



# WEEKLY HANSARD

Hansard Home Page: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/hansard/>

E-mail: [hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Phone: (07) 3406 7314 Fax: (07) 3210 0182

## 51ST PARLIAMENT

Subject

### CONTENTS

Page

## Tuesday, 19 October 2004

<b>PRIVILEGE</b> .....	<b>2889</b>
Queensland Racing Board; Mr W. Ludwig .....	2889
<b>ASSENT TO BILLS</b> .....	<b>2889</b>
<b>QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE</b> .....	<b>2890</b>
Annual Report .....	2890
<b>PETITIONS</b> .....	<b>2890</b>
<b>PAPERS</b> .....	<b>2890</b>
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2891</b>
Queensland Economy .....	2891
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2893</b>
Employment Growth .....	2893
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2895</b>
Coal Industry .....	2895
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2896</b>
TAFE Course in Roofing .....	2896
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2896</b>
Griffith University; John Paul College .....	2896
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2896</b>
Queensland Economy .....	2896
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2897</b>
Queensland Multicultural Festival .....	2897
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2899</b>
Reception for Ex-POWs .....	2899
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2899</b>
Racing Industry .....	2899
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2901</b>
Racing Industry .....	2901
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2902</b>
Education System .....	2902
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2902</b>
Seatbelt and Helmet Offences .....	2902

Table of Contents — Tuesday, 19 October 2004

<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2903</b>
Citrus Canker .....	2903
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>2903</b>
Energex 'Get Set for Summer' Campaign .....	2903
<b>SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE</b> .....	<b>2904</b>
Report .....	2904
<b>PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>2904</b>
Racing Industry .....	2904
Sexual Violence Awareness Month .....	2905
<b>QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE</b> .....	<b>2905</b>
Energex; Electricity Supply .....	2905
Queensland Racing Board; Mr W. Ludwig .....	2906
<b>PRIVILEGE</b> .....	<b>2907</b>
Comments by Minister for Racing .....	2907
<b>QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE</b> .....	<b>2907</b>
Queensland Racing Board; Mr W. Ludwig .....	2907
Goodwill Bridge .....	2907
Queensland Racing Board; Mr J. Lingard .....	2908
Central Queensland; Death of Mr M. Hinohara .....	2908
Cardiac Services, Prince Charles Hospital .....	2909
Cardiac Services, Prince Charles Hospital .....	2909
Defibrillator Unit, Royal Brisbane Hospital .....	2910
Sportingbet Concerns .....	2910
Administration of Drugs, Aged Care Facilities .....	2911
Stanwell Power Station .....	2911
Energex; Electricity Supply .....	2912
Australian Fashion Design Awards .....	2913
Cardiac Services .....	2913
U-turn Program .....	2914
Public Housing, Caravan Parks .....	2914
Emergency Services, Darling Downs .....	2915
South Burnett Beef Pty Ltd .....	2916
St Paul's, Moa Island, Centenary .....	2916
<b>MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST</b> .....	<b>2916</b>
Racing Industry .....	2916
Multiculturalism .....	2918
Skilled Independent Regional Visas .....	2919
Water Infrastructure, Moranbah .....	2920
Suncoast Plantations Cooperative Ltd .....	2921
Dale and Meyers Pty Ltd .....	2922
Kingston College; U-turn Program .....	2922
Electricity Industry .....	2923
Logan City Jobs and Business Expo .....	2924
Cardiac Services .....	2925
Obesity .....	2926
<b>STATEMENT OF UNFORESEEN EXPENDITURE 2003-04</b> .....	<b>2927</b>
<b>APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)</b> .....	<b>2927</b>
First Reading .....	2927
Second Reading .....	2927
<b>APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)</b> .....	<b>2927</b>
First Reading .....	2927
Second Reading .....	2928
<b>SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL</b> .....	<b>2928</b>
First Reading .....	2928
Second Reading .....	2928
<b>EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL</b> .....	<b>2929</b>
First Reading .....	2929
Second Reading .....	2929
<b>WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL</b> .....	<b>2931</b>
First Reading .....	2931
Second Reading .....	2931
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL</b> .....	<b>2933</b>
First Reading .....	2933
Second Reading .....	2933
<b>ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL</b> .....	<b>2936</b>
First Reading .....	2936
Second Reading .....	2936
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL</b> .....	<b>2938</b>
Second Reading .....	2938

