



WEEKLY HANSARD

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51ST PARLIAMENT

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THURSDAY, 19 AUGUST 2004

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Presentation

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that on Wednesday, 23 June 2004, accompanied by honourable members, I presented to Her Excellency the Governor the address of the Legislative Assembly adopted by this House on 20 May 2004 in reply to Her Excellency's Opening Speech, and that Her Excellency has been pleased to making the following reply—

Mr Speaker and Members:

On the 17th March 2004, I had the honour to deliver a speech at the Opening of the First Session of the Fifty-first Parliament of Queensland. As the representative of Her Majesty the Queen, I now extend to you and to the Members of the Parliament of Queensland, my sincere thanks for the formal Address-In-Reply.

It will be my pleasant duty to convey to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second the expression of loyalty and affection from the Members of the Queensland Parliament.

The Queen remains a strong and unifying figure for the peoples of our Commonwealth of Nations, and a sign of our shared beliefs in freedom and democracy.

Within our own community of Queensland, I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly in their endeavours to promote the well-being and prosperity of our State.

On behalf of the people of Queensland, I trust that your efforts will be rewarded with much success.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that today I have received from the Auditor-General a report titled *Audit Report No. 2, 2004-05: An audit of the Queensland disaster management system*.

DAFFODIL DAY

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, on your desks today is a daffodil which I have distributed on behalf of the Cancer Council of Australia for members who wish to participate in this year's daffodil campaign. Daffodil Day will be held tomorrow, Friday 20 August, as part of the Cancer Council's month-long campaign to raise funds for cancer research, education and patient support. This year the Cancer Council aims to raise almost \$9.5 million nationally, which will support vital research into the causes and potential cure for a disease that affects almost one in three Australians. The money raised will also support programs for patients and their families, a cancer help line and education programs aimed at preventing cancer.

By wearing your daffodil today and tomorrow you will be showing your support for all those who have been affected by cancer and help raise awareness of this worthwhile cause. Should you wish to make a donation, the Cancer Council can be contacted on 1300 65 65 85, or you can give a donation to the attendants around the chamber. We will make sure that it gets to the Cancer Council.

PETITIONS

The following Honourable Members have lodged Paper Petitions for presentation—

TAB Agency, Ipswich

Ms Nolan from 22 petitioners requesting the House to maintain the Brisbane Street, Ipswich TAB Agency on Saturdays between 11.30 am and 5.30 pm.

Rail Services, Caloundra-Cairns

Mr McArdle from 22 petitioners requesting the House to have the Cairns Tilt Train and Sunlander stop at Landsborough to allow people living in the City of Caloundra and surrounding areas to access the trains.

Road Improvements, Pinklands Sporting Reserve

Mr Quinn from 242 petitioners requesting the House to improve the intersection at the entrance to Pinklands Sporting Reserve on Cleveland-Redland Bay Road.

Mapleton Forest Reserve

Mr Wellington from 364 petitioners requesting the House to make provision in the proposed new tenure for Mapleton Forest Reserve to have some of the already existing fire trails (approximately 2% of the forest) set aside as Conservation Park Corridors. By doing so, 98% of Mapleton Forest would become National Park and horse riders will be able to ensure that fire tracks remain open and preserve the safety and livelihood of the surrounding community.

Forest Reserves, South East Queensland

Mr Wellington from 153 petitioners requesting the House to make provision in the proposed new tenure for Forest Reserves in South East Queensland State Forests to have the already existing fire trails and tracks set aside as Conservation Park Corridors

PAPERS**MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK**

The following ministerial papers were tabled by The Clerk—

Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas)

- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Mr Fenlon from 514 petitioners regarding safety issues related to traffic lights at the intersection of Kurts Street and Marshall Road, Holland Park
 - Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to an E-Petition sponsored by Mr Johnson from 5 petitioners regarding a request to widen the section of road between Charleville and Quilpie on the Diamantina Development Road towards the Ward River Bridge
- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Mr Quinn from 81 petitioners regarding a request to reduce the speed limit on the section of Moggill Road in the vicinity of Moggill State School.

MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following ministerial paper was tabled—

Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (Mr Robertson)—

Annual Report on Administration of the Foreign Ownership of Land Register Act 1988.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Electricity Supply**

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.36 a.m.): The government's power response continues. Today we are putting more in place—in fact, millions more. Two more transformers have been delivered to their electricity substation sites as part of the program involving 23 transformers. These are being installed by Energex before Christmas. One of them is the biggest of the 23 and costs just short of \$5 million. The transformers, delivered to the Energex Crestmead and Brendale stations, are the fourth and fifth transformers delivered for installation and commissioning. As we know, Crestmead is in the south and Brendale is in the north. The substation transformer upgrade program is part of Energex's commitment to improve reliability of its electricity network in south-east Queensland.

The new \$4.87 million 80 MVA substation upgrade transformer for the Brendale bulk supply substation weighs approximately 65 tonnes and will be lifted into place by a 300-tonne crane today. MVA, for the information of the House, stands for megavolt ampere, which is a measure of the power delivered through the transformer. One megavolt represents a million volts, hence the 80 MVA transformer being delivered to Brendale is an 80 million volt ampere transformer.

Brendale is a bulk supply substation and it feeds a number of zone substations. It is vital in the south-east Queensland network and is a major receipt point from Powerlink Queensland's power transmission line. The bulk supply substation serves Energex substations at Bald Hills, Albany Creek, Arana Hills, Lawnton, North Pine Dam, Strathpine and Samford, and also provides direct power supply to the Australian Paper Mill site.

Approximately 50,000 industrial, commercial and residential customers will benefit from the upgrade. These customers are in an area bounded by Petrie in the north, Bracken Ridge in the east, Arana Hills in the south and Mount Glorious in the west. The new Crestmead transformer, weighing approximately 37 tonnes, replaces the pre-existing 15 MVA, 31/11 kV transformer with a larger capacity 25 MVA transformer. The cost of the project is \$624,000. The increased capacity at the Crestmead zone substation will improve reliability of supply to predominantly industrial customers in Browns Plains and Crestmead.

Energex will be spending a record amount—\$391 million—this financial year on capital works. The first of the 23 transformers was delivered on site at Narangba zone substation on 2 August, the second at Victoria Point zone substation on 9 August and the third also on 9 August at the Morayfield zone substation. We promised we would fix this problem and we are fixing it.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Science in Parliament

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 a.m.): I am pleased to announce during National Science Week that our annual Science in Parliament will take place on Wednesday, 6 October. The theme will be Queensland in 2025 through the eyes of science. Leading scientists will join members of parliament to discuss how science will shape the future of Queensland. They will discuss how the research they are involved in now could influence life 21 years hence. For instance, a medical researcher could discuss how developing a blockbuster drug that cures or prevents specific cancers could change the health profile of Queenslanders in 2025.

Because of the importance of Science Week I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

There is absolutely no doubt that research in train today will influence the future—these scientists will project how this will happen. They will also look at our ageing population, the shape of health and science education in 2025, and opportunities for tropical science.

Science in Parliament is an opportunity for Members to acknowledge scientists and learn more about their vital work.

We need leaders in science and innovation—but we also need leaders in this place who are excited about science and innovation.

The Smart State should salute scientists just as we honour our sports champions.

One of Australia's leading science communicators and authors, Professor Julian Cribb, will make the keynote address at the event.

For a quarter of a century Professor Cribb has been at the forefront of communicating about science in Australia.

His work has been recognised in thirty-two awards for newspaper journalism, including several for science and medicine.

His address will highlight how important it is for people involved in science to explain its benefits for the community.

Better communication will improve society's appreciation of innovation.

Queensland Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Andrews, will also speak at the event.

Some 400 scientists have participated in Science in Parliament in the two years since we started it in 2002.

I look forward to this year's event again attracting a diverse range of people and I particularly encourage young scientists to take part.

Invitations will be sent shortly to Queensland's key research bodies in the government, industry and university sectors, and to each Member.

Queensland is the only State Parliament in Australia with a day earmarked for scientists—and I thank you, Mr Speaker, for your enthusiasm in accommodating this event.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Premier of Queensland Smart Awards

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 a.m.): The second annual Premier of Queensland Smart Awards on 29 July was a great opportunity to celebrate diversity and achievement by smart Queensland businesses. We introduced the Smart Awards in 2003 to recognise Queensland businesses that are creating potential export income, generating new employment opportunities and driving the future prosperity of Queensland today and tomorrow.

I am pleased to report that the number of entries in this year's awards represented a 36 per cent rise over last year. The number of entries increased from 83 in 2003 to 113 in 2004. That demonstrates that the Smart Awards program is highly valued by the business community. The overall Smart Award of the year winner this year from among the seven categories was wotif.com. I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

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The overall Smart Award of the Year winner this year, from amongst the seven Award category winners, was Wotif.com.

This is a Brisbane-based company specialising in last minute accommodation bookings in 32 countries around the world.

The seven winners in this year's Award categories were:

- Withcott Seedlings Queensland in the Agribusiness category;
- The Riviera Group for Manufacturing;
- Xstrata Technology—for Mining or Mineral Processing;
- Wotif.com in the Services category;
- Opcom in the Science or Technology category
- BEEPS, winner of the inaugural Creative Industries Award, and
- GroundProbe—in the new Rising Star category for businesses that have been operating for under two years.

I would like to pay tribute to the Judging Panel as I know they had a very difficult task in choosing the winners from a very high standard group of entries.

I was pleased to hear the acceptance speeches of the winners at the presentation ceremony.

Some mentioned being proud of taking Queensland technology to the world while others told how they enjoyed the challenge of transferring their domestic successes to the overseas marketplace.

Mr Speaker, this is an excellent illustration of the Smart State in action.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

MacArthur Museum

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 a.m.): A dramatic era in Queensland's history—in fact, world history—the war in the Pacific, closed 59 years ago this week. It marked the closure of a period during which about one million US troops were garrisoned in Queensland. The brutal realities of global warfare arrived on Queensland soil and things would never be the same. While many regional centres played vital roles in the Pacific war effort, Brisbane has a special place in history. Our capital housed Australia's equivalent of Britain's cabinet war rooms: the headquarters from which General Douglas MacArthur directed the allied effort in the Pacific.

For many years I have been passionate, and so has my government, about preserving part of the historic building in Edward Street as a MacArthur Museum. The building is hugely significant in its own right as a reminder of events that radically shaped post-war Queensland. The potential for a museum to draw international tourists, particularly from the United States, is great—the history tourists.

I was honoured on Sunday to officially open the MacArthur Museum Brisbane on the eighth floor of the heritage listed Edward Street building occupied by General Douglas MacArthur and his staff.

I seek leave to advise the House by incorporating more details for the information of all members.

Leave granted.

It is a tribute to Macarthur and is also a window into what life was like for Queenslanders during the Pacific War.

It includes displays of photographs, uniforms, personal items, furnishings and a multimedia presentation, plus an interactive display where visitors can see every front page of every wartime issue of the *Courier-Mail* from 1939 to 1945.

The furnishings include a large planning table which was recently tracked down by the Museum's Executive Officer, Lt Col John Dwyer, in a shed at Warwick.

The Queensland Government began contributing funds for the museum in 1999, and the Queensland Government has now contributed \$350,000.

Funding support for the project has also been provided by Brisbane City Council and the Commonwealth.

The Museum is scheduled to open to the public in October.

The museum is eagerly looking for any items from the World War II era which would be appropriate for displaying in the MacArthur Museum, so anyone with memorabilia could contact the museum on 3211 7052 or contact them through their website at www.macarthurmemorial.com.au.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Events Regional Development Program

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.42 a.m.): I also want to briefly report that on Tuesday afternoon this week more than 450 people had attended one of 16 free regional workshops for the state government's revamped Queensland Events Regional Development Program, the QERDP. This is an excellent outcome with organisers saying that they were most successful. The largest attendance numbers were at the Gold Coast, 50, and in Rockhampton, 55. I highlight this because I want members to encourage local organisations to make bids for these Queensland Events Regional programs and I seek leave to incorporate details so members will be encouraged to do just that.

Leave granted.

All the workshops were successful thanks to the strong support of the Regional Tourist Organisations, the Local Councils and the local MPs—all of whom have supported the workshops by distributing information on the workshops.

It is heartening that a number of people attending the workshop indicated that they were not necessarily looking at applying immediately but were looking to apply in the future.

This is an excellent program and one that has—like no other—captured the hearts of regional communities.

The State Government has doubled its commitment with more than \$6 million dollars in event funding to be delivered over the next three years.

This increase in funding provides an excellent opportunity for event and festival organisers to develop and strengthen their event.

The Regional Development Program is a Smart State initiative designed to take unique and creative regional events to their full potential in order to grow regional event-tourism economies.

The program has seen over \$2.4 million invested in more than 125 events since its inception in 2001.

Two new funding initiatives have been introduced under the program, providing those events that demonstrate the potential to increase local economic activity and showcase their region, greater access to financial support.

The program now comprises of three funding schemes: the Core Program, Significant Regional Events Scheme and Regional Events Innovations Scheme.

The free workshops were held at: Townsville, Cairns, Atherton, Kingaroy, Susan River, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Caboolture, Mooloolaba, Ipswich, Kingsthorpe, Toowoomba, Warwick, Surfers Paradise, Cannonvale, Mackay.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Death of Mr Ted Smout

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 a.m.): I wish to acknowledge today the passing of a great Australian, Mr Ted Smout. Mr Smout, recognised as a Queensland Great by the government in 2001, was fittingly farewelled with a state funeral on 30 June. I approved that state funeral on behalf of all Queenslanders because of how significant a Queenslanders Ted Smout was. With his passing on 22 June, we not only lost Queensland's last World War I veteran, we lost an extraordinary Queenslanders who lived a full life and a life full of achievement and community service.

Born on 5 January 1898 in Brisbane, Mr Smout's life spanned three centuries. Mr Smout was a 17-year-old office clerk when he enlisted to join the Australian Imperial Force to serve in World War I. Many members of this House knew Ted. He was a great guy. I seek leave to incorporate details of his life so there is a permanent record of what a great Queenslanders he was.

Leave granted.

He was posted to the Australian Army Medical Corps and, after arriving in England in July 1916, Private Smout completed further training before heading to France.

He was appointed as Lance Corporal in November that year and took part in operations at Armentieres and later Messines and Ypres in Belgium. Lance Corporal Smout also served on the Amiens front, the Battle of Amiens, the advance to Peronne and the Hindenburg Line in 1918.

On his return to Australia and discharge from the Australian Imperial Force in 1919, Mr Smout went on to a distinguished career in the private sector, reaching the second highest executive position within the Australian Prudential Insurance Company.

Throughout his life, Mr Smout served his community tirelessly, working with a number of charity and volunteer groups, including Legacy, Meals on Wheels, Rotary, Sandgate Senior Citizens and the Red Cross. Mr Smout also joined the World War II effort, becoming a Lieutenant within the 2nd Battalion Volunteer Defence Corps (Qld).

Despite his many work and community commitments, Mr Smout still found time to enjoy his game fishing.

He epitomised the Australian spirit of mateship—such as the occasion when he and two friends transferred into the Australian Medical Corps to avoid being separated because of a British Army edict that mateship was not good for discipline.

In France in July 1998, Mr Smout became one of the first foreign servicemen to be awarded the Legion of Honour by the French Government to honour all those who fought in France during World War I.

His numerous other awards include the 80th Anniversary Armistice Remembrance Medal, the Medal of the Order of Australia and an Australian Service Medal.

I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to his family.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Death of Sir Dormer Andrews

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.44 a.m.): It would be remiss of me if I did not also pay tribute to Sir Dormer Andrews, who was a former Chief Justice of Queensland. Upon his appointment as Chief Justice Sir Dormer stressed the importance of an independent judicial system as being fundamental to an organised community - something that my side of politics is totally committed to. I do wish to acknowledge his passing. He was a well-known legal identity. He passed away on 28 June 2004.

Sir Dormer was born in North Queensland on 8 April 1919 and was educated at the Taringa State Primary School and Nudgee College, where he became dux and represented his school in athletics and

football. In 1936 he won an open scholarship to the University of Queensland. As a former Chief Justice he should be appropriately honoured in this House. I do so. I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* more details of his life.

Leave granted.

However, before completing his studies, World War II took Sir Dormer to Europe where he became a Flying Officer with the RAAF and flew single-engined aircraft in England and the Middle East.

It was while he was engaged in aerial combat over El Alamein in Egypt in 1942, that Sir Dormer was injured, resulting in the loss of his left arm.

He parachuted from his aircraft and was taken prisoner of war spending time in an Italian prisoner of war camp in Naples, Italy, before being exchanged for release in 1943.

On his return to Australia, Sir Dormer resumed his studies and was the winner of the Virgil Power prize for proficiency in law studies.

He attained an arts degree in 1944, a law degree in 1946 and was called to the Bar in 1947.

During his legal career, Sir Dormer was appointed as Judge of the District Court, Southern Region in 1959 before becoming Chairman of the District Court in 1965.

In 1971, Sir Dormer became the first person in the state's legal history to be directly promoted to the Supreme Court from the District Court.

In 1982, he was appointed Queensland Supreme Court Senior Puisne Judge and Queensland Supreme Court Chief Justice in 1985 before retiring in 1989. Sir Dormer also held the office of Chairman of the Queensland Law Reform Commission from 1973 to 1982.

Upon his appointment as Chief Justice, Sir Dormer stressed the importance of an independent judiciary system as being 'fundamental to an organised community'.

In 1987, Sir Dormer was knighted for distinguished service as a judge of the Supreme Court and as Chief Justice of Queensland. In accepting his award, Sir Dormer noted that it was an honour for the judiciary rather than for himself.

I also wish to acknowledge the passing of Sir Dormer's widow, Lady Joan, who passed away just a month after Sir Dormer, on 30 July 2004.

Sir Dormer and Lady Joan are survived by their sons Peter, John and David.

I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to their family.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queenslanders at the Olympics

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 a.m.): Finally this morning I want to talk about a great topic, the sterling performance by our wonderful Queenslanders at the Olympics so far. The Deputy Premier and Minister for Sport and I had a discussion about how significant the Queensland contribution has been and we want to ensure that everyone in this House and everyone in Queensland pays appropriate tribute to these great Queenslanders. They have helped Australia get off to a flying start in the medal tally in Athens. We are a proud sporting state that always tends to rise to the occasion on the world's biggest stage.

One only has to look at the outstanding contributions Queenslanders, particularly the Queensland Academy of Sport (QAS) athletes, have already made to Australia's early Olympic success. Who could overlook our gold rush in the pool, as the Brisbane trio of Alice Mills, Libby Lenton and Jodie Henry combined with veteran Petria Thomas to power home in the women's four by 100 metre freestyle relay to set a new world record. Not since the great Dawn Fraser's team in 1956 have we taken out gold in a race that the Americans have virtually owned since 1960. Not a bad achievement. These three exceptional young women—or quick chicks as they have been widely dubbed; not my words, I hasten to add—have been assisted by the state government, through the Queensland Academy of Sport. They have been with us for the past two to four years, starting when they were all young teenagers, but haven't they come of age? A lot of developmental work, a lot of training and a lot of early mornings with the QAS have achieved an Olympic gold medal—the pinnacle of international competition and a remarkable effort, and all Queenslanders are justifiably proud.

That is not all. Overnight Jodie Henry went on to break the world record in the 100 metres freestyle in her semifinal and showed that she is a huge gold medal chance tomorrow morning. Every Queenslanders will be riding that race and every Queenslanders will be with her and we simply say good luck.

Another QAS product was Grant Hackett, of course, who showed the world he looks the goods for the 1,500 metres freestyle by giving Ian Thorpe—another great Australian, of course—a run for his money with a silver medal in the 400. He and fellow QAS swimmer, Nicholas Sprenger, also formed half of the four by 200 metre freestyle team which took out silver, narrowly missing out on gold. That was a very exciting race. Grant is a long-time QAS swimmer, having been with us for at least the past seven years, but many may be surprised to hear he that is still only 24 years old.

Nicholas Sprenger is a relative newcomer at the QAS, but he has already made the most of the two years he has been with the QAS. He is a 19-year-old Brisbane athlete who, with a lot of hard work, was able to earn his spot on the relay team alongside the great Ian Thorpe. I bet Nicholas will put that down as the highlight of his short career so far and I am sure academy staff are very proud of him—as we all are.

This will be close to your heart, Mr Speaker. Redcliffe star Leisel Jones has also been in amongst the medals with a bronze in the 100 metre breaststroke. She is also the holder of a QAS scholarship that has helped her break the world record in the event. I know she was a little downcast for not picking up the gold, but as a great young talent who has won two individual Olympic medals before even hitting 19, she has absolutely nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed about. She is a great Queenslander, a great Australian and what she did was a great achievement.

And what about our golden girl of the road—champion cyclist, Sara Carrigan. Sure, she is originally from Gunnedah, New South Wales, but I think we can claim her as a Queenslander. She lives on the Gold Coast and has received world-class support from the academy for the past seven years. Sara's story exemplifies what the games are all about: a little-known surprise packet who overcame the odds to ride to Olympic glory and upset a few hotshots along the way. It is a great story. Not really considered a gold medal chance herself, she upstaged the favourites to take out the gruelling 119-kilometre race in difficult conditions.

There is plenty more to look forward to. All in all, Queenslanders are competing in 21 out of the 30 Olympic sports and several of them have strong medal claims. Queensland sent 94 athletes to Athens, 68 of whom are supported by the state government through the QAS. Our dedicated coaches, trainers and support staff and first-rate facilities at the QAS set a world benchmark in competition preparation and it is clearly rubbing off in Athens.

We have come a long way since the academy started back in 1991. I want to congratulate all of them and join the Deputy Premier in doing so. Thirteen years ago we had 33 athletes across 11 sports under our wing. Now we help more than 650 athletes across 25 sports. After 70 Olympic medals and a \$10 million redevelopment of the new headquarters at Nathan, we can proudly stand tall as having the best state based academy or institute of sport in Australia. Our best athletes use the best facilities and are helped along by the best staff, so clearly their outstanding achievements should not come as a shock.

This government's support for our elite athletes does not end there. We were the first state government to make a commitment to our Athens Olympians with a \$300,000 donation to the Queensland Olympic Council. We are also the only state to present bonus grants of \$5,400 to each eligible Queensland Olympian and Paralympian. We wanted to do everything we could to help them prepare for the games without them having to worry about their finances.

As our eyes will be fixed on the telly for the next several days, I want to congratulate all of our Queensland Olympians for earning their place to compete and wish them all the best for the remainder of the games. The whole of Queensland and Australia is right behind them. They are an inspiration to us all and we are very proud that they are representing this country.

I want to acknowledge that last night Justin Anlezark finished seventh in the men's shot-put—an impressive performance indeed considering he is the first Australian to make an Olympic final in the event since the 1960 games in Rome. As the member for Toowoomba North and member for Toowoomba South will know, he is a great lad from Toowoomba and I congratulate him.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gaming Authorities

Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.52 a.m.): Last month the state government completed the first sale of gaming authorities for Queensland hotels. The sale represents a new system of distributing surplus gaming machine authorities when they become available in the hotel industry. Surplus authorities may become available when a hotel decides to get rid of some or all of its existing machine authorities.

As members of the House would already know, authorities are government authorisations for Queensland hotels to install and operate a gaming machine in licensed premises. They do not apply to Queensland clubs. Sales were conducted by competitive tender in each of the three authority regions—the south-east Queensland, the coastal and western regions.

Authorities are only able to be sold in the region from which they originated and hotel licensees are only allowed to bid if they are first granted approval to do so from the Queensland Gaming Commission. For instance, if a hotel is granted approval to operate an additional five machines, it is only eligible to bid for up to five authorities. Today, I will table the full list of hotels that submitted successful bids for the first sale of gaming authorities.

The final average prices paid for an authority per region are \$99,453 for south-east Queensland, \$70,755 for the coastal region and \$15,260 for the western region. Twenty-eight out of the 40 tenders in south-east Queensland were successful, while the coastal region had 10 out of 19 successful tenders and in the western region all seven tenders were successful.

I must stress to this House that, although gaming authorities are now able to be distributed from one hotel to the next, the three-year-old statewide cap on hotel machines remains in place. That means the total number of gaming machines in hotels has not and will not exceed the cap as a result of the sale. The individual limit of 40 machines per hotel also remains unchanged.

This is just one of the reasons Queensland is the national leader in responsible gambling. We have earned this reputation through other significant measures, such as the statewide Responsible Gambling Code of Practice, the 24-hour gambling help line and a very strong and vigilant Queensland Gaming Commission. Yet within the statewide cap, there needed to be a new system that allowed hotels to buy and sell gaming machine authorities. This sale and distribution of authorities was developed as the most responsible and efficient way of doing this. A second round of sales is planned for later this year, although a date has not been set. I table the list of hotels that submitted successful tenders by each region.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Brisbane Festivals; Death of Ms T. Astley

Hon. A.M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (9.55 a.m.): Brisbane is in the grip of festival fever. It started with the Brisbane International Film Festival on 27 July when Academy Award winner Geoffrey Rush returned to Queensland, his home state, to inject some of that Hollywood red carpet pizzazz into BIFF's opening night. I take the opportunity to thank my colleague the Attorney-General for opening that festival on my behalf. I understand he was a great hit.

The fun is set to continue over the coming weeks with a feast of festivals bringing the best local, national and international talent to our doorstep. Major Brisbane Festivals is delivering the first two key drawcards, starting with Riverfestival which runs from 27 August to 5 September. Under new artistic director Jonathan Parsons, much-loved traditions like Riverfire and Riverfest's dining on bridges will complement innovative new programming with a focus on the local environment.

From 3 September to 2 October, the Energex Brisbane Festival will deliver 17 new productions, nine of which were created in Queensland or feature local companies. These events enrich our cultural life and boost our economy. The Brisbane Festival is expected to create 1,500 jobs and generate a significant financial boost. The last festival generated \$18.5 million in economic activity. Held every two years, the festival will extend throughout south-east Queensland with events in Ipswich, Logan City, Pine Rivers, Nambour and Toowoomba. It will also be the swansong for outgoing artistic director Tony Gould, who will be delivering his fifth and last Brisbane Festival.

Before the Brisbane Festival ends, the Brisbane Writers Festival begins, featuring activities for emerging and established writers with international and local authors from 27 September to 3 October. Events include workshops, debates and readings. A special kind of writing, one that was close to the heart of the previous Minister for Arts, poetry, will be celebrated through the Queensland Poetry Festival, which runs from 8 October to 10 October at the Judith Wright Centre for Contemporary Arts.

Over the past seven years, the festival has built a reputation as one of Australia's leading poetry festivals and will bring writers from countries including Canada, Belgium and Singapore to work alongside local poets. During the festival, I look forward to unveiling a bus featuring the work of the five winning Queensland students in the Queensland government's second annual Poetry on the Move competition.

But celebrating the next generation of writers comes as we mourn the loss of a local literary legend—Brisbane born author Thea Astley who passed away aged 78. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ms Astley and the rich contribution she has made to Australian literature. She began her career by sharing her talents as a teacher working in schools in both Queensland and New South Wales. While working in Pomona in 1958, she published the first of more than a dozen novels that gave readers a humorous, often unsentimental, insight into Queensland's character. She was widely acclaimed, winning a host of awards including Australia's richest literary prize, the Miles Franklin Award, an astonishing four times and her last book, *Drylands*, took out one of our own Premier's Literary Awards in 2000. I am sure members will agree that Ms Astley left an indelible mark on Queensland and Australia's cultural landscape and will be sadly missed.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Dive Industry

Hon. T.A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (9.58 a.m.): Commercial diving is a risky occupation and in Queensland there have been a number of accidents in recent years involving divers collecting crayfish or sea cucumbers. For this reason, the government is intent on making our aquaculture industries as safe as possible by minimising the risk to all employees. Last month the government issued a regulatory impact statement to obtain comment from industry on a number of proposed changes to occupational diving regulations. This consultation paper was developed in collaboration with a dive industry reference group, and we have been urging people right across the industry to offer feedback on its proposals. I again highlight the opportunity for comment on what is proposed and point out that the opportunity closes at the end of this week—indeed, tomorrow.

What the government wants and needs are regulations that incorporate minimum standards of diver training, dive site assessment and diver logbook requirements. In recent weeks Workplace Health and Safety officers have consulted with a number of industry groups, notably those in the state's far north. They have had discussions with people in the Torres Strait to discuss key issues such as the availability of diver training there. Once again, I encourage any group or individual with a view on occupational dive industry safety to take this opportunity to let us know what they think.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mater Medical Research Institute

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) (10.00 a.m.): I want to congratulate the Mater Medical Research Institute for securing a grant worth \$US100,000 from the United States Army. The money is for a phase 1 prostate cancer clinical trials program later this year. I also want to congratulate institute director, Professor Derek Hart, for winning a \$US100,000 grant from the prestigious American Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation. Professor Hart secured the grant based on his pioneering research. His work could potentially see a patient's own immune system waging the fight against this deadly blood cancer. The Mater Medical Research Institute attracted the separate grant from the United States Army because its research could result in prostate cancer sufferers also using their own immune systems to battle this potentially fatal disease.

The Queensland government is doing everything possible to support and indeed encourage innovation within the state's health and medical research community. We provided \$10 million to the Mater Medical Research Institute to help develop its clinical trials centre and a further \$3 million to enable it to purchase equipment to support its cancer research. Since 1998, the government has invested a total of more than \$2.4 billion to provide Smart State researchers with the infrastructure, skills development and commercialisation assistance that they need to get their ideas from the laboratories and into the marketplace. As members can see from our investment, it is clearly paying off.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Home Warranty Insurance Scheme

Hon. R.E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.02 a.m.): The residential building and renovation sector is still performing strongly with the latest data from the Queensland Building Services Authority showing that more than \$472 million worth of work on 4,788 new construction projects was insured last month. This reflects the buoyant construction sector not only in Queensland but right across the country at the moment. In fact, the residential building market is so strong that it is placing extreme pressure not only on materials and labour costs but also on home warranty insurance providers. This is causing havoc in southern states as privatised home warranty insurance companies struggle to keep up with demand. Many builders who have small to medium sized businesses have experienced a lot of problems in the southern states. Builders have been forced to endure long waiting times for their applications for insurance eligibility to be processed. While they wait, builders are unable to build anything or earn a living. Spiralling construction costs have also hit homeowners, who are being forced to pay skyrocketing insurance premiums.

This failure of the privatised home warranty insurance providers has seen uninsured and unregulated work soar to unprecedented levels of around 40 per cent of all building activity in New South Wales and Victoria. Fortunately for Queenslanders, the Beattie government made the smart decision to retain our statutory home warranty insurance scheme under government control, a decision which was made by former Minister Judy Spence, who had ministerial responsibility for the Building

Services Authority before me. I congratulate her for her foresight in putting an end to what was the Tories plan to privatise that insurance scheme. Had she succumbed to the pressure of selling it off like all other states, Queenslanders would be facing the same problems they are having south of the border.

The BSA offers the best home warranty insurance scheme in Australia. Queensland licensees and consumers enjoy the cheapest premiums, best coverage and the easiest access to insure new construction and renovations. In fact, the latest edition of *Choice Magazine* suggests that the best option for homeowners is to move to the Sunshine State, or should I say the Smart State. *Choice* states—

The current privatised home warranty scheme as it operates in most Australian states appears to primarily benefit insurers and larger building companies at the expense of consumers and smaller builders. A Queensland-style system offers much higher levels of protection for consumers as well as being easy to access for builders. But if you live outside Queensland there is very little you can do about this—short of moving there.

And people are certainly doing that at a rate of around 1,000 a week. I am proud of the benefits which are provided to Queenslanders through our system and assure them that this government will continue to back the Home Warranty Insurance Scheme.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National DNA Database

Hon. J.C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (10.05 a.m.): Our police are increasingly using DNA to clear unsolved crimes and exonerate suspects. Queensland is leading the way in matching samples to the national DNA database. Legislative changes this year have allowed Queensland to enter into ministerial arrangements with other jurisdictions to allow for the exchange of DNA information. Agreements have already been signed with Western Australia, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania and negotiations are currently under way with New South Wales. Almost \$3.2 million has also been committed this year to link our police with the national database and centrally manage DNA samples across the state to ensure that they are of a high quality.

Queensland was the first state to have downloaded DNA profiles onto the database and currently has the profiles of more than 29,000 individuals loaded onto the system and available for comparison with other jurisdictions as they come online. Queensland Health has a further 20,000 samples ready to upload onto the database. In addition, more than 4,500 crime scene samples have been uploaded for comparison with other jurisdictions, linking over 1,300 people to DNA found at crime scenes. They include 308 prisoners who were matched to other crime scenes. The Queensland police have also been working closely with Queensland Health Scientific Services to develop efficient and effective systems and safeguards for the use of DNA in criminal investigations, including a new forensic register. All of these initiatives come on top of the \$11 million this government has committed over the next three years to clear the DNA backlog of samples at the John Tonge Centre and cater for future profiling.

Many claims have been made about the DNA backlog, and I want to correct some of those. Firstly, samples relating to the most serious offences or those required for courts are given high priority. Of the outstanding crime scene samples, 96 per cent relate to property offences, including break and enters, stolen motor vehicles, fraud and wilful damage. There is no backlog in DNA profiling samples relating to mouth swabs from individuals taken at watch-houses and police facilities, for example. Queensland Health has received 54,000 DNA samples collected by police from prisoners, suspects and volunteers, and there is no backlog in relation to these samples. Police and Queensland Health are exploring the possibility of sending low-level samples for private testing. This option would allow scientists to focus on those cases that are scheduled for court.

Queensland Health is merely conducting a logistical trial involving mock or dummy samples. The John Tonge Centre is the only laboratory in Queensland accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities, NATA, to do forensic DNA samples and police exhibits. If samples were outsourced, they would only be sent to other NATA laboratories to ensure that they are tested under the same strict guidelines. Police and Queensland Health will also have to guarantee that issues such as chain of custody and supervision are of a standard that would satisfy the courts. Those safeguards are already in place when it comes to real samples being sent from far-north Queensland to Brisbane for testing. If other Queensland laboratories receive accreditation, then police would consider sending samples to those labs under the same strict guidelines. Our police are to be commended for their skill and dedication in collecting crime scene samples, their initiative in matching those samples and their record in solving crime. I would not like to see their hard work undermined by scaremongering or misleading and false information.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Reef Fish Field Guide

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.09 a.m.): The Department of Primary Industries has produced a new *Reef Fish Field Guide*. This guide is an easy to use, 68-page field guide to help anglers and commercial operators identify fish in Queensland's iconic coral reef fin fish fishery. The guide features full-colour photographs of the fish listed under the coral reef management plan and was produced to assist recreational anglers and commercial operators become familiar with reef fish species.

As members are aware, on 1 July this year, new documentation and reporting arrangements were introduced for Queensland's reef line and Spanish mackerel fisheries. They follow the development of a system of catch based quotas for coral trout, red throat emperor, other reef fish species, and Spanish mackerel introduced in September last year and implemented under the coral reef management plan. These new commercial regulations, combined with the range of recreational changes introduced last year, are aimed at protecting coral reef fish stocks under threat from increased fishing activities in all sectors.

Although primarily an identification booklet, this manual will help all fishers comply with this very important fisheries regulation. For example, it helps them to recognise and identify important fish species such as no-take species. The fish have been grouped into families with similar species placed close together to help the user recognise the differences between them. The *Reef Fish Field Guide* also highlights the vast array of beautiful coral reef fish, which makes Queensland such a sought after national and international fishing destination. Commercial operators fishing in the coral reef and Spanish mackerel fisheries have been sent a copy of the manual printed on waterproof paper, making it more versatile and robust for them to use in the wheelhouse and on the sorting tray. The guide was among a range of educational material sent to commercial operators to help them become familiar with the new legislative requirements. Copies on non-waterproof paper are also available to recreational anglers. They are available from Queensland Boating and Fisheries patrol offices or by calling the DPIF call centre on 13 25 23. The guide will soon be able to be accessed on the DPIF Fishweb site. I say to any honourable members who would like to obtain a copy of this much sought after guide to please contact DPIF or my office.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Land Clearing

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (10.12 a.m.): Members will recall that the government has established a transitional cap of 500,000 hectares to allow limited clearing before broadscale tree clearing ends on 31 December 2006. A ballot will be held on 17 September to determine land-holders who can undertake clearing of the remaining balance of the 500,000 hectares once all pre-existing applications have been assessed. Applications to participate in the ballot close on 31 August this year and I urge all interested land-holders to lodge their applications as quickly as possible.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will get to the member. Already, 178 applications to participate in the ballot have been received. We have recruited additional staff to ensure that applications are assessed in a timely and efficient manner to allow as much time as possible for successful land-holders to undertake clearing before the end of 2006. To ensure the integrity and impartiality of the process, an external agency will conduct an audit of the ballot process and the procedures used by my department. All applicants will be notified in writing of the result of the ballot regardless of whether their application was successful or not.

I turn to recent inaccurate and mischievous allegations made by the member for Darling Downs regarding the vegetation management hotline. My department has been operating a call centre to manage the large number of inquiries since the new vegetation management legislation came into effect on 22 May this year. The call centre has received 6,262 calls of which nearly 90 per cent have been successfully returned. While departmental officers are doing their best to return the large number of calls received by the call centre, there can be difficulties getting back to callers.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: The member is wasting his time, not mine. I have been informed that in some instances officers have rung a particular number on seven or eight occasions—day and night—but have been unsuccessful in contacting the land-holder. Letters are now being sent to those ballot callers who

still cannot be contacted providing them with a direct number to call to ensure that all inquiries are answered.

Mr Johnson: If you call at night-time or at 5 o'clock in the morning, you'll get them.

Mr ROBERTSON: The member is wasting his time, not mine. They will be informed that attempts had been made to contact them at night as well as during the day and that if they are still interested in the ballot they must ring a particular mobile number as soon as possible. Mobile phones are being allocated to officers in different areas. Officers will have the mobile with them at all times. A special message will be added asking the person to give a time when they can be contacted.

Any reasonable assessment of the processes that have been put in place by my department would conclude that we are doing everything possible to contact land-holders who have indicated an interest in participating in the ballot. They are, after all, our first priority. I can assure Queenslanders that my departmental staff will continue to work well into the night to ensure that all interested land-holders have a fair go to participate in the ballot process.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Adoption Laws

Hon. M.F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.15 a.m.): In recent weeks I have made two significant decisions on adoptions in Queensland and I would like to inform parliament today that these exciting initiatives have been very well received by the people of Queensland. On 25 July, I announced that Queensland's adoption registers would re-open on 12 September this year, ending the two-year freeze on accepting new applications from people wishing to adopt children. Then on 6 August, after numerous representations from the community and many of my colleagues, supported by feedback from the adoption legislation review, I announced the abolition of the maximum age restrictions that applied to eligibility criteria for Queensland couples wishing to adopt children. So when the intercountry and general adoption registers open for eight weeks next month, I expect that the government will receive many hundreds of applications during this window of opportunity. To cope with that demand, my Department of Child Safety is in the process of recruiting additional adoption contract workers to increase the capacity of the system to be able to complete assessments. We are also seeking more external reviewers to increase the transparency of the decisions and the quality of assessments that are made.

