foundations for the future.

At the other end of schooling, the government is expanding education and training pathways for 15- to 17-year-olds. We want young people in this age bracket to be either learning or earning. These reforms are about ensuring that young Queenslanders can reach their full potential and develop the skills necessary for successful lifelong learning.

Our government looks forward to working in partnership with schools like St Mary's to transform the lives of children across Queensland. I would like to acknowledge the school community for its outstanding contribution of $95,000 towards stages 3 and 4 of the school renewal project. I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of parents who are currently helping to landscape the school grounds. This is a school community that wants the best for its children and gives the best to its children. St Mary's School is laying strong foundations for its students' future success in work and in life. This government will ensure that this school has every possible help.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.29 p.m.