Table of Contents — Tuesday, 19 October 2004

Consideration in Detail .....	2978
<b>SITTING HOURS; ORDER OF BUSINESS .....</b>	<b>2990</b>
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL .....</b>	<b>2991</b>
Consideration in Detail .....	2991
Third Reading .....	2993
<b>PETROLEUM (SUBMERGED LANDS) AMENDMENT BILL .....</b>	<b>2993</b>
Second Reading .....	2993
Consideration in Detail .....	2996
Third Reading .....	2996
<b>ADJOURNMENT .....</b>	<b>2996</b>
Wide Loads .....	2997
Ergon Energy .....	2997
Japan and Friends Day .....	2997
State Schools .....	2998
Bushfires .....	2999
Department of Housing Garden Awards .....	2999
Horse Riding, State Forests .....	3000
Noosa Electorate .....	3000
Intergenerational Transfers .....	3001
Prince Charles Hospital .....	3001



## TUESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2004

---

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

### PRIVILEGE

#### Queensland Racing Board; Mr W. Ludwig

**Mr HOPPER** (Darling Downs—NPA) (9.31 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. On 13 May 2004 I asked the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing whether he could confirm that AWU president Bill Ludwig would soon be appointed to the board of Queensland Racing. In his response Minister Schwarten, among other things, said—

I have heard a lot of nonsense since I have been in this parliament—sometimes I might have said a bit myself, although I find it hard to believe—but there is nothing that compares to this. Nothing that compares to this. Such ratbaggery is unparalleled.

However, on Tuesday, 12 October 2004 Minister Schwarten's hand-picked selection committee including Bob Bentley and Cyril Vains recommended that Bill Ludwig be appointed to the board of Queensland Racing; a recommendation that the minister took through process. This establishes beyond doubt that Minister Schwarten, by his failure to truthfully answer my question, has attempted to mislead this House. Accordingly, I request that you refer Minister Schwarten to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee to consider his response to my question of 13 May 2004 and for his inadequate actions.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The claim made by the shadow minister that I was untruthful is offensive to me and I demand that it be withdrawn. It is untrue and I demand that it be withdrawn. Mr Speaker, I have sought a withdrawal from the honourable member.

**Mr HOPPER:** It's in *Hansard*.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** He called me untruthful.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member will have to withdraw, as the minister has requested. I do have in front of me a letter from you on this matter which I will respond to at the appropriate time. Would you withdraw, please?

**Mr HOPPER:** Mr Speaker, I will withdraw.

**Mr Johnson:** It's not hard to see who's running the Labor Party, is it?

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Gregory will cease interjecting. This is my final warning.

**Mr Johnson:** Oh, Mr Speaker, I haven't—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! It is my final warning.

### ASSENT TO BILLS

GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
QUEENSLAND

13 October 2004

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

Dear Mr Speaker

I am pleased to inform the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on the dates shown:

Date of Assent: 12 October 2004

"A Bill for an Act to amend legislation about exploring for, recovering and transporting by pipeline, petroleum and fuel gas and ensuring the safe and efficient carrying out of those activities, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Petroleum Act 1923 and the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend legislation to provide for marine parks and the conservation of the marine environment, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Partnership Act 1891, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend legislation about primary industries and fisheries, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Rural Adjustment Authority Act 1994"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Plant Protection Act 1989, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend legislation to establish development entitlements for particular land on the Southern Moreton Bay Islands"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Community Ambulance Cover Act 2003"

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

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Quentin Bryce

Governor

## QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE

### Annual Report

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I lay upon the table of the House the Queensland Parliamentary Service annual report for 2003-04. As well as meeting all mandatory reporting obligations, the report provides a range of additional information about the operations of the service during the year. I wish to thank all parliamentary staff for their ongoing work, which is essential to the operations of this parliament. I also wish to thank the annual report committee—Lyndel Bates, Chris Garvey, Leah Ilott, James Robertson and Kylie Sareen. I commend this annual report to all honourable members.

### PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

#### Revetment Wall, Pacific Harbour Estate

**Mrs Carryn Sullivan** from 706 petitioners requesting the House to reconsider the latest Environmental Protection Agency report and to allow erection of a hard fix revetment wall along the foreshore from the Pacific Harbour estate boundary north to Wrights Creek as has been the case at numerous locations along the foreshores of Moreton Bay and South Western Bribie Island.

#### Road Upgrade, Bardon

**Mr Fraser** from 235 petitioners requesting the House to as a matter of urgency upgrade the intersection of Coopers Camp Road, Jubilee Terrace, Simpsons Road and MacGregor Terrace, Bardon so that it adequately services the traffic using this route.