I moved urgently to address the age issue ahead of the opening of expressions of interest because I believe it is imperative that more Queensland families have the opportunity to express an interest in being assessed as prospective adoptive parents. It is also in the best interests of children for there to be a reasonable pool of approved applicants to match with children requiring families in Queensland.

Can I say today that there is a lack of evidence linking adoption outcomes to any particular age range. In fact, people are generally starting families later than they did in the 1960s, when Queensland's adoption legislation was first drafted. Yet people seeking to create their families through adoption were not being given the same opportunities to delay parenthood by a few extra years. That has now gone. I must emphasise that applicants wishing to adopt a child from overseas will still need to meet the eligibility requirements, including age, for the specific country from which they are hoping to adopt a child. I am continuing to progress the adoption legislation review and I look forward to its finalisation over the next four months.

There will also be an important opportunity for further public comment once a draft bill is released. I thank all members of parliament for the input they have given to me on these important decisions. I know that I now look forward to bringing further important changes to adoptions in Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Fire Preparedness

Hon. R.J. MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for the Environment) (10.18 a.m.): The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is taking a proactive approach to fire management and control in our parks and forests. We are acutely aware of the fire risk that Queensland is facing this fire season. That is why we have invested an extra \$500,000 in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's fire management program this financial year. That investment will take our total budget allocation for fire management measures and firefighting equipment to a record \$5.5 million.

Specific budget initiatives include spending \$715,000 on 67 projects to facilitate the construction and upgrading of high-priority fire lines and major hazard reduction burns across Queensland. Work

carried out prior to the beginning of this year's fire season included the upgrading of nearly 1,000 kilometres of high-priority firebreaks on and adjacent to parks and forests.

Conditions permitting, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service plans to undertake planned burns targeting nearly 800,000 hectares of parks and forests this year. The burns are scheduled over the winter months to address protection issues at parks and forests which have an urban interface. Since the beginning of March, controlled burns have been undertaken across Queensland from Cape York to the Gold Coast and into western Queensland. In the past fortnight burns have been undertaken at Glen Rock, on Bribie Island, in the D'Aguilar Forest Reserve, at Cooloola, at Ravenshoe and on Fraser Island. The burns were for conservation and weed management purposes as well as for hazard reduction, particularly in urban interface areas such as in the D'Aguilar Forest Reserve and on Bribie Island.

The burns are undertaken only when it is safe to do so. The protection of human life is our No. 1 priority. In the past week the service has banned camp and barbecue fires in the Brisbane Forest Park, Mount Mee and Venman National Park. We also closed the Ocean Beach camp area on Bribie Island because of fire. No camp fires will be allowed between six o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the evening at the Gympie music muster.

In addition to our controlled burn program, we have also earmarked a further \$85,000 for upgrading firefighting equipment. Over 500 Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service field staff spread across 130 operational centres are trained in fire management. Ongoing training ensures that all fire operations staff are trained to the basic firefighter level before they attend any fires. Advanced fire training is provided for staff with a management role in responding to fires. Other specialised training is provided to more experienced staff in areas such as fire management planning, conducting aerial ignition burns and incident control.

The service liaises closely with all bushfire management agencies in Queensland, particularly the Rural Fire Division of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. It also keeps staff up to date on innovations in fire equipment and management techniques by liaising with agencies across Australia and New Zealand. Under its good neighbour policy the service works with adjoining landowners, local communities and traditional owners to manage fire on its land and surrounding areas. This policy recognises that our parks and forests occupy only about 6.6 per cent of Queensland's total land mass. It recognises that fires do not begin only in national parks and forests. It also recognises that a partnership approach is vital to effective fire management.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service conducts ongoing reviews of its fire management practices to ensure it continues to deliver effective and contemporary fire management. All of our actions underscore the importance this government places on having a balanced approach to managing the environment and maintaining a high state of preparedness for any wildfire outbreak.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bushfire Season

Hon. C.P. CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.22 a.m.): Members have raised with me the issue of recent bushfires. I would like to reassure them that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Rural Fire Service are better prepared and better equipped than ever before. Rural and urban firefighters, assisted by their colleagues in the SES, have been working together to gain the upper hand during the early start to our bushfire season. Our firefighters have also held major bushfire planning sessions leading up to this fire season. Their key focus has again been the urban-rural interface regions where homes adjoin bushland areas, which the fires have called the iZone.

In 1996-97 the coalition spent only \$13.3 million on fire vehicles. In 1999-2000 the Beattie government boosted this budget to \$20.9 million. In the past five years this government has spent more than \$50 million designing, developing and delivering new state-of-the-art urban fire trucks.

With latest bushfire risk mapping showing the majority of the state under a high fire danger, our firefighters are calling on all Queenslanders to be vigilant. If anyone sees someone acting suspiciously in the vicinity of a fire, they need to report it. A large number of bushfires are deliberately lit, and we all have a part to play in bringing firebugs to task. This government will have no hesitation in throwing the book at anyone caught lighting fires. If the worst case eventuates and someone is killed by a fire lit by an arsonist, the firebug faces life in jail. All Queenslanders need to take personal responsibility for keeping Queensland safe during this fire season. Little things like not flicking cigarettes or matches out of car windows can make a big difference during the current conditions.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the tremendous efforts firefighters have made in protecting people and property during this already very busy fire season. I have also met this week with Dick Irwin,

Rob Holzberger and Arthur Puccini from the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland to discuss areas where we can work together to best support our rural volunteers.

The Beattie government is ensuring our firefighters have the best equipment and vehicles available for the job. For example, during the 2003-04 financial year 49 medium-sized fire vehicles, five heavy tanker trucks and 10 fire trailers were built and supplied to rural fire brigades. This financial year we will see another 15 light response vehicles, 35 medium response trucks plus another five tanker trucks and 20 fire trailers delivered.

CITIZEN'S RIGHT OF REPLY

Hon. A.M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.25 a.m.): I move—

- (1) That this House notes report No. 63 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and the recommendation of the committee that a reply by a citizen be published under the citizen's right of reply resolution.
- (2) That the House adopt the committee's recommendation and that the reply be published by the Clerk with question on notice No. 1735 of 2003.

Motion agreed to.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON TRAVELSAFE

Discharge of Mr R.G. Hopper; Appointment of Mr S.A. Knuth

Hon. A.M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.26 a.m.): I move—

That the member for Darling Downs be discharged as a member of the Travelsafe Committee and that the member for Charters Towers be appointed to that committee.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Comments by Member for Nanango

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (10.26 a.m.): Last night in debate on the private property protection and land acquisition amendment bills, the member for Nanango launched a sharp personal attack on me for my speech on the bills. She said my speech was—

... the most disgraceful exhibition of elitism I have ever been sorry to hear. The member—
that is me—

may perceive herself to be more highly educated, and

...

she has no compassion or decency—

I would like to explain to the House that I must have offended the member by osmosis, because I did not actually make a speech on those bills. She has hit me on suspicion.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Comments by Member for Whitsunday

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (10.27 a.m.): I wish to make a personal explanation with regard to comments made in this House yesterday by the member for Whitsunday. I refer to page 1933 of *Hansard*, which refers to the Estimates Committee F report. In the chair's report reference is made to a statement in my dissenting report that I am still waiting for the Minister for Fair Trading to contact my office. It is stated that I am 'actually recorded as thanking the minister for getting back to her so promptly on the matter of Millward v. Jones'. The Fair Trading Commissioner said that he was not familiar with the particular case and continued—

But through the minister, we will attempt to get an answer before the end of the proceedings in terms of what action is on foot in relation to that specific case.

In saying thank you, which, I might add, I say regularly through my question period as a matter of courtesy, I was anticipating receiving further information on this specific case and the broader issue of compliance activities on real estate buyers agents. Nowhere in the minister's reply is there any referral to buyers agents or the specific Supreme Court case. In fact, the minister said—

The Office of Fair Trading has not received a complaint with regard to this matter, but we will undertake to investigate any possible breaches of PAMDA on the part of the parties involved in this matter.

No information was provided at the committee hearing on this, despite assurances at the hearing that they would provide me with an answer. I stand by my comments in my statement of reservation, and I am still waiting for the minister's office to get back to me.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Report

Mr LIVINGSTONE (Ipswich West—ALP) (10.29 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House Public Works Committee Report No. 85 on its inquiry into the Upper Coomera State College, stage 1. I would like to thank all those who have assisted the committee with its inquiries. Thanks to my fellow committee members for their assistance and support. Thanks also to the committee staff for their assistance. I commend the report to the House.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.29 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee's annual report for 2003-04. This report covers the work of two committees—LCARC of the 50th Parliament and the current committee.

LIQUID FUEL SUPPLY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.29 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Liquid Fuel Supply Act 1984.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.30 a.m.): I move—
That the bill be now read a second time.

Today I am introducing a bill to require that all petrol sold in Queensland contain up to 10 per cent ethanol. This legislation will ensure that Queensland becomes the ethanol production capital of Australia by giving financiers, investors and farmers the confidence to invest in ethanol production.

Given the hour of the day, I seek leave to have the remainder of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Ethanol is a renewable fuel that can be produced from crops like sugar cane, sorghum and corn. It is being widely used around the world in places like Europe, the USA and Brazil to blend with conventional petrol.

Ethanol has many benefits. It will reduce greenhouse gas and toxic emissions, it will improve the air quality in our cities, and it will stimulate the development of an exciting new industry in rural and regional areas throughout Queensland. Quite simply, a viable ethanol industry in Queensland will create jobs.

The Nationals are absolutely committed to unlocking the benefits that ethanol can deliver to Queensland. We are committed to taking E10, which is petrol with a 10% ethanol blend, from a niche product to the mainstream fuel used in Queensland. We are committed to doing something meaningful not theatrical to ensure this industry gets off the ground.

Unfortunately, the Labor Party would not back The Nationals in 2002 when we last attempted to introduce a state ethanol mandate and they have continued to oppose the development of an ethanol industry in Queensland via a state mandate.

Despite the Premier's excuses about legal technicalities, sugar industry experts and even the RACQ have said there are no legal barriers to introducing a State ethanol mandate.

And experience overseas has shown that an ethanol industry will only happen when a government has the vision and commitment to get behind it and make it happen by introducing a mandate.

There is no debate any more about the benefits of ethanol in the United States. In the US Renewable Fuels Association's Ethanol Industry Outlook 2004, the Secretary of Energy Spencer Graham reveals that in the last three years, 21 new ethanol plants have begun production and the entire industry has added more than one billion gallons of annual production capacity.

The arguments peddled against it, the same old arguments that have been peddled in Queensland in recent years—that it is more expensive, that it is less efficient, that it is damaging to engines—have been totally and completely discredited. Ethanol has been embraced in the USA, in Europe and in Brazil, and with this Bill I hope that this State Parliament will embrace the use of ethanol in Queensland too.

Painted buses travelling up and down the Queensland coast and stickers on government cars won't ensure that an ethanol industry develops in Queensland, but a state ethanol mandate will. This is about being responsible not shifting responsibility. This is about doing something meaningful not theatrical. I hope that all Members will put politics aside and do what is good for Queensland by supporting this bill.

Debate, on motion of Mr McGrady, adjourned.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Electricity Supply

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.30 a.m.): My first question without notice is directed to the Premier. Given that the Premier has accepted responsibility for the power crisis in Queensland, will he give an absolute commitment to compensate all people who have had to throw out food because of the Beattie blackouts?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question. As the Deputy Premier indicated yesterday, the government is currently working on a scheme to set particular standards for Energex and Ergon to meet. If those standards are not met, then there will be a requirement for Energex and Ergon to compensate by reducing the bill of people affected. The full details of this plan will be released by the government probably next week—or at least the initial details will and then the final details as soon as possible thereafter.

We are currently working on it, but I thank the Leader of the Opposition for drawing attention to this scheme because it is an important part of what we are trying to do to fix Energex and Ergon. The benefit of this is very simple. It puts a financial imperative on Energex and Ergon to deliver—to meet the standards that we are asking of these organisations to adequately look after consumers, to look after Queenslanders. What we are doing here is coming up with a very clear leverage that will be able to help facilitate the solution. We need to put some oomph into the system. We need to put some delivery into the system, and the way to do that is to ensure that there is a financial penalty if the standards that we have set have not been met. That is an appropriate way to do this.

As I have said, we are absolutely determined to fix this problem, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for drawing attention to one of the solutions that we are pursuing. By raising this question, he can see that we are serious about this. By raising this question, he can see that this will work. I want to thank him for that because he can recognise how determined we are to fix this problem.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Good heavens, what is the matter with them today? As I indicated, we will be doing everything we can to ensure that there is a system in place that will deliver power to the people of Queensland. I noticed with some interest the hypocrisy of the opposition on this issue. Earlier this week the Leader of the Opposition raised some matters in relation to Grace Grace. A media statement was released which said in relation to her payment—

It has been a long-standing practice that board fees are paid to the QCU in compensation for time lost, including when Ms Grace was appointed to the Workplace Health and Safety Board by Santo Santoro under the Borbidge Government.

While we are having a bit of honesty, let us talk about the Borbidge government and Max Christmas in China.

Time expired.

Electricity Supply

Mr SPRINGBORG: My second question without notice is directed to the Premier. Given that the Premier has already accepted responsibility for his self-created power crisis in Queensland, will he give a commitment that all people who suffer loss this summer because of the Beattie blackouts will receive proper compensation, or is this just another example of his shallow words and is it just a squib?

Mr BEATTIE: I am in shock at the level of cynicism of the Leader of the Opposition. All I say to the Leader of the Opposition is: stay tuned. As he saw from the announcement I made in relation to transformers this morning—

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: He is so rude again today. I am happy to answer this, but the Opposition Leader should grow up a little and not be so rude. This morning we announced extra transformers, and they are on their way to the north and south. There will be more and more of them. We are announcing one of the strategies that the Treasurer and I alluded to yesterday about compensation. We are fixing it and they still do not like it because what they are interested in is power for the National Party.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Please do not be so rude. The Leader of the Opposition needs to grow up a little and not be so rude. What we have is solutions on the table, and I am delighted to have the House talking about our solutions. As to the details, all I will say to the Opposition Leader is, 'Stay tuned.' As you get older, you realise patience is a virtue. I will make sure we put out a news statement about it so that Mr Springborg understands what is going on. Not only will we share it with them; we will share it with every Queenslanders. As a result of what the Leader of the Opposition is doing, I will ensure that we run an appropriate advertising campaign so that every Queenslanders will know how to get compensation. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for encouraging me down that path. Without him, I would not have done it. But now he wants me to tell Queenslanders about how they will be compensated. Let the record show that I have bipartisan support for that scheme. I will make sure that every Queenslanders in the state knows how they can be compensated.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I would invite the Premier to direct some of the advertising money into compensating people who have lost out.

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

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition should not go back on his word. He was in there supporting me a minute ago. I thought he was getting better, but we will tell Queenslanders all about it.

While we are talking about these matters, it is interesting to note there are a whole lot of things in here that none of us can be very proud of. I was interested to see what the Borbidge government did when Mr Springborg was a member. The Auditor-General states in March 1998 that AUSTA Energy purchased a 50 per cent interest in NCHK Power Ltd at Shengzhou, which held a 52 per cent interest in a power generation company in China. AUSTA also provided two loans to this company totalling \$4.991 million. At the time AUSTA was, as the Auditor-General says, taking small equity positions in the energy sector in Asia. Bewildering stuff! How did the Borbidge government go about that? Max Christmas was paid \$1 million to waltz around the Chinese countryside using government money to put together dud investments in Chinese companies.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Absolutely. What we have is a shameful performance from the opposition when in government. No-one can be proud of what happened here, but we are going to fix it. The opposition does not have clean hands; no-one does. But we are going to fix it. I table for the information of the House all the details relating to that debacle.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will have a little bit of order in the House. Before calling the member for Barron River, could I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from the Good News Lutheran Primary School in the electorate of Mount Ommaney. Welcome!

Queensland Convention Centres

Dr LESLEY CLARK: My question without notice is also to the Premier. There have been some recent great successes in relation to convention centres in Queensland, including the award-winning convention centre in Cairns. Can the Premier please provide further details of these successes and what they mean for Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: I would be delighted to. This is a day of great news. We not only have more transformers and electricity, we are going to compensate people if they lose power if the standards to be set for Ergon and Energex are not met. Not only that, we have other great news for the people of Queensland. Queensland is going from strength to strength when it comes to convention centres. I was delighted—

Mr Springborg: I might send you a hero fax later.

Mr BEATTIE: Please don't be rude, Lawrence; that's terrible.

I was delighted the other morning when the Cairns Convention Centre and the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre were named in the top three congress centres in the world by the general assembly of the International Association of Congress Centres. Nominations for this prestigious, independently judged award came from the association's 130 members from 49 countries. The result was that Cairns was selected as the World's Best Congress Centre and Brisbane was in the top three. Not surprising! Of course, members know a Labor government built this; members understand that. That is the sort of commitment the Labor Party has to infrastructure in the regions.

Mr Mackenroth: It's Labor governments that built them.

Mr BEATTIE: The member is absolutely right. I take the Deputy Premier's interjection—Labor governments have built the four of them. That is the sort of energy that is needed and the commitment to the regions—exactly right.

My government supports the convention and conference industry in very tangible ways. In particular, the Department of State Development and Innovation has a full-time business event attraction officer whose role is to help attract targeted businesses, conferences and events, particularly those

aligned to priority industry sectors like biotechnology and aviation, but they are not exclusive. It is much broader than that. This new role ensures that major bids to attract conventions include appropriate support from my government. When a bid is won, this officer ensures that everything possible is done to maximise the economic benefits from the event. This can include organising industry site visits for corporate delegations and delegates, showcasing Queensland's technology and capabilities, or strategic marketing to keep decision makers attending the event.

The Department of State Development and Innovation has been instrumental in winning bids for the 2006 World Meat Congress for up to 1,000 international delegates, the 2008 World Hydrogen Energy conference for up to 2,000 delegates, and the 2004 World Congress on Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics for 1,000 delegates. Conventions and major events are worth more than \$1.8 billion per year to our economy. Many of these events attract people to the state who may not otherwise ever consider visiting Queensland. These events provide us with an ideal platform for promoting the benefits of doing business in Queensland, and I have no doubt that our new \$130 million Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre will be up there with our other award winners in the very near future.

This is a great story when it is considered that the award is a worldwide award—first place to go to Cairns and third place to go to Brisbane—and the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre did not even have an opportunity to be able to submit for the award.

Ms Keech: It will be soon.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right. We build this infrastructure, and we are going to continue to build.

Electricity Supply

Mr SEENEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy.

Mr Beattie: What happened? I was enjoying it, Jeffrey.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Who has got respect for the rules of this House this morning? It is all very well—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide, you will ask the question or you will resume your seat.

Mr SEENEY: I will ask the question when the Premier allows me to, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: We will continue with the question.

Mr SEENEY: My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. I refer him to the ministerial statement that the Premier made this morning about the installation of the new transformers in response to the Somerville report. Can the minister confirm to the House that the lead time for ordering and delivering such equipment is many, many times longer than the three weeks that have elapsed since the Somerville report was handed down? Can he also confirm to the House that the Premier's ministerial statement this morning was a continuation of the same dishonesty that caused the Beattie blackouts in the first place?

Mr ROBERTSON: Today is a red letter day. Today is the 630th day since the last time my shadow minister stood in this place and asked me a question. He is not a shadow, he is a ghost. He is a ghost!

Honourable members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: This is indeed a red letter day, and I am more than happy to answer the question. I welcome the member back to natural resources, mines and energy. Welcome back, Jeff! I have missed you. I am more than happy to answer the question.

What the member needs to understand is that work commenced on upgrading the networks of Energex and Ergon as soon as we called for the independent review. When it was clear, as a result of the storms and the outages that occurred earlier this year, that work needed to get under way, we got it under way. That is why we saw an increase in capital expenditure in the budget this year for both Energex and Ergon for capital upgrades and for maintenance expenditure, and they will continue. But it is not just transformers that are being upgraded in Energex, it is right across the whole network. I recall recently—

Mr Seeney: When did you order them?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You have asked the question.

Mr ROBERTSON: I do not order them.

Mr Seeney: When did you order the transformers?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Callide, I cannot even hear the answer.

Mr ROBERTSON: The member for Callide knows that I do not order them. We have seen from day one—

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is becoming a farce. I am going to hear the answer to this question and everybody else in this chamber is going to hear it, otherwise they will be removed from the chamber.

Mr ROBERTSON: After 630 days I thought he would be interested in the answer.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, I have just warned you.

Mr ROBERTSON: We have said from day one—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I now warn you under standing order 123A. I call the minister.

Mr ROBERTSON: It will probably be another 630 days now.

We have said from day one that people just cannot go down and buy these things off the shelf. In terms of fixing the networks, it is going to take time, and that is why the chief executive of Energex has been visiting his suppliers both here in Brisbane and down south to ensure those supply chains are put in place as we continue to roll out, day in and day out, improvements to the network in Energex and in Ergon.

Mr Copeland interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: But it is not just transformers, it is right across the whole network; it is right across the—

Mr Copeland interjected.

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

Mr ROBERTSON: —full supply chain to electricity consumers in this state. I table for the information of all members the upgrades across the Energex network that will be taking place before Christmas. They include the 23 transformers by December 2004. They include the thirteen 33-kV feeders. They include the 92 11-kV feeders. They include the 447 distribution transformers. We are getting on with the job.

Brisbane Cruise Terminal Development

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: My question is directed to the Premier. What progress has been made in the portside wharf cruise terminal facility?

Mr BEATTIE: More good news.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: You had better get used to the good news because we are going to keep delivering and we are going to keep doing what we said we would do, absolutely. The Brisbane cruise terminal project is an outstanding example of how the public and private sectors can work together in partnership to deliver valuable facilities and services to the community.

On 3 August, State Development Minister, Tony McGrady, finalised the development lease giving tenure to Multiplex's portside wharf development. I also announced on that day that we would negotiate with Multiplex on the possible sale of an adjacent block of 0.9 of a hectare, which will allow for expansion of the portside wharf development. This block is owned by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, but it is surplus to their requirements. I am very pleased with the cruise port's completion target of 2005, and, Henry, I know you will be part of this.

Mr McGrady: That's the day the Leader of the Opposition was stalking you.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, it was. The Leader of the Opposition was stalking me that day, but I am happy for him to do that because we are where the action is. I do not mind him following me as long as he does not get too close.

Construction of the terminal will mean that for the 2006 cruising season Brisbane will have an international cruise terminal facility capable of operating as a base port and transit stop for cruise ships and navy vessels.

The terminal is part of a \$300 million residential and retail development. The terminal will be of international standard and provide passengers with a very positive 'welcome to Brisbane' experience. Establishment of the terminal is critical to the promotion of cruise shipping in Queensland, which could potentially generate up to \$80 million per year to the state. It will also create an estimated 800 jobs during the construction phase and more than 450 full-time positions once the terminal is operational.

This development is timely because Queensland is now experiencing significant growth in cruise ship visitations. Cruise ship calls to Brisbane have increased from 12 in 2003 to 28 scheduled for this year. In 2005 we expect a further increase to around 50 cruise ships visiting Brisbane.

Our proximity to Queensland's great coastal attractions, as well as being close to cruise destinations in the Asia Pacific region, gives Queensland the potential to become a major player in the international cruise market. My government is working hard to assist and promote the cruise shipping industry in a number of locations in the state. After Brisbane we will look at the possibility of improving facilities at Townsville, the Gold Coast, Cairns and the Whitsundays. I thank the honourable member for his question.

In the closing minutes I highlight this: I listened to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition before grossly misrepresent what I said. I simply say: where is what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said in this statement? Where? The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has got to learn a lesson about credibility and honesty. Truth, truth, truth; where is it? Do not come in here and tell dishonest things.

Electricity Supply

Mr HORAN: My question is to the Treasurer. Given that the Premier has accepted the blame for the power crisis, will the Treasurer establish a joint parliamentary committee to recommend performance standards for the electricity retailers and compensation payments? Who will be consulted in preparing the consultation guidelines for those who have been affected by the Beattie blackouts?

Mr MACKENROTH: When the Somerville report was delivered cabinet considered that report. We immediately established a CEOs committee and we have in place a group of people who are working on the government's response to that report, which will include the setting of the standards for Ergon and Energex. One of the members of the Somerville inquiry, Mr Steve Blanch, has been employed by the Office of Energy to assist them in establishing those standards. When those standards are established we will make them public—everyone will be aware of them. That is the way it will be done.

Interruption.

PRIVILEGE

Comments by Premier

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.55 a.m.): rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. The Premier accused me a moment ago of being untruthful in the question I asked. I would like to quote from the Premier's statement to the House this morning in which he said—

The government's power response continues. Two more transformers have been delivered to their electricity substation sites as part of the program involving 23 transformers.

The Premier said that the transformers were part of his government's power response. I find the Premier's assertions that I was untruthful offensive and I ask him to withdraw it.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has just asked for a withdrawal. Could we have that?

Mr BEATTIE: I will withdraw. We have got to the stage in this parliament where it has become a farce. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition alluded to the fact that I had said that this was in response to the Somerville report. I did not say that at all. Where does it say that?

Mr Seeney: That is what it says—'Response continues'.

Mr BEATTIE: Exactly right. Our response to this started when we set up an investigation, an independent investigation, earlier in the year.

Mr Horan interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Energex has, over a period of time, talked about this year accelerating—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I don't know how many times you are going to warn him, Mr Speaker. Energex has talked about accelerating this program. I made it clear that I did not make any reference to the Somerville report. I find what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said offensive and I want it withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Now we ask for another withdrawal. Member for Callide?

Mr Seeney: What?

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier has found what you said offensive and has asked for a withdrawal.

Mr Seeneey: I quoted the Premier's own words.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no argument about this. If you are asked to withdraw, you withdraw. It is that simple.

Mr SEENEY: I cannot withdraw something that has not been identified. Surely you cannot expect me to withdraw something that has been not been identified.

Mr SPEAKER: If a member asks you to withdraw, you withdraw. That is part of the rules of this House and you will obey them the same as everybody else. If you wish to argue about obeying them, there are other standing orders that I can enforce and I will.

Mr SEENEY: I am prepared to withdraw when I know what it is I am being asked to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier?

Mr BEATTIE: It is very simple. Everybody knows what happened. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition accused me of making a statement this morning that made reference to the Somerville report, which it did not. Then the Deputy Leader of the Opposition continued to accuse me of misrepresenting that position. I have not done that. It is consistently on the record. I have been misrepresented in the House. Under the standing orders I am entitled to ask for it to be withdrawn. It is very simple. The same rules apply.

Mr SPEAKER: Now the member for Callide will withdraw. It is as simple as that. Member for Callide, you will withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, the Premier has not indicated—

Mr SPEAKER: If you are going to defy the chair I will give you a warning and it will be under standing order 124. So you either withdraw and, as everybody else in this House does, obey the standing orders or I will name you. It is as simple as that.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, I find it incredibly difficult to comply with your ruling, but out of respect for you and the chair I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: And the standing orders of the parliament. Thank you. We will now continue with question time with some order in the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Resumed from p. 1996.

Alcohol Management Plan, Yarrabah

Mr BRISKEY: My question is for the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. I understand the minister recently visited Yarrabah in far-north Queensland. Can the minister give an update on how the alcohol management plan is working in that community?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I thank the member for the opportunity to talk about the great things that are happening in Yarrabah which is, of course, in the electorate of Mulgrave. I visited Yarrabah following the Innisfail community cabinet earlier this month. It is a beautiful place and I am happy to say its alcohol management plan is working well. The plan was implemented in February this year and restrictions now allow the carriage of only one carton of beer or two litres of wine per vehicle. It is still early days, but figures show that there has been a 22.7 per cent reduction in average monthly alcohol related offences. There has also been a 15.4 per cent reduction in average monthly offences against the person. This marks a significant improvement in Yarrabah. The statistics are a sign of a safer and, ultimately, a healthier community.

But this, of course, is not the only thing that is happening in Yarrabah. I was fortunate enough to meet with the national NAIDOC awards apprentice of the year, Neil Fourmile Jnr. Neil is the first qualified boilermaker from Yarrabah and is a great role model for young people within the community. The Queensland government is proud to be working with people like Neil, the Yarrabah council and the many people throughout Yarrabah who are making it an even stronger community. Congratulations to the chairman, Vince Mundraby, his councillors, chief executive officer and members of the community justice group for the work that they do in support of their community, which is a credit to them and to their vision.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I welcome to the public galley students and teachers of Ashwell State School in the electorate of Ipswich West.

Electricity Supply

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Premier. I refer the Premier to Energex's regulatory submission 2004 which states—

Voltage unbalance levels on the Energex network are now approaching the maximum allowable limits

And that —

voltage unbalance on the distribution system can cause excessive heating in rotating machinery and lead to premature aging and failure.

Given that the Premier has now made an offer of compensation to homeowners for the loss of perishables, I ask: will the Premier now extend this offer to business and homeowners who suffer electrical equipment damage as a result of brownouts and other voltage problems—damage caused by the actions of your government?

Mr BEATTIE: I need to be really clear. I thank the Leader of the Liberal Party for his question. I have not said that and nor has the Treasurer. We need to be really clear about what we have said. Compensation will be paid if the standards that we set are not met. That is very important. This is a mechanism that is used.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Can I ask those opposite to have some courtesy. It is the Leader of the Liberal Party's question and not those opposite's question. For once, do not be rude.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Fair dinkum, this is silly. If those opposite want to wreck this place, go outside. At least give me the chance to answer the question. He at least has a brain. Allow me to deal with his questions.

Mr SPRINGBORG: On a point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has the right, the same as anybody else in this House, to ask for a withdrawal.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Given the Premier's commitment to standards in this place and his gross personal reflection, I ask him to withdraw that as I find it offensive.

Mr BEATTIE: I withdraw. I was making a general reference. I ask for courtesy from the opposition, though, so that I can actually answer the Liberal Party leader's question. I apologise to the Leader of the Liberal Party for the behaviour of those in the National Party. I will give him a serious answer.

I understand why the Leader of the Liberal Party is not in coalition with them. No-one else could be, either. The member has raised a number of things in his question. I will make three points. Firstly, we have not suggested what the member alluded to in his question. What we are doing is setting a standard. If Energex and Ergon do not reach that standard, then compensation will be paid.

Mr Quinn: For everyone?

Mr BEATTIE: We are going to announce the details very shortly. There are already some limited opportunities for compensation in certain circumstances. That is very limited. We are talking about compensation if they do not meet certain standards. In the next few days I will be announcing, along with my relevant ministers, exactly how that scheme will work. With a bit of luck we will have all that done before we come back in a couple of weeks time. If the Leader of the Liberal Party wants to pursue more details in here or privately with the government we are happy to brief him on it.

The third point I want to make is in relation to reference to the network, as I understood what the member was saying. The Somerville report did identify overuse of the network. That is one of the things that is being dealt with by the government in response to the report. I do not have the percentages in my head, but they are certainly in the report. I do not want to put them on the record in case I get them wrong. They are in the report.

We will actually deal with that overuse of equipment. We need to make sure that the processes followed with the equipment are up to international standards. There were some processes used like watering down generators or transformers which simply were not working. We will correct that, and that will be part of our response. Could I ask the Leader of the Liberal Party, when we have made the announcement, to come back to us if he wants more information and we will provide it to him.

Mackay Water Resource Project

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Is the minister aware of a survey doing the rounds of Mackay which highlights federal funding priorities for the region? What implications does this survey have for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef?

Mr MICKEL: In answer to the honourable member for Pumicestone, yes I am aware of a survey that was circulated by the federal member for Dawson, Mrs De-Anne Kelly, in response to a number of community issues. One of those issues that she sought to address through what I can only term a tick-a-box approach was an issue that I have raised in this House previously concerning the Mackay City Council's request for federal funding for a sewerage treatment plant and water reuse scheme at Bakers Creek.

Mrs Kelly indicated to people in the survey that it would only benefit 20 canefarmers. I think honourable members would be interested in the reaction of the Mayor of Mackay to this survey put out by Mrs Kelly. In the Mackay *Mercury* on 5 August the mayor of Mackay described Mrs Kelly's survey as 'a clumsy attempt to justify her opposition to the Mackay water resources project'. She said—

(The survey) is not worth the paper it's written on...

She is trying to divide the community by suggesting that if we want one thing we can't have another.

Why would the Mayor of Mackay take this approach when the survey, I think, falsely indicated that it would support 20 canefarmers? In actual fact it is supported by the thousands of ratepayers in Mackay city. Does it have the support of the Mackay district canefarmers? I refer all honourable members to the Mackay *Mercury* of 6 August this year under the heading 'Growers want water project to go ahead.' It has a resounding endorsement not just of the ratepayers but also of the Mackay and district canegrowers.

But what of the Queensland government? The honourable Premier prior to the election promised that on his re-election there would be money for this project. So the Minister for Local Government and the Premier have ensured that our effort will provide \$28.7 million for this project along with the money provided by the Mackay City Council.

What are we asking for here? We are simply asking for the federal member to contribute to one thing—to help with the reef water quality issues that the federal government says it is interested in. The beneficiaries will be not only the Mackay ratepayers and the Mackay canegrowers but also the environment because it will take pressures, as I have indicated to this House before, off the aquifer and the reef. All the Queensland government, the Mackay ratepayers and the canegrowers ask is for a bit of decency from Mrs Kelly. Go down to Canberra, join in with the member for Mackay and fight for the city of Mackay to get funding from the federal government for a project that will assist the entire district. In other words, take a leaf out of the honourable Leader of the Opposition's mouse pad—comrade, there is a better way.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Maryborough, I welcome to the public gallery staff and students of Springwood State High School in the electorate of Springwood.

Marine Sewage Legislation

Mr CHRIS FOLEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Transport. In his absence I will direct it to the Premier. The new marine sewage legislation, which has recently been introduced, has left many of my constituents feeling concerned and confused. In light of the effort the department has been putting into ensuring compliance, could the Premier confirm that all state owned and operated vessels currently comply with the new legislation?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. I know this has been an issue in Maryborough because I am an avid reader of the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* and I have a lot of respect for the editor, Nancy Bates. So I have followed this discussion and I understand the member's genuine concern about it. When there is a law passed in relation to protecting the environment—the member understands that—and protecting our waterways all government vehicles and government vessels, in this case, are required to conform.

I will double-check with the minister what processes are in place to ensure that there is government compliance. I will ask him to write to the member about it. If there are any examples that the member is aware of of a lack of compliance by government vessels then I would like to know about them and the minister would like to know about them. We will comply.

Maryborough is one of our great cities. I understand why there is some sensitivity about this. But we need to have statewide laws that protect our marine environment, that protect our fish environment and protect our quality of life. I know that there are difficult issues and I understand when these measures come in that there is some sensitivity. I would ask, as best I can, for the member to work with us to try to ensure that what we do is fair but also to make sure that the pressures are appropriate, which we think they are.

I will go back and detail the legislation. The enhanced legislation relating to vessel source sewage was introduced on 1 January this year, as the member knows. It provides greater environmental protection for Queensland waterways. What it does is encourages boat owners to choose from a range of options. They have options. This is the important thing, I say to the member for Maryborough. Those

options are onboard sewage holding devices, treatment of sewage or discharging to onshore facilities. We want to keep it out of the water. That is what we are trying to do here.

Education is now the key to raising awareness and achieving a high level of compliance. Education has included advertising in newspapers and in boating and fishing magazines, the distribution of 40,000 brochures, information on the Maritime Safety Queensland web site and a series of public meetings and one-on-one information sessions.

Despite this, there is some misinformation about MSQ's enforcement approach with recreational boaters, which is the member's concern. The majority of recreational users are not impacted by the new legislation. Some 70 per cent of people do not generate waste while on the water and 85 per cent of boat trips are less than 10 hours. Industry clubs and local authorities have been slow to embrace a proactive role in providing onshore facilities, and we need to work with them to bring that about. The government does have a role to facilitate this and possibly provide some new facilities. Let me table for the information of the House some more points here which I think may be relevant. We talk about Hervey Bay. For example, during the Hervey Bay whale watching season there are 60,000 tourists in a four-month period. The permanent population of the treatment area is 43,000. This would create some high short-term impacts. So we have to deal with these issues. I will table more information for the House, and that will give the member the opportunity to look at it. If there is anything further, please come back to me or the minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Fitzroy, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from Pacific Pines State High School in the electorate of Gaven.

Police Citizens Youth Clubs

Mr PEARCE: My question is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. The minister as part of a recent visit to central Queensland went to Blackwater in the Fitzroy electorate where she was able to see and appreciate the good work done by the Blackwater PCYC and the strength of community support for that facility. Can the minister please outline for the benefit of the House the value of PCYCs across the state?

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for Fitzroy for the question. Last month I was pleased to open a new PCYC at Emerald, and I acknowledge the significant contribution of the Emerald Shire Council to that PCYC. I also acknowledge that the member for Gregory also attended that event. I also opened an extension of the Blackwater PCYC in the electorate of the member for Fitzroy. The extension was funded by the Blackwater mine. It is a new pulse centre at the Blackwater PCYC. It is a games area for that centre, and I understand that the Blackwater PCYC is a great asset to that community. There are 42 PCYCs throughout the state stretching from Mornington Island to Mount Isa to the south-east corner of the state. This organisation has been a registered charity since 1948—over 60 years—and is still expanding. I am pleased that next month the 43rd PCYC will be opening in Mount Gravatt.

Government members interjected.

Ms SPENCE: The member for Mount Gravatt and the member for Mansfield have been working on this project for a number of years. The Police Service is pleased to support the PCYCs with over 50 police officers throughout the state. These days they have changed from being a place where only boys went to learn boxing and judo to centres which cater for the whole community, and I understand that over 50 activities are carried on at PCYCs—things like teaching circus skills to ballet to the traditional gymnastics, boxing and judo which are still carried on.

I am sure I join with all members in this House in wishing Australia's only gymnastics trampolining representative at the Athens Olympics, Queensland's Lesley Daly, the best in her pursuit for gold tomorrow night. Lesley, who took up trampolining when she was nine but gave it up several years later to pursue a career as a professional diver, started jumping and tumbling again at the Carindale PCYC only 18 months ago when it took delivery of a new trampoline. Four weeks later, at the age of 36, Lesley won the Queensland open trampolining championship and of course tomorrow night she will take the Olympic stage. I understand that the members of the Carindale PCYC have sent their head trampolining coach a mountain of hero messages and 100 or so young trampoliners there are working very hard to emulate their coach's feat. So I am sure that all PCYCs throughout Queensland as well as the members of parliament here wish Lesley the best in her endeavours tomorrow night.