#### Infrastructure Planning, Montville Country Club

**Mr Wellington** from 199 petitioners requesting the House to initiate the necessary steps that will ensure that the proposed Montville Country Club be established as a fully sewered, environmentally self-sustainable golfing residential community and that it be planned as a national model for non-reliance on state or local government community infrastructure.

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

#### Public Liability Insurance

**Mr Wellington** from 1503 petitioners requesting the House to establish an independent, public inquiry into the impact of public liability insurance increases on Queensland's community life and to consider and recommend policy solutions at both state and national level to maintain social capital and community capacity.

### PAPERS

#### PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

8 October 2004—

- Supreme Court of Queensland Library—Annual Report 2003-04
- Queensland Local Government Grants Commission—Report 2004
- Mount Isa Water Board—Annual Report 2003-2004
- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Mr Reeves from 181 petitioners regarding noise pollution barriers to prevent the constant, excessive noise emanating from the Gateway Arterial Road

11 October 2004—

- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Ms Barry from 56 petitioners regarding a request to build noise barriers along the Gateway Motorway for Northwind Estate residents

15 October 2004—

- Response from the Minister for Education and the Arts (Ms Bligh) to a paper petition presented by Mrs Stuckey from 2883 petitioners regarding the future usage of the site of the Coolangatta Special School

18 October 2004—

- Treasurer's Appropriation Statement 2003-04

#### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996—

- Education (Overseas Students) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 210

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000—

- Police Powers and Responsibilities Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2004, No. 211

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

- Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2004, No. 212

Fisheries Act 1994—

- Fisheries (East Coast Trawl) Amendment Management Plan (No. 1) 2004, No. 213

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2004, No. 214

Fair Trading Act 1989—

- Fair Trading (Novelty Dummy) Order 2004, No. 215

Public Service Act 1996—

- Public Service Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 216

Justices Act 1886—

- Justices Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 217

Food Production (Safety) Act 2000—

- Food Production (Safety) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 218

Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999, Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999—

- Mining Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 219

#### MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by The Clerk—

Minister for State Development and Innovation (Mr McGrady)—

- Report on a decision by the Minister for State Development and Innovation (Mr McGrady) regarding the call in of a development application under the Integrated Planning Act 1997—development application by Wingate Properties Pty Ltd lodged with the Ipswich City Council

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Queensland Economy

**Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.36 a.m.): A lot has changed in the past six years. The songs on the radio are different, TV shows are different and our lifestyles are different. The Queensland economy is also different. It has grown and diversified. Business confidence is high; consumer confidence is high. The unemployment rate has plummeted and people now have a greater chance of finding a job than at any time in recent history. Our government is proud of the role we have played in helping to shape this new, strong, vibrant economic environment. We have invested heavily in our state's future by supporting existing industries and creating new industries. We have created an environment which supports business, which supports entrepreneurs and which supports workers. We have proven our credentials as strong economic managers.

I table today two documents which illustrate the continuing strength of the Queensland economy and the state's finances—first, the *2003-04 Annual Economic Report*. This document shows Queensland recorded gross state product growth of 3.9 per cent in 2003-04, exceeding economic growth of 3.6 per cent in the rest of Australia. This is the eighth consecutive year we have eclipsed the national figure. The Queensland economy once again showed remarkable resilience despite a combination of international and domestic factors that adversely impacted on the state's trade sector.

Record levels of consumer and business confidence, strong interstate and overseas migration as well as low interest rates all bolstered consumer spending, housing activity and business investment. Growth in housing investment in Queensland increased by 16 per cent, nearly three times the 5.4 per cent growth in the rest of Australia. Dwelling investment was also driven by high levels of renovation activity, as many Queenslanders drew on the increased equity resulting from large increases in the value of their properties.

One of the primary reasons for the sustained growth in the housing sector in Queensland has been the state's relatively strong population growth and in particular high levels of interstate migration. This has seen demand for new housing construction remain strong in Queensland, with total dwelling approvals increasing in each of the past three months to August 2004, compared with further declines in dwelling approvals in the rest of Australia. The strength of the housing sector has supported consumer

spending on household goods, while the positive impact of house price rises on household wealth has also underpinned spending on other goods and services. As a result, total consumer spending in Queensland rose by 9.9 per cent in 2004—more than double the 4.7 per cent growth in the rest of Australia. An improving labour market and solid wage gains also contributed to the highest rate of consumption growth in Queensland since 1989-90.