Agricultural Colleges

Mr JOHNSON: That is a better response than the blokes either side ever give.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will just ask the question without comment.

Mr JOHNSON: Mr Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will hear the question.

Mr JOHNSON: You protect me, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I will protect you.

Mr JOHNSON: Minister—

A government member: You should have a pansy on!

Mr JOHNSON: I know who the pansy will be in a minute.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will have the question.

Mr JOHNSON: On 15 July the minister announced that a review would be conducted by his department into Queensland's four agricultural colleges—these being at Dalby, Burdekin, Longreach and Emerald. Given the concern of students, workers and their families for the future of these colleges with the announcement of this review which has come with no detail, will the minister tell the parliament what the terms of reference are for the review and when does he expect the report to be available?

Mr BARTON: I do thank the member for the question. As the member is aware, during the budget estimates I did advise of my intention to have a review of the four agricultural colleges in Queensland. I also had a quick discussion with the shadow minister at that time as to the reasons why I was conducting that review. My department is in the process of preparing a discussion paper to assist in the review and there will be—as I promised at the stage when I announced it—broad discussion with all of the interest groups, including the agricultural colleges themselves, about the review and about all of the issues associated with it and the options that are available and that will be considered as part of that review.

I must put on the record though—and it gives me no pleasure to do this—as I did at the time in the budget estimates and also in the press conference that I held after that that the reasons for the review are very straightforward. In fact, my predecessor, Matt Foley, brought legislation in here about three years ago to ensure the corporate governance of those colleges. Sadly, most of them have not heeded the requirements under the act for that corporate governance and there are continuing problems with that.

There are significant financial problems at the colleges. Certainly, the tropical north one has improved in recent years. It did have significant problems in the past but has improved. There are also very significant problems with the training outcomes of those four colleges. The Training Recognition Council of my department—the regulator of standards—has asked one of the colleges to show cause why it should not lose its recognition as a training provider. It has had its recognition suspended on three counts for, I think, three months—I could check—which is current at this point in time. Had it been a private provider, I am advised that it probably would have lost its recognition full stop. But that would have resulted in 150 young people who are currently at that college not having anywhere else to be placed. So the Training Recognition Council was very conscious of that in making that decision.

I also need to say that there have been other problems. There have been whistleblowers making complaints both to my department anonymously and to me and to the *Courier-Mail* and to the CMC. There are some investigations currently being undertaken by the CMC into those complaints. Of course, that is a matter for the CMC, as is the timing of when the CMC finalises those matters. I must say that that discussion paper will be available soon, and I will certainly be consulting with the member opposite and other members. Of course, the member for Gregory has two of the colleges in his electorate. There is a campus in the tropical north in the seat of Burdekin and another one in the Tablelands electorate and another at Dalby. I have run out of time. It is a very serious issue. A discussion paper is being prepared to assist that consultation process, and that will be available shortly.

Time expired.

Ministerial Christmas Cards

Mr REEVES: My question is to the Minister for Education and the Arts. Minister, last year a very talented class of year 9 art students from a school in my electorate, Redeemer Lutheran College at Rochedale, produced a great piece of artwork which featured on the minister's official Christmas cards. Is the minister planning on giving Queensland students another opportunity to have their creative artwork showcased on her Christmas cards this year?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. Members may be surprised to hear the member for Mansfield talking about something to do with Christmas when it is only mid-August, but the end of the year is fast approaching and so is Christmas. The minister's Christmas card competition ran for the first time in 2003. I am pleased to report to the House that it was a huge success. In its first outing, we received more than 4,000 entries from students in both state and non-state schools.

Unfortunately, there could be only six winners. Not only did we see a very beautiful piece of work get into the final six from the students at the Redeemer Lutheran College but a number of contributions from other students, including a very distinctive orange crab wearing a Santa hat from Norman Park

State School year 4 student, Claire O'Connor, that I am sure people might recall receiving. The calibre of the artwork—

A government member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I thought that it was a great tribute to the Queensland seafood industry.

A government member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: Yes, I think the crab was called Henry. The calibre of the artwork was so high that I would have to say that I found it very difficult to select from a short list of entrants. With the announcement today that we are confirming that the competition will run again this year, I am sure that that decision will not get any easier. I hope to see many more entries.

This year's theme is My School at Christmas. The competition is open to Queensland students from state and non-state schools and, again, six artworks will be chosen. I am very pleased to tell the House today that Australia Post has decided to become a partner in this project and has provided generous support this year, donating gift vouchers for winning students and their schools. The schools of this year's winning students will receive a framed personalised stamp sheet featuring their students' designs. Christmas is one of the busiest times for Australia Post, so I am very pleased to see it come on board with this competition.

I ask the members to encourage their local schools and schools in their electorates to enter the artwork of their students into this competition. Entries close on 22 October. I am very pleased that our government is supporting Queensland's budding artists in this way. Competitions like this reward excellence and I hope that they inspire others to strive for that excellence in the future.

Fostering creativity in our children is a key plank of the Smart State strategy of this government. The creative urge is at the heart of innovation wherever it is found—whether that is in the arts, whether it is in industry, whether it is in research or whether it is in science. Our government is determined to build a culture of innovation and creativity in our schools from the earliest stage. We had 4,000 entries in 2003. I look forward to a great deal more this year and to using the Christmas cards to promote Queensland's young artistic talent. I also ask members at this early stage of the year to consider using some of the winners of this year's competition on their own electorate Christmas card list.

Suncorp Stadium, Energex

Dr FLEGG: I refer the Treasurer to the fact that the \$280 million cost of the Suncorp Stadium and associated infrastructure, as detailed by himself, did not include any provision for the electrical installations or infrastructure to support the redevelopment. I ask: why did the government force Energex to bear this cost in full, thereby leaving less money in Energex's budget for the maintenance and capital equipment upgrades to other parts of the network?

Mr MACKENROTH: The member is incorrect in what he is saying. In relation to the upgrade of Suncorp Stadium—at the same time that that was done, Energex took the opportunity to upgrade its substation to provide power to the whole of that suburb and surrounding area, not for Suncorp Stadium. Not for Suncorp Stadium! In fact—

Dr Flegg: No, nothing to do with that.

Mr MACKENROTH: No, they took that opportunity to do it at that time. Energex was planning to upgrade its substation. In fact, if my memory is right, Energex actually shifted from one block of land to another, which better fitted in with the planning, but it still had planned to do an upgrade.

We are being criticised in this parliament over and over again because the electricity system is not good enough, yet when Energex does something, the member wants to complain about that.

Water Reform

Mr SHINE: I direct a question to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. Can the minister advise the House of the progress of water reform on the Condamine-Balonne and Queensland's contribution to the Murray-Darling, particularly in light of negative comments from people in New South Wales?

Mr ROBERTSON: I am pleased to inform all honourable members that last Thursday I released the long-awaited water resource plan for the Condamine-Balonne catchment in south-west Queensland. This plan represents some of the most innovative and visionary work done on resolving water allocation and management issues seen in Australia. It is the result of years of planning, stakeholder discussion and independent scientific review of the Lower Balonne led by eminent water reform expert Professor Peter Cullen.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: If I was the member for Warrego I would not be critical for one moment about this plan.

In particular, this plan is the result of the strong partnership developed between water users in the Condamine-Balonne and my department. I want to thank those people for their hard work, particularly Mrs Leith Bouilly, who led the community reference panel. Her work is certainly greatly appreciated, as is the panel's willingness to make hard decisions and their commitment to delivering a water resource plan that considers the water resource needs of everyone, whether they be farmers in Queensland or New South Wales or the important needs of the natural environment.

This plan sets down rules to support the sustainable use of water to meet the requirements of Queensland land-holders, the environment and downstream water users in New South Wales. It will afford water users greater certainty by converting all existing water licences to volumetric tradeable allocations and by developing water-sharing rules for water supply schemes in the catchment. When it is implemented, it will form the cap for Queensland's share of the Murray-Darling. That means greater certainty for water users on both sides of the border in the years ahead and it ensures the natural flows that are vital to the ongoing health of our rivers, flood plains and the iconic Narran Lakes.

Contrary to what some in New South Wales have claimed, the final plan does not promote further levying or bunding on the Lower Balonne flood plain. In fact, strict controls on the bunding and overland flow dams contained in the final report ensure more water for the environment and downstream users in New South Wales. Contrary to other southern claims, this plan broadens the provisions relating to interstate interests and representation, including explicitly land-holders downstream of the plan area in the new permanent water advisory council for the Lower Balonne.

If this plan had been operational during the small- to medium-flow event in the Lower Balonne in January and February, the total potential water that could have been harvested would have dropped by some 100 gigalitres—from 480 gigalitres to 308 gigalitres. That is the sort of reduction in water harvesting that the Howard government and the other states are spending \$500 million over five years to achieve through their Living Murray initiative.

Queensland contributes only one per cent of the water that reaches the mouth of the Murray and we extract less than six per cent of all water extracted from the entire system, which is why we say with some pride that with the finalisation of this plan we are punching above our weight. This water resource plan supports the efforts to achieve water sustainability in the Murray-Darling Basin and it is entirely consistent with the intent of the national water initiative, which was recently agreed to by Australian governments. It is a clear step forward for water reform in Queensland—a field in which Queensland is leading Australia

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Gladstone, could I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of St Augustine's Primary School in the electorate of Currumbin.

Electricity Supply, Gladstone Electorate

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. Access to reliable electricity is critical for everyone in my electorate, but particularly for the large employers such as Boyne Smelter and QAL, to name two. In the recent audits undertaken by energy GOCs in Queensland, have any areas of vulnerability been identified in the Gladstone city and Calliope shire areas?

Mr ROBERTSON: Not that I am aware of, but I would encourage the member for Gladstone to look at the summer preparedness strategy for Ergon that the Premier tabled the other day in parliament, because it breaks down the works that are under way on a regional basis throughout Queensland. In the time available to me, I want to reflect briefly on the nonsense carried on by the opposition this morning with respect to when certain transformers were ordered or when they were not. I want to make it quite clear that when I took over this portfolio it was after those violent thunderstorms this year when it was clear that this work needed to be done. We did two things: firstly, we announced the independent review; secondly, we got on with the job of identifying problem areas in south-east Queensland.

Could members imagine the outcry if, as the Minister for Energy, I sat back for the past seven months and did nothing while the independent review conducted its work. I was not prepared to do that. From day one I was to ensure that our electricity networks were upgraded while the independent review did its work. We now have a longer-term blueprint and we will continue to deliver to south-east Queensland and the rest of Queensland to ensure that we have an electricity network for the 21st century.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electricity Supply

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.30 a.m.), by leave: The government is looking at improving overall system reliability by providing greater incentives for Energex and Ergon to improve their services to customers. I have made reference to this today. Yesterday the Deputy Premier made reference to it in the parliament and I made reference to it outside the parliament.

In light of issues that have been raised today, I want to be clear about what we are doing. More work needs to be done and the details will be announced in the future, but I want to make sure that the record is clear. The incentives I referred to will involve payments to customers from the companies in the form of reduced bills. In terms of compensation for spoilage or loss of equipment due to electrical problems, customers are now able to claim if it is the result of proven negligence on the part of Energex or Ergon. That is currently the position. Negligence could be caused by failure to undertake maintenance on key equipment or in other areas of responsibility.

Our new scheme will complement the existing arrangements. For instance, if trees have not been trimmed within specified times and those trees cause an interruption that results in damage then there will be compensation. If trees are outside a designated tree trimming range—let's say approximately two metres; we are determining these things—then compensation will not be paid. How this will work is very simple. We will set standards. The standards will have to be met. If the standards are not met—I have given an example with the two metres in relation to trees—then compensation will be paid.

We know that this is a sensitive area, because what may appear to customers to be the fault of Energex and Ergon could sometimes be an appliance fault. As I have made it clear, the government has taken this problem by the horns, and we expect Energex and Ergon to fix it. We have made it absolutely clear to both of them that it is their responsibility. They have the money to do it. We are simply saying to both of those bodies: do it.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Comments by Member for Ipswich

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.32 a.m.), by leave: On Wednesday, 19 May 2004 the member for Ipswich spoke in this House in a manner which I described as uncharitable, unkind and lacking in compassion. I table the member's comments. I wish to correct the record, as the speech was in fact delivered during debate on a motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition but prior to debate on the Private Property Protection Bill and Land Acquisition Amendment Bill 2004. That does not lessen the patronising nature of the member's statement, which has been described in this House as a patronising, pathetic contribution full of all her esoteric lecturing.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND FISHERIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (11.32 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend legislation about primary industries and fisheries, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (11.33 a.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Primary Industries and Fisheries Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 proposes to repeal one old and outmoded act, namely the Sawmills Licensing Act 1936, and make amendments to a number of acts in the Primary Industries and Fisheries portfolio, namely:

- the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981;
- the Fisheries Act 1994;
- the Food Production (Safety) Act 2001;

- the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act 1991; and
- the Stock Act 1915.

The bill also amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, following consultation with the Police Service, in regard to police powers when responding to animal welfare incidents.

Honourable members will be aware that it is my policy to bring a miscellaneous amendment bill into parliament each year to deal with amendments to a range of acts, where the amendments are not expected to be controversial, in order to avoid having to open up each individual act via a separate amending bill. This year's bill includes the repeal of an act as well, which I will deal with first, followed by the various amendments.

In order to meet national competition policy—NCP—time lines and to avoid the possibility of a specific penalty in the next tranche of NCP payments from the federal government, the Sawmills Licensing Act 1936 needs to be repealed to complete the process of implementing the outcome of an NCP review of this statute. The review found that this old and antiquated act does not provide any net public benefit and indeed the act is quite unnecessary in this day and age.

It is proposed to amend both the Stock Act 1915 and the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981 to clarify the appeals process under each act, although I stress that these amendments will not have retrospective operation. The amendments will overcome the current legal uncertainty surrounding a right of appeal where the relevant legislation does not provide an express right of further appeal. This is very important in the context of possible compensation claims against the state in the event of destruction of stock during a major disease episode, where many millions of dollars could be at stake.

The proposed amendments will involve providing for another level of appeal beyond the Magistrates Court in the case of the Stock Act and the District Court in the case of the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act. The amendments will also change the first level of appeal in compensation matters from the Magistrates Court to the District Court in the case of the Stock Act.

Amendments to the Fisheries Act 1994 are proposed in three areas. Firstly, an amendment to the Fisheries Act is required for NCP purposes, this being to remove the current requirement for a prior administrative approval by the chief executive of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries before a transfer of an authority—including quota—can take place. In future, all that will be required is that the transferee and transferor have to notify the chief executive of the details of the transfer so that the department's fisheries business group can make the appropriate changes in the fisheries register to enable enforcement of the legislation. Transfers can only be made with the full knowledge of all parties who have an interest in the authority to be transferred or whose rights may be impacted by a transfer.

Secondly, amendments are proposed to allow the exchange of information between fisheries enforcement agencies and other relevant bodies. There is growing evidence that fisheries related crime is becoming increasingly more organised, particularly in regard to illegal harvesting, transporting and trading of high-value fish stocks, such as abalone, rock lobster and coral reef finfish, and it is desirable for enforcement agencies to be in a position to share intelligence and to provide information collected in the conduct of an investigation to other jurisdictions.

In carrying out investigations under the Fisheries Act, the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol often comes across matters that it believes would be of interest to bodies such as the interstate and Commonwealth fisheries agencies and to non-fisheries agencies such as the Australian Taxation Office and state and federal police. However, this can give rise to potential conflicts between the operational requirements of the patrol and the expectations of its state and federal counterparts and the implications of Queensland's privacy policies.

In accordance with a balanced assessment of the right to privacy and the broader public interest in ensuring compliance with relevant legislation, it is now proposed to establish a communication framework, underpinned by legislative authority, that assures the appropriate provision of evidence to prescribed government entities. The amendment will provide for the exchange of information where that information would help a prescribed enforcement agency to perform its function of investigating and taking action in relation to criminal offences. Guidelines will be formulated by the chief executive of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries on the way this power is exercised.

Thirdly, an additional amendment to the Fisheries Act has been included in the bill in order to deal with a significant work place health and safety matter. Presently, the Fisheries Act prescribes it as an offence for a person, unless they have a reasonable excuse, to obstruct, hinder or resist an inspector exercising a power conferred under the act or to attempt to commit such an offence. However, unlike other similar provisions in other legislation there is no definition as to what constitutes 'obstruction'.

The lack of a clear definition of what constitutes obstruction has resulted in some enforcement difficulties in several incidents in recent times where Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers have been threatened and assaulted. The difficulty stems from the fact that, without a definition as to the extent of the offence provisions, there has been no clear power for patrol officers to take enforcement action as a result of these incidents, including the ability of patrol officers to issue a formal caution to the person involved.

In more serious cases, such as assault on a patrol officer, the matter is reported to the Queensland Police Service to take action under the Queensland Criminal Code. This will continue to be the case. Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers have expressed concern that the Fisheries Act does not afford them the necessary degree of protection. They have also pointed out that there are inconsistencies with the protection afforded to other enforcement officers under other legislation, such as the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001.

It is absolutely and totally unacceptable to me, and indeed I hope to each and every member of this House as well, that patrol officers should be exposed to this type of reprehensible conduct without having proper legal redress. Accordingly, it is proposed to utilise this bill to include an appropriate definition of 'obstruct' into the Fisheries Act that includes specific reference to the terms 'assault', 'hinder', 'resist' and 'attempt or threaten to obstruct'. The amendments reflect the wording that is already in the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001.

To ensure that the police can continue to investigate the more serious incidents, the proposed amendment will be underpinned by standard operating procedures that will identify what matters were appropriate for the Boating and Fisheries Patrol to investigate as distinct to those that must be referred to the police for action.

In addition, another standard operating procedure will ensure officers from the same Boating and Fisheries Patrol base will not investigate actions for obstruction under this provision. I strongly believe there is a clear case for the Boating and Fisheries Patrol to be provided with a safe working environment, including ensuring there are appropriate powers in the legislation to protect authorised officers from harassment, assault, intimidation and abuse.

An amendment to the Food Production (Safety) Act 2000 is proposed to clarify the effect of an amendment made to the act in 2003 that may have had the unintended consequence of excluding all game meat harvesting, including commercial harvesting, from the ambit of the act. This needs to be corrected to enable the act to properly cover these commercial activities, as was always intended. It is also proposed to amend a review clause in the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act 1991, which currently provides for a Queensland review of wheat marketing arrangements following any national review of the long-standing single desk export arrangements.

A national review is currently under way under the Commonwealth's Wheat Marketing Act 1989, although the continuation of single desk export powers are not actually being reviewed but, rather, the review is confined to addressing the actual performance of the single desk marketer, AWB International Ltd, in exercising those powers. This being the case, there does not appear to be any reason for a subsequent state based review if the national single desk arrangements are not being changed. Accordingly, it is proposed to amend the Grain Act to require a state review only if the federal government takes any action to dismantle the national single desk arrangements.

There are also some other amendments to the Grain Act to remove references to the former Queensland grain handling and marketing body Grainco Ltd, which is no longer a Queensland grower owned and controlled company.

After consultation with the Queensland Police Service, it is proposed to amend two sections of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 which were inserted as consequential amendments by the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. The amendments will align the powers of police officers to respond to animal welfare incidents more closely to those of inspectors appointed directly under the Animal Care and Protection Act.

In accordance with my long-standing policy on handling primary industries and fisheries legislation, I have asked that the relevant legal, policy and technical officers of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries be available to brief members on both sides of the House on this bill and to fully answer any issues that are raised. I look forward to informed debate on the bill, and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Horan, adjourned.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee F

Report

Resumed from 18 August (see p. 1940).

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mrs Croft): Order! The question is—

That the report of Estimates Committee F be adopted.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (11.46 a.m.): I rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee F. In view of the purpose of the estimates committee to be a genuine, public examination of the expenditure within the department in question, I consider the approach that the minister chose to take of aggressive and at times personal confrontation to be inconsistent with that role and perhaps more in line with what we might expect to see in question time in the chamber. It was also not conducive to obtaining answers to the questions given that the committee became a confrontational grandstanding political exercise rather than a genuine exchange of information.

To illustrate this point, a number of questions I asked in relation to untreated sewage discharged by local authorities aimed at assessing the extent of incidents of this nature and the effectiveness of the EPA's reporting and detection procedures for untreated sewage discharge were singularly unsuccessful in producing any meaningful response from the minister. Similarly, the exchanges on the Great Walks of Queensland became a confrontational political exercise in attempting to shift blame to the federal government.

Given that the Gold Coast hinterland walks had been promised prior to the election in 2001, the minister and his department had ample time to assess what the requirements were and to realise that they had to comply with the provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and make application to the federal minister. In fact, this took until May 2004 and it is entirely unreasonable if it took the Queensland government over three years to make its submission that it should then be blaming the federal government for delay after a matter of a few weeks. Likewise, the length of the walk or the size of the buildings the Queensland government wished to build in this World Heritage listed area should not excuse it, as the minister claims, from meeting its obligations under the act. If a landowner wanted to carve a track and build a toilet block under circumstances which required the approval of the Queensland government, I can assure the House the minister would not be about waiving the requirements of his legislation.

Queensland has a unique cultural heritage. There is a general belief among those concerned for cultural heritage in Queensland that this government has no commitment to the protection and preservation of our cultural heritage. Given this government's obviously low priority for heritage issues, the concerns recently expressed that the powers of the Heritage Council will be watered down might seem to be very well founded. Given the Liberal Party's commitment to preserving our cultural heritage, we will vigorously fight any such proposal.

The concern of heritage groups around the state has been elevated to a new level by this government's abject disregard for the cultural heritage of Queensland, as demonstrated by this government's facilitation of the destruction of the Heiner Road Bridge in Ipswich. This beautifully preserved sandstone rail cutting bridge dates from 1864. It is one of the last remaining remnants of Queensland's first railway and the world's first railway built as a government enterprise. In fact, this beautifully preserved piece of our early history may well commemorate our state's first world-first.

Minister Mickel is noted for some feisty performance, as it was called by Chris O'Brien on ABC radio. In relation to the Heiner Road Bridge, his colleague the Minister for State Development made the state's most notorious statement about cultural heritage. In a press release he said—

If we cut up and bury the Heiner Road Bridge it is a win for heritage as future generations will know where it was and could dig it up if they wanted to look at it.

I would say to the Minister for Environment that it is a pity that we do not see some of that feisty spirit defending our cultural heritage and directed against some of the philistines he sits with in cabinet. Beyond that, I would express my thanks to the officers who helped with our committee and to the member for Whitsunday for her very professional chairing of it. Thank you.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (11.51 a.m.): I rise to speak to Estimates Committee F. The Department of Environment and the Department of State Development both play a critical role in the development of our state obviously, but in my electorate they play an especially important role. The electorate relies heavily on the work of the Department of Environment in relation to overseeing the quality of life, particularly air quality and water quality, in light of the heavy industrialisation of the area. They look to the department to be proactive; not to be unnecessarily proactive in terms of involvement with the industry but to always ensure that overriding decisions in relation to emissions, the long-term quality of life of the community and the health of the environment are kept clearly in mind. I would have to say that the people who live at Targinie, and the people who lived there but have been required to move on, have expressed a great deal of frustration at what they see as a lack of activity by the department in particular over the SPP emissions.

In relation to the Department of State Development, many developments in the electorate are of state and national significance. We have been privileged; we have also been asked to participate in heavy industry development. The area has benefited by these developments with many families holding secure employment as a result of this. Lately, however, two major events have undermined business and community confidence. The first was the prolonged operation of SPP in what many in the community regarded as an unacceptable environmental circumstance. They subsequently sold to QERL, and QERL has now made the decision to close the plant. That put approximately 100 people out

of work. Whilst the closure is regrettable, I believe that before it can be reopened—and there is a proposal to look at stage 2 and to give consideration to stage 2—a great deal of attention must be given to the environmental issues, and they must be addressed and corrected prior to any consideration of approval of stage 2 and, more importantly, the reopening of the plant for operation.

The Aldoga project is the other area of concern that has only recently emerged. It has created a greater depth of concern in the community after the announcement last week that the company would be restructuring the project. There is not a lot of detail available to the community to be able to put this statement in perspective, and I am not suggesting that the announcement is something that the minister could change—I believe it was outside of the minister's purview—but the advice that the community was given was that the work would cease for the restructure to occur. However, it has undermined investor confidence in our community.

I would like to thank the minister for the improved communication between my office and the DSD in Gladstone. I know that it has been probably, of all the state offices in Gladstone, the least communicative, but I do want to thank the minister for that improvement in the last month or so.

The CAR project is progressing strongly. As the most recent green field project, I would like to put on record that I commend Comalco—both locally and the Brisbane offices—for their very positive communication with the community. In particular, on the local front I would commend Robyn Sermon. Their project commenced at a time when there was considerable scepticism, particularly within the Targinie community, particularly in relation to big industry. As I said, the Targinie scepticism was as a result of SPP. The closest community to the CAR project was, again, Targinie.

The challenge ahead for the DSD is to re-establish confidence lost as a result of these two announcements that have been made in close proximity to each other. The other announcement that distant investors would relate to our area is AMC. However, in terms of local impact, it had less impact as far as employment is concerned than SPP and Aldoga.

I would also like to put on the record in the time remaining my thanks to the Fair Trading officers in Rockhampton. The staff up there provide informed responses in a timely manner to our office and we get—as all electorates do—a lot of inquiries in relation to the scams that are around today that have the potential to undermine the finances of many families. They are a wonderful group of people to work with in Rockhampton, and I thank the minister.

The wine industry in my electorate is important. We have one winery, Gekko Valley, and that industry reflects the vision of the McCraes who own and operate the winery.

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) (11.56 a.m.): I want to place on the record my thanks to the chair of the committee for the very professional way in which she conducted herself. I also want to thank all of those members of the committee who came in and asked the questions. The whole estimates process is one of the great success stories of the Labor government in this state because it ensures that the minister certainly understands what is going on in his or her department. It is all very well to receive media releases done by the department, but for three months before the estimates hearing senior officers of the department and, of course, the minister and his staff go through every single item of expenditure to ensure that things are right for the estimates debate. However, above all else, they are forced to understand exactly how their department ticks.

One of the most relevant speeches in the last two days came from Ken Hayward, the member for Kallangur, when he questioned the whole role of estimates. It is not about cheap gimmicks; it is about members of parliament actually examining the finances which have been allocated for the following year. All too often some members use the estimates debate to try to get their picture in the paper with some cute little gimmick. That is not what the estimates process is about.

I take note of what the member for Gladstone said. It is true that I have requested all the directors to meet with their local members, to invite them around for coffee and tell them what is happening in their area. I am glad that is working in Gladstone. It is certainly working in other parts of the state, and I appreciate the member's comments.

The other point I would raise is Aldoga. The member for Moggill—and I wish he had still been sitting here—has been taking great delight in opening his mouth outside this parliament and, in my opinion, throwing question marks over the whole process of Aldoga. He made allegations that I had taken Aldoga around China. It was not true, as the member for Gladstone knows. He does not ask questions in parliament. He did not raise this in estimates, but puts a doubt in people's minds. I think what members of parliament have to understand is once they are elected to the parliament they are no longer an ordinary citizen, and what they say outside parliament can have an impact on certain events within the state and within the nation. I wish that the new member for Moggill would try to understand the role of a member of parliament.

In relation to the question of ethanol, I notice that the Leader of the Opposition has a private member's bill before the parliament which restricts some of the comments I was going to make. I find it quite galling that on the one hand the National Party in Queensland put out on the web this nonsense

from Mr Barnaby Joyce, the National Party senator, that we are wasting taxpayers' money with our campaign to try to promote ethanol and on the other hand our friend—who again is not here—in the local *Tully Times* is saying that he was responsible in part for having the government embark upon this campaign. They cannot have it both ways.

The reality is, as has been pointed out in this parliament by both the Premier and me, that the Queensland state government does not have the power to mandate. It is only the federal government that can make these decisions. We have made this clear time and time again. I would suggest again to the National Party that it get its act right and in the time between now and the federal election put pressure on Mr Howard and Mr Anderson, because when the election comes they are going to have a rude awakening in some of those sugar seats.

The other matter, of course, was the question of grants—which time does not permit me to deal with at this stage—but I believe I answered those questions and that that is now a dead issue.

I would conclude by saying that we did make an error in relation to one of the questions on notice. We were of the opinion that the department people had taken the papers to the member; they had not. As soon as we found out we did rectify that problem. I was grateful for the comments yesterday acknowledging that.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee D

Report

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mrs Croft): Order! The question is—

That the report of Estimates Committee D be adopted.

Hon. D. BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women) (12.01 p.m.): I am pleased indeed to thank the members of Estimates Committee D. It was a series of vibrant questions and answers over those hours and I thank all of the members of the committee for their participation and, in particular, the chair, the honourable Robert Poole. I also, of course, thank the secretariat for the very hard work they did in the lead-up to the estimates committee hearings and since.

May I remind members that through my portfolio in this year's budget there is half a billion dollars to ensure a strong and sustainable future for regional communities through local government. I am particularly pleased as a regional member myself to tell members of the House that 75 per cent of the budget is earmarked for councils in regional Queensland. I am particularly pleased, too, to highlight that \$3.6 million of new money has been allocated for regional planning and that that will be spent outside and in addition to the efforts made in the south-east corner with the SEQ regional plan. This brings total funds for 2004-05 to \$2.7 million, an increase of over 40 per cent in 2003-04 spending on regional planning. Another smaller but nonetheless important part of my budget is the \$500,000 allocated for partnership grants through the Office for Women.

I do note that the opposition member for Mirani has expressed some reservations in relation to the estimates committee hearings and report. He expresses his disappointment at the lack of enforcement of pool fencing laws by some councils. I agree with him. I too am disappointed and concerned, particularly as we are now only months from the next summer season. Again the state government sends the message, as do all of the councils right across Queensland, to residents who have swimming pools that it is absolutely essential that they make sure that their fence complies and to also make sure that they understand that propping open gates is just an invitation to disaster.

I note also the opposition's reservation in regard to SCAP funding. The opposition nonetheless is well aware that the government is reviewing the suite of funding programs to local government and that this review will take place as quickly, but nonetheless as thoroughly, as possible and that until that review has been completed there will be no announcement of further SCAP funding.

Similarly, in regard to the reservation in relation to the SIP program, this program was not cut. It had always been a time limited program and it has, in fact, come to an end for now. The SIP program will be one on which, of course, local government will be consulted prior to us announcing the new suite of funding programs for the next three to five years.

The opposition's reservations also included some remarks in relation to grey water use. Far from complimenting the government as they should have done on the rollout of legislation to allow grey water use in residential areas, they appear to have misunderstood, in fact, what we have announced and are working on. Legal grey water use will be available to all householders; not just those in new residential areas but also those in existing housing. Yes, the costs may be considerable, and the opposition's implication that a rush at subsidisation would be a good idea would be premature at this stage.

Some further remarks were made in relation to the use of rainwater tanks. I have to absolutely endorse the remarks made by the member for Mirani in this regard. It is important that we further

investigate the potential benefits and savings there can be to our potable water supplies through the use of rainwater tanks.

The final reservation was in relation to the protocol between the state government and local government. I reiterate that the protocol is, indeed, being taken very seriously; not just by the Premier and me but by all ministers of this government. Good relations under the protocol do not mean, however, that we will always agree. What they do mean is that we have easy access between the ministers and representatives of the Local Government Association to discuss all matters, to remain informed and to disagree face-to-face when that is necessary.

It has been a great privilege to represent local government and planning as well as women in this debate.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (12.07 p.m.): It is my pleasure today to speak to Estimates Committee D on behalf of the member for Mirani, Mr Ted Malone, who cannot be here. He wishes to pass on his congratulations to the committee for the estimates process. There are a number of points that I would like to cover.

One of the issues that we have found very important in relation to all the estimates hearings is the receipt of replies to questions on notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual meeting of the committee. That is not fair at all. A lot of time goes into compiling those questions; a lot of time is put in by the department compiling the answers. In some cases it is less than 24 hours before the estimates committee hearing itself that answers are received. A great amount of research work often has to be done to work your way through some of those detailed answers. Certainly some of the answers that have come back have been quite good.

As the minister said a while ago, a number of issues were raised by the shadow minister in a dissenting report, particularly in relation to swimming pool fencing. As the minister said, there seems to be a little bit of slackness on the Gold Coast and in the Logan City area in relation to the inspection of swimming pool fences. It is obviously a huge job, but it is one that has to be addressed. It can be done responsibly without causing World War III. It is purely a matter of ensuring that people do have adequate pool fencing and that there is no loss of life through a lack of pool fencing.

A number of the programs such as the Smaller Communities Assistance Program, SCAP, the Rural Living Infrastructure Program and the Security Improvement Program will run out in 2005 or 2006. There has been no indication from the minister or the government whether those programs will continue. It is quite reasonable that work has to be done in relation to how these new programs should be set up and whether they should be exactly the same or different from the previous ones. We accept the fact there has to be a review. The department has known for a long time that this review is coming up. Local government needs some certainty.

One of the big things that we have been pushing from both a state government and local government point of view—and I have been involved in both—is that we need certainty. We want to know that if a program starts it will finish or at least that we can fund it for quite a long time. Lead time is very important. The applications for funding have been enormous. There has never been enough money in the program. I urge the government to look very carefully at that to improve the situation.

We need to look at rainwater tanks. There are devices where the first flush goes straight off out on to the garden or is held in a reservoir and then drained out. There are definitely ways that we can utilise rainwater tanks far better than we are at the moment.

The other issue I will deal with is the failure of government to adhere to the local government protocol. I know that the minister was quite genuine in her statement about the protocol. However, the problem was that, unfortunately, cabinet—through the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines—gave local government no notice of the valuation legislation that was brought into the House. It was purely an anti-local government bill in the end. The way I see it, there certainly was a very serious breach of that new protocol. I believe that the Minister for Natural Resources pushed it through to protect his own interests. That is disappointing and I certainly hope that we do not see that again.

There are a number of other issues to talk about. I notice that the minister has called in the people from Emerald Towers, that 250-metre high building. It would be 37 storeys higher than the current tallest building in Brisbane. It is probably appropriate under the circumstances. It will be particularly important if the minister becomes the assessable manager for the development.

Time expired.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Shine): Order! Before calling the honourable member for Cook, I welcome to the gallery students and teachers from St Augustine's Primary School in the electorate of Currumbin.

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (12.12 p.m.): I rise to support the report of Estimates Committee D currently before the House. It was my first estimates committee experience as a backbencher and I did enjoy participating in the process of scrutinising the executive. The preliminary meetings, hearings and subsequent meetings of Estimates Committee D were chaired by Mr Robert Poole, the member for

Gaven. Robert is absent from this House this week due to illness. I am sure all members of the House join with me in wishing him a speedy recovery.

First cab off the rank for Estimates Committee D was the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. The minister caused some controversy within the deliberations of the committee by wishing to introduce new technology in terms of the way the committee operates. He wanted to use slides, overhead projectors and Powerpoint presentations to present information to the committee. Some members of the committee were uncertain that this was an appropriate way to present information. The more traditionalists on the committee thought that information given to the committee, as in this chamber, should be given verbally or tabled in written form. I suppose I am not tied to the pangs of the past like some of those members. I thought it was useful for the minister to bring that technology to the table to help explain some of the information he was trying to present to the committee—whether it be a photograph of an intersection that was clearly congested and needed works done or whether it was a graph or pie chart showing types of expenditure or expenditure over time. I think the ability to present that information and make that information easily digestible certainly helped the deliberations of that committee.

One of the stipulations that the committee put on the minister was that any slides or graphs he used had to be tabled to be included as part of the committee report. By and large, he was able to do that. I think the new technology is there to be used. It can be of great benefit in explaining complicated or large chunks of information. It can be presented in a form that is able to be grasped quickly and, therefore, the proceedings can move along in an efficient and timely manner. I commend the minister for that initiative. If other committees are agreeable to introducing new technology I think it would benefit their deliberations as well.

The committee asked questions on two levels. There were specific questions and more general policy related questions. I was able to get certain information that was beneficial specifically to my electorate like the \$3.5 million we talked about for the dredging of the Port Douglas harbour. We talked about more general issues such as funding of federal highways. That was one of the things that the minister talked about that was of great benefit to me and the people in my electorate. We are waiting with bated breath for the federal government to commit to upgrading the Bruce Highway between Cairns and Townsville.

Mr English: You could be waiting a while.

Mr O'BRIEN: I hope the member is wrong. Honourable members would be surprised to know that the Bruce Highway between Cairns and Townsville can be cut for up to 79 hours per year. Members can imagine the impact that has on trade up and down the coast of Queensland and also the disruption it causes to people going about their normal lives—seeing family members—or getting on with business.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: They spent the Centenary of Federation money on our part of the Bruce Highway.

Mr O'BRIEN: I take that interjection. Most disappointing is that the federal government has blamed us and said that it is a state government responsibility to upgrade the Bruce Highway. There was no money as part of the AusLink announcements for the upgrading of that highway. I think that is a disgraceful situation. Honourable members will be very pleased to note that the federal opposition has recently come out and committed \$80 million for that highway.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (12.18 p.m.): From the outset I point out that I was not a member of this committee but I thank Robert Poole, the member for Gaven, and the members of Estimates Committee D for allowing me to ask questions of the minister and departmental officers in relation to the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy.

I think that is a portfolio area that many people have for too long been very quick to criticise in terms of outcomes and government policy—regardless of who is in government. I asked a series of questions about this. I know government members asked questions. Probably one of the most important issues of the estimates—and I know that the minister and the government have recognised this—is the need for alcohol management plans to be further scrutinised. I think we have to see some flexibility in policy to make certain that we are not going to create a situation where there is a mass exodus from our indigenous communities into places like Mount Isa and Cairns. We have to see responsible management practices adopted.

There are a lot very good indigenous people who want to make a difference, and that difference can only be made if we as legislators listen to what the people in the regions say. Initiatives have been and are being developed, and most times those initiatives are created in the regions by the people who know what they want. After the budget estimates process I received an email from a woman who criticised me for asking a question of the minister with regard to giving indigenous mothers free formula and free baby food to allow those children to get the required nutrition they may not otherwise get because of the alcohol problem. I know that the government is endeavouring to address that issue, and it has the total support of the opposition to do it. The point I make is that we are not going to fix the problem by blatantly criticising all of the time and saying, 'This is what you should or shouldn't be doing.'