In addition to a high level of domestic demand, strong business conditions existed in 2003-04. Business investment in Queensland continued to grow, rising by 5.1 per cent. Machinery and equipment investment rose by 6.5 per cent, while non-dwelling construction investment rose by 2.4 per cent.

Business surveys indicated that businesses benefited from positive trading, profitability and employment conditions for much of the year, and that overall business conditions in Queensland remained significantly stronger than those in the rest of Australia. These strong business conditions and solid domestic fundamentals ensured that the Queensland economy as a whole continued to grow strongly despite the challenges faced by the state's trade sector. This growth translated into significant gains for Queenslanders in terms of both employment opportunities and further growth in household incomes.

Employment in Queensland increased by nearly 60,000 persons, of which 53,500 were full-time jobs, with strong job gains in the construction, transport and retail industries. The beneficial impact of a strong domestic economy on jobs can also be seen in the most recent labour force statistics. Queensland's trend rate of unemployment fell to 5.4 per cent last month—its lowest rate since the inception of the current ABS series in 1978. Further, it is the first time since 1995 that the state's unemployment rate has been below that in the rest of Australia. Our government was elected on a promise of jobs, jobs, jobs for Queenslanders. We have delivered.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! We will listen to the Treasurer.

**Mr Johnson:** You're grinning, Peter.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** I just have to say that, with the figures we are delivering, he should be grinning.

The second document I table today is the 2003-04 report on state finances. This report combines the reporting obligation of the state under the government finance statistics basis—the outcomes report—and the Australian Accounting Standard AAS31, the consolidated financial statements. There are a number of major features. The final GFS operating surplus for 2003-04 climbed to \$3.34 billion—\$966 million more than that estimated at budget time.

**Mr Seeney:** What is the GFS?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** The increase was due to prudent financial management as well as positive post-budget movements in investment markets and stronger taxation revenues.

**Mr Seeney:** I'll have to ring Peter Costello.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** GFS is government finance statistics. The member did not know that. He can come and see me about anything else he wants to know.

The estimated actual surplus was based on investment returns of 18 per cent. However, following publication of the budget, markets continued to move upwards and returns of 21 per cent were achieved. This contributed an additional \$390 million in interest income to our final position. It is important to note that because this largely relates to the state's employee entitlement schemes these funds have been reinvested through the Queensland Investment Corporation and are not available for service delivery.

Taxation revenues also contributed an extra \$202 million on the back of higher than anticipated payroll tax and transfer duty collections. During the same period general government expenses were \$258 million lower than that estimated at the time of budget. This underexpenditure represents only one per cent of budgeted expenditure and primarily relates to the timing of claims under grants and subsidies programs.

Another factor contributing towards the lower expenditure was the extinguishment of a loan made to the Australian Magnesium Corporation Ltd that did not occur in 2003-04 as expected. This expense of \$63 million will now be recognised in 2004-05 in accordance with the date of the signing of the associated documentation.

Other major highlights of the report include an underlying GFS operating surplus of \$2.095 billion when adjustments are made for superannuation and a cash surplus of \$3.49 billion—up from the estimated actual of \$2.249 billion at budget. The government was in fact able to repay debt, that is, reduce general government sector borrowings during 2003-04 while spending \$2.415 billion on capital. There was an increase in the state's net worth of \$12,829 billion to \$77,723 billion.

This report shows an outstanding result for 2003-04. It has been achieved through strong economic management and on the back of a strong, flourishing economy. It is the highest operating surplus in Queensland and the second highest of any state or territory in Australia since accrual

accounting was introduced in 1998-99. The additional funds delivered through this excellent result have enabled us to undertake our budget capital program without the borrowings we originally planned. This increased capacity will now be reassessed as we start preparations for the 2005-06 budget and in line with our budget priority of urban and transport infrastructure.

Later this morning I will also introduce Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2004. This bill accompanies the statement of unforeseen expenditure for 2003-04. Appropriation represents the amount paid from the consolidated fund to departments during the financial year. Supplementary appropriation sought for departments for the 2003-04 financial year totals \$2.375 billion. In addition, further supplementary appropriation of \$511,000 is sought for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service.

Some of the reasons for additional appropriation include departments carrying over unspent appropriation from the prior year; increases in agency asset values giving rise to additional equity return expense; despite the equity return being a transaction that occurs within government and budget neutral for departments, the provision of additional funding for the equity return arising out of asset revaluations still must be appropriated; funding adjustments for departments due to changes in formulae such as population or student numbers; and policy decisions of government, most notably in 2003-04 a number of new child safety initiatives.

The largest additional appropriation requirement is for the Treasury Department. This included the provision of equity injections of \$260 million to CS Energy for the Kogan Creek project, \$200 million to Ergon Energy for planned network expenditure, \$110 million to Enertrade and \$450 million provided to the QSuper Trust to forward fund future benefit payments. Both the statement of unforeseen expenditure and the appropriation bill are technical in nature and simply represent the transfer of funds within government.

I am proud of the Beattie government's record of economic and fiscal management. Our end-of-year results are the best in the country and we have consistently beaten the national average for all major economic indicators: economic growth, household consumption, business investment, retail trade and now unemployment.

Our balance sheet is the envy of every other jurisdiction in the country. A lot has changed in the past six years. The Beattie government has presided over an economy that has grown, diversified and now provides opportunities for all Queenslanders.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Employment Growth

**Hon. P.D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.50 a.m.): What a wonderful set of figures. Isn't it wonderful that Queensland leads the nation? I congratulate the Treasurer, my ministerial colleagues and my team for giving Queensland the economic direction and solid base for the future.

Thursday, 7 October was like Christmas Day for Queensland. It was the day a dazzling package of unemployment statistics arrived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The headline figure was a 5.4 per cent Queensland trend unemployment rate. This was below the national rate of 5.6 per cent—the first time in almost 10 years that it has been lower than the Australian rate.

The trend unemployment rate—just listen to this—has plummeted by more than a third since June 1998 when it was 8.4 per cent. That is what this government inherited when it came to office six years ago. At that point my government began applying the Smart State blowtorch to unemployment and since then Queensland has generated 305,100 jobs.

**Mr Springborg:** What was the national average under Paul Keating?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! You will get an opportunity to ask questions later.

**Mr BEATTIE:** The Leader of the Opposition says 'national'. Let us talk about national. Queensland created 29 per cent of all jobs nationally over the period. That is, more than two-thirds of the 305,100 jobs created in Queensland—205,000 jobs—were full-time. Queensland created 37 per cent of all the full-time jobs created nationally over the last six years, and 51 per cent of all full-time jobs created in Australia in the past year were in Queensland—with 19 per cent of the population. The opposition cannot argue against that; we are punching well above our weight. John Howard owes a great debt to Queensland because we are the engine room of Australia. Imagine what Australia would be like without Queensland. What a low performing area it would be; unthinkable as that would be.

This tearaway employment growth has sliced into unemployment, which peaked at 9.5 per cent in trend terms when the National Party Premier was last in office and there was a Liberal Party Treasurer. That was the legacy. While Queensland's trend unemployment rate has fallen three per cent since June 1998, nationally the fall has been 2.2 per cent. Queensland's record is all the more remarkable because our participation rate has climbed. The trend participation rate—of people in work or looking for work—has increased by 0.4 per cent in Queensland over this period. This is double the national increase of just

0.2 per cent. We have slain the two-headed dragon: more people are looking for work and more people are finding it.

The terrific improvement in labour market conditions has occurred across the state. This is the good news: every statistical division in Queensland has experienced a decline in its trend unemployment over the past six years. Many Queensland regions now have an unemployment rate below five per cent.

Jobs are coming from a range of areas of the Queensland economy. Many sectors were notable for employment growth, including Queensland manufacturing which created 10,500 more jobs, while manufacturing jobs fell by 53,200 nationally. So we are creating them and they are being lost nationally. Smart State industries, which are jobs dynamos, include: export education, 3,000 extra jobs to the end of 2002-03; aviation and aerospace, almost 5,000 new jobs; and bioindustries, currently employing more than 1,800 people and projected to employ 2,500 by 2010.

I have more detail about where the growth has been. I seek leave to incorporate that in *Hansard* along with a graph that highlights that the government has not only delivered jobs, jobs, jobs; it has delivered Queensland as the engine room of Australia.

Leave granted.

The largest increases in employment in Queensland over the period were in:

- retail (up 49,800 persons),
- construction (up 40,100 persons),
- government administration and defence (up 39,700 persons) and
- property and business services (up 38,900 persons).

Queensland accounted for a significant proportion of national jobs growth in several industries:

- 33 per cent in the Personal and Other Services sector (includes hair dressers, gardeners and police);
- 27.2 per cent in Cultural and Recreational services;
- 26.1 per cent of national retail jobs.
- 22.5 per cent in Construction
- 21.7 per cent in Mining and
- 21.6 per cent in Health and Community Services.

The result is a ringing endorsement of our Smart State strategies over the past six years.