Rather, if we work together we can make a difference. People who want to criticise for the sake of criticising are negative, and negativity is not going to work. I came at this issue from the point of view—and as this woman said in her email to me—that it is about addressing education and health. That has to happen down the line. We all want that to happen, but we have to start at the beginning. If we can give these kids the required nutrition to prevent them from perishing before they are five, we are a long way towards achieving that.

Management practices are a difficult issue that the minister is confronted with. We have seen the Auditor-General's reports in recent times relative to overspending and issues of non-compliance in terms of furnishing reports. There has to be definite, responsible and decisive leadership, and I said that to former Minister Judy Spence. If the occasion arises and those in charge are not doing the right thing, they need to be dismissed and replaced with people who will manage the money properly, ensure that the policy is implemented and ensure that the law is upheld. At the end of the day, we are not going to get anywhere if we allow this violation of policy and violation of direction to continue to happen. After all, it is taxpayers' money that is funding many of these communities. Therefore, there needs to be accountability. The government has spoken about accountability on numerous occasions, but transparency of accountability is another important factor.

I now turn to the Meeting Challenges, Making Choices initiative. As I just said, many of these initiatives can be achieved. There are many people who do want to make a difference. I spoke to a gentleman in the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy in Mount Isa yesterday, and as an indigenous person himself some of his ideas and initiatives are absolutely fantastic. I say to all members of this parliament: we can make these programs work and we can make a difference in these communities. However, the first thing we have to do is get the alcohol management plan working. We need to revisit that issue to make certain that there is some flexibility—whether we allow an hour or two here and there where people in those communities can consume mid-strength beer or low alcohol beer. I am not quite sure how we can go about it, but there are ways and means of addressing this. I say to the government: I as the opposition's spokesman will give you every support to make these outcomes happen.

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (12.23 p.m.): I was very pleased to be part of Estimates Committee D, and thank Ministers Boyle, Lucas and Clark for their willingness to take a variety of questions and the clarity of their answers during the process. I also want to thank my colleague Robert Poole for doing such a great job as chair and for keeping members in line. Some of us were more difficult than others. My fellow members from the Gold Coast will agree that one of the major problems facing our great city is a lack of water. I was particularly pleased to hear from the Minister for Local Government on the subject of the reuse of grey water and rainwater tanks. Grey water reuse will allow a supply of water for use in subsurface irrigation. That is good news for the keen gardeners who have watched their gardens die from a lack of water. The water needs to be subsurface in order to protect public health. It is conservatively estimated that there is a potential 100 litres of grey water per person per day available for use. The other major advantage of grey water is the reduction in household waste water being released into the sewerage system and consequently into our waterways. This will help to improve the water quality of our rivers, estuaries and streams.

I was impressed by the comments of my colleague the Minister for Local Government and Women and her commitment to the Office for Women. She outlined what we all too often forget—that there is still an important role for government to play in improving the lot of women in Queensland. In this workplace, we are surrounded by independent and confident women who receive equal pay and equal respect—well, mostly—but it is easy to forget that not all workplaces accord their female employees the same courtesy.

Transport is a major challenge for any government. In Queensland there are more than 1,000 people a week who are realising that this is the best state in Australia and are moving here. This places an extraordinary burden on our transport system and it is vital that we are vigilant and innovative in maintaining and improving our transport infrastructure. The Beattie government's 2004-05 budget delivered an unprecedented \$4.1 billion to the Transport and Main Roads operating budget. I was pleased to see that this government's commitment to improving transport on the Gold Coast continues. The duplication of the line between Ormeau and Coomera is a very important improvement. It will allow for extra services to be provided on this heavily patronised Gold Coast line.

My electorate contains a great number of people who commute to Brisbane to work, a journey which is much more attractive and safe because of the Gold Coast rail service. I am proud that this government continues its commitment to improving and maintaining this vital service. In addition to the duplication work, there is \$35.6 million budgeted this year for track infrastructure work between the Gold Coast and Beenleigh. The planning of the proposed extension of the line from Robina to Elanora is well under way. Now that the route of the Tugun bypass has been determined, the rail corridor for the line to Coolangatta can be identified and secured.

The minister took the opportunity to thank the Brisbane City Council for its involvement and support of Brisbane transport. Those of us on the Gold Coast are not so lucky. The Gold Coast City

Council recently announced a public transport levy, and this is something that no other council in Queensland feels is necessary. I am afraid that it is another example of the Gold Coast City Council taking money without providing services.

The Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy spoke of the innovative ways in which this government is working to reduce the cycles of violence, poverty and poor health which plague the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The much-publicised alcohol management plans are one important facet of this plan. Other programs such as illicit drug diversion and getting back to country are working with local communities to offer the support needed to improve lives and break the cycle. As part of this whole-of-government approach, the Department of Communities has funded four healing centres in Cape York and Torres Strait at a cost of \$1.39 million. This service will offer innovative and appropriate responses to families and children who are affected by violence through developing and implementing traditional therapeutic responses.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank the committee staff as well as Hansard for their hard work and assistance during the process.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (12.28 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on the report of Estimates Committee D. I certainly appreciated being involved in this report, and I want to take this short opportunity to reiterate some of the issues I raised during the committee hearing. First, I want to say that there has been a lot of acknowledgment in this House over recent times about the rapid population growth happening in south-east Queensland. That certainly puts a great deal of pressure on our transport network. This also comes back to the capacity of our Department of Transport offices and staff in its transport customer service centres to actually respond to the many requests for assistance, filing and applications that have to be made.

In the Nambour Department of Transport customer service centre there is now a television and lounge chairs. Quite frankly, it seems to me that there has been more money spent in providing televisions and lounge chairs for people to simply wait because the department has not allocated enough staff and resources to make sure that it can provide the services required. I really do have a concern about this. It seems that the Department of Transport is now going down the road of focusing on balancing revenue against the number of staff that it can provide. I thought that the Department of Transport customer service centres were focused on delivering services in a very timely and appropriate manner.

But I have a concern that, when I raised this matter with the Minister for Transport, he did not give a commitment that he would respond to increasing the staffing in many of our customer service centres. I certainly hope that he will again look at this issue and respond in a more appropriate way so that we can have more staff in our customer service centres. It is not much good the government saying, 'We are going to have all of these services provided at our customer service centres' if the government is not also going to have proper staffing there so that the members of the public can receive timely, appropriate and speedy service.

I also reiterate my concern about the lack of planning for the duplication of the Citytrain network between Nambour and Landsborough. Again, this matter was raised with the minister. Instead of saying, 'Yes, we have it in the plan' he simply wanted to focus on the duplication to Landsborough. It is not good enough. If Nambour is going to be part of the Citytrain network, we need to have the plans in place now to be working on this important duplication, because we cannot have a major population growth in south-east Queensland linking to Nambour if we do not have the infrastructure in place.

Without beating around the bush, can I say that the Sunbus service on the Sunshine Coast is simply unacceptable. But again, the government holds all the cards and it is the only one that can fix this matter and improve the service delivery. We have also heard about the new ticketing system on the Sunshine Coast as a result of the new transport programs. I think that we have a long way to go in improving this system. I understand that at the moment the new ticketing system does not allow for the pre-purchase of a one-way ticket as that ticket expires two hours after purchase. A number of constituents have come to see me to say that they are really concerned that they do not have the capacity to actually purchase the ticket and then get on the public transport network. I have written to the minister about this matter and I look forward to his response to see if he is prepared or able to change the system so that we do not have this two-hour cut-off.

I note that the Minister for Local Government spoke at length during the hearing and also again this morning in the chamber about water tanks. We have been speaking about rainwater tanks for at least the six years that I have been in parliament. I can recall when the Speaker allowed us to put a rainwater tank and water filtering systems on display on the Speaker's green. I believe that it is high time that the government actually took some leadership on the issue of water. During this week in parliament we have heard a lot about the energy crisis in Queensland. I put on record my concern that water is going to be the next major crisis facing Queensland, especially south-east Queensland where we have such a significant population growth.

What is wrong with the state government providing some incentive to have rainwater tanks installed in south-east Queensland? Recently we have heard in the media that if we have an energy

crisis we are going to call on the major unit holders in the Brisbane CBD to start their generators to put some energy back into the electricity grid. Why can we not have the state government lead by example in relation to rainwater tanks and give incentives to people to put in rainwater tanks so that when we have a problem, the rainwater tanks are there? I do not want to see a situation arise in two or three years time when we have a government saying, 'Let us congratulate the government on responding to the water crisis by doing this and this.' It is time for the government to respond now by providing incentives to people in south-east Queensland to install rainwater tanks. I am sick and tired of having ministers coming in and giving all the excuses under the sun for why rainwater tanks are not appropriate and all the technical reasons. I certainly believe that if there is a will, a way can be found.

In the short amount of time that I have left I also want to say that I really did appreciate the great effort that our support staff provided to the committee during the hearing. I thank the ministers and their departmental staff for being involved in the estimates committee process. I certainly believe that, because we do not have an upper house or any other house of review in Queensland, the estimates committee process is a great opportunity to question ministers and to focus on issues. Through this process, members of parliament from right across the political spectrum are able to question the ministers and are able to put pressure on the senior departmental staff. The estimates committee process has a very important role to play in the politics in Queensland and I commend the process. I commend the report to the House.

Hon. E.A. CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (12.33 p.m.): Before I begin, I would like to table a non-conforming petition. I would like to thank the members of Estimates Committee D for their efforts. The estimates process is an excellent opportunity for an in-depth look at the work of every portfolio. I was particularly satisfied to see that the committee was as pleased as I am with the progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy as a stand-alone portfolio. The committee tabled no statement of reservations. However, at this stage I would like to acknowledge the statements made by the member for Gregory. I have taken on board everything that he said and I would also like to thank him for his support.

The fact that there is no statement of reservation is obviously recognition of the fact that the portfolio is turning its attention to where it is needed the most. We are shifting the focus of this department from service delivery to policy and a whole-of-government coordination. The issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders are far wider than can be encompassed in one portfolio. Issues in remote, rural regional and urban areas cover everything from housing to health and employment to education. That is why those needs are best dealt with by the experts.

The 2004-05 Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy core budget is \$54.7 million. Our role is to take a strategic look at what is being provided—what services, strategies and policies are already in place—and ensure that they work together to deliver the best results. We have learned from the past and we are working with all the bodies and the many people involved to work towards a strong future. Partnerships Queensland will be the integrated framework to achieve this vision. This framework is currently being developed and will tie in the very important strategies already making changes in Queensland. These include the state government's long-term planning framework—the 10-year partnership—and Meeting Challenges, Making Choices, the Queensland government's response to the Cape York Justice Study.

The estimates committee was updated on some of the many moves that this department and this government is making in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure that indigenous people have the same opportunities as all other Queenslanders. These programs include everything from developing and implementing alcohol management plans where they are needed the most to funding for cultural celebrations. I informed the committee of the many measures in place to support the communities where alcohol management plans are in place, the work of the 44 community justice groups around the state, and the work of the government champions and the negotiation tables.

The Cape York Strategy Unit, which is funded by this department, is another key government area. The unit plays an important role in facilitating and promoting relationships between Queensland and Australian government officers as well as between the government and the community. This unit, which has about 10 officers from both the state and federal governments, demonstrates the ways in which we are working together to build a united approach to program development and service delivery between the community and the government.

This portfolio makes every aspect of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people's lives its business, but it is taking the long-term approach that is needed to find ongoing solutions to historical problems. It is time to make a difference. Again, I thank the members of Estimates Committee D for their involvement and I thank the staff of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy for their work in preparing for estimates and for their commitment to our vision.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.36 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak in regard to Estimates Committee D. Firstly, I want to thank the parliamentary staff who supported our committee and the departmental staff who also attended. In regard to the Main Roads and Transport budgets—and first of all in relation to Main Roads—we have to say, 'Don't just judge this government by

what it says that it is doing, but what it is actually doing.' In this budget, what we have seen has not in real terms been an increase in spending on roads. When we take into account that last year \$35 million was underspent in the capital works budget and that has been rolled into this budget, we find out that the increase is actually neutral compared to last year's budget. That is when we consider actual spending against the budgeted spending for this year.

I want to refer to spending on roads as a proportion of the overall budget. Once again, this government is quick to say what it is doing in regard to infrastructure, but the actual reality of what it is doing is very different. The government talked a lot in this budget about investing in infrastructure, yet in real terms infrastructure spending in this budget has fallen to only 20 per cent of the budget. Six years ago, under a National-Liberal coalition government, nearly 28 per cent of the budget was spent on infrastructure.

This issue is extremely significant because if the government is going to sustain growth and sustain jobs as well as take into account the livability issues in our state, the government has to put the investment into the appropriate infrastructure. Yet this government has increasingly gone to the recurrent budget. It has taken its eye off the ball in regard to infrastructure. We have seen that with the electricity industry. It is interesting to note that this minister, in fact, presided over the Energy portfolio and now the government cannot work out why it suddenly has a problem. It is because the government simply does not invest in infrastructure in a timely way until it bites everybody on the face.

The matter of roads funding as a proportion of that capital works budget is extremely interesting. Over six years ago, something like nearly 24 per cent of the capital works budget was being spent on Main Roads. Under this Labor government, that spending has now fallen down to under 14 per cent. It is interesting to see where the Labor government's real focus is.

In this budget there are a number of very good announcements about future roadworks, which I have welcomed, certainly in my own electorate. But we note that the majority of these new roadworks are not within this term of government. They go into the next term of government. It has put these projects out another four or five years. One could say cynically that that is because it is another election cycle, and I would say that is correct. It is also because there has been a lack of consistency and capacity within these departments.

I have been talking to engineers in this state, and they tell me that it would have been good if there was consistency of work and a build-up of work whereby they were able to put on young apprentices or bring on new graduates so that they had trained personnel in these areas. One of the great concerns we are seeing in construction in this state is that, because of a lack of infrastructure spend and consistent work in the last six years, there simply has not been corresponding training and opportunity for graduates. Those engineers are not there. In four or five years, as the construction companies are being asked to come on line and bid for that work, we will see a situation that has been contributed to by government because of the lack of consistency in infrastructure spend. It is bad planning, it is bad government and it is bad for people who are trying to get out of gridlock when they need those roads now. This is not an extraordinary situation. This is not a crisis that just happened, as the government keeps trying to claim in relation to the electricity industry; it is something that was foreseeable. Now the government is in catch-up mode.

I turn to other issues in the budget. The minister also revealed under questioning that \$400,000 allocated from the Smart State Building Fund is to be paid back as a result of the reforms to be implemented within the rail system. But he was unable to indicate any projections of the savings that are to be achieved as a result of these reforms so that the people of Queensland, in particular rail workers, can have an appreciation of the impact of these as-yet-unspecified reforms. That clearly is not good enough.

We also see that the Travelsafe Committee's recommendations about a trial of drug impairment to be assessed by police have not been taken up by this government. It must be noted that this is a significant issue on which we disagree with the government. I also refer to the 'secret state' agenda with regard to how speed camera revenue is being allocated. Still the government has not outlined on a detailed basis where all this funding from speed cameras is going.

Time expired.

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (12.42 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the debate in consideration of Estimates Committee D's report—committee hearings for the portfolios of Main Roads and Transport, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Local Government, Planning and Women. These hearings provide for a detailed examination of the proposed expenditure identified by the budget papers. The hearings require evidence and questioning of the relevant minister and departments by the committee and the parliament for the purposes of increased accountability.

This was my fourth estimates committee attendance since my election to this place. I am, as always, impressed by the hard work of everybody involved in the process. I would like to thank in particular the chair, Mr Robert Poole, the member for Gaven, for his leadership, and my fellow

committee members, and the committee and parliamentary staff for their hard work, always undertaken with good humour.

Of special note is the preparation by ministers and their departmental and ministerial staff. Their work for the estimates process is extensive and achieved sometimes under onerous time frames. After all, the business of running large departments continues unabated, despite the additional workload the estimates process entails. So I thank them for their efforts and their outcomes.

With respect to the individual committees, I would like to acknowledge the detailed information available from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Transport and Main Roads are of critical importance to the electorate of Aspley. All roads lead through Aspley, which is the gateway to Brisbane. So infrastructure plans in both the greater and inner Brisbane areas have real impact on my communities. Demands for new roads, wider roads and faster routes are part of responding to a south-east Queensland population boom. But those types of demand create their own unique problems in my electorate. It is easy to make political mileage by demanding quick-fix solutions to traffic problems. But in an electorate such as mine, one man's heaven is another man's hell. More traffic, more pollution, more noise and the encroachment of roads on residential areas cause at times a real reduced quality of life for many of my residents. Previously quick trips to the shop, letting your kids ride safely to school and access out of usually quiet local streets are all affected. So detailed information during the estimates process provides me, the parliament, the people of my electorate and the people of Queensland with the means to consider the impact on everybody.

I also thank both the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women and the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy for their detailed responses. Minister Clark's compassion and determination in relation to her portfolio are, in my view, exceptional. Her specific focus on building respectful, cooperative relationships and real community capacity building is, I am confident, going to make a real difference as these communities work to save lives, family and culture. I, as always, appreciated the member for Gregory's shared commitment and advocacy in his shadow ministry.

Minister Boyle provided extensive information across her portfolios. The news on planning in the south-east corner is of critical importance to my constituency. The minister demonstrated her vast knowledge of the matters of local government and planning to the benefit of the committee, and I thank her for that. Of course, her appointment as the Minister for Women is one I am on the record as saying was an inspired one by the Premier. The portfolio of Women is about making a real difference to all women and the communities that support and depend upon them. The challenges of this portfolio are extensive. What we as individuals experience as women does not necessarily reflect the challenges and opportunities that face the woman next door to us. As the portfolio requires a minister committed to all women, diverse and different as they are, Minister Boyle is a great observer of women, and her commitment to making a real difference to women was evident in her estimates answers. I particularly thank her for that. With those comments I would like to say thank you to all involved. I commend the committee's report to the House.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Fraser): Order! Before calling the member for Moggill, I recognise the presence in the gallery of the principal, school captains, vice-captains and the president of the student council of Earnshaw State College in the electorate of Nudgee, in particular school captain Fiona Roberts, the daughter of the member for Nudgee.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (12.46 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee D. At the outset I record my thanks to the member for Gaven for his very professional chairing of the committee. My remarks will be confined to the area of transport, because that was the only portion I was present for. I also record my thanks to the minister, who answered questions directly and in a very parliamentary type manner. I appreciated that very much.

I reinforce the words of the member for Maroochydore in stressing the issue of drug-driving. Drug-driving is an extensive problem. There have been some pretty high-profile cases. I think Luke Harrop was one. It is a concern to think that there is a large number of people out there drug-driving—perhaps even more than are alcohol affected. I would urge the minister to accept the Travelsafe Committee's recommendation and to look at other ways of dealing with this problem.

I refer to the issue of delays in young people getting drivers licence tests. In some of the driving centres it is quite difficult. We expect a lot of young people on the roads. It is only reasonable that we should be fair to them.

During the estimates committee hearing I raised with the minister the issue of registration of rental vehicles. He said that he would look into one particular matter. Perhaps we might get an answer in relation to rental vehicles being registered in Victoria but used extensively here. Likewise, the minister said he would have to check the time limits for students and non-residents of Australia driving on overseas licences. I know that temporary visa doctors can be here for up to four years. I think it is important that we maintain the standards of drivers on our roads.

The matter of Caloundra Road was discussed. The minister pointed out that it is in the RIP. Caloundra Road is in an appalling state, not being four lanes from Petrie Avenue to the Bruce Highway.

This is the major road into Caloundra and the southern end of the Sunshine Coast from the Bruce Highway. The idea that the people of Caloundra have to wait until 2009-10 for this double-laning of Caloundra Road is totally unacceptable. It shows that in terms of roads this government cannot plan them, cannot develop them and cannot deliver them where they are badly needed. This road is an economic essential to Caloundra and for the Sunshine Coast. Queensland does not end at the rim of Brisbane.

Despite the great efforts of SUNROC in planning to diversify the regional economy, this neglect is impeding the development of the Sunshine Coast. The people of Caloundra deserve better and they deserve an explanation of why they are such a low priority—2010 for a road that should have been done years ago.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Dr FLEGG: There is enormous growth up there and the roads have not kept up with it. Speaking of roads that need attention, we are going to talk about Moggill Road. The minister made a comment in *Hansard* that there are some significant indications in relation to the Marshall Lane-Centenary on ramp. Neither I nor anyone else locally is aware of what that project is or what that means. So I have put in a request to the minister's office to see if that can be clarified. I will look forward to a response. It may be a reference to the Kenmore bypass, but I am not sure.

Moggill Road is a goat track that was designed prior to the time of extensive use of motor vehicles. It now has thousands of cars per day travelling along the road—20,000 cars per day heading towards Kenmore, 33,000 cars per day leaving Kenmore on what is essentially a one-lane road through Kenmore. Right the way through Bellbowrie, Moggill Road has a speed limit of 70 kilometres through a closely settled suburban area where everyone else in a suburban area gets a speed limit of 60 kilometres.

Mr Lucas: Cameron Thompson will sort it out.

Dr FLEGG: The minister would not want 70 kilometres as the speed limit in his residential area. It has a series of intersections that are bad, that do not have left-hand turn lanes, such as Livesay Road, Sugars Road, Mount Crosby Road, Moggill Road—

Time expired.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (12.51 p.m.): I want to speak initially about the TransLink system, and I thank the minister for his response to the letter I wrote to him. The TransLink system extends throughout south-east Queensland and west to Helidon station. I wrote about the need to extend that to Toowoomba. What happens is a bus will leave from Toowoomba and go down to Rosewood, then there is a rail-bus link that goes down to Helidon, and then there is a rail-bus link which goes from Helidon to Rosewood. The integrated ticketing system is an excellent system that allows people to use ferries, trains and other modes of public transport with the one ticket. For many people from Toowoomba who want to travel to Brisbane to see relations or for medical services, it gives them that wonderful opportunity. I know the minister has left an option open to examine that in the future, and I thank him for that.

Secondly, I want to talk about plane services to Toowoomba. I commend the Toowoomba City Council for the efforts it has made to obtain plane services from Toowoomba directly to Brisbane airport to link up with interstate services and also for a service that flies from western Queensland, from Roma, over the top of Toowoomba to be able to land in Toowoomba on its way to Brisbane and return.

Most people from out west do business in one shape or form with Toowoomba. It is the capital city of the south-west. Many have children at the eight boarding schools in Toowoomba or children at the University of Southern Queensland. Many of them are dealing with lawyers, accountants, bankers and agribusinesses in the city so it is important for them to be able to do business with the convenience of a plane service. It seems so silly to have planes flying over the top of Toowoomba and not be able to land there. Even if we had a plane service a couple of days of the week—maybe Mondays and Fridays.

The other important thing about a plane link to Toowoomba is in the attraction of business. The economic development department of the Toowoomba City Council has worked hard to attract businesses to our city. When people come from interstate and look at establishing a factory or a manufacturing business or some type of business in our city or near our city, they want to know that they have the convenience of going to the Brisbane airport and being able to get onto a commuter plane or some service so they can come directly here.

Mr Lucas: One of the problems with Toowoomba airport, though, is it is constrained in size.

Mr HORAN: The council is prepared to work in, particularly with regards to the terminal. It is prepared to make that comfortable and a very pleasant place to stop over. I understand the concern about particular planes due to the size of the airport runway, but they are prepared to look at the width of the strip as well. There is full cooperation from the council. I would certainly urge the minister to give every consideration to that. It would make an enormous difference. I know there are companies looking at the possibility of a service from Sydney to Toowoomba.

Finally, I want to speak about the second range crossing. This has been mooted for so long. Originally the federal government said that it would start building it in the year 2007. I know approximately \$30 million—maybe one or two million more than that—has been apportioned by the federal government and I understand most of that has been provided. About \$2 million has been used to complete the final design details of the second range crossing, and the balance has been used to purchase properties in the corridor which were identified some time ago.

The role of the state government is to establish priorities. What concerns us in Toowoomba is the massive growth that is occurring in south-east Queensland. Our road is very important to us and to the economy of the state because it is the heaviest freight carrying road in Australia. As the highway comes through Toowoomba on James Street, the trucks have to traverse some 16 sets of traffic lights. There is of the order of 3,000 or more trucks out of the 20,000-plus vehicles that go up the range every day, and most of those trucks are B-doubles. It has done enormous damage to the amenity of our city but, more importantly, to the economy of Australia and south-east Queensland.

It should be a priority road, and it is important that priority is pushed for by the state government. There are two partners in this—the state government in the area of priority and the state government who is responsible for its construction when the funds come through. The other task is for us to keep pushing the federal government to get these funds through. It may have to be a special project because of the urgent needs of other roads like the Ipswich Motorway, which we certainly recognise. I would call on the minister to give us support in getting the priority of this road right up to the top so this most important national road can become a second range highway for the convenience of our city.

Time expired.

Hon. P.T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (12.56 p.m.): I might deal with the issues that have been raised in good faith by the member for Toowoomba South. I will have a look at the plane services in Toowoomba. The length of the runway is an issue for long distance flights. Large planes are needed for these flights and whether that can be safely accommodated there I do not know, but we will have a look at that.

I congratulate the Toowoomba community on its attitude in relation to the second range crossing. It is very vigorous in its advocacy for a second range crossing, and I do not blame it at all for that. It is a good idea. But it has also been quite mature and sensible in the debate because there is a realisation that, if the Ipswich Motorway is not fixed, it does not matter much in terms of whether people are going to or from Toowoomba if they cannot get through that part as well. That is why I have been so forthright in pushing the federal government to do something about the Ipswich Motorway. Notwithstanding the fact that Cameron Thompson is doing his best to stuff everybody up, we hope we can get a commitment from them. We have a commitment from the Latham opposition to fix the Ipswich Motorway. When we have fixed that and cleared other bottlenecks such as the Gatton bypass—that project was well done and I thank the Commonwealth for that—we then have the question of the second range crossing. It will have to be a toll road but I am told that economically it will probably be cheaper for trucks to go on the toll road and around the back of Wellcamp.

The state government has not been resting on its laurels. We have not got all the money in this most recent AusLink round from the Commonwealth for the land acquisitions for the corridor. We have written to them about that. They ought to do that. They have been a bit naughty in not doing that. We have also identified the corridor for the Gowrie to Grandchester rail line. That will also be important. The member raised the issue of TransLink not being in Toowoomba, and I know the member for Toowoomba North has raised it with me as well. I am sympathetic to that. I am a bit of a Toowoomba fan, I have to say. I got one of my university degrees from the University of Southern Queensland. I am a fan of the great city that it is. I think ultimately the lifestyle that it offers will be very well linked with Brisbane where we can get proper rail access up there and link it in with the south-east Queensland public transport world. So please be aware that is something that is a priority to me.

The member for Nicklin raised a number of matters including duplicating the rail line between Landsborough and Nambour. That is a good idea, and I am not disputing that at all, but one needs to be mature and sensible about this fact: we will commit the funds to duplicate the line to Landsborough. Again, what would be the point if you had it duplicated from Landsborough to Nambour and then went back on a single track between Nambour and Caboolture? There would be no point in doing that whatsoever. We have to be sensible about this.

There is a significant amount of money involved, but I am glad to say that the budget is a good budget for rail and the outlook for rail is good in the future. We understand that the future for Queensland Rail is not Queensland Rail in the past; it will be Queensland Rail in the future and it will be grown. It will be grown in areas such as on the Sunshine Coast with the CAMCOS corridor study.

The member for Maroochydore might want to make her little points about decisions here and infrastructure there. The decisions that I deal with now are decisions that were made 20 years ago, and decisions that I make now are decisions that will matter 20, 30 and 40 years into the future. That is the nature of infrastructure portfolios. Things cannot be done in two seconds and things cannot be wrecked

in two seconds. People need to spend time, effort and planning on this, and that is what I am trying to do in relation to our important road infrastructure needs.

Back to more general things, the 2004-05 budget consists of \$1.7 billion for Queensland Transport and \$2.3 billion for the Department of Main Roads, including \$1.3 billion for regional roadworks, and operations in corporate and technical services. It also contains \$1.1 billion in new money for roads and transport over four years, which is on top of the \$951 million provided since December 2003.

This is a government that recognises the need to increase spending on our roads and transport network. One only had to look recently at the Road Solution report in the *Courier-Mail*. Here it is. It is actually quite a good contribution to the debate that they made in this regard. It can be seen from that that Queensland's average annual spend on our roads is \$228.90 per head, more than twice Victoria's spend of \$89.20. That is the problem that confronts us in Queensland. We are spending a lot on our roads and we need to spend more. I am the first to concede that we need to spend even more. The *Courier-Mail* report—not me—notes the increases in our budget this year. But it is a challenge when Victoria, a densely populated state, can spend less than half of what we spend. We have to spend more. I do not mind that in the sense that I am proud that we have a decentralised state because it will lead to economic success in the future that we are not all huddled into a little corner of the state like they are in Western Australia, but it is a challenge for us in terms of infrastructure.

The members opposite want to talk about road funding and the federal government want a pat on the back for AusLink. I have a lot more to say, but time has escaped me.

Report adopted.

Sitting suspended from 1.02 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Wallace): I would like to draw the House's attention to teachers and students from Lake Clarendon State School in the electorate of Lockyer and welcome them to the parliament.

Estimates Committee E

Report

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Wallace): Order! The question is—

That the report of Estimates Committee E be adopted.

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (2.01 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in relation to the report of Estimates Committee E which met on 21 July 2004 to inquire into expenditure for the portfolio areas of Health, Emergency Services, Communities, Disability Services and Seniors. At the outset I would like to thank the three ministers involved for their cooperation and the detailed responses they provided: the Minister for Health, Gordon Nuttall; the Minister for Emergency Services, Chris Cummins; and the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, Warren Pitt. I would also like to extend my thanks to their ministerial staff and their departmental staff for the highly detailed research work and follow-up work which was part of the process.

I would particularly like to thank the research director of Estimates Committee E, Deborah Jeffrey, and the executive assistant, Michelle Benham, who put in an enormous effort. To the extent that the committee's proceedings ran smoothly and its efforts were regarded as being professionally conducted, I think they deserve the credit. Anything that went wrong was undoubtedly my fault. I would also like to thank my fellow committee members: the deputy chair and member for Cunningham, Stuart Copeland; the member for Greenslopes, Gary Fenlon; the member for Southport, Peter Lawlor; the member for Indooroopilly, Ronan Lee; the member for Gladstone, Liz Cunningham; and the member for Moggill, Dr Bruce Flegg.

There was a very high degree of cooperation, courtesy and consensus in the proceedings of the committee. I think it is something that is simply not remarked upon enough that the proceedings of this parliament, whether they be the normal proceedings in the chamber or estimates proceedings, are overwhelmingly marked by courtesy and cooperation. I think we are all unfairly characterised on many occasions as being at each other's throats when, in fact, there is a great deal of consensus and work for the common good which goes on. That is not to say, of course, that the estimates committee proceedings did not have some moments of high drama and anxiety and a little bit of rowdy behaviour, but there was certainly nothing that required anyone being sin-binned.

Ms Jarratt interjected.

Mr McNAMARA: No. The deputy chair of the committee particularly conducted himself with a great degree of decorum throughout. Taking that as an example, the honourable member for Charters Towers, Mr Knuth, joined us at one point when the Disabilities expenditures were being examined as he is the shadow minister. I recall one exchange between him and the minister which ran along the lines of

'Great answer, Minister'. There is a very refreshing, open and honest appraisal from a shadow minister of how the minister is responding to questions that are being asked of him. Again, I think that that sort of open, honest and warm praise from the opposition for the way the government is doing a particular job is worth noting.

I also like to think that the portfolio areas which were inquired into are among the most important that the government provides to the people of Queensland—Health, Disability Services, Seniors, Communities and Emergency Services. They are all vital areas. Certainly I know that in my electorate of Hervey Bay people are vitally concerned about those areas. Health in particular is a huge issue. It is an enormous part of the budget, and it is vitally important to every single Queenslanders. For those members who recall *The Princess Bride*, as the six-fingered man said to the evil Prince Humperdinck, if you haven't got your health, you haven't got anything.

This government is putting more into health than has ever been the case before, with over \$5 billion in the Health portfolio this time around. In my area of the world we are seeing much greater expenditures than ever before. Some of the things which we touched on in the expenditures include a new stroke unit, a new \$5 million building at the Hervey Bay Hospital to provide a new rehabilitation unit, clinics and paediatrics—all wonderful stuff. It will continue, I am sure, in that vein with the minister.

To the extent that the health system does not work, I think it is quite clear from the proceedings of the committee that it comes down purely and simply to a shortage of specialists. Money alone will not fix this. Until the specialist colleges are either brought to heel and forced to allow more people to become specialists or we come up with a new way of doing it we are always going to have massive shortages. In Queensland we have some 56 ophthalmologists statewide, of whom only two get the bulk of their income from working in the public sector. If all 56 of the ophthalmologists moved to Hervey Bay they could not do all the work that is required. I commend the report to the House.

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (2.06 p.m.): Can I join with the chairman of this committee in thanking all the staff who were involved in assisting us with our deliberations, and also all of the members who took part on the committee. This was also probably a little bit of a complicated committee because we did have a number of visiting members, as the chair referred to—the members for Hinchinbrook, Charters Towers and Burdekin. It did take some cooperation, and we thank the committee for their assistance in allowing those members to join us.

I think it was last year that the member for Nicklin commented on how many public servants were in attendance to support the minister, and I remarked at the time that that is because they know where all the problems are, and if we stumble across them they can help the minister out. It is a sign of how much work does go in to preparing for estimates, both on behalf of the government and on behalf of opposition members and other non-government members. I think it gives both the minister and the shadow minister an opportunity to get right across the portfolio areas and the issues that we are discussing.

An issue that did emerge during the committee process was that of waste management. There have been a number of attempts, including the statement by the minister this week, to try to deflect blame on to rogue contractors or unhappy contractors or old photos and all sorts of things, but the minister did not say in his statement to the parliament on Tuesday when we found that an incident had occurred in Cairns about a fortnight ago that the Cairns Hospital actually admitted that they had made a mistake.

With this issue I am not trying to point fingers at anyone; I simply want to make sure that the waste disposal procedures that are taking place in Queensland Health not only comply with the law but are also in accordance with the expectations of the Queensland public. If the EPA regulation that covers it says that any waste that is saturated with, or containing, free-flowing blood or body fluids—and only that—is classified as clinical waste, that leaves an awful lot of stuff that can be disposed of as general waste. I look forward to the results of the audit that the Minister for Health is undertaking, and also an examination of the appropriateness of the regulation that currently governs that area.

It was quite difficult to get through many questions in the estimates process. I think I got through about a quarter of the questions I had prepared, so there were a lot of areas that I would have liked to have got to that I did not get to. There were clearly differences of opinion between members questioning and some of the ministers. But, as the chair said, the proceedings were courteous and certainly cordial. Regardless of the differences of opinion, we were able to go through those questions. There were a lot of areas that I would have liked to have explored that I simply did not get to. I will agree to disagree with the minister on the problem of getting on the waiting lists. The problem of actually accessing specialists is a real one. We need to be able to monitor those people who are waiting to see specialists.

I would like to say a lot more about health but I am going to diverge from it because of an emerging problem in my electorate. This committee also looked at the area of disabilities. I thank the minister for the commitment to look at the transferring of the office of DSQ from Ipswich to Toowoomba. I also implore him to continue trying to help the Endeavour Foundation as best he possibly can. The member for Toowoomba South rose last night and spoke about the importance of the Endeavour Foundation to Toowoomba. On Saturday we heard that there will be the closure of the Endeavour

Foundation farm and nursery in Toowoomba, both in my electorate, which provide a service for people right across Toowoomba and the Darling Downs. We simply will not be able to survive in Toowoomba without the support the Endeavour Foundation gives to people with disabilities. I am grateful for the commitment that the minister gave yesterday in a statement to parliament to continue helping the Endeavour Foundation. I certainly will continue to work with the minister and with all of the members of parliament who will be affected by the difficulties facing the Endeavour Foundation. There are a number of facilities right around the state, not just in Toowoomba. We hope to see a continuation of the services that are so vital to providing a fulfilling life for those people who are working in those facilities.

I met with the member for Toowoomba South and the chair of the Endeavour Foundation, Peter Short. I was impressed by Peter Short's commitment and his very practical and commonsense approach to this issue. I know Mr Short will be working hard with his colleagues to try to address the difficult circumstances that the Endeavour Foundation finds itself in. I certainly hope that we are able to work together to achieve a good outcome, most importantly for those people who access those services. It is an important issue and I thought that I should take today's opportunity to actually raise it during this debate.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.11 p.m.) It is a pleasure to rise to speak on this debate in relation to the estimates for 2004-05. This is a very important function of this parliament in that it is the only organ within this parliament that deals with the estimates process. It was interesting recently, in a visit of the Queensland Public Accounts Committee to Victoria, to see first-hand the very different approach where you have one committee with an extremely large workload dealing with that very important process. We have that function spread across this entire parliament, as it were. It is a process which allows every backbencher to engage in one way or another in that process. It is a very valuable and important process because it has the fundamental role of scrutiny of the forward estimates for the next year and the consideration of appropriation.

This is a function that is carried out very well and in a very constructive way across this parliament. This committee was certainly a reflection of that in looking at the estimates for Health, Emergency Services and Communities and Disability Services. The ministers provided a very sound account of their estimates for the coming year and I certainly congratulate those who participated from a departmental level in assisting with that information.

It is a very good process because the people who work all year round in these departments have the opportunity to see the fundamental point of accountability in the sense that they actually get down here to directly answer to an organ of this parliament. That is an extremely healthy approach in terms of the democratic processes in this state. Indeed, I know how much work goes into the preparation of these estimates at a departmental level. That is a great exercise in its own right because those isometrics, as it were, for those departmental people are very good in terms of checking and re-checking what they are about and being able to properly explain that they have a sound foundation for making those budget estimates.

The Health estimates show that this state is on track to take forward the advances that have already been put in place over the past decade, in particular by way of the capital works program. It was very stimulating for me to be able to attend last night the launch of Queensland's strategic plan which highlighted exactly what these estimates are about. At the launch last night it was said by the minister and the Premier that the government had built the new hospitals, had put in place so much of the capital, and this is now about essentially bringing the people together to make the entire system work better. This indeed is a very people focused and service delivery focused budget estimate for the coming year.

The concept of a healthier Queensland is fundamental to this. The Health Minister talks about an awareness, for example, in relation to elderly people who have sight problems who will then have other health problems because they have falls. It is certainly a magnificent approach to treat our patients in the system in this holistic way. It is the only way to make sure that we do have a healthier Queensland.

The other ministers also conducted themselves very well. Changes in departments in the Communities area, in particular, is going to create great challenges and the attention to staff training and departmental staffing issues in this context is a very important focus. That is what is going to be the most important thing for the coming year.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (2.16 p.m.): I rise to speak on Emergency Services. I would like to acknowledge the great work that is done by the fire brigades and ambulances in the state. Not only do we have fire brigades and ambulances involved in emergency services, we have also got the SES, the Coast Guard, the Rural Fire Brigades and Life Savers. The Department of Emergency Services is not just made up of people who have a paid position; but also by a very large group of volunteers. I think this is commendable. You do not see too many volunteers in this day offering their services in such a professional way. I would like to acknowledge them as much as anybody. Without those services Queensland would be at a major loss and it would cost us a hell of a lot more to actually operate the state in so many critical areas.

One of the issues I was concerned about, and I raised with the minister during the period of the estimates, was when he talked about the fact that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service never charges for any motor vehicle accident where an extraction service is provided and certainly that will continue. As a matter of reviewing the policy, it has also addressed the need to look at not charging for what could be deemed as a minor motor vehicle situation where there is a small amount of clean-up work to be done.

I raised the particular situation with the minister at the time of a young person who was driving a Hi-lux utility and the utility rolled over as a result of him avoiding a dog. Unfortunately somebody rang the 000 number, I suppose with the best intent, and the fire brigade turned up. He was not aware that that had happened. He went to ring the police to make sure that he was doing the right thing. As a result he was charged \$420. Basically, the fire brigade turned up, put four witch's hats down, spent an hour there and sent him a bill for some \$420.

I wrote a letter to the minister on 23 July. I have received no response. The fellow has the invoice. I had to write to the northern region QRFS on 12 July to ensure that he did not face a situation where he was in breach of the payment of that charge.

I raised this issue in estimates on 21 July but, to date, I have heard nothing. There has been no response. I am not quite sure what the minister intended. It is not a good situation as far as that young person is concerned. He is still wondering whether he is going to have to pay this \$420. It is a pity the minister is not here. I think he will turn up later. If I do not hear anything from him in the next week I will have to raise the issue with him once again. The minister had plenty of bits of paper with him on the day that he read from. I am wondering whether he has addressed this issue. It is extremely important as far as this young person is concerned.

There is also another issue to address in terms of the rural fire brigade. That is an intrinsic group that provide a great service in many areas of Queensland during times of bushfires. I know of a group that has an Isuzu NPR 300. It is a four-wheel drive that has five forward gears. It is a four-cylinder diesel with a 4.5 litre capacity motor. The gross vehicle mass weight is 6.2 tonnes. It can carry 1,800 kilograms of water, equipment and personnel. It is a great little vehicle. There is no question about that.

The problem with this vehicle is that its first gear is geared too high to go up steep slopes. As a consequence, that group has to be very careful where they go. They had an older vehicle that could get through these areas that they have to go to from time to time when dealing with a rural fire. But, unfortunately, this vehicle is totally inadequate as far as carrying the water that is necessary and getting to areas where it could be critical to put out a fire and save lives. This vehicle could endanger the lives of that group. If they attempted to go up a slope in the process of putting out a fire they could endanger their lives.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (2.22 p.m.): I am delighted to rise in the House today in support of the report of Estimates Committee E which examined the portfolio areas of Health, Emergency Services, Communities, Disability Services and Seniors. I join with the other members of the committee in recording my appreciation for the efforts of not only our committee chair, the member for Hervey Bay, but also my parliamentary colleagues on the committee. I also want to record my thanks, which are due, to the committee staff who I know work exceptionally hard to make the committee function and run smoothly.

Ministers Nuttall, Cummins and Pitt as well as their ministerial and departmental staff should also be acknowledged for their efforts before and also during the committee meeting. I am always quite impressed by the lengths that government departments go to to ensure that they can answer our questions in committee meetings. I think we should acknowledge that we do not always make it particularly easy for them. We often ask questions that are quite technical and difficult to answer. In the case of Estimates Committee E, I thought all questions were answered adequately and on the spot.

We examined three principal portfolio areas, but I would like to mainly confine my comments today to the area of health. Queensland has a wonderful Department of Health with a budget annually of around \$5 billion. We deliver an exceptionally extensive range of health services to Queenslanders through over 200 acute care facilities, as well as 570 non-inpatient services working the areas of mental health, oral health, community health and pathology services.

The committee heard that the priorities for the department throughout the 2004-05 budgetary year are going to include: establishment of a 24-hour health hotline which will provide access to health information and advice about health services; funding of four pilot bulk-billing general practice clinics which will be located near public hospital emergency clinics; support for programs which focus on the prevention of stroke and the treatment of stroke victims; increased funding to support cardiac services and cancer care; funds for early hearing screening for newborn babies through enhanced investigation; establishment of a birthing centre on the Gold Coast; and establishment of mobile dental teams to deliver extra treatments in rural and also remote regions.

The health care of Queenslanders is a priority of this Queensland state government. The government has worked extremely hard to make sure that Queensland has one of the best health care

systems in the world. I think, though, that it is worth noting that this stands in stark contrast to the attitude of the federal Liberal-National Party government which has, since 1996, presided I believe over a scandalous decline in the national rate of Medicare bulk-billing.

While in Queensland we are working hard to develop a wonderful health care system, the actions of the federal government since 2000 have seen a decline in bulk-billing in my community of around 25 per cent of all GP visits. In 2000, almost three in four visits to a GP were bulk-billed. That rate has now dropped well below 50 per cent. I think it is unacceptable and it is a sign of poor federal government policy towards the health care system.

A government member interjected.

Mr LEE: I am not quite sure what the federal member for Ryan is doing about it. I have to say that he cannot be doing much if 25 per cent of all GP visits that used to be bulk-billed are not being bulk-billed anymore.

Oral health care is a telling example. I do not think there is any better indicator of the wellbeing of a community than by looking at people's teeth. More or less, the better off a community is the better the state of that community's teeth. The federal government withdrew funding for dentists to visit primary schools a number of years ago. I am very proud to be part of a government that actually stepped up to the plate and funded this program. We are the only state in Australia that does this. I think it is a great sign.

I think it says a lot about the federal government's attitude towards the health care of Australian school students that it would withdraw funding for dental vans to visit schools. I think it says a lot for the care that this government has taken and the commitment of this government to schoolchildren's dental care that we have actually funded this.

I will finish by making a quite telling point. This policy disgrace is not lost on local schoolkids. I was at a debate recently where a child from Brisbane Boys College said that if he ever had to have an organ donation he hoped that he would receive John Howard's heart. He told the audience that he was looking forward to getting John Howard's heart because at least he knew it was never used before.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (2.27 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak to the report of Estimates Committee E and record my thanks to the chairman of the committee and staff. I will speak only about the health aspects. My thanks go to Health Minister, Gordon Nuttall.

One matter that I want to raise—and I am disappointed the Health Minister is not here to hear it, but I will make sure he hears about it—is that the Mental Health Association of Queensland is tendering to provide mental health services within the community of Queensland. After having different allowances paid in recent years for its Brisbane operation and its Gold Coast operation, it submitted two proposals for funding but was only funded for Brisbane. So, in essence, Queensland Health has totally withdrawn the funding for the Mental Health Association of Queensland's Gold Coast operation.

An amount of less than \$60,000 provided premises and two part-time staff in Gabrielle Savage and Maureen Dehara. They gave far more than their part-time salaries would suggest. They did over and above the call of duty in terms of supporting mental health patients on the Gold Coast. It had 10 support groups for conditions such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia and around 30 community based mental health programs, including seminars such as beyond blue. It provided a walk-in service that would otherwise not be available. This funding was withdrawn with only a few weeks notice. It will end in September and result in the closure of this service, and those patients will be required to attend the Gold Coast Hospital whose mental health services are currently stretched to the limit.

Mr Copeland: Every hospital is stretched to the limit.

Dr FLEGG: Withdrawing a very minor amount of money that was providing a major service to the community in terms of mental health patients on the Gold Coast is a very short-sighted act by Queensland Health. I would appeal to the minister to reverse this decision and care for the community based services on the Gold Coast. Last night we attended the very glossy and slick launch of Health that told us how much it was going to do. It was a bit short of initiatives, but the real test is what it will provide for the people of Queensland. Shutting down a community based mental health service is not providing and not caring for the people of Queensland. We call on the minister—and I am pleased to hear support from the shadow minister for health—to properly provide these sorts of services and not continue the neglect which has characterised his attitude to community mental health services.

In other matters that were dealt with by the committee, funding for the AIDS Council was dealt with in a similar manner to the Mental Health Association of Queensland. What the minister and the department have to understand is that we cannot build up these networks of community support, which are largely staffed by volunteers and which often have high elements of donations outside the community and take many years to build up, and switch them around every three years on a tendering process and expect to maintain the standard of that care in the community. The committee also dealt with the issue of cigarette smoking and bans. Again, there is still no initiative from the government. It

keeps talking about it. It was raised again last night. People are dying in Queensland from environmental tobacco smoke. People are being forced to work in pubs and clubs under unsafe conditions. It is unacceptable. We call on the government to ban smoking in public environments as soon as possible and not continue to delay.

I noticed the difficulty the minister had in answering questions relating to the occupancy of hospitals and the staffing of hospitals. Let me tell him that the basic elements of health are doctors, nurses and beds. If the minister cannot even tell us what the occupancy rate of his beds is, that is like Qantas not knowing how many seats it has on an airline. It is like a person ringing Qantas and saying, 'Have you got a seat on such and such a flight?', and Qantas saying, 'We don't know how many vacant seats we've got.' That is the situation in Queensland hospitals at the moment, and it is not good enough. Likewise, there was no evidence of any monitoring of the performance of overseas trained doctors who are in large numbers in the health system. The minister had no ability to tell us the number of litigation cases against overseas trained doctors.

Time expired.

Hon. C.P. CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (2.32 p.m.): I rise to speak in the estimates reply. Since this record \$658.2 million Emergency Services budget was delivered, I have travelled to every region of the state—some areas more than once—to spread our good news. It has been a busy time handing over new fire and ambulance vehicles, SES flood boats and long service medals to Emergency Services personnel and volunteers alike. Our budget has been very well received by the department's 7,100 full-time and part-time employees and also our 88,000 volunteers right throughout Queensland. During the estimates hearing I was surprised to hear the member for Hinchinbrook's comments about the Rural Fire Service. I want to point out what the member said in parliament on 17 June this year. The *Hansard* states—

The minister would be aware of the high degree of concern amongst rural fire services that they are gradually being consumed by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

To which I responded—

I thought the member opposite said the rural fire brigade was being consumed by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is consuming the rural fire brigade; is that what the member opposite said?

Mr Rowell then said—

That's right.

During the budget estimates committee I said—

As I advised the House on 17 June this year, there is no intention and has been no intention to abolish the Rural Fire Service as was suggested by the member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr Rowell said that he did not say that. 'That is totally incorrect,' he squawked. He continued—

I would like that remark struck off, please. A point of order.

At the end of the day, members can make up their own minds as to whether the member for Hinchinbrook is with it or not.

I also note that in his report the member for Cunningham has called into question our support for rural volunteers. As I said during the estimates hearing and in this House this morning, the Beattie government has continually supported our 44,000 volunteer firefighters in the Rural Fire Service throughout Queensland who are committed to safeguarding our communities. There are 1,575 rural fire brigades that receive funding for personal protective equipment provided at no cost and subsidised firefighting equipment, communications equipment and firefighting appliances. The Beattie government's seventh consecutive record Emergency Services budget—up 8.3 per cent on last year—will continue delivering world-class emergency services to Queenslanders.

In terms of the performance of the member for Cunningham during the estimates hearing, it truly was below par. In fact, he did not ask me a single question. So I believe that if he was auditioning—

Mr Copeland interjected.

Mr CUMMINS: The member is ready to criticise but did not do anything. He just sat there like a stunned mullet. If he were on *Australian Idol*, I do not think Dicko would even be able to give him any points. I do not think Mark Holden would be saying 'touchdown' and even Marcia Hines would go softly on him. The member for Cunningham also claims that it was misleading in terms of how the community ambulance cover would be spent. Let me repeat what I said at the estimates hearing and during the budget, because I want to be very clear on this: the focus of this budget is the provision of \$5.6 million in 2004-05 for the first wave of an additional 240 Queensland Ambulance Service paramedics over three years. This is on top of the 110 paramedics appointed in the 2003-04 financial year. So these extra 250 paramedics are part of the \$35.9 million commitment over three years. I hope that is plain and simple enough for the member opposite to understand.

This boost to paramedic numbers will serve the needs of Australia's fastest growing population, maintain emergency service response times and improve services to rural and remote communities. The Beattie government values its hardworking paramedics. They are the most trusted professionals

out there along with our fires, and they deserve our sincere thanks. As I reported during the estimates process, the response time performance for the QAS for the state in 2002-03 was 66.6 per cent of code 1 cases attended to in less than 10 minutes. In the 2003-04 financial year, this percentage was 66.64 per cent. In the next 12 months the Department of Emergency Services will also continue to focus on reducing the level of risk and impact of emergencies and disasters on our communities. This Emergency Services budget continues the commitment of the Beattie government to achieving a safer community and a better quality of life in Queensland through world-class emergency and disaster services. My department is also continuing its ongoing support to volunteers through a further \$3.3 million for the enhanced emergency services volunteer support package. In closing, I thank the chair of the estimates committee.

Time expired.

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (2.37 p.m.): I want to firstly thank the Minister for Emergency Services for making the effort to meet with me during his visit to Charters Towers to discuss the need for an LAC coordinator as promised previously at the recent budget estimates hearing. It is encouraging to know that we both have the wellbeing of our constituents at heart. In my relatively short time as shadow minister for communities and disability services I have spoken with many constituents regarding many issues relating to the portfolios of Disability Services and Communities. As a shadow minister, I am slowly coming to understand some of the major problems currently facing constituents.

I urge the Minister for Disability Services to work with the Minister for Health in relation to an issue which has been drawn to my attention, as this is a difficult issue which crosses over several portfolios. The current rate per kilometre for the patient transport subsidy is 10c a kilometre. Constituents would like to see this rate increased and the paperwork involved with claiming the subsidy cut drastically. It seems unfair that the elderly and the infirm are expected to run around town and make several trips to hospitals and doctors to claim their 10c per kilometre. I will give the House a quick example of the process these people go through. They get an appointment with a doctor, who refers the patient to a specialist, usually in a metropolitan area. They then go to the hospital and get a form to claim the patient transport subsidy. They then go back to the doctor to get the form signed by the GP. They then have to take the form to the specialist and get the specialist to sign the form and verify treatment clinic visits. They then have to take the form back to the local hospital to submit the claim. There has been no increase in the kilometre rate paid by the patient transport subsidy scheme for years. With petrol costs now at \$1 a litre, I believe that the time has come for the government to reassess the paperwork involved and the rate per kilometre received by claimants.

I would also like to raise an issue that I am sure the minister is familiar with. This is an issue that also crosses into the Justice portfolio. I acknowledge the hard work done by the Adult Guardian, but I need to draw to the attention of the minister the fact that there has been a great deal of disquiet from constituents with regard to some matters involving disabled people who are in the care of the Adult Guardian. I am more than happy to work with the minister and the Adult Guardian to address any areas of concern to ensure the best possible quality of life for those people with disabilities.

On other matters, I have been encouraged by the minister's commitment to provide support and programs for adults and children diagnosed with autism. However, I have a concern in that currently autistic-specific services are available only in Brisbane. If people live outside the capital city and have an autistic child, they have to travel over 1,000 kilometres to access professional services. That makes it terribly difficult for those people who have to travel such long distances with children or family members who require these services. I can only imagine the amount of anxiety that a parent would have to go through just to get a young autistic child to Brisbane to see a specialist, let alone the financial burden involved. The minister has already acknowledged that this is an area that requires attention. I believe that priority should be given to establishing an autistic-specific facility or service in north Queensland as soon as possible.

Respite care is a big issue. I would like to have further discussions with the minister on this matter as he may be aware of the high number per capita of people within the Charters Towers electorate who need respite care. I believe that my electorate needs an emergency respite care centre. I also would like an update on the process of getting EFTPOS facilities in QGAP offices.

Hon. F.W. PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors) (2.41 p.m.): I would like to thank all the members of Estimates Committee E for their contribution to the estimates hearing and also for their report. I firmly believe that my portfolio of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors is one that deserves a large degree of bipartisan support. I thank members on both sides of the House for their demonstration of commitment to assisting our communities and to ensuring a better quality of life for people with a disability. I would also like to acknowledge the Treasurer's commitment to vulnerable Queenslanders through the significant budget increase for Disability Services. This is the largest budget ever delivered for Disability Services with a guarantee of an extra \$285.6 million over four years. My discussions with people with a disability, their families and carers since the release of the budget shows a strong appreciation for the large commitment by the Queensland government to support their needs.

The budget for the new Department of Communities has also provided funding to allow it to work in partnership across government, communities, the non-government sector and the private sector to make a real difference to the lives of Queensland's families. An injection of \$22 million, including ongoing funding of \$15.8 million and \$6.1 million in capital funding for community and youth justice services, is a significant boost for Queensland communities.

I would like to address some of the concerns raised by opposition members during the estimates process. The member for Burdekin asked why the Queensland government did not take up the Commonwealth's partial funding offer to extend travel concessions to Seniors Card holders from other states. I also note that this issue was raised in the estimates report by the member for Cunningham. The answer is simple: it was not a good deal for Queenslanders. The federal government refused to adequately fund the proposal or to commit to funding it beyond 2006. The Queensland government saw this offer for what it was: a pre-election stunt in which Queensland taxpayers would be saddled with the true costs. I ask members to forgive me for believing that the money of Queensland taxpayers should be spent on Queenslanders.

In his estimates report the member for Cunningham also falsely asserted that we had not provided adequate access and resources to assist child care workers. The child care statewide training strategy, implemented in 2001, has seen more than 1,200 child care workers throughout the state gain formal qualifications. The 2004-05 budget allocated almost \$1 million to extend this highly successful strategy through to 2006. The Department of Communities has also allocated an extra \$1 million a year to boost its child care service licensing and monitoring role. That funding is on top of the \$3 million in ongoing funds to boost Queensland's child care facilities and standards.

The member for Cunningham also seems to be of the opinion that Disability Services Queensland should be intruding into the lives of all people with a disability. Although 20 per cent of the Queensland population has some form of disability, many of those people live in private accommodation just like you and I. The assertion of the member for Cunningham that Disability Services Queensland should keep records on where every person with a disability chooses to live is patronising and shows a lack of understanding of the disability sector.

The member for Charters Towers raised the issue of funding early intervention and prevention programs for children with a disability. In 2004-05 the Beattie government has allocated additional funding of approximately \$1.2 million for DSQ-operated family and early childhood services. That will take the total amount of additional recurrent funding for family and early childhood services to about \$3.4 million by 2006-07. I believe that the provision of respite to those people caring for people with a disability is an issue of importance to both sides of this House. It was raised by the member for Gladstone at the recent estimates committee hearing. In the 2004-05 Disability Services Queensland budget, additional recurrent funding of almost \$3 million and \$1.4 million in non-recurrent funding was allocated to enhance respite service delivery. This will increase the recurrent funding base for respite services to approximately \$23.5 million in 2004.

I am proud to sit in a Queensland cabinet as Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors at a time of such dynamic, positive change—and not to mention a time of large budget increases. My portfolio lies at the very heart of the Labor vision for reducing inequality and improving people's quality of life. I can give a sincere commitment that I will work with the people of Queensland and for the people of Queensland to achieve this aim.

Once again, I give my congratulations to all members who formed Estimates Committee E for their courtesy and attention to duty. I finally, I would like to thank all of my departmental officers and my ministerial staff for the tremendous work that they did in preparing for the estimates committee hearing this year.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (2.46 p.m.): At the outset could I thank ministers Nuttall, Cummins and Pitt for the time that they took to answer the questions—perhaps involuntary—but I thank them anyway. I also thank the committee staff, the committee members and the parliamentary workers on the day—both Hansard and other staff—and the departmental staff.

The three areas that fall within the terms of reference for Estimates Committee E are fairly critical for community satisfaction and community comfort and safety. The issue of hospitals is one in my community that has been on the agenda for many, many years. I have said before in this place that it has been very encouraging dealing with the new Minister for Health because of his expressed interest in the problems facing the community in terms of health and in trying to rectify those problems. I look forward to the matters relating to Gladstone that his department is currently working on receiving some positive action.

Public oral health services and the wait time for oral health services continue to be a concern with constituents regularly ringing me saying that they have to wait two years to three years for dentures and, in some instances, two years for just an oral check-up. Gladstone is not a remote area; it is a regional area. But people have also expressed concern about access to specialists because there is an incredibly large amount of travelling necessary by members of the community to access specialists. In

past years those specialists actually visited the area, perhaps on a rotational basis, and it saved the patients having to travel either to Rockhampton or to Brisbane.

We have discussed before the availability of hospital beds. Only last week a constituent wrote to me. She was admitted to hospital for medical purposes. She was actually admitted into the maternity ward rather than into the medical ward because she was told that there were no beds available. That is a concern, because although the actual number of beds that are allocated to Gladstone hospital sounds sufficient, when incidents like this occur, it begs the question as to whether those beds are available or the staff are available to service those beds.

HACC funding is an issue that has been raised with me in only the last few days, not only in terms of quantum but also in terms of when the money in the HACC budget is actually released to those services that desperately need the finances to provide in-community services. For instance, the HACC state plan for 2003-04 was released in only June this year. The funding is often released well into the second half of the financial year, which makes things very difficult for those community based organisations providing HACC services. I am sure that the new Health Minister will review that and ensure not only that the HACC state plans are released in a more timely fashion but also that, after the finalisation of the state budget process, funds are made available to those HACC service providers at the beginning of the financial year and not at the end.

Emergency Services is an area that has come into sharp focus this year, particularly because of our dry weather. My area of concern in the budget estimates process was the inability of the minister to advise the committee of the total income accrued from the ambulance levy, the amount of administrative cost the energy agencies remove and the amount of administrative cost Treasury removes for the community to be able to see transparently that the quantum of income, less those two amounts, is actually apportioned to the Ambulance Service. In my electorate I am advised anecdotally that staffing levels for the QAS on day shift are being reduced from three officers to two and that officers are regularly seconded to Rockhampton, which means that the growing community of Gladstone is often left unsuitably covered in terms of emergency turnout for QAS. It is not the fault of the staff; it is the fault of the system. It needs to be reviewed.

The new Communities Department is one that is still emerging in terms of its final format. I look forward to positive communication with the minister and his staff in relation to service provision for people in my electorate. Particularly we have issues in terms of funding for Meals on Wheels. That was always done on a voluntary basis—not only the cooking but also the delivery of meals. As more and more families require both parents earning wages, the availability of volunteers is reducing all the time.

Time expired.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (2.51 p.m.): Even though I did not participate in Estimates Committee E, I wish to contribute to the debate on the issue of the vital health services the state government provides to the people of Queensland. First, I would like to compliment the new Health Minister. I can report that my community at least thinks he is doing a better job than his predecessor—at the moment.

In the Burnett and Bundaberg areas we have had a public health care system which I describe as being in crisis. There have been excuses, cover-ups, incompetence and growing industrial unrest. I note from local media reports that the anaesthetists at Bundaberg Base Hospital joined a statewide stop-work meeting yesterday. The anaesthetists do not want extra money; they are concerned about conditions and safe care of patients. Dr Martin Carter, the hospital director of those professionals, is quoted in the *Bundaberg News-Mail* as saying that four of his colleagues were averaging 80-hour weeks and fatigue was a serious issue.

Since my election in February I have consistently called for an independent review of the whole of the Bundaberg and District Health Care Service. In May of this year I introduced to this House three mental health nurses who presented evidence and gave testimony which detailed assaults, maladministration and possible criminal behaviour. The Health Minister, through Director-General Dr Buckland, promised an independent—I repeat, independent—review of the Bundaberg mental health service by Dr Mark Waters, who was working for the private health care system at the time. The review was supposed to be completed in a timely manner and, it is my understanding, was finished by the end of last month.

Despite numerous attempts by me, through the staff of the office of the Leader of the Opposition, we have not heard anything about the independent review. Sadly, the only rumour which has leaked out about the independent review is that the independence is most probably compromised. I have had several health care professionals tell me that the doctor in charge of the review, Dr Mark Waters, has now been employed by Queensland Health in a senior position. Can the Health Minister please confirm or deny those rumours? If they are true and the independent reviewer, Dr Mark Waters, is now an employee of Queensland Health, what does that say about the independence of the inquiry into the Bundaberg Mental Health Unit? Should we trust a report which is no longer independent? That is if we ever get to see this report! This report is vital to workers, consumers and families.

I would like to give the minister an update on the state of mental health care in the Bundaberg and Burnett region. I am sure he would like to know about that as part of the estimates process. From the information supplied to me, I have to say that it is still in crisis. People who are suffering from mental illness, who are suffering from feelings of suicide, are presenting themselves to the Bundaberg Mental Health Unit only to be turned away. They are being referred to community based mental health care groups, Lifeline, gambling self-help groups and other mental illness recovery programs. The Bundaberg Mental Health Unit, which has an occupancy rate of around 30 per cent, is not offering proper care to these people.

I have spoken with a senior worker in a Bundaberg community based mental illness recovery program who said that in the past two years they can think of six clear-cut cases where people with mental illnesses have killed themselves after being turned away from the Bundaberg Mental Health Unit. Our conversation came about after another mental health worker told me of a recent incident where a young man presented himself to the Bundaberg Mental Health Unit and asked for help. That young man was refused help and told to contact Lifeline. I do not know whether this young man contacted Lifeline, but I have been told by a number of reliable health sources that he was found dead a few hours later. I hope that the mental health care workers who contacted me with this story are wrong, but today I am asking the minister to use the considerable resources available to him and his department to investigate these claims. I have had a steady stream of mental health professionals visiting or contacting me. All of them are scared of a management which they claim will personally vilify and bully them if their identity is discovered after they complain.

Hon. G.R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Health) (2.56 p.m.): In the year ahead the Queensland government will increase spending on health care by more than \$500 million, or 10.8 per cent, to a record budget of \$5.1 billion. For the first time, health care accounts for more than one-quarter of the entire Queensland budget. Such an investment gives us the opportunity, perhaps like never before, to help improve the health of all Queenslanders. But the future is not about more of the same. It is not about improving what is already there.

There is no doubt the focus of health care in Queensland is shifting to more preventative measures, bringing with it a challenge to each and every Queenslander to take more responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. If we can keep Queenslanders healthier, we can free up enormous resources to better treat chronic disease such as cancer and heart disease and better meet the emerging challenges of caring for an ageing population, changing lifestyles, rising costs of drugs and new technology and a national shortage of skilled health professionals.

That is why this year's record \$86 million for improved medical treatments includes a higher proportion than ever for prevention programs, so all Queenslanders can take early steps to improve the quality of their lives. That includes \$16 million to help treat kidney disease, \$18 million for cancer prevention and treatment, \$8.2 million for stroke prevention and rehabilitation, \$7.5 million to help treat heart disease, \$3.3 million for better dental care, \$2.1 million for improved spinal treatments and \$14 million for more home and community services.

In addition, in the year 2004-05 we will spend \$40 million on additional elective surgery to reduce public hospital waiting lists even further; \$15.2 million to reduce pressure on emergency departments around the state; \$17 million to help protect children's health and safety, including hearing tests for all newborn babies; \$127 million to improve health care through partnerships with non-government organisations and others; \$55 million on major hospital redevelopments; and \$54 million to improve our aged care facilities. More than ever before we will be looking for new and innovative ways to improve health care such as better partnerships with the private sector, in rural and regional areas in particular, where recruitment of specialist staff can be difficult.

Already more than a thousand patients have undergone urgent surgery in the private sector to help reduce public waiting lists. It is also important that patients have access to a range of health services in the one place. That is why we are spending more than \$41 million this year to build new community health campuses in 15 locations around the state. We will match our aim to improve patient care with a renewed investment in our staff. This year we will also commit \$26 million for improved nursing care including 1,500 new graduate nurses throughout Queensland over the next three years. To keep pace with rapidly changing technology, we will invest a massive \$135 million in new equipment and technology including Queensland's first public PET scanner to treat cancer patients. By this time next year there is the opportunity for a much healthier Queensland. With teamwork from the industry, communities and individuals, I truly believe we can make these changes happen.

In closing, could I thank in particular the estimates committee for its courtesies throughout the hearing. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my personal staff and my departmental staff for the work that they have put into preparing the estimates committee process.

In the debate this afternoon there have been a couple of issues raised—one in relation to smoking. As people would be aware, submissions closed on 31 July. There were over 1,200 submissions. Those submissions are being evaluated as we speak. We have made a commitment for

stricter smoking laws and we have made a commitment to introduce that legislation into the parliament and to have it passed before the end of the year.

The honourable member for Burnett raised a number of issues. I ask him to be patient with us. Most of those matters are being attended to, and I give an undertaking to get back to him in due course on those matters.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee G

Report

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Jarratt): Order! The question is—

That the report of Estimates Committee G be adopted.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (3.02 p.m.): I am very pleased to support the motion. In doing so, I would like to thank the chair of the committee, the member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin, for his contribution to the proceedings of the committee. He could not be here this afternoon because of other duties. The cooperation of all members of the committee was good and the process was worth while.

Another reason I enjoyed being on this committee was that it related to the portfolios of the Minister for Primary Industries, Henry Palaszczuk, and the Minister for Natural Resources, Energy and Mines, Stephen Robertson. I want to say how well received they are in areas outside Brisbane—no doubt inside Brisbane as well—in this state. Their popularity and the respect that both ministers have earned in rural Queensland is to their credit. These ministers perform the duties of these very important portfolios, particularly bearing in mind the historical importance of primary industries to the economy of Queensland, and that still remains the reality.

I want to refer to some activities of both portfolios which are financed through the appropriation process. First of all, I want to refer to a visit that I had the pleasure of undertaking with the Minister for Natural Resources and the chairman of this committee, the member for Mackay, last Tuesday to the Tinaroo Falls Dam project near Mareeba. This is a project being undertaken by SunWater at a cost of \$4 million for the provision of a hydroelectricity power station on the Tinaroo Dam. It really is a milestone for SunWater because it is the first hydropower station to go online.

The importance of this in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the greater reliance on clean, green, renewable energy sources is self-evident. It will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 8,500 tonnes per year, which equates to about 2,000 cars being taken off the road. It will generate 1.6 megawatts of green electricity, equal to the supply of electricity to 1,200 homes. It makes sense for SunWater to add value to its storages without impacting upon water supply to its customers.

One of the things I also noticed was the extensive network of irrigation channels that the Tinaroo Dam provides. This was a construction of the Gair Labor government in the 1950s, and it is good to see that example of capital infrastructure expenditure being spent in the regions has been carried on by this government and other Labor governments in the meantime. Reference was made this morning to the convention centres that are being built in Cairns, the Gold Coast and other regional areas. Another aspect of that project that is being undertaken is the fish exclusion project whereby fish will be prevented from going down the channel to the western side of the Great Dividing Range. In other words, fish that belong on the eastern side will stay there, preventing the introduction of problems down the track.

The other point I want to make with respect to the portfolio of the Minister for Primary Industries is the activities of his department at the Leslie Research Centre and at Tor Street in Toowoomba. One relates to piggeries and the measurement of odours and the other relates to an eye in the sky project. The department has developed an innovative, low-cost remote sensing package which can be put into the air under a 1.8-metre helium balloon or a two-metre wing span remotely controlled aircraft. It comprises two digital cameras and a video downlink enabling producers to identify disease, nutrition, and moisture variations in paddocks. This technology has a wide-scale application—

Time expired.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (3.07 p.m.): At the outset I would like to thank the chairman, Mr Tim Mulherin, for the courtesies that he extended to us and the efficient way he operated the estimates hearing. I would also like to thank the secretariat—Ms Renee Easten and Ms Carolyn Heffernan. At the conclusion of the estimates hearing, I gave credit to the department for its efforts in the citrus canker episode. From all the reports I was receiving, departmental officers did a good job, and let us hope their efforts continue to be successful.

I presented a dissenting report to this estimates hearing because I believe there are a number of issues that were not satisfactorily answered. That is what the estimates process is for: for us to be able to scrutinise some of the payments made during the year or some of the budgeted amounts and the spin that goes with those amounts in the production of the budget.

The first part of my explanation about inconsistent answers was the failure of the minister to properly explain why more than \$1.2 million of FarmBis funding was spent training 350 divers in the Torres Strait. Under the QRAA guidelines—QRAA is the agent which provides the money—funding for FarmBis cannot be used for operational training of people and it cannot be used to train people to comply with particular guidelines, for example, workplace health and safety. So money cannot be used to train a jackaroo to ride a horse. It cannot be used to train someone to drive a tractor, but it can be used for farm business management. It is for farm business management and land management. That is why it is called FarmBis. We see that this amount of \$1.2 million has been given to train 350 divers in the Torres Strait, and the minister himself said that it was for health and safety reasons.

In questioning on this whole process, we demonstrated that about 25 per cent of FarmBis funding was spent in three shires in far-north Queensland, pretty well all in the Cook electorate. We showed how that was two and a half times the amount that had been paid out in FarmBis to 20 shires in western Queensland. What we are trying to do in estimates is to make sure that when funds are available like this—which was Commonwealth funds and an allocation from the state government—it is paid out fairly and squarely around the state. It looks very suspicious to us that all this money in FarmBis went to these three shires in the electorate of Cook just prior to the election to help the new Labor member who was hoping to take the place of the former minister.

Mr Palaszczuk: I rise to a point of order. That is totally untrue and offensive, and I ask that that remark be withdrawn.

Mr HORAN: If the minister finds that offensive, I will withdraw that remark.

Mr Palaszczuk: I rise to a point of order.

Mr HORAN: I withdrew it.

Mr Palaszczuk: I rise to a point of order.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Jarratt): What is your point of order?

Mr Palaszczuk: My point of order is this: I found the remark untrue and offensive, and I have asked the honourable member to withdraw it.

Mr HORAN: I have withdrawn it.

Mr Palaszczuk: He only withdrew it. He did not withdraw the fact that it is untrue.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The remark has been withdrawn in its entirety.

Mr HORAN: It has been withdrawn.

As I said, 25 per cent of FarmBis funding went into those three shires in the Cook electorate, and I have shown how, under the rules of QRAA, they could not have been applied. We do not mind the funds going to those particular shires for genuine reasons, but we see a problem when 25 per cent goes into one small area of the state and other areas of the state miss out. It is just not fair.

There was also the issue of the National Livestock Identification System to which some \$690,000 has been allocated. Through the answers we received in the estimates, there is the possibility of another \$520,000 that has been provided being new money, but that is all the new money that there possibly is. Yet the announcement in the budget and the press announcements by the minister were that there was \$4.45 million for the NLIS introduction in Queensland. That is simply not true. The bulk of that money is for what they have always been doing—brands identification and registration, property identification and so forth. We were able to expose that particular spin.

We also sought some clarification of decisions on revocation of drought declarations. The minister refused to provide any minutes from the drought committees. We are very concerned about the decisions that are being made. The minister has always said in the statements on revocation that the decision has been made by the local drought committee. We want to know that everybody from the drought committee has been involved and that it has been a genuine decision by that drought committee, not by one or two people or because of pressure from the department to bring about that revocation.

Time expired.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (3.12 p.m.): I was pleased to participate in Estimate Committee G in the 51st Parliament. Although I did not take on the role of chair this time, I enjoyed being able to direct a number of questions to Ministers Robertson and Palaszczuk about relevant and current issues in the electorate of Pumicestone. I would like to place on record my appreciation to all the people involved in this accountable process which, for those new to the House and those with short memories, was introduced by the Goss Labor government in 1994. It has the effect of keeping everyone on their toes. Nothing like it existed under the Bjelke-Petersen regime.

I want to now concentrate on a number of issues that I raised during the estimates hearing, but first I want to congratulate Minister Robertson on the way he and his department have handled the introduction of vegetation management in Queensland. I had to listen to the Opposition Leader

yesterday carry on about farmers and graziers having a god-given right to do what they want on their land just because it is freehold. Well, he got that wrong. No-one has that right. I own a block of dirt in suburbia—probably as most members do—and it is freehold, but I cannot do what I want to do in my own backyard. There are myriad rules and regulations and council controls. I often wish we did not have so many, but I certainly abide by them, and so should the people living off the land. Gone are the days when primary producers can expect 100 per cent yield from their properties. It is a terrible, destructive attitude, so they have to get smarter because what they do to the land not only affects them; it affects us all. As the honourable member for Murrumba said, nobody owns the land except by the operations of law. Every piece of land held individually was once held publicly and was transferred conditionally, not unconditionally.

I now want to turn to the issue of fishing, particularly Fisheries compliance, which has always been a hot topic of conversation in Pumicestone. Fisheries is working hard to meet Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage requirements to be assessed as sustainable across all fisheries, and certainly there is some good news with regard to Queensland fishers complying with Queensland laws. Compliance among the state's commercial and recreational fishing sector remains high, with 93.4 per cent of inspections conducted by the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol in 2003-04 not recording an offence. However, there are still some who break the law, and anyone who is aware of such illegal fishing activities should immediately ring the Queensland toll free Fishwatch hotline on 1800 017 116 and report them.

The fish farm proposal in Moreton Bay remains a contentious issue. Everyone who has made the effort to speak to me about it has said they do not want fish farms in Moreton Bay. As their local member, I have supported the stand of my constituents and have publicly expressed my concerns as well. It is easy to make such public comment on an issue when everyone is on the same side—when everyone is saying the same thing and when everyone wants the same outcome. Wouldn't life and my job be easier if there were never any contentious or divisive issues?

During the week that Estimates Committee G sat there was grave concern over the Shark Control Program and the tragic entanglement of a juvenile whale off the Gold Coast. As I share a great interest in the wellbeing of marine life, I was pleased that during his opening statement Minister Palaszczuk outlined specialist underwater video equipment to assist our marine mammal rescue teams to safely release marine mammals such as whales from shark control gear—for example, nets and drumlines.

The DPI and Fisheries Ministerial Portfolio Statement has a strong focus on industry development and particularly assisting Queensland primary industries to diversify and grow through expanded market access, export and trade opportunities, increased value-adding, productivity growth and the development of future growth industries.