It is no coincidence that exports are leaping ahead because exports are a dynamo for jobs growth.

We will continue working to grind down the unemployment rate, by pursuing sound economic policies and innovative strategies for job creation and industry growth.

Table 1: Queensland Labour Market Outcomes Since 1998

Change since June 1998 as at September 2004	Level Change (000)			Share of National Change
	QLD	Rest of AUS	AUS	
<b>Trend</b>				
Employment	305.1	759.3	1064.4	28.7%
Full-time	205.1	349.6	554.7	37.0%
Part-time	100.0	409.7	509.7	19.6%
Unemployed	-38.0	-113.0	-151.0	25.2%
Labour Force	267.0	646.4	913.4	29.2%
<b>Seasonally Adjusted</b>				
Employment	314.6	783.4	1098.0	28.7%
Full-time	211.7	360.7	572.4	37.0%
Part-time	102.9	422.7	525.6	19.6%
Unemployed	-42.5	-121.1	-163.6	26.0%
Labour Force	272.3	662.2	934.5	29.1%
<b>% Point Change</b>				
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>				
Trend	-3.0	-2.0	-2.2	
Seasonally Adjusted	-3.3	-2.1	-2.3	
<b>Participation Rate</b>				
Trend	0.4	0.1	0.2	
Seasonally Adjusted	0.4	0.2	0.2	

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Coal Industry

**Hon. P.D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.54 a.m.): While we are talking about great industries, as I speak here this morning there are 49 bulk carriers sitting off or in Queensland's coal ports ready to export to the world. These 49 giants—some of them of more than 200,000 tonnes—shore up our status as the largest exporter of seaborne coal in the world. The state's coal industry continues to achieve record production and export levels courtesy of growth in international and, of course, domestic markets. Matching our nation-leading efforts in job creation, the state coal industry as at 30 June 2004 directly employed 10,575 Queenslanders, a staggering 27.8 per cent increase over the previous year's 8,275 employees.

In 2003-04, total raw coal production in Queensland was approximately 203.6 million tonnes, from which a record 160 million tonnes of saleable coal was produced. This represents a 4.37 per cent increase on the record production performance of 195.1 million tonnes in 2002-03 and is 80 per cent more saleable coal than produced a decade ago in 1993-94.

The Queensland coal industry also managed to set a new record for export sales of 134.97 million tonnes during 2003-04. This represents an increase of 5.7 million tonnes, or 4.5 per cent more than the record 129.2 million tonnes of coal exported by Queensland in 2002-03. Queensland coal exports are currently valued at about \$A8.2 billion—representing 38 per cent by value of the state's total overseas exports of goods. Market analysts are predicting Queensland's growth in export coal will average seven per cent per annum from 2003-04 through to 2009-10.

This is a great story of sound economic management and careful planning by my government. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard* to educate those opposite.

Leave granted.

The growth in Queensland's coal market is forecast to be driven by strong demand from Chinese, South East Asian, Indian, Japanese & Brazilian interests.

The Government's Coal Transport Infrastructure Planning Group has been working in consultation with coal companies, to develop production forecasts for 2004-05 through to 2008-09 that will form the underlying foundation for work now under way across Government and a range of our GOCs on transport & water infrastructure to underpin that expected expansion.

The focus of the work with the industry at this time is very much on the northern Bowen Basin.

This is because it is metallurgical coal that is showing the strongest growth prospects right now.

The major issue here is whether we continue to upgrade the Goonyella rail system through to Hay Point, and Prime Infrastructure proceed with a major expansion of the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal.

We have assessed there is considerable expansion capacity in this system, before the geographic constraints of Black Mountain on the rail network really start to bite.

The alternative is to complete the "missing link" between Goonyella & Newlands rail systems to enable more product to be exported through Abbott Point.

Of course, for this option to proceed, a substantial upgrade of that port would be required.

It is not yet clear to us that this option would be, of its own, competitive with an upgraded Goonyella-Hay Point system.

It does have the clear benefit, though, of potentially adding to the Basin's overall security of supply by providing an alternative outlet for more mines.

An important milestone in this process was last Friday evening's release of the draft Queensland Competition Authority determination of the Prime undertaking on the Dalrymple Bay facility.

While on the domestic front sales of Queensland coal have also continued to rise during 2003-04 with sales to industry within the State rising 3.72% to 25 million tonnes; and interstate sales up a bewildering 90% to 87.2 million tonnes.

The beauty of all this is that the coal industry continues to be a key driver of regional economic development and job creation.