An issue I raised during estimates, which involves an extensive industry in my electorate and one I believe is a successful example of DPIF's direct assistance to industry, is the development of new strawberry varieties and the ensuing growth in production and exports of this industry. The Queensland strawberry industry has grown dramatically over the last decade. In 1991 the value of Queensland's annual farmgate strawberry production was only \$8million. Now it is over \$100 million, which is largely due to the Better Berries program developed by the DPIF in 1994. A result of this program is new Queensland-bred strawberry varieties—Rubygem, Sugarbaby, Harmony, Brighteyes and Crimson Glow. These aptly named varieties have helped strengthen the state's supremacy as Australia's major strawberry producer. The Queensland government has now signed a licensing agreement with EMCO CAL, a Californian strawberry marketing company, allowing them to distribute Rubygems and Sugarbabies outside Australia and New Zealand. I had the opportunity to visit a local strawberry farm in the electorate to see first-hand the initial crops of several of the new strawberry varieties. Growers Bill and Sandra Trost, owners of the Highway Strawberry Patch, have taken up the challenge to produce two of these new varieties. Mr Trost said the Rubygem and the Sugarbaby are doing very well. He says the plants fruit early and that meant an early start to the season, which was definitely good for business. I must say these new varieties are delicious and very sweet, and I would certainly recommend the taste test to lovers of the fruit.

Once again, I congratulate and thank all those involved in Estimates Committee G. They have allowed all the expenditure of ministers and their departments to be debated in an open, accountable and transparent way.

Time expired.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (3.17 p.m.): I rise to speak to Estimates Committee G to address concerns in regard to the state's infrastructure and, in this particular case, energy. The problems now emerging within the electricity industry have been revealed clearly. This week has been an extraordinary week where we have had the government try to congratulate itself on fixing a problem, or alleging that it is going to fix a problem which it, in fact, created. Labor has been in government six years. Premier Beattie has been Premier for six years, and still in this parliament he cannot explain how they mucked up the electricity system. They have gone even further than that and said, 'Don't ask us how it was destroyed; just let us concentrate now on how we are going to fix it.' That is an interesting

scenario. If someone was running an organisation with many shareholders who were expecting you to look after their assets and to perform the services associated with an organisation and then, as the person in charge of that organisation you ended up causing a crisis which destroyed the asset base and was likely to undermine the service you were delivering, the shareholders would have every right to say, 'How did this occur? What were the lines of communication—the management system—that allowed this to fail?'

But no, Premier Beattie, as the one who is in charge of the Queensland government, says, 'Please do not ask me; just trust me now that we are going to fix it.' That is not good enough because that is not how you are going to fix the electricity system in Queensland.

The government has gone further and said the extraction of the extraordinary and special dividends cannot be blamed for the destruction of the electricity system. Yet when the government is asked how much it is going to cost to restore current reliability, let alone deal with future needs, it still cannot put a figure on what that is going to cost.

On the one hand the government says not to blame the amount of money that it has sucked out of the organisation and yet on the other hand it cannot put a definitive figure on what it is going to cost to fix the issue. The government simply cannot be believed. The government cannot be trusted. It is extremely disappointing when one sees the parliament being abused the way we have seen this week. We saw the government using its numbers, 70 per cent of the seats, to give itself a vote of confidence for undermining what is a fundamental and basic service that Queenslanders rely on. Government has the primary role of delivering infrastructure. The state government has the role of ensuring that electricity capacity is there and that there is reliability of supply. What we have seen happen has been an undermining of that reliability of supply.

Linesmen I have spoken to in my area have been warning about the cutbacks in maintenance and the services that they saw were being undermined. Yet coming into the last state election the government said, 'No, trust us. Everything is fine.' After the election it announces a review. It clearly covered up and did not come clean with the people of Queensland about how it had undermined six years of maintenance and the services of our electricity system. The government cannot be trusted to put in place the infrastructure for the future.

In relation to other issues such as child safety, the government had been in power for six years and suddenly we saw the appalling breakdown and the incredibly high turnover in circumstances where our child safety system was on the point of collapse.

We see it in other infrastructure areas, for example with roads, and I alluded in an earlier estimates committee debate to the gridlock that has occurred. These things did not happen overnight. The next, of course, will be water. All these things have long-term planning requirements. When the crisis occurs it is because the warning signals have been ignored by those who are in a position to do something about it and they ignored it. These things do not happen overnight and that is why every time there is a blackout in future people will blame the Beattie government—quite rightly. This government has let down the people of Queensland. It should not say it is going to do a good job, but should get in there and do the job, invest in the infrastructure and supply for all of Queensland. It should not just put out press releases that promote the government and say there is a system for all of Queensland when clearly they have undermined and, in many cases, even destroyed some businesses which have found that they have to throw out stock.

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (3.22 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Estimates Committee G report on behalf of the member for Mackay and chairman of this committee, Tim Mulherin. Mr Mulherin would like to thank the rest of the committee for their assistance and input in conducting this year's hearing. He would also like to thank the Hansard staff, the parliamentary attendants, research director Renee Easten and assistant Carolyn Heffernan. He extends his thanks to the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Hon. Henry Palaszczuk, and the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, the Hon. Stephen Robertson, for their time and patience during the proceedings. The ministers were ably assisted by their departments and he thanks all departmental officers for their involvement.

In the consideration of the estimates hearing many important issues were raised and discussed. The hearing gave the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy the opportunity to detail the investment our government has made in NME and the benefits that this investment will generate for Queensland. The total appropriation for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy for 2004-05 is \$609,267 million. The output summary for Natural Resources and Mines is \$384,779 million; Mineral and Petroleum Resource Services is \$58,109 million and Energy Services is \$12,191 million. The total is \$455,079 million.

The minister responded to questions on topics ranging from mining royalties to the sustainable development of the mining industry, clean coal technology, power generation, transmission network infrastructure and Powerlink, electricity GOCs Energex and Ergon, coal seam water management study, irrigation price paths for SunWater schemes, Kyoto greenhouse gas emissions and riparian land titles on property boundaries.

Minister Palaszczuk also had an opportunity to discuss a range of issues concerning the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and to report on costings. The total appropriation for the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries for 2004-05 is \$261,782 million. The cost for industry development is \$200,241 million, biosecurity \$89,190 million and Fisheries \$45,389 million. The total is \$334,820 million.

The minister outlined some of the issues, when responding to questions pertaining to matters of importance, in relation to drought declarations, the drought relief assistance scheme, the primary industries productivity enhancement scheme, coral reef fin fishery plan, the quota monitoring unit for quota fisheries, the cooperative research centre for climate risk technologies, climate risk technologies, plant health biosecurity initiatives, exotic citrus canker disease and economic development of the Wide Bay-Burnett.

The complexity of both ministers' portfolios is apparent. The member for Mackay thanks the Hon. Henry Palaszczuk and the Hon. Stephen Robertson again for their time and effort.

The estimates process undoubtedly increases the workload on ministers and their staff. Their combined patience and competency allowed the hearing to be conducted smoothly. The member for Mackay reiterates his thanks to the committee members, Mr Jeff Seeney, Deputy Chair and member for Callide, Mr Paul Hoolihan MP, the member for Keppel, Mr Mike Horan, the member for Toowoomba South, Mrs Dorothy Pratt, member for Nanango, Kerry Shine, the member for Toowoomba North, and Carryn Sullivan, the member for Pumicestone. He appreciates the efficient and rigorous endeavours of all members throughout the hearing.

Having thoroughly examined the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2004 the member for Mackay commends the Estimates Committee G report to the House.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (3.26 p.m.): I rise to speak on the motion regarding Estimates Committee G but firstly I would like to thank everyone who was involved in the process from the committee chair, the member for Mackay, who ensured all pre-estimate G committee meetings and the actual day were conducted efficiently and any points of contention were contained in good spirit. I thank my other parliamentary colleagues on the committee, the secretariat, Hansard and the attendants who kept us supplied with all the necessities.

Estimate Committee G covers the portfolios of Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, Primary Industries and Fisheries. All these portfolios relate directly to the Nanango electorate. I would like to comment on a few issues which I believe are very relevant to the needs of the state and the electorate. As the members would know, the Tarong North and Tarong Power Stations are situated in the shire of Nanango in the heart of the Nanango electorate. Both these sites have a prepared pad just waiting for the word to start the building of further units. Although the minister has assured us that we have enough generative capacity for now, it would be appropriate that with the expected explosion of the population of the south-east corner consideration be given to the establishment of further units at these two sites whether they be gas or coal.

I take this opportunity to praise the employees of Ergon and Energex who I know from personal acquaintance and through experience work extremely hard to ensure the power stays on in Queensland. They are not to be castigated in any way whatsoever because of the current state of the industry infrastructure. It would appear from the letters to the editor, statements in the media and the editorials that the people of Queensland have not been duped over the last few days and know exactly where to lay the responsibility and that is at the feet of this government.

The rural sector continues to struggle under the Labor government. Primary industries has undergone massive changes in almost every industry, whether it be beef, pork, chicken, dairy—some necessary, some not. The staff of the DPI do endeavour to do an efficient job but their resources are stretched to the limit because it has been reported to me that the research department has had to take in up to 70 per cent of their work from outside to ensure it had sufficient funds. This ties up their resources from between three months and four years at a time.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I rise on a point of order. That statement is untrue and offensive to me. I would ask that that be withdrawn.

Mrs PRATT: It is withdrawn. They have difficulty keeping up with the time that is allowed for them to deal with the legislation. I did receive the impression at the estimates committee hearing that the minister would be looking into the issue. He obviously has. I had not heard that up until now. I thank the minister for correcting that. I appreciate that.

Mr Palaszczuk: Do not lie all the time.

Mrs PRATT: I did not know it was a lie. Therefore, it was not untrue. I do not believe that people in my electorate lie. If there was any truth in the statements passed on to me it would have been an appalling situation. More money does need to be allocated to DPI.

I have heard other members state that they have encountered a fear culture in many portfolios. Employees feel that their jobs will be jeopardised if they speak out. I have found that exists not only in

Health and Energy but also in DPI. This is a negative way for any government to allow departmental and industry staff to feel. I thought the aim was to get the industries working at their optimum for Queensland's benefit.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I rise on a point of order. That is a very serious allegation. Has the member written to me about that or has she written to my DG about that? Has the member taken the time to correspond with us about that very serious allegation? No!

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Male): Order! There is no point of order. Resume your seat, Minister.

Mrs PRATT: The recent canker virus scare, which had the potential to devastate the orange industry, proved the worth of the DPI and well and truly justifies its existence. However, I have concerns that whereas a man from the DPI was once seen as an aid to the man on the land, and a welcome one at that, a person who was viewed as a friend of the family and invited in for a cuppa, he is often being seen today as the enemy—someone one would rather avoid than see. This perception of the changing role of the DPI has the potential to make some in the rural sector—

Mr PALASZCZUK: I rise on a point of order. That is untrue and offensive. The member is arguing against her husband who works for the DPI.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Male): Order! There is no point of order.

Mrs PRATT: If the minister would like to take the point up with some of my constituents who feel that way, then I will gladly tell them that he is prepared to talk to them. I am only conveying their words to the House.

The DPI has the potential to make some in the rural sector reluctant to deal with them, as was seen recently. I find this to be a dangerous state of affairs for rural industries now and in the future. Although the estimates committee is supposed to be a valuable process in the accountability of government, I have to question exactly how valuable it is when ministers can choose how to answer questions.

Time expired.

Hon. K.W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (3.32 p.m.): It is certainly a pleasure for me to speak today in relation to the report of Estimates Committee G. I was not involved with Estimates Committee G, but I have had a chance to read the report and much of the *Hansard*. I am sure the chairman, the honourable member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin, did a very good job. I have listened to those who have spoken previously and they have made that point. As has been said earlier in this debate, it involves two departments—the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

The thing I noticed straight away when I looked at this report was what I spoke about yesterday. I was a member of another estimates committee and I covered this point pretty strongly when I spoke yesterday. When one goes to the statement of reservations it is interesting to note that the first nine points of the statement of reservations of both shadow ministers are the same. My recollection is that for the committee that I spoke about yesterday it was exactly the same.

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr HAYWARD: As the member for Southport said, it must be absolutely sheer coincidence. I will not hold up the House today talking about what I said yesterday. Similar things are talked about in these statements. They talk about the limited time available to conduct hearings. How much time does someone want the hearings to go for? There was the issue of the limit of questioning. The shadow ministers say that the process inhibits the capacity to pursue issues of interest until finality is reached.

From my experience with opposition members and even sometimes government members we are simply never going to reach finality on particular issues. I think it is important to recognise with these committees that all members of parliament should be given the opportunity to make a contribution to the various committees they are on.

Another comment that was certainly made yesterday in terms of the other committee is the use by ministers and government members of questions to provide a basis for propaganda statements. That is a judgment that is made. It is a judgment that I reject. I said yesterday that a number of the issues that were brought up in the committee turned out to involve incredible detail that a member could not possibly expect a minister to really be across. I did not attend this committee, but I am sure many of the questions were similar.

One of the very important issues that I want to take the opportunity to speak about this afternoon is citrus canker. The movement restrictions on citrus fruits and plants were imposed by the governments of all Australian states and territories and will remain in force while surveillance is undertaken to delimit the citrus canker outbreak. Members would have heard about this and there has been a lot of discussion in this parliament about the issue of citrus canker.

Interstate quarantine authorities have placed restrictions in order to be satisfied that the disease is not spread from one known injected property in central Queensland. To assist growers affected by this outbreak, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries will waive the normal inspection fee for three months from 21 July 2004. Industry observers were present in the national meetings at which these market access protocols were developed to ensure that industry was aware of the situation. As one would expect, even if growers do not like what they heard, it is a good idea. This is a terrible disease.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the minister for the leadership he has demonstrated during this very trying time. It certainly has affected one particular property. The reality is that, if the minister and his department had not made those decisions quickly, who knows where this sort of disease could have spread. The cost of waived fees that I talked about for the three months will be about \$800,000 which the department will carry.

The involvement of the growers' representatives on the interstate committees on citrus canker was found to be a most beneficial way of dealing with some of the most pressure packed issues. The issues carried implications for the operation of the industry presently and possibly the future productivity of the industry.

Time expired.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (3.37 p.m.): I rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee G. These two departments have particular significance to my electorate. Natural Resources, Mines and Energy has charge of our water resources, vegetation management legislation, overseeing the policing of land clearing restrictions and so on. It also controls our mining industry. DPI is charged with overseeing the actual farming, grazing, fishing and horticultural industries.

I want to begin by recognising the efforts of local officers and ministerial staff in working through some major issues raised by the Barron water resources plan and the development of the Barron resource operations plan. While this is the result of weaknesses in the water resource plan, I do recognise the cooperative manner in which those weaknesses are being re-addressed for those irrigators above the dam. There are, however, other water concerns in my area regarding a lack of new water storage infrastructure. For example, locals are calling for a new dam on the Walsh and the Tully Millstream or indeed anywhere suitable on the Tablelands. Much attention has been focused on risk to major agricultural areas posed by the recent drought and the grave situation it created in many other areas. They include the Ravenshoe-Millstream area which faced major struggles to access adequate water.

The minister was in my electorate recently for the commissioning of a micro-hydroelectricity generating station at the base of Tinaroo Dam. This small facility produces 1.6 megawatts of power. That is enough for 1,200 houses and, more significantly, adds an additional \$500,000 per year for SunWater. This extra income is going to be treated entirely separately from everything else when it comes to calculating the price path for water charges in the MDIA. It will be a nice little gravy train for SunWater while it busily hammers away and insists on user pays for everyone else.

I have an ongoing concern with inadequate resourcing for the control and elimination of pest weeds and plants, a recent one appearing on the Tablelands being *nuova sedge* which is spreading voraciously. It is unpalatable to cattle. It is destroying productive capacity and land values. However, it is not getting any government attention locally—not because its threat is underestimated but because we do not have the resources. So we face the situation where we are struggling to hold back the worst threats only to be wiped out by the lesser threats that we just cannot get to. In general, the land-holder has to deal with pests such as these at their own cost, whether they have the resources or not. I point out that Queensland is struck by 20 new pests and diseases each year due to failures on the part of AQIS and Biosecurity. If this government believes that it is appropriate for landowners to pay the full price of dealing with introduced pests, why is it that not a single Brisbane householder was asked to pay up for the cost of dealing with fire ant infestations that might have been found on their properties?

At a state level, the broadscale land clearing laws have torn the heart out of many farming families. Properties with sometimes massive potential for expansion and growth have been turned into millstones around their necks. For many this has happened without their knowledge. I have had constituents come to me in recent weeks because they had checked their property descriptions, say, only three months ago at which time they were marked as being not of concern. They have proceeded on that basis but have discovered when they have gone to apply for permits that in the intervening time their land has become of concern yet they were not notified. In that short time they have not had any new vegetation suddenly sprout a new forest, yet their descriptions have changed. That, coupled with what is a very short time in which to meet a wide-ranging set of conditions for an application, is making this less and less about vegetation management and more and more about closing down the bush.

Many primary industries in my electorate are suffering badly under the combined effects of state and federal government policies. At the federal level, our sugar industry has been hamstrung by its omission from the US free trade agreement. Our other primary industries are facing waits of years and decades before they have free trade access to the US, and that is a deal struck under the supposed

bush party—the Nationals—with the support of this Premier. Citrus growers in my area have been badly affected by the canker outbreak. This has taken place 1,000 kilometres from the Tablelands, yet the local growers have been roped into market restrictions, treatment regimes and so forth. Again, individual growers are carrying the financial burden of a preventable infestation. It will get worse, as our obligations under the WTO strip away even the frail defences we now have. These departments are essential to the bush, and they need proper resourcing.

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (3.42 p.m.): I thank all members of Estimates Committee G, which was chaired by the member for Mackay. As the minister for the Department of Primary Industries for the last seven budgets, I always welcome the opportunity to appear before the committee. I believe that the department's budget for the year 2004-05 is a significant one because it is a record allocation to the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. There have been a number of issues raised by different members—some issues that have been raised today and other issues that were raised during the estimates committee.

Could I once and for all put an end to the lie that is being peddled by the member for Toowoomba South in relation to FarmBis funding. We have to realise that FarmBis is a joint Commonwealth-state government funding arrangement. Negotiations are made between the Commonwealth and the state governments to decide what types of training are provided. In 2001 the Commonwealth and state governments negotiated that wild catch fishing operators—it does not matter if they are white or black—will be allowed to access funding from FarmBis 2. Macropod and wild game harvesters will also be allowed to access that funding, as will indigenous land managers. Just because 315 indigenous fishers in the cape were able to access FarmBis funding does not mean to say that it has been specifically targeted to those people. They were allowed to come into FarmBis funding in 2001. Under the guidelines and under the rules that have been given to me, there is no problem—no problem whatsoever. So I certainly hope that the member for Toowoomba South stops peddling this nonsense once and for all. Just because indigenous fishers from the cape are able to do training under FarmBis funding does not mean to say that there is a problem with the program. There is not, because it is signed off by the Commonwealth, that is Warren Truss, and by me and every other state government in Australia—full stop.

The other point is that the opposition always claims that the DPI budget has been cut. It claims that it has been cut by \$200 million. It claims that the staffing levels in the DPI have been reduced by hundreds of people. The test of that has been the citrus canker outbreak. If that was the case, we would not have been able to mount the response that we did mount. As a matter of fact, we managed the citrus canker outbreak in 17 days—in 17 days. We mobilised hundreds of people into the field within two days. If they were not there, where would we have got them from? We cannot manufacture them out of thin air. They were there. So the staff are there. The money is there, and the citrus canker response was so good that the nearest response anywhere else in the world for such an outbreak was over three months. We did it in 17 days. I want to congratulate all of those hardworking DPI officers and our DG who worked day and night to make sure that our citrus industry was not destroyed because of the actions of one person.

Now I want to go a bit further. In relation to drought, I have offered the honourable member for Nanango and the honourable member for Toowoomba South a briefing to explain to them what state drought aid is all about and what Commonwealth drought aid is all about. They can have it again. I will offer it to both of them again. If they are going to attack the integrity of the local drought committees—local people who are working for their own local—

Mrs PRATT: I rise to a point of order. At no time have I attacked the integrity of the local drought committee. I have spoken with it since the estimates committee. It has briefed me adequately, and I thank the minister for his offer.

Mr PALASZCZUK: So the member is satisfied with the local drought committees?

Mrs Pratt: Absolutely. They do a great job.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Thank you. The member should have let me know and I would have praised her. Congratulations! Now get the message across to the member for Toowoomba South and we all might be able to get out of this silly nonsense that we have been involved with. With regard to the member for Pumicestone, what a great member she is. She spoke about a brand-new industry in her electorate that has grown from \$13 million six years ago to \$85 million today, and that of course is the strawberry industry.

Time expired.

Hon. K.R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (3.47 p.m.): The recent drought conditions in south-east Queensland have shown what was a folly by the Goss government in cancelling the Wolffdene dam. Everyone realises that it was a political decision. The unfortunate part was that, when the Wolffdene dam was cancelled—I will give Ed Casey his due—Ed Casey went out and quickly resumed the land for the Glendower dam. The Glendower dam at Beaudesert was to be built in 2005. The irony now is that the south-east Queensland regional water supply report has said that the Glendower dam is

not viable. So after cancelling the Wolffdene dam and resuming all of the land for the Glendower dam outside Beaudesert, now we have a situation where the Glendower dam is not viable. So south-east Queensland is left with the Hinze Dam, the Maroon Dam and Moogerah Dam. Quite obviously, this is not going to be enough.

Continual reports by the government state that it is not going to build any more dams. The present situation is that a pipeline will be taken from Wivenhoe and across Inala, Woodridge, Kingston and down to the Gold Coast, and Beaudesert and probably Boonah will take their water from this pipeline in the future. This is quite obviously a ridiculous situation. I have spoken about the Moogerah Dam in this House previously, but the Maroon Dam is a typical example of the government now shoving its thoughts and its opinions on to SunWater and then hiding behind SunWater's decisions to supply urban water and industrial water at the expense of the farmers, for I honestly believe that the Maroon Dam was built for them for agricultural viability and sustainability.

Regardless of the minister's opinion, when a dam is built on a creek like the Burnett Creek, most people would expect the government to say, 'You will receive no less water than what you are receiving now.' Everyone accepts that in times of drought there would be low water, but the people along the Burnett Creek can never remember not having puddles or deeper holes from where they could take water. Recently, Burnett Creek, which is the creek that the Maroon Dam is on, was utterly dry. The platypus died and there was absolutely no water available for farmers along that particular creek. Yet we still had a dam that at that stage was probably about 30 per cent full. Obviously people ask, 'Why does SunWater not allow some water to come out of the dam to at least replace some of the water that has gone from Burnett Creek to allow the platypus and the rest of the environment to live? The reason is that groups like SunWater who are running those dams then say, 'We have to maintain at least two years supply of water in a dam for urban and industrial development.'

At present, in Beaudesert there is a great row going on. I would have expected the minister to intervene, but unfortunately he says, 'No, SunWater is running it.' SunWater is saying, 'We must have at least two years supply of water held in the Maroon Dam for urban use.' Maybe they will cut back that time to 20 months. There is now the new satellite development of Celebration City, which is a new Delfin development. They are requesting that at least 3,000 megalitres be maintained in the dam for their use in the future.

Both Moogerah and Maroon dams are at a very low percentage. Maroon Dam is now at probably 30 per cent capacity. What has to be maintained in the dam? At least two years supply for urban and industrial development and now a special request for water for the new Celebration City. Who are the first ones to go off the dams? The people who are expecting to use the water for agricultural use. There is no way that, unless a dam gets very, very high, these people will get water for agricultural use.

Industries like Davis Gelatine and A.J. Bush have come to the area. They have their demands. When the water gets low, obviously SunWater says, 'We can't take Davis Gelatine off, because they supply gelatine to Australia. We can't take A.J. Bush off because it takes all the offal from south-east Queensland.' So the only ones who do not receive water are the farmers and it was the farmers who originally agreed that a dam be built at Maroon for what they thought would be sustainability in agricultural viability.

I say to the minister and I say to the government that they made a mistake about the Wolffdene dam. They have now made a mistake about the Glendower dam. They must build further dams in these areas to maintain some water storage so that when we have good rain, we maintain the storage and when we have no rain, at least we have some storage to help not only urban but also agricultural people.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (3.52 p.m.): It is my pleasure to speak to the report of Estimates Committee G on behalf of the shadow minister for natural resources and mines, the member for Callide, Jeff Seoney. The dissenting report that was submitted by the shadow minister outlined some of the major issues of concern that he found during the estimates process—to name two, the failure of the Beattie government to provide sufficient funding to improve the state's geological database and the failure of the Beattie government to commit significant funding towards the development of clean coal technology. Today, I want to touch on a number of other issues, particularly in relation to the power crisis that we have had all this week. No doubt, we will have it for many more weeks to come until the matter is resolved.

Every day something has happened. The power has gone out again today. As I speak, thousands of houses in the Logan area are without power. Power has been restored to some areas, but there are still quite a few houses without power. That just goes to show exactly what we were predicting for so long. The minister knew, the Premier knew and the government knew for quite a long time that there was a crisis. Yet they papered over it. Obviously, as was explained this morning, the transformers had been ordered for quite some time. So it is a bit hard to believe their suggestion that this is a reaction to the report. We have a very serious problem. The minister might as well just get down and try to fix it instead of trying to explain it away.

Another issue that is very important for the primary producers of this state—in fact, not just the primary producers, but all Queenslanders—is the Vegetation Management Act. I read in *Hansard* that during the estimates hearing there was quite an extensive exchange between the minister and the shadow minister in relation to the so-called compensation package that is so inadequate. Now the Productivity Commission report has clearly backed up exactly what we have been saying for so many years in relation to vegetation management. The minister is not going to achieve the environmental outcomes that he is hoping to achieve. We fully appreciate the reasons why the minister is doing it—we know why he is doing it—but the reality is that he is not going to achieve the environmental gains that he is hoping to achieve. Quite clearly the Productivity Commission points that out. The minister has not properly taken into consideration the land-holders' concerns. He has overridden those concerns completely. It is just not reasonable for the minister to expect to get total cooperation from an industry when he acts like that.

The so-called package that was put together was originally called a compensation package. Now it is called an adjustment package or an assistance package. It really does not address any of those issues. The productivity commission, which is a body that is set up to look at all of these types of arrangements, has shown clearly that the track that the minister is on is wrong. So I do not know what more can be said or done to clearly point out to the minister that he is on the wrong track. If the minister wants to try to get some outcomes, he has to take people with him. If he wants to try to use a big stick or stupid, idiotic ways to try to achieve an outcome, then they are just not going to work. That just simply will not work at all.

Another issue that has been addressed at long last, which I and many others are pleased about, is the Condamine-Balonne water agreement and other agreements that are slowly coming together. That has been a marathon effort. I have to say that I certainly believe that it could have been done a bit sooner, but I appreciate all the problems that there were.

Mr Robertson: Come on! Say 'Well done.'

Mr HOBBS: Let me tell the minister a story. Basically other states have been trying to pirate our water and the federal government has been trying to assist in a lot of ways. I think that we are getting close to a reasonable response. There are still going to be a few people out there unhappy. So under the circumstances the package seems reasonable. As I said before, we are going to have people who will not be happy with it, but we finally got there. It is a damn shame that it took so long to get to that situation.

Time expired.

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (3.57 p.m.): First of all, I thank all members who participated in Estimates Committee G. I find it unfortunate that the shadow minister is not here to speak to this report, but as we found out earlier today, he has gone 630 days without asking a question. He now cannot be bothered turning up to the debate on the estimates committee report. No wonder I said that he is less of a shadow and more of a ghost. He disappears more and more every day from the natural resources, mines and energy debate.

But I will deal with some of the shadow minister's comments that he made in the dissenting report. Frankly, despite providing him with full and detailed answers in relation to a number of his concerns, the shadow minister continues with the nonsense and the spin that he is renowned for. The first one was mentioned by the member for Warrego and that relates to the assistance package for land-holders who are affected by our decision to stop broadscale tree clearing by the end of 2006. I do not need to explain this anymore. I just refer the honourable member to the editorial in today's *Queensland Country Life*. The *Queensland Country Life* got it dead right because it indicated that, in its view, in terms of the Productivity Commission's report the failure to provide adequate compensation for land-holders rests firmly with the federal government—the same federal government that agreed with us in May last year to contribute \$75 million then squibbed on the deal. No wonder the *Queensland Country Life* came out the way it did today and said that the responsibility for increasing the compensation package rests fairly and squarely with the federal government. That is what the *Queensland Country Life* said, and I say good on them.

Mind you, I have to raise a concern in terms of the Productivity Commission's report. I think it is a legitimate one. One of the things members opposite carry on with is this issue about thickening and the economic impact that thickening of vegetation may have. Apart from the fact that in all of the regional vegetation management codes we have provisions for the thinning of thickening vegetation—despite the fact they can actually continue to do that—we have this continued nonsense about this economic impact. When I looked to see who actually provided that part of the report for the Productivity Commission I saw that it was a Mr Devine, who I assume is the same Mr Devine who has until recently been leading Property Rights Australia. I assume it is the same Mr Devine who has as his business, as his source of income, providing advice to land-holders on issues to do with vegetation management. That is fine, and good luck to him. I hope he prospers, as is his right. But I do not think he actually cuts it as an independent commentator on issues to do with vegetation management. I suspect that he probably has not been able to be impartial, because I suggest there would be a conflict of interest there.

Mr Hobbs: He is a professional in his field.

Mr ROBERTSON: That is right, but he is not impartial because he is involved with Property Rights Australia. It has been running this agenda for some time now. I think it actually reflects badly on the Productivity Commission that it could not see through that conflict of interest in terms of this report. The member for Warrego should read the editorial of *Queensland Country Life*.

In the time available to me I will briefly deal with the other issue the member has mentioned. The vacant Deputy Leader of the Opposition—I would not want that to be misinterpreted—claims that 'the minister has failed to prevent a blow-out in the completion time frames for water resource planning throughout Queensland'. The extensions to the water resource planning framework in a number of catchments—like the Condamine-Balonne, the Fitzroy and the Barron—have been driven not by a failure by my department to provide information but by land-holders and stakeholders seeking further information, seeking more meetings and wanting to continue to be engaged in the process. When I hear those calls I say, 'Yes, let's extend that time frame so we can hear what people have to say, so that they can participate.'

Mr Hobbs: They took you to court. You had no choice.

Mr ROBERTSON: Not in the Fitzroy they didn't. Not in the Barron they didn't. Not in all of those other catchments in relation to which I have received requests from people such as the member for Gregory to extend the consultation period for our water resource planning framework. Then his colleague the Deputy Leader of the Opposition criticises me because we failed to reach those time lines. It is absolute hypocrisy.

Time expired.

Report adopted.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bills reported, without amendment.

Reports adopted.

Third Reading

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

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 18 May 2004 (see p. 1107).

Hon. K.R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (4.04 p.m.): In the absence of the shadow Treasurer, I will make a few comments in support of the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill, which is a largely mechanical bill designed to clarify existing legislation to ensure its effective operation. We the opposition will certainly support this legislation.

The bill makes an amendment to the Duties Act 2001 which will rectify what essentially are a number of errors and inconsistencies arising from the repeal of the Stamp Act 1894. In repealing the Stamp Act 1894 transfer duty was limited to dutiable property. The amendment proposed in this bill will restore the former situation, thereby ensuring that the transfers of mortgages and other securities of Queensland properties are liable to stamp duty. This bill also seeks to retrospectively ensure that transfer duties will not be applied to the transfer of mining leases, mineral development licences and mining claims under the Mineral Resources Act 1989. It is important to note, however, that duty will still apply to transfers of existing mine rights.

The amendments to the Duties Act also provide exemptions from duty for certain transactions carried out in the process of a corporate reconstruction, expanding exemptions to cover indirect as well as direct shareholdings. Once again, this bill seeks to restore a situation which was in effect under the repeal of the Stamp Act 1894.

The operation of the Fuel Subsidy Act 1997 means that the fuel subsidy is not payable on diesel fuel used for off-road purposes. The amendments being proposed here are largely designed to ensure that such a situation continues following the Commonwealth's replacement of the diesel fuel rebate scheme with the energy grants credit scheme.

Amendments to the Land Tax Act 1915 are designed to ensure consistency in the definition of a retirement village between the Land Tax Act and the Retirement Villages Act 1999. Retirement village and body corporate legislation needs to be continually reviewed in light of the continual changes which

are being made and challenged. Any delay in reviews of this legislation causes considerable concern to everyone involved. The opposition will support the legislation.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (4.07 p.m.): I rise to support this bill. Debate on the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 gives me an opportunity to highlight a major problem in the Burnett and Bundaberg regions with regard to state income generated by payroll tax. It is a significant state tax which has not been addressed in the bill which is currently before the House.

Recently I met with primary producers at the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers dinner. I spoke with a number of concerned producers who are struggling to keep workers employed because of the extra financial burden that state payroll tax is placing on businesses, particularly horticultural businesses. Put quite simply, payroll tax is a tax on jobs.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine): Order! I would ask the member to remain relevant to the bill at hand.

Mr MESSENGER: I would like to say that payroll tax could have been a component of the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Please keep your comments relevant to the bill at hand.

Mr MESSENGER: The Burnett region is suffering from an embarrassing and unacceptably high unemployment rate. It is currently sitting at over 13 per cent—one of the highest rates in Australia. The Beattie state government has placed additional financial restraints on our employers, who suffer as a result of revenue generated by the state government in unfair payroll taxes and of course other revenue. Queensland may well have a 5.7 per cent unemployment rate, but Mr Beattie has not delivered on jobs in the Burnett. It is an area that needs to be addressed by the government. The message I received from the primary producers and business owners at the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers dinner was that if Mr Beattie's Labor government really wanted to solve the unemployment problem it should stop throwing red tape and unfair state government taxes and charges at our primary producers.

Mr WILSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member continues to address matters that are not relevant to the bill. In such a case, I would suggest that is out of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine): I have drawn the member's attention to the requirements of relevance, and I ask him again to keep his comments relevant to the bill before the House.

Mr WILSON: Regrettably, he has not complied with your direction, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr MESSENGER: The Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill, as I have said, gives me an opportunity once more to highlight the inequities in the state government's taxation system. There are many inequities in the state government's taxation system. May I bring the attention of members back to the problem of a significant state tax—that is, payroll tax.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the honourable member is straying. If he cannot keep to the bill, I will ask him to resume his seat.

Mr MESSENGER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this bill and I give this House notice that I will speak to the subject of payroll tax at a later date.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (4.10 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill, there are two matters that I wish to raise with the minister. Firstly, I want to commend the inclusion in this bill of the formal removal of the legislation in relation to the collection of succession duty debts. I acknowledge that the duty was abolished in January 1977, but because of the nature of the legislation and the fact that some debts accrued prior to the cessation that obligation to collect has remained in situ since then. For many people, as per the minister's advice, there were only relatively small debts outstanding but for those people who may have had those notations on their paperwork the fact that this legislation is being amended today will give them peace of mind. I commend the minister for following through on the administrative arrangements.

The other issue I wish to raise is that of the amendments to the Fuel Subsidy Act in changing the definition of 'off-road purpose'. I raise this because I want to clarify with the minister that, in changing this and bringing it back into conformity with the federal government's replacement words from the diesel fuel rebate scheme to the energy grants credit scheme, there is no other unintentional effects on off-road vehicle users.

I recall that when the federal government and the state government negotiated the change in those taxes there were a lot of people in the community, particularly small businesspeople, who inadvertently were affected after the fact. They did not realise there had been changes to the diesel fuel rebate and were using fuel with the subsidy paid back to them and then later on were required by Treasury to repay significant sums of money. Probably more onerously, they had to calculate the debt that they owed to Treasury. So I would like the minister to clarify that this is as it appears: simply a change of designation, a change of name, and it does not have any other unintended consequences to off-road diesel users.

If this is more than a change of name, they should be clearly notified on an individual basis so that the same sorts of concerns do not arise in 12 months or two years time where they are caught and have to calculate retrospective amounts. It reads as if it is a change in name only; that there is no other implication, and I look forward to the minister's confirmation or clarification on that matter.

Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (4.14 p.m.), in reply: I thank the members for their support of the legislation. I know the member for Burnett tried hard to get payroll tax into it. It is not the payroll tax bill, but to satisfy his mind I would point out that our government has made payroll tax in Queensland the lowest in Australia at 4.75 per cent—the lowest in Australia.

I thank the opposition for its support. I thank the member for Gladstone for her comments in relation to the changes that have been made. In relation to off-road use, we do not see any unforeseen changes or effects that the changes will have. It is simply to ensure that we are picking up changes that the Commonwealth has made. The issue that the member raised about people who ended up with debt—and that goes back a couple of years now—was due to the Commonwealth making changes to its scheme. It stopped paying the state the money and that is why it was not being handed on, although people were claiming for it. The off-road diesel rebate was a Commonwealth responsibility and not a state one, yet people were accessing that rebate and that is where people got into debt. It was not as a result of any actions of the state. As I said, I thank members for their support.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) in charge of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause 4—

Mr MACKENROTH (4.16 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

1 After clause 4—

At page 7, after line 2—

insert—

'4A Amendment of s37 (When transaction for particular Queensland business assets not dutiable transaction)

Section 37(3), from 'aggregated with'—

omit, insert—

'aggregated with 1 or more of the following—

(a) a dutiable transaction for a Queensland business asset, other than intellectual or personal property;

(b) a dutiable transaction for land in Queensland.'.

I table the explanatory notes.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 37, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

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

BIODISCOVERY BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 18 May 2004 (see p. 1111).

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (4.19 p.m.): I am pleased to speak to the Biodiscovery Bill 2004. Biodiscovery relates to the collection of a lot of chemicals or compounds that exist in our natural fauna and flora, particularly in relation to a major source of active pharmaceutical compounds sourced from flowering plants—for instance, sunscreen components from coral and insecticide from eucalyptus. They are the types of products that we are looking to be able to selectively collect for the betterment of mankind.

The objectives of the Biodiscovery Bill 2004 are to facilitate sustainable access of biodiscovery entities to the state's native biological resource for biodiscovery, encourage the development in the state of value-added biodiscovery, ensure the state obtains a fair and equitable share in the benefits of

biodiscovery on behalf of all Queenslanders, and enhance the knowledge of the state's native biological diversity, promoting conservation and sustainable use of these resources. Clearly that is the framework that has to regulate the collection and use of such biological matters. All Queenslanders would need to be able to share in that process. There is nothing wrong with that, provided that we are able to do it in a reasonable and practical way, which I will deal with in due course.

It also allows small quantities of biological material to be taken from protected species and areas. While that may prove difficult in some areas, I believe it is paramount that we are still able to access those areas even if there is some concern with the region. We have to be able to make sure we have a balance there, but we certainly need to be able to ensure that we are able to use whatever resources there are for the betterment of humanity. Further, we need to implement the objectives of article 15 of the CBD in creating a regulatory and contractual framework for the access and use of Queensland's native biological resources.

This bill also takes into consideration one of the United Nations treaties. I do not have the number in front of me, but it is a treaty that is signed up to by Australia. Australia does have—and Queensland does have as well—unique biodiversity. In fact, in many instances it is much better than what would exist in other countries. So there is a great opportunity for us in this state to be able to participate with biodiscovery.

I do recall that many biological type products, insects and such like, are often found in the Americas, particularly South America, and some are even found in North America. We have many scientists over there who have been working on those projects for quite a long time. This is the type of project that creates the opportunity to expand the medicines that we currently have, but we need to be able to expand these medicines even more. People have a resistance to many medicines these days so we no longer have the benefit of those particular chemicals. We should be able to improve this.

I am quite concerned about this bill after looking at some of the issues that were raised in the *Alert Digest*. I would like to go through a few of those, and even though the minister has provided some answers I would like him to expand on those.

The committee noted that different sections of the bill provide that in certain circumstances a collection authority may be amended, suspended or cancelled. Some of the circumstances do not involve any fault on the part of the collection authority holders. Some would appear to be a result of changes to government policy. The minister has responded to the committee by saying that that would occur if there was a case of flood or fire. I can appreciate that, but I think what has happened is that in the past there has been a trend for this government to head down that line. I give the example of the Vegetation Management Act and the Water Act. I do not think there is much consideration for the enormous amount of resources put in by a land-holder or by a company when exploring and investigating new ways. They may be staking hundreds of millions of dollars, for instance, on a new product. While there may be some concerns by some of the conservation groups in Queensland—for instance, they may be jumping up and down saying they do not want these people in the forest—we have to make sure that we do not allow emotion to take over. The practical outcome should be that we reduce the amount of access but still carry on. There are some real concerns in relation to the rights of those people to collect whatever it is they are particularly after.

I also note that the committee talks about the fact that the bill excludes the operation of the FOI in relation to most, if not all, of the key documents created under this bill. Yes, we do need to have commercial-in-confidence in relation to a company that is prepared to put up the millions of dollars required to do the research. They need to have the knowledge that their product will be secure and safe. I do not think we should have FOI access to those particular documents, but I do not see why documents cannot be available under FOI if they relate to normal departmental type activities as long as the company is protected. I think we have to be a bit careful here. There has been a lot of criticism in recent times in relation to FOI and holding back information unnecessarily. I think that point is worthy of consideration.

The other point—

Mr McGRADY: I rise to a point of order. Are you saying—

Mr HOBBS: What I am saying is that, if a company is exploring in a forest somewhere and it has spent millions of dollars on this new wonder product, it needs to have the protection, the security, that somebody else cannot come in on the game. But information relating to normal departmental activity should be accessible under FOI. That is what I am saying.

The reverse of the onus of proof is an issue as well. This is also a trend with more and more legislation. The onus of proof was reversed in two instances. Firstly, where a representative of a person may be taken to be guilty of an offence by another and, secondly, executive officers may be held responsible for offences committed by corporations. For instance, under the Vegetation Management Act so-called representatives of another person are being charged in relation to vegetation management offences. In many instances those people have no knowledge of the offence or they may happen to be

in the wrong place at the wrong time. It may be that the dozer driver, who is there on a casual basis, suddenly finds himself in real trouble and has no legal defence.

We have a really serious situation here. I do not know whether we need to go at it as hard as this. The person who committed the offence has to be the one responsible, not a second or third person. That is the problem we have. The owner of the property who gives the instruction or the person in the company who gives the instruction to do the exploration are the ones who should be responsible. That company would be eligible for a fine or whatever. The bill contains powers of entry which are quite severe. I suppose we need powers of entry, otherwise the situation could not be examined.

Probably the most important issue that we need to address is that there is no external merits based appeal process. This follows the same trend that we are seeing with other legislation. We are finding that departments—and I particularly refer to the Department of the Environment with which I have had personal experience—are making philosophical decisions that are not based on science. They are based on someone's view. It is not necessarily sound.

Therefore, those decisions cannot be appealed. We should be able to have a system whereby people can appeal a decision and have it heard fairly. In the first instance it should really go to the minister again, but it really cannot be carried on. That is an issue that we really need to pursue a little more. Overall, we support the legislation. It has been quite a while in the making. It will certainly benefit Queensland and mankind the world over if we can find a few more wonder drugs. With those few words, I support the bill.

Mr WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.32 p.m): I rise today to support the Biodiscovery Bill 2004. I start by congratulating the smart minister of the Smart State for this wonderful piece of legislation which seeks to utilise and protect our valuable natural resources. Here in the Smart State we recognise our role as custodians of our environment for future generations. But we also recognise that plants, animals and other organisms in our environment contain treasures of great value to all mankind.

In my area, the most beautiful area of this state, north Queensland boasts one of the world's great biological treasure-troves. I well remember as a kid my grandad showing me various species of native plants, ones that were put on cuts and wounds, ones that were used for severe cases of dysentery and certain plants that were used for skin cancer and such like.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: What about tea tree oil?

Mr WALLACE: Tea tree oil is more of a southern oil. Australia is one of only 17 megadiverse environments in the world which together contain more than 80 per cent of the world's biological diversity. Australia has 10 per cent of the world's biodiversity and north Queensland is home to a significant proportion of that biodiversity. Queensland's vast biodiversity is a rich environmental asset and enhances the state's potential as a hub for biotechnology research and development.

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation report entitled *New pharmaceutical, nutraceutical and industrial products: The potential for Australian agriculture* was released in 2000. This report stated that 25 per cent of the active components of drugs prescribed in 1996 had their origins in flowering plants, with an additional 10 per cent derived from fungi.

This presents a real opportunity for north Queensland where it has been estimated that more endemic species of tree are present in one hectare of the Daintree than in the whole of North America and the continent of Europe. We have the technology to exploit the value in biodiversity without having to destroy it.

In my electorate of Thuringowa, James Cook University has developed a solid reputation for research in tropical marine science. It has one of the largest concentrations of tropical marine scientists in the world, employing approximately 44 research staff and 90 research students in the School of Marine Biology and Aquaculture. Indeed my wife, who owns the post office at the university, is regularly acquainted with students from across the world who are undertaking courses in marine biology and aquaculture at James Cook University.

Scientists can identify chemical compounds within a single leaf, flower, fern, fungi or microbe and apply that knowledge in the search for cures for diseases or for a more sustainable industry. Through biodiscovery we can open Queensland's biodiversity treasures while keeping our forests and reefs untouched for future generations. North Queensland is already engaged in world leading research in that area.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science, which is near my electorate and the electorate of my colleague the member for Burdekin, has research facilities valued at approximately \$75 million. Tribute must be paid to the former Whitlam government which instituted this wonderful facility for all Australians. It is currently commercialising a sunscreen based on coral from the Great Barrier Reef. Indeed, I would suggest to all honourable members when they are in my neck of the woods to pay a visit to this wonderful research facility.

It has also discovered new and exciting chemical leads in some marine organisms that may help overcome the increasing problem of antibiotic resistance. This has the potential to fill the critical gap in

antibiotic research and discovery. EcoBiotics in Yungaburra is identifying an anticancer compound from plant species sourced from north Queensland.

Dr Lesley Clark interjected.

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Barron River.

Mrs Lavarch interjected.

Mr WALLACE: They were indeed at the Smart State awards. A Smart State with smart people. Although drug production is still some years off, the Biodiscovery Bill will ensure this exciting work continues and spreads. This bill sets the rules by which the process of biodiscovery will be managed. It ensures scientists can explore our rich biodiversity, collect the small samples needed for study and progress knowledge while conserving nature.

The Biodiscovery Bill will produce two tremendous outcomes for Queensland and, in particular, north Queensland. Firstly, it will provide scientists with managed access to the vast number of medically active compounds that are awaiting discovery in our forests, reefs and living environment. Secondly, and equally important, it will be the guarantee of ecological sustainability for Queensland's natural environment in concert with the biodiscovery process. It is without hesitation that I commend this bill to the House.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (4.38 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Biodiscovery Bill today. The potential within our state, both within the marine environment of the Great Barrier Reef and such areas as our rainforests, to hold the secret to many and new innovative treatments for disease is a fascinating thought and one which medical science now has the capability to explore. We are all aware of the emergence of super bugs which have developed a resistance to present antibiotics as well as diseases such as tuberculosis and leprosy, which still remain resistant to treatment. Biodiversity gives science the potential to search for new and unique ways to treat diseases and overcome the increasing problem of antibiotic resistance.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science, AIMS, currently holds one of the world's largest publicly owned marine diversity collections made up of approximately 20,000 micro-organisms collected and isolated from over 1,500 marine sites around Australia. The AIMS biodiscovery team believes that there are chemicals in the marine environment that have the potential to be as successful as penicillin. In July 2000 the Premier signed a landmark biodiscovery benefit sharing agreement on behalf of the Queensland government which was designed to encourage further research and development throughout our state. Xenome Ltd, a Brisbane based company, is another example of innovative use of Queensland's biodiversity. Xenome is capitalising on the vast array of toxins produced by venomous animals to capture their prey. One exciting discovery originated from the venom of the cone shell found in Queensland's tropical waters. The substance is proving to be more potent as a pain-killer than morphine. It is this type of research which places our biotechnology companies at the head of their field throughout the world.

This bill will make it easier to access the potential lifesaving properties locked in Queensland's unique flora and fauna for the benefit of all communities, including those of my own electorate of Woodridge. The bill is environmentally responsible and will ensure that there will be no negative impact on Queensland's biodiversity whilst benefits from any discovery and development are shared by all Queenslanders. I commend the minister and this government for their commitment to keep Queensland at the cutting edge of discovery and research, and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (4.41 p.m.): I rise to support the Biodiscovery Bill 2004. It is a very important bill, putting in place mechanisms to give Queensland a strong position in a new industry with a bright future. This is, I believe, significantly different from the troubled field of genetically engineered crops. It is in fact about extracting from nature and from some of the most pristine areas of nature those compounds, chemicals and so forth that hold so much promise. There appears to be almost unlimited potential. This is, however, a very high-tech area and I do have some general concerns.

The first is that we do not become a simple source for these compounds with the development, value adding, manufacture and distribution winding up in the hands and pockets of large overseas operations. It is a very common process in Defence Force projects for offsets to be part of the deal—that is, where we do a deal with a major aircraft maker or other manufacturer and that company agrees to contract out the manufacture of parts to Australian companies. I believe offsets may be well worth considering in the biodiscovery field. Royalties of course are vital, but so is the establishment and expansion of the entire industry downstream from harvesting of those raw materials.

I note the many different potential benefits described in the explanatory notes and that there is, among others, reference to contributions to the local economy and institutional capacity building. However, I would be very keen to see some clear references to the establishment of a full range of downstream industries. Frankly, we need to learn the lessons of our minerals industry and much of our agricultural industries. It is well and good to produce the raw materials, but it is no good to see the

investment and economic benefits and, most importantly, the jobs in value adding going overseas. We need to make sure that we avoid that in sunrise industries such as this.

I am also concerned about the proposal in this bill for the creation of a new range of inspectors. As most of this activity is expected to take place in national parks, I believe it is much more appropriate to provide relevant training and resourcing to our existing ranger networks. Many of these people are well qualified academically and are already well experienced at protecting our public lands. It is true that they are vastly underresourced and understaffed and any increase would be welcome. I do not see any reason for the creation of a whole new group of green police.

In his second reading speech on this bill, the minister said it could be difficult for biodiscovery organisations to identify the relevant government agency and necessary approvals. I believe that our public servants are almost all very dedicated and professional people who work together well both within and between departments. I have no doubt that anyone or any biodiscovery organisation that might approach the wrong agency would be very quickly provided with all of the relevant material and/or contacts for appropriate information.

Finally, this bill refers to this state's native biological resources. I question whether this may be too narrow. For example, should a biodiscovery entity find something of value in an introduced species here in Queensland, would they be able to escape royalty and other obligations on the basis that this bill refers only to native resources? However, this bill is heading in the right direction and, as such, it has my support.

Mr FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (4.44 p.m.): I rise to support the Biodiscovery Bill 2004. This bill has been developed after broad consultation, including the Queensland biodiscovery policy discussion paper of 2002 and the production of an exposure draft which was released for consultation last year. Biodiscovery as the search for active compounds in plants, animals and micro-organisms provides us with a horizon of opportunities. Biodiscovery involves the collection of only minimal samples with minimal ecological impact. It is important that this legislation is not proposing a regime for bioharvesting of ecological matter but rather the sampling of material for research and production purposes. This bill will implement the provisions of article 15 of the United Nations environment program's Convention on Biological Diversity and its stated purpose involves the facilitation of sustainable access to the state's native biodiversity for the purposes of biodiscovery.

A central principle of this bill that I particularly welcome is that biodiscovery entities will only be given permission to collect minimal quantities of native biological resources. Indeed, it is pertinent to note that the proposed regulatory instrument under the bill, the Biodiscovery Collection Authority, will be administered by the Minister for the Environment. Researchers who have a collection authority will need to report every six months on their activities and any material taken will require a sample to be lodged with the Queensland Herbarium, which is located in my electorate, or with the Queensland Museum. This will enhance the collections and the public knowledge of Queensland's own biomaterial. The regime proposed under this bill will ensure that there will only be the smallest impact on the environment. The bill will only permit samples of leaves to be picked which are renewable rather than, for example, the need to sacrifice a whole tree or a number of trees.

As well as protecting Queensland's precious natural resources, this bill reflects the rapid advancements that have been made in technology. These advancements have provided scientists with the opportunity to search for valuable natural products using amounts that will have a negligible impact on the environment and on the population from which the samples are sourced. Robotic systems have been developed to test for active compounds in only small amounts of matter. This has been a great stride forward for drug discovery, for example. With today's technology we have the capacity to synthetically create compounds without having to harvest native biological material. The well-known anticancer drug Taxol, initially extracted from the bark of the Pacific yew in the United States, is an outstanding example of the unknown values locked in biodiversity, the advancements in technology and the increased awareness of the need to regulate collection activities for biodiscovery. The anticancer properties of Taxol were first discovered in the 1960s, but it took nine years to figure out the structure of the active compound. Today, scientists at Natural Product Discovery at Griffith University, my alma mater, in Brisbane estimate that with today's technology it would only take a maximum of two to three days to work out the structure.

At present, 90 per cent of the structures of new compounds isolated at Natural Product Discovery are solved within 48 hours. However, to treat one patient with the drug Taxol, roughly six trees had to be harvested. The public outcry against this proposed harvesting of the trees and shrubs in the US led to the Pacific Yew Act 1992 to manage the collection activities in relation to that tree. The Biodiscovery Bill 2004 before us today is welcomed as it will ensure that biodiscovery in Queensland will not raise similar environmental concerns. The bill regulates the taking of all classes of native biological resources on state land and in Queensland waters, which means that it extends coverage to all forms of wildlife in these areas. Currently, under existing legislation, the collection of many insect and all micro-organisms is not regulated or controlled. For these reasons and the potential public benefit that may be gained, particularly from research, investment and increased environmental knowledge, lifting previous

prohibitions on limited access in a controlled manner to particular areas such as national parks for these purposes is a sensible and determined step towards a better quality of life for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (4.50 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Biodiscovery Bill 2004. The intent of this legislation, which is to regulate the access and collection of Queensland's biodiversity for the purpose of biotechnology research and development, is worth while. There is a need for the protection of the state's interest in this area and the establishment of a framework to regulate the collection of bioresources and subsequent research.

As the minister outlined in his second reading speech, Queensland has significant biodiversity assets and biotechnology strengths. Biodiscovery involves the search for those components in native flora and fauna that can be developed into commercial products. The scope and diversity of the types of compounds and products that may be discovered or produced is enormous. A structure that makes this process more efficient and acceptable for commercial entities to invest in these opportunities must be welcomed. The end products of biodiscoveries could be pharmaceutical products for health and wellbeing, products to be utilised in industry or perhaps to improve lifestyle.

When one considers the effects world wide on health that Sir Alexander Fleming's discovery of the powers of penicillin has had and when one considers the simple origins of penicillin one realises that Queensland's natural resources are an enormous source of untapped potential. The commercial entities involved in biodiscovery are most likely to be pharmaceutical companies, chemical companies or various research institutes. At this point, I would like to pay tribute to the work and achievements of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, which happens to be located in the Burdekin electorate. Over the years the work done at that institute has gained worldwide respect and significant and beneficial discoveries have been made through its marine research.

However, this bill as it stands is extremely bureaucratic. It is obvious that in some areas this bill perhaps restricts rather than clarifies the directions possible bioresources investigators have to take. The minister stated in his second reading speech that one of the features of the bill will be a reduction in the number of regulatory regimes applicable to collection and research into bioresources. The purpose is to make applications a more open and efficient exercise for biodiscovery organisations. But it has also been stated that the bill is going to apply in the first instance only to state land and waters, which would be national park and protected areas, and not to private land. As the majority of the state is privately owned, no doubt in practical terms the bill represents an increase rather than a reduction in applicable regulatory regimes. It is stated on the same page of the minister's speech that, if a biodiversity entity can legally gain access to private land, then the land-holder has every right to enter into a benefit sharing agreement over these resources. However, that appears not to be reflected in the bill.

Although I have no doubt that private land-holders would welcome the preservation of the individuality of their enterprises, it could seem that perhaps a valuable opportunity may have been lost. Given that the tree-clearing legislation has been forced upon land-holders, here is an opportunity to provide an incentive to land-holders to conserve national forests and ecosystems on their land through the potential benefit sharing of biodiversity resources. Land-holders care for their environment. They care about the preservation and ecological sustainability of the natural resources on their own properties.

The purpose of the legislation is to permit holders of a collection authority to collect native biological material from state-held land if the activity is considered ecologically sustainable. Part 8 of the bill, which deals with the powers of inspectors, procedures, et cetera, appears to be setting up a separate enforcement agency. It seems that the bill is setting up an enforcement bureaucracy in addition to police, Parks and Wildlife rangers, fisheries inspectors, forestry inspectors, et cetera. Is another enforcement agency somewhat superfluous?

The process appears to be that a collection authority must be issued to a biodiversity entity—probably in reality, that would be a pharmaceutical company, a research organisation or some other commercial entity—before the said entity may commence searching for compounds of interest. Presumably, once the search under a collection authority has proceeded a reasonable distance, the biodiversity entity must enter into a benefit-sharing agreement with the state. A condition of any such agreement is for the biodiversity entity to have an approved biodiscovery plan. The restrictions on the term of a collection authority are probably unrealistic, particularly in that clause 16(4) states that an authority lapses after 12 months if a benefit-sharing agreement has not been entered into within that time period. Further, clause 34(2) subclauses (c), (d), and (e), requires that the benefit-sharing agreement must state the benefits to be provided to the state, when they will be provided and the amounts of money involved.

Scientists have told me that searching for and developing useful biocompounds is very complex work and akin to looking for very small needles in very large haystacks. The lead times for the development and successful exploitation of useful compounds are usually measured in decades rather than in years and certainly not in months as the bill seems to imply. This part of the bill may require further modification if it is found to be unworkable or inappropriate in the future.

This bill seems to be a grab for power by government departments and it seems to be overly bureaucratic. The bill is also unrealistic with respect to the practical issues surrounding bioresources. It is with these reservations that I commend this bill to the House.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (4.55 p.m.): I rise also to speak in support of the Biodiscovery Bill 2004. Biodiscovery, being the search for active compounds in plants, animals and micro-organisms that can be developed into commercial products including medicine, is vitally important to Queensland. That is because nearly 50 per cent of Australia's plant species are found in this great state of ours, including more than 8,000 non-flowering plants and plant species.

I can still remember when I was very young that if I felt sick my mother would go to the herbal clinic and bring home some really weird looking herbal medicine for my consumption. I have eaten a lot of unnamd and untested plants and parts of animals. When I queried the effectiveness of those unorthodox treatments, my mother would reply, 'Mother knows best.'

An honourable member: As they do.

Mr CHOI: Yes. But I had to draw the line when she gave me a tonic made from rhino horn. Not being able to imagine how a rhino horn could be made into a drink, I flatly refused. I now deeply regret my rejection of her offer. It seems mother did know best. In fact, she was able to foretell the future as I have since found out that the rhino horn is very good for hair growth.

Plants, animals and micro-organisms have massive potential for medicine and other commercial products and we have only touched the surface of this massive industry. I believe that this bill will not only encourage a new industry in Queensland but will also improve our health and our quality of life. One of the potential problems of research into the biotechnology industry is the certainty of the origin of the biological material. This is critical when one considers that the average drug discovery and development times are between 10 years and 15 years. The cost varies considerably, but estimates generally lie between \$US200 million and \$US500 million and the odds of a product having commercial success range from one in 5,000 to one in 10,000. A lack of clear procedures for gaining access to genetic resources presents a major deterrent to those entities undertaking biodiscovery. That is why this bill, as presented by the minister, is absolutely critical to ensure that the supply is authentic and its origin is clearly defined.

This bill splits the responsibility of environmental and commercial issues between the two relevant portfolios. The authority to collect native biological material will be administered by the Hon. John Mickel, while the portfolio headed by the Hon. Tony McGrady will ensure that an equitable share of the benefits arising from biodiscovery is captured on behalf all Queenslanders.

The compliance, codes and collection protocols provided for in the bill that will govern the collection of native biological material for biodiscovery purposes will not only provide guidance to those collecting samples but will also support best practice in the industry. The bill requires that duplicate specimens of native biological material collected are returned to the states. This will increase the state's knowledge of its biodiversity.

In my electorate of Capalaba wildlife preservation is a significant issue. This bill provides an avenue for the wildlife within our bushlands and waterways to be better understood and consequently better preserved. Finally, the bill makes provision for biodiscovery plans so that the government will be apprised of the use planned for all samples collected, enabling it to negotiate a fair and equitable share of benefits for the Queensland community.

In closing, this bill does provide a very balanced approach to conserving nature and its responsible use. I take this opportunity to thank the smart minister of our government for his leadership in this regard. I am looking forward to the provision of a rhino horn tonic for the consumption of the honourable member for Sandgate and me.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (5.00 p.m.): I rise to join in giving the unanimous support that is apparent in the House this afternoon for the Biodiscovery Bill 2004. I compliment the minister for bringing this most important bill before the House as it provides clear guidelines to all companies interested in bioprospecting in Queensland. It is important that we try to ride this wave and that we try to avoid any potential confusion that may deter investors in this fantastic future industry. It should be noted that the bill has bipartisan support. It has the support of both parties and certainly the support of all of the members who have spoken so far.

The National Party and others have previously found it difficult to support environmental outcomes. That is because I believe they have difficulty quantifying the environment. They have difficulty putting a value on a clean environment. They have difficulty putting a dollar value on a beautiful, pristine world. However, in this case they are supporting this bill because even the National Party can see clear environmental outcomes as well as clear financial outcomes for the state of Queensland.

Queensland is known as a megadiverse region. There is more biodiversity in one square kilometre of the Daintree forest than in the entire North American continent. That biodiversity positions

Queensland very well in the growing bioprospecting industry. Our megadiversity, combined with our stable system of government and our high level of scientific infrastructure, puts Queensland at the cutting edge of bioprospecting in the world.

I was recently in New Zealand, where I spoke to members of the New Zealand trade association. They spoke in glowing terms about the partnership that has been signed between New Zealand and Queensland in the area of biodiscovery. This alliance between New Zealand and Queensland allows a synergy of effort that hopefully will allow Queensland and New Zealand to fight well above their weight in the international realm of bioprospecting. New Zealand, because of its climate, has specialist knowledge in the primary industries area and bioprospecting in the temperate climate. Queensland has specialist knowledge of the tropical climate. Hopefully together we can combine and be a one-stop shop for researchers, in the area of primary industries or bioprospecting generally, who are interested in getting compounds from either a tropical or a temperate climate.

I compliment the minister and other members who have spoken in support of this bill, because this will bring about a good outcome financially for Queensland and also give added impetus and motivation to what is occurring right across the state in attempting to protect a unique and diverse environment.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (5.04 p.m.): The Biodiscovery Bill aims to help regulate access to the state's unique biodiversity for the purpose of scientific research. I hope this bill succeeds in developing more biodiscovery to help biotechnology. I am not sure whether this bill should be in the portfolio of this minister or the Minister for the Environment. I am sure that this minister will work together with the EPA to ensure that matters of disagreement are quickly resolved so that we do not end up with demarcation disputes.

Mr McGrady: I give you a promise—a solemn promise.

Mr RICKUSS: I thank the minister. The possession of a biodiscovery collection authority removes the requirement for a permit under the Nature Conservation Act. However, to obtain a BCA one must apply to the EPA chief executive on the approved form. This is what I raised earlier with the involvement of the two departments—State Development and the EPA.

The benefit-sharing agreement is a very complex part of the legislation. It also takes in the Nature Conservation Act 1992 from the EPA, the Fisheries Act 1994 from DPIF and the Land Act from the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. Again, we have a large crossover of departments. Is this really the simplest and best way to legislate?

Monitoring and enforcement are the responsibility of the EPA, State Development, DPIF, DNRME, local government offices, et cetera. Is this a realistic approach, as in some areas in which this will be relevant it will be up to council officers and the like to be the responsible officer. Has the department consulted with the Queensland indigenous groups and councils to explain the Biodiscovery Bill and how it relates to them? I am sure that as this technology is advanced some of the discoveries that are made, especially in the Wet Tropics, where the indigenous groups are the custodians of large tracts of land, will be mind blowing. It is virtually an untapped resource, so whatever can be done to bring some simple, rational legislation to the Queensland parliament to help the biodiscovery industry thrive is to be supported. It is with some reservations that I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (5.07 p.m.): The purpose of the Biodiscovery Bill 2004 is to facilitate sustainable access to the state's native biodiversity for the purposes of biodiscovery and to ensure fair and equitable benefit sharing of these resources on behalf of Queenslanders. The biodiscovery collection authority will be administered by the Minister for the Environment, and the benefit-sharing agreement system will be administered by the Minister for State Development and will apply to those collections sourced from land and waters in Queensland.

The Beattie Labor government has been committed to the development of a Smart State economy and society because Queensland has tremendous opportunities to become an Asia Pacific hub for 21st century industries based on the biosciences. Queensland is home to more than 50 per cent of Australia's known flora and fauna. Enough is known for Australia to be regarded as one of the world's 12 megadiverse countries, but our scientists tell us that we still have a very great deal to learn. In fact Dr John Hooper, director of Queensland Museum's Centre for Biodiversity, believes we have identified fewer than 25 per cent of living creatures that inhabit Queensland. For example, in the past 15 years 3,500 species of sponges have been identified on the Great Barrier Reef, of which 60 per cent are new to science. Our ancient tropical forests and wetlands are other major sources of Queensland's biodiversity. As we have heard, in one hectare of rainforest in the Daintree in the state's far north there are more tree species than there are in all of North America.

Dr Hooper also points out that not only are we one of the most biodiverse regions on earth but also that most of our flora and fauna can be found nowhere else. This is a splendid natural endowment, but there is more. Australia is the only one of 12 megadiverse countries to have first-class infrastructure. That is, we have internationally recognised education systems, first-class research and development facilities and highly skilled people. Other members have mentioned these.

One of our Smart State centrepieces, however, is the \$105 million Queensland bioscience precinct here in Brisbane, and it is now home to more than 700 scientists. The establishment of this institute was a Beattie government initiative and it was a very big step towards creating a major biotechnology industry here, which is one of our top priorities.

A recent report suggests that, if the government continues to give the industry that level of priority, biotechnology will generate revenue of \$1 billion a year by 2010 and directly employ some 2,500 people. It has been estimated that by 2025 those figures could rise to an annual revenue of \$4 billion and the industry could be employing some 10,000 people.

We are also on the doorstep of the most rapidly growing economies in the world—those of Asia—and our links with that region's major centres are excellent. We seek collaboration in our research and development efforts both in Asia and throughout the rest of the world. The most basic level of collaboration is through bioprospecting, and the Queensland government has established ground rules for these organisations wishing to do so. Bioprospectors in Queensland undertake to share the benefits of their discoveries with the people of Queensland through the government. They are also bound to undertake their prospecting activities in an ecologically responsible manner given the unique and sometimes delicate environments in which they are working.

I think this bill will be great for Queensland. We are on the verge of a wonderful new industry in this state. I would like to join with previous members here in saying that we do have a smart minister in the Smart State, and I would like to commend the bill to the House.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (5.11 p.m): I rise to speak in support of the Biodiscovery Bill. This is a very important bill because there are a lot of people watching what we are doing with this bill here in Queensland. The world is watching Queensland. I have been speaking to people in the international academic environment of late who are acutely aware of the advances that we are making here in Queensland and the way in which we are basing ourselves here on a knowledge economy. This is a very fundamental construct of that knowledge economy that we are putting into place with this bill, because it is about making sure that we value the very important biological resources that we have and that we ensure that value is maintained and that there are processes to develop in a reasonable manner in the international environment these important resources through the great new technologies that are being developed in this state.

In supporting this bill, I wish to point out that Queensland is the most biodiverse state in Australia and home to 19 of Australia's 80 terrestrial bioregions and 17 of Australia's 60 marine bioregions. Whenever I travel around the state I am staggered by the different climes and the different marine environments. One only has to be aware of the mangrove regions throughout the state to have a sense of that. I am a great lover of mangroves. They are beautiful places. They are places where a great amount of life is generated and created. If we look just at the mangroves we can see how diverse Queensland is from the border to the Torres Strait region.

The markets for biodiversity are varied and range from pharmaceutical products to treat human diseases to bioremediation applications to enhance Queensland's existing industries. There are a number of steps in the process of delivering a biodiscovery product to market. These include collecting small samples of biodiversity, screening and testing the samples, identifying and analysing active compounds and optimising the potential of the compounds. We have a great bevy of Queensland scientists to undertake these activities as well as conducting field or clinical trials and manufacturing the end product ultimately in an industrial context.

The Biodiscovery Bill gives Queensland the opportunity to capture as many elements of the steps I have just described, thereby utilising and increasing the skills of our scientists, providing greater opportunities for more jobs and capturing a greater share of global research and development expenditure. This means a great deal to me as a local member, with institutions such as the Cavendish Road State High School, which has a specialisation in sciences. In fact, it has a great interest specifically in this area of bioresearch to see those young students doing experiments in genetics, et cetera in year 12. Some of them are moving on to do university subjects from school. It gives us great confidence that we will have in the future the scientists to work in these spheres. We have to also have confidence that these students will be able to be employed in the future. We have to ensure there are jobs for these kids coming through places like Cavendish Road State High School.

This is the sort of legislation that we need to put in place in Queensland to guarantee that, and it will do that. The provisions in the bill that will achieve this are those requiring entities undertaking biodiscovery using native biological materials sourced from Queensland to enter into a benefit sharing agreement with the state. Before a benefit sharing agreement may be entered into by the state, the entity must have an approved biodiscovery plan. The plan will include the entity's proposed commercialisation activities and the benefits it reasonably anticipates will be delivered to the state.

Only if the state is satisfied with the proposed level of benefits that will be returned to Queensland will it approve a biodiscovery plan. This will ensure that all Queenslanders get a share in benefits derived from our native biodiversity. To date there has been no statutory obligation on entities undertaking biodiscovery to enter into benefit sharing agreements with the state. Having said this, in the

absence of any statutory requirements, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, AIMS, BioProspect Ltd and EcoBiotics Ltd have already shown their good faith and entered into benefit sharing agreements with the Queensland government. Last year the Australian Institute of Marine Science signed a five-year memorandum of understanding with the United States's National Cancer Institute to examine Queensland biological samples for antitumour activity using the institute's world leading screening program, and this is also what this very important process is about. It is about having outcomes for humanity in terms of improving our life chances to deal with diseases such as cancer which has touched so many of our family members and so many people in our communities.

Should any sample reveal promising leads, AIMS has the right to patent that intellectual property if appropriate. AIMS will therefore retain control of the further development of the sample so that at least part of the product's developmental work will take place in Queensland. Through the benefit sharing agreement with the state, Queensland has the opportunity not only to participate in the development of a new drug but also to share in the benefits of a drug if a drug is brought to the market.

This is just one example of the enormous opportunities that biodiscovery has for Queensland. Benefit sharing agreements will allow organisations to attract a greater share of the research and development dollar to Queensland as the agreements demonstrate that their biodiscoveries involve biodiversity that was sourced legally with the consent of the state.

Through initiatives such as this, the Biodiscovery Bill will position Queensland as a regional leader in the supply of natural products for new pharmaceutical, agricultural and industrial products and boost the state's enviable biotechnology research and development base. To date, no other Australian state or territory has addressed biodiscovery in such a consistent and comprehensive manner. Once again, Queensland is leading the nation.

This bill is regulating cutting-edge science to ensure that the use of Queensland's native biodiversity is sustainable and delivers equitable returns to the state and therefore to all Queenslanders. But there is much more to be done. Indeed, the final phase of the developmental process, I think, is a sphere which we will, as a state, have to focus a lot more on in the future. We are obviously aware of the importance of the industrial applications of these technologies. One of the constraints that we have had historically in Queensland and Australia generally has been the restrictions that we face in terms of having an adequate capital market to sustain the implementation or application of these technologies. That is something that we hope can be focused on more in the future so that these technologies can be developed here in Queensland right through to their industrial application. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (5.21 p.m.): I, along with other members in the House, rise to support the Biodiscovery Bill 2004. The Biodiscovery Bill has been developed to capture the natural resource advantage Queensland has by providing streamlined and regulated access to biodiversity on state land and in Queensland waters whilst ensuring an economic return for the state.

The bill has four key objectives: to facilitate access to minimal quantities of native biological resources on state land and in Queensland waters for biodiscovery purposes; to encourage the development of value-added biodiscovery research and commercialisation in Queensland; to ensure that the state, for the benefit of all Queenslanders, obtains a fair and equitable share in the benefits flowing from biodiscovery; and to improve our knowledge of Queensland's biodiversity for better conservation outcomes. The bill sets up a legislative framework to carry out those objectives. It proposes a two-pronged approach that will have a single regime authorising collection of native biological resources for biodiscovery on state land and in Queensland waters and, secondly, mandatory commercial benefit sharing agreements with the state government for the use of native biological resources sourced from Queensland.

Many other speakers have spoken about the legislative framework set out in this bill but, like the member for Thuringowa and the member for Capalaba before me, I want to speak on the practical effects, or the intents and purposes, of the bill. The member for Thuringowa spoke of his mother's use of native plants for medicinal purposes in his household, and the member for Capalaba spoke about his mother's use of herbs for medicinal purposes for cures within his household.

Last Saturday night I was at the Mater Medical Research Institute's annual dinner. The guest speaker was Hugh Lunn. Hugh Lunn had the whole room entertained with anecdotes of his mother's medical remedies. He made the point that he had come from a childhood where medicine was administered by his mother to medicine now being mainstream medicine. I, too, grew up in a household where we rarely visited the doctor, but my mother had a remedy and cure for all of our childhood illnesses, from putting calamine lotion on your chicken pox to using laundry blue on bee stings to the aloe vera plant being used for every cut, scratch and itch.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: Olive oil for earaches.

Mrs LAVARCH: Olive oil, yes, warmed up on a teaspoon—

A government member: Aloe vera for sunburn.

Mrs LAVARCH: And aloe vera for sunburn, yes. But one has to ask the question: where did our mothers get the information from?

A government member: Their mothers.

Mrs LAVARCH: And where did their mothers get that information from? I was actually taken by a World Health Organisation fax sheet which stated—

It has been estimated that some 80 per cent of the world's population rely on traditional medicine, either because it is cheaper and/or more easily accessible or because it is more culturally appropriate.

It goes on to say—

The use of traditional medicine has historically been on a small local scale, either self-administered or provided by traditional healers, often without any state involvement at all.

This leads me to the remarks I wanted to make in the debate this afternoon. It is in relation to how our traditional indigenous knowledge, held within the state of Queensland, will be treated practically by the legislative framework set up by this bill. The value and significance of traditional knowledge handed down over thousands of years by the indigenous people of Queensland is recognised. I want to stress the point that it is recognised and appreciated by the Queensland state government. Traditional knowledge must be protected for the benefit of traditional owners and all Queenslanders as the benefits of biodiscovery are reaped in the new development of new products and resources.

At the international level there has been widespread and increasing interest regarding the interaction of traditional knowledge and intellectual property. This has resulted in the World Intellectual Property Organisation—or WIPO—establishing a special intergovernmental committee to actively address the interaction between genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore with conventional intellectual property systems. The international Convention on Biological Diversity encourages the protection of indigenous knowledge, promotion of the wider application of this knowledge with the consent of traditional knowledge holders and equitable sharing of benefits with traditional knowledge holders when this knowledge has been relied upon.

Queensland has gone further than any other Australian jurisdiction to ensure that benefits arising from biodiscovery flow on to traditional knowledge holders. The Code of Ethical Practice for Biotechnology in Queensland states—

Where in the course of biodiscovery and research we obtain and use traditional knowledge from indigenous persons or communities, we will negotiate reasonable benefit sharing arrangements with those persons and communities.

In other words, the Queensland government will not enter into a benefit sharing agreement with an entity unless it subscribes to the Code of Ethical Practice for Biotechnology in Queensland. The government of Queensland is serious about protecting the natural resources of Queensland and has acted decisively to do so.

This brings me to an illustration and a comparison between what will happen under this legislative framework and what happened in relation to the use of the smoke bush plant in Western Australia. In an article titled 'Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Native Title', written by Kirsten Howden and published in the University of New South Wales Law Journal in 2001, she makes the point that there is no case law to illustrate even partly successful attempts by indigenous Australians to protect their environmental, medical or nutritional traditional knowledge. She used the example of an agreement signed between the Western Australian government and AMRAD, a Victorian pharmaceutical company, ensuring AMRAD's access to a plant known as the smoke bush plant. Smoke bush, as I understand it, is a part of the banksia family. It is a wild flower growing in Western Australia. This plant known as smoke bush may prove useful in developing an anti-AIDS drug. In this article she recounts that there is no provision in this agreement for benefits to flow to indigenous communities living on or owning land in the area where the smoke bush is found, despite the fact that smoke bush is known to be used medicinally by the indigenous people concerned.

This situation raised a lot of issues in relation to patents and whether a community's knowledge about medicinal plants is considered intellectual property. I will not go into that this afternoon because that issue comes under the Commonwealth's patent legislation. Responsibility for intellectual property law and how traditional indigenous knowledge interacts with conventional legislation in this area lies with the Commonwealth government.