An excellent example of this were some flow-ons announced last week.

Transport Minister Paul Lucas announced a \$21.6 million rail contract delivering additional job security for 70 Townsville workers.

Queensland Rail has awarded the contract to United Goninan to supply 190 coal wagons.

These will be built at the railway manufacturer's Townsville factory.

QR had also awarded a second \$22.4 million contract to United Goninan to supply 920 coal wagon bogies.

QR is also currently building 310 wagons at its Redbank workshop to meet increased demand to service the coal boom in Central Queensland and the \$240 million Rolleston mine project.

Last year QR won the tender to construct, own and operate the new 110-kilometre rail spur to Rolleston.

This spur—the longest line to be built in Queensland for 20 years—will create about 400 jobs in the mining and construction sectors.

QR's overall annual coal haulage continues to grow—in 2003-04 it carried 143.2 million tonnes of coal or an extra 3.6% from the previous year with 135 million tonnes exported.

Coal plays the lead role in the State's mining and minerals processing industries—apart from contributing hundreds of millions in royalties—it generates wealth and jobs in other sectors of the economy, including:

- Manufacturing, machinery and equipment
- Building and construction
- Transport and communications
- Services

The export and jobs creation performances—combined with the growing overseas demand for our quality coking and thermal coal—reinforces Queensland's position as a world coal giant.

Queensland currently exports coal to 37 countries and our traditional Asian markets remain our strongest and most important coal customers.

Japan remains our biggest customer accounting for 50 million tonnes (or 37% of total coal exports) followed by Korea (21.3 million tonnes) and India (13 million tonnes).

Other major purchasers include Taiwan, The United Kingdom, France, Brazil and China which alone increased its imports of Queensland coal by a whopping 56.7% in 2003-04.

In all this is a very exciting time for an industry in demand and one playing a vital role shoring up this State's future.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### TAFE Course in Roofing

**Hon. P.D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.57 a.m.): Let me talk about some of the smaller things we are doing but which are fundamental building blocks. In line with our Smart State strategies in education and training, my government has responded positively to industry calls for a training course in roofing. Apprenticeship courses are now expected to begin at three TAFE campuses at the start of the second semester next year. The Treasurer has just talked at great length about the construction and building industry and what is happening. We are planning for the future with these sorts of training programs.

I was very pleased last Friday to open the new, expanded headquarters of BSM Steel in Northgate because this is a Queensland company which is taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the economic activity and population growth in Queensland. But, like many other companies around Australia today, it is concerned about a shortage of skilled workers. While industry is experiencing skills shortages across the country, I am pleased to say Queensland currently has record numbers of apprentices and trainees in training programs—around 70,500. Next year this could well increase because the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations has advised me that his department, working closely with the roofing industry, has developed a new apprenticeship in roof plumbing for the metal roofing sector of the building and construction industry. The courses will be available next year at Brisbane North TAFE, Yeronga TAFE and Cooloola Sunshine TAFE. The new trade covers all areas associated with metal roofing structures. It means we will be giving people quality skills in roofing work now and in the future. This is a great example of industry working in partnership with the government in the Smart State and it is a good example of how my government is putting in place the building blocks necessary for the future.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Griffith University; John Paul College

**Hon. P.D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.58 a.m.): I am delighted to announce that Smart State institutions won major awards at the 18th IDP Australian International Education Conference held earlier this month in Sydney. I congratulate Griffith University and John Paul College for winning top honours for excellence and innovation in international education. This is the sort of future the government is building and I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

IDP was known at one time as the International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges.

Its conference is the premier southern hemisphere forum for the international education industry, with more than 1,300 participants.

Griffith University won the Special Initiative Award for Intercultural Understanding with its production of a pre-departure DVD with Arabic sub-titling to assist Middle Eastern students and their families with clear information as to what a student can expect when studying in Australia and a guide to services and facilities in and around the University.

John Paul College received special commendation under the cultural integration, diversification and mobility criteria for its BroadLEARN Study Abroad program—an interactive multi media program assisting students with English Language and transition to life in a new country.

John Paul College is the first school in the history of the awards to win from a field dominated by tertiary institutions.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Queensland Economy

**Hon. P.D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.59 a.m.): Just in case the opposition want to whinge about certain indexes, according to the Bjelke-Petersen measure of economic activity—that is, cranes on the city skyline—we are in a massive new boom era. Today there are 44 cranes in Brisbane, 42 on the Gold Coast, 26 between Redcliffe and the Sunshine Coast and

eight elsewhere—mainly in north Queensland. It does not matter what index is used, we are leading Australia. I seek leave to incorporate more details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

In February 2002 there were 29 tower cranes up in Brisbane—a further 16 between Maroochydore and Burleigh making a total of 45 in the south-east corner.