The Commonwealth needs to take a lead in addressing traditional knowledge and its likely interaction with intellectual property with the cooperation of all states and territories. The Queensland government will continue to work with the Commonwealth, international agencies such as the United Nations and traditional owners to develop systems through which the value of traditional knowledge is recognised and protected for the benefit of the knowledge holders. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.30 p.m.): There are a couple of issues that I wish to raise in relation to the Biodiscovery Bill. The comment has been made by a number of other speakers that for many in the community who recommend natural remedies it is a breath of fresh air that we are focusing on the contribution that plants, animals and micro-organisms can have in terms of human treatment. Those who adhere strictly to natural remedies would say that these are the only things for

healing. It is an exciting area of science and one which I believe will illustrate how much knowledge is there waiting for us to explore in terms of the interaction between us and our environment.

We had a weekend science school at the university in my electorate. There were two major focuses at the university: environmental and process engineering. There is a band of volunteers who work as mentors, leaders and teachers at this science school run for high school students. Teams of three or four students are giving various areas to investigate. One of those areas was 'not just mud'. This group of students investigated the mangroves. The member for Greenslopes was talking about just how interesting this plant is. In real scientific terms they had a superficial look at the property of the mangroves and the mangrove mud. This illustrated some of the opportunities available which are touched on in this bill.

The bill provides that the EPA chief executive who has the responsibility to accept or refuse an application for a collection authority has to respond within 40 business days after receiving either the application or the additional information that is requested by the CEO in relation to the initial application. The bill requires that if a decision is not made within that 40-day period it is a deemed refusal.

I have raised this concern before. I do so today only to point out that a deemed refusal when an application has not been processed within a set time does not place any constraint on the decision maker to make timely decisions. That is not a criticism of the current CEO, past or future CEOs but an observation that deemed approvals are a much stronger constraining factor on the decision maker physically considering the information and making an informed decision. Non-action and a deemed approval is a much more motivating. A deemed refusal really is of no constraint or motivation to the decision maker.

Within the legislation there is a monitoring and enforcement section. That always has the potential to significantly impact on people's freedoms, rights and liberties. However, I wish to place on the record my concern about those who will be eligible to be appointed as inspectors. The category of people includes: a Public Service employee, a local government employee, a person holding an appropriate accreditation by the National Association of Testing Authorities Australia, ABN 59004379748, or another person prescribed under a regulation. I thank the minister for the qualifier that whoever is appointed by the chief executive must be an appropriately qualified person.

My concern, though, is the potential devolution yet again of an activity to local government. I seek a clarification from the minister, where that devolution is used, whether the local authorities will be appropriately compensated to allow for the time and effort that the local government employee is required to put in to act as an agent for the state government.

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I trust local government implicitly. What local government is finding is that, as devolution occurs, if resources are not matched their staff are more and more being asked to do extra work without any corresponding funding to employ more full-time staff or to compensate for employing more part-time staff. It is not a matter of wanting local government employees to do the work, it is whether they will adequately recompense local government to allow a local government, large or small, to employ extra staff in order to carry out this monitoring and enforcement role. It does not appear that they have the ability to refuse to do it.

I imagine that it would be the weeds inspector or the rural parks officer who would do this. Different local authorities have different designated staff. However, I know that in rural and regional local authorities, particularly those that have a significant rural area within their jurisdiction, the staff are already fully occupied on weeds management and pest animal management inspections and those sorts of activities. So devolving another responsibility may be fine so long as it is accompanied by appropriate resourcing and financial recompense.

The other issue that I wanted to express some concern about is the breadth of the FOI exemption. It appears that all records in relation to benefit sharing agreements will be exempt from FOI. Whilst commercial-in-confidence information can be justified in terms of the investment that a commercial entity and perhaps government will make in their investigations, it is concerning that even a record kept by a department about a collection authority in the broader sense of the word appears to be exempt from FOI examination.

I put on the record my concern that it is broad. I believe, as has been said before, there is general support for the beginning of this biodiscovery journey that we are making in Queensland and Australia. I look forward to the discoveries that are made and the benefits that humans can enjoy because of the opportunities offered by our plants and our micro-organisms. I raise those concerns with the minister and look forward to any information he can give.

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) (5.38 p.m.): At the outset I express my thanks and appreciation to all of those members who have participated in this debate this afternoon. In particular, I would like to thank the shadow minister and members of the opposition for the way in which they have supported this proposed legislation. I would also thank the Independents who have participated in the debate. Above all else, I express my gratitude

to the members of my caucus committee for the contribution they have made over a long time to this legislation that is before the Queensland parliament today. There comes a time when people feel an air of excitement in this chamber. I think today is one of those occasions. What we are doing is bringing in legislation which is fairly unique not just in Australia but indeed around the world.

What has touched me this afternoon is that it is quite apparent to me that all members who have participated in this debate have in fact done their homework, read the bill and asked the relevant questions. So it is with a great deal of satisfaction that I stand here tonight to wind up this debate.

There are many people in our community who have not quite yet understood what biotechnology is. It is very difficult to start a discussion about the benefits of this new emerging industry. But when we start to explain to them the benefits of those people trying to secure cures for cancer, they start to take a new interest. What we as legislators have to do is start preaching the gospel, if you like, of biotechnology right around this state. There is one way in which we can do this, and that is to do a similar exercise that is currently taking place now with the ethanol bus—that is, to start a biobus and take it up and down the coast of Queensland and of course in the interior to explain to people what the benefits are—because in years to come, unless we have this issue high on the political agenda, future governments could take the decision not to fund this new and emerging industry in the same way as the Beattie government has been doing over the last number of years.

Many of the issues which I was going to address in my closing speech have been articulated by the various members who have participated in this debate. When we have legislation such as this, it does not just arrive here on a sheet of paper. A great deal of consultation takes place and there is input from many organisations. A moment ago I mentioned my caucus committee. It has had input into this, but so too have the many universities and other learning institutions right around this state. In fact, when the Premier and I went to BIO2004 earlier this year we were again able to tell the delegates there and the various people that we met that this legislation was about to be debated in our parliament. I have to say that people were very impressed.

The shadow minister raised a number of relevant and important questions, questions which have added to this debate. The first question he asked was if at the whim of individuals the legislation can be changed. I think that was the gist of the question he asked. What we have to establish is that the paramount principle of this legislation is that the taking of samples is ecologically sustainable. Therefore, there has to be the ability to cancel the collection authority where, for instance, conditions change and the taking is no longer sustainable. So the issue of sustainability and the decision to cancel an authority will not be taken on a whim. I hope that is a satisfactory answer to the question the member asked. The second issue he asked about—and other members have too—was commercial-in-confidence and if we are going a bit far. There might be a chance that, if information is subject to FOI, it may disclose a secret site or that a company may be prevented from patenting something at a later stage because it has been available to the public. We have to be careful. We are not running a secret society; but, at the same time, by the time it gets to the stage that we are talking about, as other members have stated, a great deal of money has been invested. It is important that we do have some commercial-in-confidence in our transactions.

The shadow minister also mentioned the fact that there is a trend of reversing the onus of proof. This has been raised many times in this parliament. When I was Minister for Mines, the same issue was contained in the safety legislation that I introduced. Somebody somewhere has to be responsible for actions. I have to say that this is not new in this legislation. It happens in many industries today. The shadow minister also said that there is no opportunity to appeal or to seek a review. My answer to that is that there is always the opportunity for judicial review. I give the commitment to the opposition today that we will come back in 12 months time and see how this legislation is performing. I gave a similar commitment when I was Mines Minister to Mr Rowell when he was the shadow minister. If there are some areas which need amending, we are more than happy to discuss that and take the necessary actions.

With regard to the member for Tablelands, I was quite impressed with her contribution. But once again she raised the issue of multinationals, as she would. She raised the issue of exporting drugs offshore. The answer to that is that at the present time there is nothing to prevent the state's native biological materials from being exported and used internationally to produce these new drugs without any benefits being retained to the state. What this legislation is all about is giving the taxpayers of this state—the men, women and kids—some return. The reality is that to exploit some of the newer drugs costs many millions and millions of dollars, and maybe that sort of capital is not available in this country and maybe we do need some overseas investment. Therefore, that is the reason why some of this will be going offshore. But at the same time and for the first time ever Queensland taxpayers will be getting some return.

The member for Tablelands then asked if this will require new inspectors, and the member for Gladstone and other members asked similar questions. The reality is that there are not going to be hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people queuing with dozers to go into national parks. We are talking about a number of organisations and companies which we can currently count on the fingers and

thumb of one hand. The other thing is that they are taking minute samples, so there is no way that dozers are going to be moving in or anything like it. We will obviously have inspectors.

The member for Gladstone raised the question of local authorities. I spent 17 years in local government and six of those years as a mayor. What we have to understand is that there is a bit of give and take and that the state government does—and the Minister for Local Government will tell you—give local councils large amounts of money. In many cases—in almost all cases—it serves them well, too, to ensure that the right thing is being done in their area. So we do not propose to pay or reimburse local councils for this particular work that they will do. It is not as if they are going to need to assist hundreds and thousands of times. We are talking about a very small number of people.

The member for Tablelands also asked if this legislation concerns only native species. The answer is yes. This legislation is about indigenous species, species which are peculiar to this continent. It does not concern imported species or fauna which have come in from other countries. These exotic species may be exploited, but they are not within the terms of the convention that has been agreed to internationally. This is what this legislation is all about—implementing the convention that is already in place.

The member for Lockyer, who is still in the chamber, talked about the various government agencies. We are trying to get a one-stop shop. There will be times when the EPA and the Department of State Development and Innovation and other government instrumentalities will be involved, but it is a matter of working together. I always say to the people who work in the Department of State Development and Innovation that they do not work for the Department of State Development and Innovation; they work for the Queensland government. We have to start working as a team and I am sure that, in this regard, that will be the case.

I thought that the member for Burdekin made a good contribution. I know that she had to leave to catch a plane, but basically I think she was asking whether we would be missing out on capturing benefits from the materials sourced on private land. Again, that is covered in the legislation. I did imply that in, say, 12 months time we will come back and we will look at how this legislation is affecting private land-holders. The reality is that if someone comes onto my property and discovers something, then we should be able to enter into some sort of an agreement.

The member for Gladstone asked whether a decision that is not made within 40 days is classified as a refusal. The answer to that question is that it cannot be considered to have been an approval, because the decision of the EPA CEO is to ensure that the activities are sustainable. So it is a matter of coming back. This is new legislation. It is unique legislation. The commitment that I have already given to the official opposition is that if there are any problems being experienced, we will come back and revisit the legislation.

In conclusion, I believe that those members who participated in this debate today will in years to come consider themselves to be part of the new frontier. We are just scratching the surface of this industry. I have said many times before that the mining industry, the agricultural industry and to some extent the tourism industry have served this state well for many, many years and they will continue to serve us well for many, many years to come. But biotechnology is a new industry. This is all about what the Smart State stands for. It is gratifying for me to be able to come into this parliament with this legislation and know that it has the support of both sides. Nobody in this chamber today has attempted to be party political. I believe that the members who participated in the debate spoke in the interests of Queensland. So to all the members who participated in this debate today, I say thankyou. To all of those people, particularly John Glaister and his staff from the department who have pioneered this legislation, I want to record in *Hansard* that the government appreciates the work that they have done. To the various vice-chancellors and the other people working at the universities who have had input into this legislation, I thank them. To my own personal staff who have burned the midnight oil on many occasions to ensure that this legislation came here today, I thank them, too. It is all very well for the minister to turn up here and bathe in the glory of the legislation, but there are so many people who have worked hard at bringing this bill to fruition and I want to record my personal thanks to all of them. But above all else, to those members of my caucus committee who have worked long and hard and who have had input into this legislation, I thank them because without them the legislation would not be here today. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) in charge of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mr McGRADY (5.55 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

- 1 Clause 9—
At page 12, line 27, 'Constitution of Queensland'—
omit, insert—
'Commonwealth Constitution'.
Amendment agreed to.
Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.
Clauses 10 to 136, as read, agreed to.
Schedule, as read, agreed to.
Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

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

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) (5.56 p.m.): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 31 August 2004.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) (5.57 p.m.): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Darling Downs School Sport

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (5.57 p.m.): Just this month Darling Downs School Sport celebrated 25 years of sport for primary and secondary schoolchildren in Toowoomba and the Darling Downs. It has been a magnificent achievement and I would like to recognise some of the people who have given so much of their life and their professional knowledge to see that the young people of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs had every opportunity to participate in sport, to compete in sport and for many of them to move on to elite sport at junior and senior levels.

The first committee meeting of Darling Downs School Sport was held on 30 June 1979. Those in attendance from the primary schools were Graham Somerfield, Noel Stephenson, Ian Dumigan, Terry McNelly, Linda Hass and Betty King. From the secondary schools there was Ray Mullins, Wayne Brandon, Ross Matthews-Fredericks, Allan Edwards, Ray Pendrigh, and Jim Voght, who at the time was the school sport officer. Also there was Geoff Horibrook from the Queensland Sport Council and Frank Killoran of the Queensland Sport Council.

Throughout the years there have been a number of regional sports officers who have made a major contribution. I would like to recognise Jim Voght, the original sports officer, John Dixon, Betty King, Dave Hazzard and the current sports officer, Wayne Beeston, who has served loyally and well since 1996.

I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* the list of some 61 young Australians who have come through the ranks of Darling Downs School Sport and have made it to senior level for Australia, be that at the Olympic Games, the Commonwealth Games, in World Cup test matches or in various other major international sports events.

Mr Reeves: There are some good names amongst them.

Mr HORAN: There certainly are.

Leave granted.

Queensland Government
Department of Education
Darling Downs School Sport Board 25th Anniversary Celebrations

AUSTRALIAN REPS—SENIOR

Alderman, Brett (Harristown SHS)—Volleyball, Olympics
Anlezark, Justin (Blackbutt SS)—Track & Field, Olympics
Ashley, Vernon (Toowoomba Grammar)—Paralympian 1989
Bell, Karen (Pilton SS)—Equestrian, World Cup Championships

Brennan, Michael (Our Lady of Lourdes & Toowoomba SHS)—Hockey, Olympics
 Brown, Donna (Quinalow SS, Pittsworth SHS)—Basketball, Olympics
 Brown, Hope—Hockey
 Bodimeade, Lee (Warwick SHS)—Hockey, Olympics
 Butler, Dean (Warwick SHS)—Hockey, Commonwealth Games
 Cuddihy, Tim (Middle Ridge SS)—Archery, Olympics
 Edwards, Melissa (Harristown SHS)—Softball, Queensland
 Elvery, Nathan (Cent Heights SHS)—Futsal
 Faulkner, Suzie—Hockey, Olympics
 Freeman, Cathy (Fairholme College)—Track & Field, Olympics
 Garard, Brendan (Toowoomba Grammar)—Hockey, Olympics
 Gitsham, Adam (Pittsworth SHS)—Shooting, Olympics
 Gleeson, Matt (St Mary's College)—Polo Crosse
 Gordon, Ken (Pittsworth SHS)—Track & Field, Commonwealth Games
 Grinham, Rachael (Cent Heights SHS)—Squash, Commonwealth Games
 Grinham, Natalie (Cent Heights SHS)—Squash, Commonwealth Games
 Gurski, Troy (St Mary's College)—Indoor Cricket
 Harch, Lana (Lockyer District SHS)—Soccer
 Head, Tony (Harristown SHS)—AWD Cricket, Athletics, Volleyball
 Hepple, Liz (Fairholme College)—Cycling, Olympics
 Hohn, Mark (Pittsworth SHS)—Rugby League
 Hohnke, Olivia (Toowoomba SHS)—Soccer, Olympics
 Horan, Tim (Toowoomba East SS)—Rugby Union, World Cup
 Hudson, Nikki (Cent Heights SHS)—Hockey, Olympics
 Irving, Nicole (Glennie School)—Swimming, Commonwealth Games
 Jones, Genaint (Harristown SHS)—Cricket, England
 Kratzmann, Mark (Toowoomba East SS)—Tennis
 Lange, Darren (Wilsonton SS & Tmba SHS)—Swimming, Olympics
 Leicht, Anthony (St Mary's)—Basketball (National Umpire)
 Lietsch, Danielle (Fairholme College)—Synchronised Swimming, Olympics
 Little, Jason (Toowoomba Grammar)—Rugby Union
 Love, Martin (Toowoomba Grammar)—Cricket
 Marsh, Damien (Goondiwindi SHS)—Athletics, Commonwealth Games
 Murray, Mark (Pittsworth SHS)—Rugby League
 O'Davis, Robbie (Cent Heights SHS)—Rugby League
 O'Neil, Nathan (Toowoomba Grammar)—Cycling, Olympics
 Pearce, Karen (Harristown SHS)—Golf
 Pearce, Craig (Toowoomba East SS)—Touch Football, World Cup
 Price, Steven (Harristown SHS)—Rugby League
 Reuter, Karla (Toowoomba SHS)—Soccer, Olympics
 Rillie, John (Harristown SHS)—Basketball, Olympics
 Ritchie, Greg (Toowoomba SHS)—Cricket
 Saunders, Glynis (Middle Ridge SS)—Track & Field, Olympics
 Schloss, Michael (Harristown SHS)—Volleyball, Referee Olympics
 Schloss, Janet (Harristown SHS)—Volleyball
 Seccombe, Wade (Toowoomba Grammar)—Cricket
 Shearer, Dale (Warwick SHS)—Rugby League, World Cup
 Skirling, Angie (Glennie School)—Hockey, Olympics
 Smith, Karen (Wilsonton SS & Tmba SHS)—Hockey, Olympics
 Stewart, Darren (Toowoomba East SS)—Swimming, Commonwealth Games
 Suey, Nicky (Toowoomba SHS)—Touch Football
 Turvey, Claire (Glennie School)—Shooting, Commonwealth Games
 Young, Scott (Toowoomba Grammar)—Rugby Union Referee
 Wade, Troy (Warwick SHS)—Polo Crosse, World Cup
 Wade, Karl (Warwick SHS)—Polo Crosse, World Cup
 Ward, Neil (Toowoomba SHS)—Touch Football, World Cup
 Webke, Shane (Leyburn SS)—Rugby League

Mr HORAN: A lot of thanks are owed to a lot of people: to the various committees, to the various teachers and principals of the schools that have been involved over the 25 years and particularly to all of the volunteers—they are mostly teachers—to those who have helped with coaching and administration and to those people over the years who have acted as billets. We no longer have the system of billeting, but over many years thousands of people have provided accommodation, either on the Darling Downs or in other regions of Queensland, to enable these young children to compete in various parts of the state.

I believe that sport is one of the most important things for our young people. It teaches them so much. It teaches them so much about the enjoyment of life, about teamwork, about discipline and about commitment. It teaches them about humility in winning and graciousness in defeat. It is probably one of the best preparations for life. If there is anything we as a parliament can do to help people in their sporting endeavours and to help all of these volunteers and teachers to maintain a strong sporting feeling amongst our schools and our young people, we should do it because it is for the good of our young people.

Canossa Aged Care Complex

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (6.00 p.m.): Since 1996 I have been working as a volunteer and pastoral care worker at the Canossa Aged Care Complex at Oxley in my electorate of Mount Ommaney. There are many volunteers, called the Friends of Canossa, who give their time and energy to help staff at the complex and to provide friendship and company to residents of this establishment. Although I am limited to giving only a small amount of time on a Sunday morning, other volunteers give a few days a week to assist with lunch and dinner times, singalongs, activities and events, and otherwise just spend some time with people who do not have the mobility and friendships that we take for granted.

Recently, Canossa opened a sensory garden in an unused space next to the hostel section known as Verona Villa. A local hardware group called Bunnings at Oxley provided some materials and willing workers to help complete the garden. It is a lovely sanctuary where residents can get some fresh air, safely go for a short walk, tend the small herb and flower gardens or just sit peacefully in quiet reflection.

On 8 May this year the band of volunteers were asked to assist to conduct the afternoon tea stall at the village fair held in the Canossa grounds. The purpose of the fair was to promote the volunteer service and promote goodwill and a positive image for Canossa in the local community.

Every second month the editing team, including Agnes Fryars, Lucy Kert, Kerry Howie, Marianne Bubb and Mary Goddard, put out a newsletter for all volunteers to keep them up to date about volunteering and events at Canossa. Kerry Howie has the huge task of coordinating volunteers and keeping them up to date and informed. There are always regular orientation programs for new volunteers, occupational health and safety training and other training including fire safety, feeding of residents, wheelchair use and infection control. Debriefing sessions are also organised regularly for pastoral care workers by Sister Lucy Kert, who looks after this side of the Friends of Canossa.

The volunteer program is working well, and new volunteers are still being recruited. They all recognise that it is a long-term commitment and they enjoy the contact with residents through the various roles they play. Some say that it is very rewarding to be able to be useful in a very busy environment such as this. Although many families of residents visit the complex on a regular basis, there are some residents who have only the staff and the Canossan sisters to talk to them. Volunteers help to fill that gap and ensure that no-one is left out.

It is great to see such a well-oiled volunteer system working to support staff and the local community. Having this network also ensures that the views of the community are taken into consideration regarding the operation of the complex, and any ideas for enhancements are listened to. I think that all hospitals and aged care complexes should have that community ownership to make them work successfully.

Mental Health Association, Gold Coast

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (6.03 p.m.): I draw the attention of the House to the plight of the Gold Coast branch of the Mental Health Association, which will be forced to close on 30 September this year because Queensland Health will not continue the funding necessary to keep this branch open. My colleague Bruce Flegg, the member for Moggill, recognised the urgent need for funding for this organisation earlier today in the House. According to staff member Gabrielle Savige, 10 support groups are run by this organisation; however, another 20 non-government groups use its facilities. Around 10 of these attend on a weekly basis. The other 10 meet once per month. Approximately 3,500 people file through the doors each year requiring assistance. This does not take into account the countless phone calls.

Located centrally in Southport, the Mental Health Association is the first port of call for many people in emergency situations wanting to access services, support groups, medical assistance and the like. It is important to note that there is no other service on the Gold Coast that provides the same services.

The support group caters to a broad range of disorders including eating, obsessive compulsive, post-traumatic and multiple personality disorders, anxiety, bipolar and depression. When one looks at the invaluable services provided by this Gold Coast branch, coupled with the fact it is asking for only \$65,000 in funding for an entire year, one cannot help but ask: why is the state government denying people on the Gold Coast access to services that are critical to their wellbeing and state of mind? Why is the Gold Coast being punished once again by the state government with withdrawal of these services? Is it not enough for this heartless government to starve us of extra funds for our homeless, even though it acknowledges that the Gold Coast has the highest rate of youth homelessness in the state?

Staff are deeply concerned with what will happen to the support groups and their participants—people like Angela, which is not her true name. Angela is in her mid-thirties. She was extroverted and high achieving as a schoolgirl. She married young and was in an abusive relationship for four years.

Since then she has suffered depression. Most GPs do not have time to spend with her and prescribe different medications which help her to some degree but stifle her spontaneity. Psychiatrists helped but were too medication oriented. Many psychiatrists are not accepting new patients, which created problems as she moved house. The mental health teams at the Tweed and Gold Coast are now, due to increased demands, more involved with emergency situations. When someone in need rings these units, they are so stretched the person is often asked, 'Is this an emergency?', or, 'Are you suicidal?'

Angela's lifeline was the Mental Health Association at Southport. Here she found compassion, fellowship, understanding and support. This gave her more hope and help than the multitude of prescription drugs. If this organisation is closed, where will Angela go? There are thousands of Angelas in our community. Please help them. I call upon this government to reverse its decision and continue with the \$65,000 funding per year—a small amount compared to organisations in Brisbane that provide a mental health service.

Counter-Terrorism

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (6.06 p.m.): The purpose of the opposition is to monitor the performance of the government and present itself as the alternative government. The National Party opposition continually provides evidence that it is not ready to govern this magnificent state of Queensland. The shadow ministers' knowledge, or lack thereof, is regularly exposed in this House. Many of them are shadow ministers in both title and action.

I draw the attention of honourable members to the dissenting report of the shadow minister for police and corrective services, the honourable Vaughan Johnson. The shadow minister demonstrates his lack of knowledge of the Police portfolio when he criticises the budget for the Counter Terrorism Coordination Unit. The shadow minister assumes incorrectly that this is the only union within the Queensland Police Service that is involved in the fight against terrorism.

The counter-terrorism unit is responsible for coordinating a whole-of-government response to terrorism. All police in Queensland have a responsibility in the fight against terrorism. The officers of the Queensland Police Service do not share the shadow minister's silo mentality. I well remember an incident a few years ago when an attentive and alert traffic police officer was responsible for breaking an interstate crime network involved in the catching and transporting of illegal—that is, undersize and female—crabs. There are numerous examples of police with a particular primary responsibility in one area solving a crime related to another area because of the overarching nature of their oath of office.

There are, however, a significant number of police who have as their primary role the fight against terrorism. I would like to now educate the shadow minister and hope to contribute to his ongoing growth. Within the Queensland Police Service there are a number of units that have a significant role to play in the fight against terrorism: the Security Intelligence Branch, which has primary roles for protective security and intelligence gathering; the Special Emergency Response Team, which has a primary role of containing and resolving any terrorist incident; the Explosive Ordnance Response Team, which has the difficult and risky role of identifying and rendering safe suspect and explosive devices; and the Public Safety Response Team, which has the role of providing specialist crowd control skills which can assist in coordinating activities in the event of a critical incident. These are a few of the specialist squads whose primary role is the battle against terrorism. This is over and above the thousands of general duties police, the hundreds of traffic police and the thousands of detectives who daily interact with members of the public and are constantly vigilant for any sign of terrorist related activity.

Unlike the phantom shadow minister, I appreciate the massive and coordinated array of personnel and skills that the Queensland Police Service brings to bear on the fight against terrorism. I thank those officers for their ongoing efforts to protect Queensland. I wish to also make mention of personnel in other departments such as the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Queensland Emergency Services and the Queensland Ambulance Service, and the volunteers in the State Emergency Service who also contribute to Queensland's preparation to prevent and respond to terrorist incidents.

Unemployment, Burnett Electorate

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (6.09 p.m.): Queensland may well have a 5.7 per cent unemployment rate which is one of the lowest in Australia, but I would like to bring the attention of members of the House to the fact that the Burnett experiences probably the highest unemployment rate in Australia—over 13 per cent. As I have mentioned before, it is a disgrace on me and it is also a disgrace on the other members of this House.

The message that I bring from the primary producers and business owners, and specifically the Bundaberg fruit and vegetable growers, the horticulturists, is that if Mr Beattie's Labor government really wanted to solve the unemployment problem it should stop throwing red tape and unfair state government taxes and charges at our primary producers and businesses. I refer specifically to payroll tax.

I have spoken to horticultural producers who are involved in a labour intensive industry. They source a large number of locals from surrounding shires for employment and they create jobs for people who would otherwise be on the dole. MacLennan Nominees are local Wallaville citrus producers and are just one of the many businesses feeling the impact of an unfair payroll tax. During the picking season, from April to October, the MacLennans average between 70 and 80 employees, and in the off season, between November and March, they average 20 to 30 employees. Needless to say, their wages bill is in excess of \$1 million per year and is rising. But thanks to the state government's tax system their payroll tax invoice amounted to around \$15,000 for the last financial year. The senseless part of this is that they were taxed \$15,000 just because their wages bill exceeded the exemption threshold of \$850,000.

The effect that this payroll tax is having on our employment, or rather unemployment, is quite obvious and devastating. In their attempt to reduce payroll tax, our local producers are constantly trying to keep their wages bill below the \$850,000 cut-off point. So, instead of employing extra workers, employers are thinking twice—and maybe three and four times—before putting on new workers and employing unemployed locals. They say that necessity is the mother of invention. It certainly is in this case. The MacLennans have been forced to develop an orchard thinning machine which, unfortunately, as well as thinning out the trees in the orchards, has thinned out 15 jobs. So 15 locals from one farm have found themselves back on the dole queue due to this payroll tax. Who knows how many more will find themselves in the same situation next year?

Primary producers and small businesses are battling forces of nature, the markets and this Labor government while trying to create jobs and wealth for communities all over Queensland. They are being squeezed enough as it is by rising wages and running costs without having the extra burden of a tax for employing staff and contributing to the economy of the state.

Time expired.

Death of Mr G. Tracey

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (6.12 p.m.): It is often said no-one is indispensable as a justification for unpalatable decisions or as a way of reminding us to keep our egos in check. But it is not true: we are all special and unique individuals and some of us have knowledge that is indeed indispensable not just for their own local circle but also for the world. One such person I have been privileged to know for some 20 years is rainforest ecologist Geoff Tracey whose funeral I attended in his home town of Yungaburra on 3 August. There was also no need to keep Geoff's ego in check because he was a very humble person, never happier than when he was sharing his vastly intimate knowledge of the rainforest he loved—a privilege I experienced many times, inspiring my own awe and love of our tropical forests.

Many of Geoff's friends joined his loving wife, Reinhild, and children, Bernard, Deiter and Karen, and the moving eulogy was given by another legendary figure of rainforest knowledge and conservation, his close friend of 40 years, Peter Stanton. Thank you, Peter, for reminding us all why Geoff was so loved and respected. Peter outlined Geoff's many achievements which were recognised with an Order of Australia honour in 1996. His most significant was undoubtedly his partnership with Professor Len Webb in the groundbreaking mapping of the tropical rainforest into its 15 different types and completely revising our understanding of the origin and nature of Australian rainforests. Their work for the federal government in drawing up the boundaries of the World Heritage listing of the north Queensland Wet Tropics forest was also invaluable.

Working in the rainforests was not just a job for Geoff; it was his passion. When he retired from the CSIRO in 1991, he became the driving force behind a number of tree planting programs including the shire based Wet Tropics tree planting scheme for displaced timberworkers and TREAT, Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands—a voluntary organisation that has planted thousands of trees to help repair the environment and create rainforest wildlife corridors. Its cofounder Joan Wright is another person for whom Geoff was indispensable.

Geoff requested no flowers at the funeral but, rather, donations to the Australian Bush Heritage Fund, so I selected a spray of leaves from the rainforest trees in my own garden to lay on the coffin. I chose Evodia, the host tree for the Ulysses butterfly, that brings us beauty and signifies the ecological relationships that Geoff taught us to appreciate and Omolanthus, a rainforest pioneer species because his pioneering work with Professor Len Webb led ultimately to the protection of our tropical rainforest for all times. The world truly is indebted to Geoff Tracey. To Reinhild and Geoff's children, my thoughts are with you. While Geoff is gone, his spirit will be with you every time you walk in the rainforest he knew and loved so well.

Retirement of Mr D. Burns

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (6.15 p.m.): After 15 years as the Manager of Gladstone Area Group Apprentices Ltd and 28 years as a councillor on Gladstone City Council, Dave Burns has retired. Dave has been a very active member of our community both through his council

activities and also his work for young people in the city area. The Gladstone Area Group Apprentices Ltd commenced in 1989 and was operating from two rooms in a recreation centre which had a habit of flooding with very little rain. The group had a total staff of three, including Dave, who acted as field officer as well as manager. On 1 August Dave left Gladstone Area Group Apprentices in very good hands. It had 27 employees and indentured more than 400 apprentices and trainees. The company now indentures students across 13 different trade areas with skills shortage areas being its main concern.

Dave was also instrumental in setting up the skills centre which operates out of NRG and was very much involved in initiating school based apprentices where, in 1996, after 12 months lobbying, they are now a feature of training right across Australia and particularly right across Queensland. The initiative—that is, the school based apprenticeships—was instrumental in changing the face of vocational education in schools Australia-wide and was one of the most innovative concepts ever to be introduced to address the skills shortage in youth today.

Dave's concern about youth also coloured his council years. He stood for council because he was concerned about a lack of sporting facilities for young people. Having realised that the job in council was much broader than he initially expected, he worked very effectively over that time. Prior to then he was a union delegate and a very outspoken representative of employees. He is never one who leaves you in the dark as to what he thinks. On behalf of the community I congratulate Dave Burns on his contribution to our community. We will miss his efforts greatly but we wish Dave, Carol and all the family well-earned time together. He is a great golfer. He will be enjoying, I am sure, a lot of golfing but he has left a formal legacy in our community that is enviable. I thank him for his efforts, I thank him for his compassion, I thank him for his concern for young people, and I wish him, Carol and the boys an excellent time in his retirement.

Mackay Whitsunday Safe Communities Project

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (6.17 p.m.): The Mackay Whitsunday Safe Communities Project was launched in February 2000 in response to the high injury rates recorded in the region. This project was the first of its type in Queensland and it has paved the way for a rapidly growing safe communities movement right across the state. Back in 2000 it was recognised that data collected from hospital emergency departments across the Mackay-Whitsunday region indicated that we incurred higher than average injury rates in areas that were entirely preventable. In response to this untenable situation, a cross-sectoral team was established to coordinate the Safe Communities Project which over the past three and a half years has developed a suite of interventions that aim to produce sustained change in the behaviour of individuals and to create a social and physical environment more conducive to safe behavioural choices.

One of the outstanding features of the Mackay Whitsunday Safe Communities Project is the level of cooperation and support that has been generated from across both government and non-government agencies. The project was initiated by a project management team comprising representatives from Mackay and Whitsunday shire councils, Queensland Health, Queensland Transport and the Queensland Police Service. Since that time, it has grown to accommodate a whole range of different agencies.

One of the programs, amongst many, that the project took on was called Fatigue Sucks, and this was directed at educating drivers about the dangers of driving while fatigued. As part of this program, which was supported by the RACQ, drivers were randomly pulled over by police and spoken to about the value of trip planning to avoid fatigue. Drivers were offered brochures on fatigue, a map indicating the location of Driver Reviver stations and were given a lolly to sweeten the whole experience.

Other programs undertaken by the safe communities project include the Fatigue Busters travel diary, Bike Ed, the development of the Whitsunday model for Schoolies Week and the Steps to a Smarter Party program. They are all great programs that have made a positive contribution to making our region a better and safer place to live.

But members do not have to take my word for the quality of the safe communities project. A much higher source is about to bestow on the project a form of recognition that confirms its status as an international best practice. On 31 August the Mackay Whitsunday Safe Communities Project will receive official designation by the World Health Organisation. This will be the first designation of a safe communities project in Australia. I congratulate the project team, who continue to work to make the communities of the Mackay-Whitsunday region safer. Many of the teams programs are being taken up in other places around the country, and this is a clear indicator of the quality and success of the project team's efforts. The World Health Organisation designation is, however, the ultimate accolade and it is richly deserved.

Maroochy River Catchment

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydhore—NPA) (6.20 p.m.): I rise to speak about the Maroochy River catchment area, in particular my concerns in regard to infrastructure and buildings being built upon the

flood plain. When I was first elected into this parliament a major issue that was running was the Yandina bypass. At that time my concerns about a new infrastructure being built across flood plains were well documented, given the poor history of government agencies being able to accurately flood model and understand the impacts that those structures would cause.

Unfortunately we have seen, with other government construction such as the Nambour bypass, a history where the flood modelling was wrong. There was an underestimation of what the impact of those structures would be. When the Nambour bypass was built they actually had to go back and put additional flood pass ways underneath that road because they got it wrong. When the Sunshine Motorway was built across the flood plains of the Maroochy River area there were also unintended consequences where the flood waters hit those structures and there was insufficient drainage under those waterways to deal with that. There was a back up of water which caused a greater flood impact upon other people.

We have also seen landowners in the vicinity of a number of these structures who have suffered the adverse impact of flood waters hitting these structures and impacting on them with higher than normal flood levels. The message I have here is that while there has been flood modelling that has been used in the past with government infrastructure and also with private property developers, I believe it has been totally inadequate. Even today, when people are considering building upon flood plains, the councils require them to undertake flood modelling. It is a piecemeal attempt to deal with an issue which I believe needs a whole-of-catchment address with modern technology because those flood studies to date have been inadequate. We know that flood mitigation is limited, particularly when there are surges in high rainfall times. When there are extraordinary rain events, flood basins do not provide any mitigation.

So there is a great concern about how much these flood plains can take without having an impact upon those other people in the catchment area—an impact upon lives, property and the environment. I am calling on the government to support a whole of Maroochy River valley catchment study with the latest technology. If members look at the veracity of the past flood studies they will find there are many flaws, even where it has been applied to government infrastructure. It is time that this was done right. It is too important when people are trying to put inappropriate structures on areas that should never be built on, and certainly not in the way they have been in the past.

Gateway Learning Community

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (6.23 p.m.): I would like to talk about an organisation known as the Gateway Learning Community. The Gateway Learning Community consists of Balmoral State High School and Bulimba, Cannon Hill, Morningside, Murarrie, Norman Park and Seven Hill state schools. I am proud to say that all these seven schools are located in the Bulimba electorate. It is great to see these schools working together, sharing their knowledge and programs in this unique program and, may I add, doing it so successfully. The end result is that everyone involved is a winner—principals, teachers, students and, in the long-term, the future employees of these motivated students.

The Gateway Learning Community has been officially recognised as one of the two state finalists for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia Showcase Awards for Excellence in Leadership. By pooling their ideas and their energies, they were able to offer better opportunities for students in science, culture, sport, music, art and new technologies. Finalists will share with the community their innovative ideas at a one-day expo in Brisbane on 3 September with six winners receiving an additional \$20,000 at a gala dinner that night. The remaining six schools will receive \$8,000 each. I am very proud of every member of the Gateway Learning Community—students and teachers alike—for their outstanding efforts, and I wish them every success.

Another exciting event for the Gateway Learning Community is the Wildwords Science Festival which this year is themed Hands on, minds on, switched on to science. The festival will culminate with a week of festivities from 23 to 27 August. I would like to quote festival founder, principal Chris Ling from Cannon Hill State School—

The Wildwords Science Festival 2004 is a literary program that recognises the multiple literacies our students will need to operate successfully in the world beyond school. It will also support Education Queensland's innovative, Science State—Smart State.

Partnerships have been formed with the community and business to provide added opportunities to enhance the students' education. Students will have the opportunity to meet with scientists from industry and research institutions such as Boeing, Caltex, Food Science Australia and the Queensland Police. Wildwords 2004 will end with the big night out being hosted by the Balmoral State High School on Friday, 27 August from 5 p.m. The big night out is open to the public and admission is free. The evening will feature buskers, international food stalls, sciences displays and events. The night's festivities will conclude with a fireworks spectacular.

Richard Morrison, principal of Balmoral State High School, is doing an outstanding job in enhancing the reputation of the school and ensuring that unique and challenging opportunities are available to students which will stand them in good stead for their future careers. Students from Balmoral High, along with year 7 students from the state schools, are also participating in an innovative

program known as the Balmoral Enterprise Team. The program teaches skills in leadership, cooperation, administration, time management and improved responsibilities. Balmoral High students are participating, along with five other secondary schools, in the new Gateway project with Boeing Australia. They are offering 12 traineeships and 30 high school work experience places in the areas of aircraft maintenance and engineering, information technology and administration.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6.26 p.m.