Today that South East corner total is 112—that is more than all of Sydney.

I said in 2002 that by our best information that the best of the Joh days was 29 in Brisbane and a total of 40 in the south-east corner.

While Joh and I might have had our differences I have always given him credit for his efforts with development; but by his simple scale this moment in time is certainly unprecedented.

It's all jobs, jobs and more jobs.

We truly are on the cusp of something very special.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Queensland Multicultural Festival

**Hon. P.D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.59 a.m.): It is more than just about building the economy; it is also about building a fair Queensland. That is why the weekend before last we had the first Queensland Multicultural Festival, which was a significant triumph for the new Queensland. I thank my parliamentary secretary Karen Struthers and her staff for their support. The event organisers, the Queensland Folk Federation, estimate that more than 30,000 people flocked to Roma Street Parkland on Sunday, 10 October to celebrate multiculturalism in Queensland. This response to the free festival shows that Queenslanders want a regular major event to celebrate multiculturalism, so the event will be held next year. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This was a celebration of the very essence of Queensland by more than 30,000 people—each and every one demonstrating pride in our diversity.

Those of us who attended lapped up a friendly atmosphere, exciting entertainment and fabulous food.

Such enthusiasm for multiculturalism is a healthy sign for Queensland's future as a safe and harmonious place to live, do business and invest.

It is also a healthy sign for the Smart State's growth as an export economy.

It sends our trading partners—and potential trading partners—a strong message that Queenslanders are comfortable with our place in the world.

The event attracted significant private sponsorship, notably \$25,000 from the Q.L.D. Group, and publicity from Channel 7—which were critical to the festival's success—and had a total budget of \$312,996.

Other supporters included Ballandean Estate, BEMAC, Brisbane Grammar School, Castlemaine Perkins, the Greek Club and Convention Centre, the Multicultural Development Association, QFleet, Simon George and Sons, State Emergency Services, Sport and Recreation Queensland and Telstra.

The State Government's total investment is estimated at \$287,996—comprising \$200,000 in new funding from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet plus \$51,223 from Multicultural Affairs Queensland and an additional \$36,773 from Communication Services in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

One of many highlights of the festival was the display of 20 short-listed photos entered in the first Images of Queensland Photographic Awards—multiculturalism in focus.

They show the many faces of the Smart State and demonstrate that Queensland is a tremendous mix of talented people from around the world.

On the day there were 1475 votes for the "people's choice" photograph from the short list—and it's not too late for Queenslanders to nominate their choice.

The winners of the photographic competition won't be announced until November 12—and the short list images will be on show on level three in the Parliamentary Annexe from Thursday 21 October to Friday 29 October.

They will be displayed at the Executive Building foyer from 1 November until 5 November.

The people's choice photographer will receive \$1,000 in photographic equipment, while winners and highly commended entries in the Open and School Students categories will share \$25,000 in prize money.

Photographers from across the state submitted 251 entries, with 213 in the open category and 38 in the school student category.

The youngest entrant was 8 and the oldest was 72.

Of the 38 entries received in the school student category, 10 came from the greater Brisbane area and 28 from the regions.

The short list of photographers and their works is as follows—

Open category:

Mr Peter Rossi of Cairns, "Scott Street"

Ms Kathy Radnoty of New Farm, "Flying the Flag for Multiculturalism"

Mr Ric Frearson, Chapel Hill, "Hills Hoist"

Ms Marie Patamise, Wavell Heights, "Shaminia in the Sunshine State"

Ms Cassandra Mathie of Grange, "Hills Hoist 2, Aspley 2004"

Ms Lisa Chewe, Wilston, "Neighbours"

Mr Jon Woodworth, Bucasia (Mackay), "Dinner"

Mr Richard Waugh, Fortitude Valley, "Workmates"

Ms Fiona Muirhead, Wilston, "Friendship"

Ms Slivana Van Dijk, Brisbane, "Sharman"

Student category:

Ms Carly Woods of Toowoomba, "Rhythm"

Ms Chy-Aine Bin-Garape of Earlville (Cairns), "Shame"

Ms Vicky Chen, Middlemount (Central Queensland), "The only race they know is the 100 metre"

Ms Megumi Gavin, of Clear Island Waters (Gold Coast), "Tunnel Vision"

Mr Darren Cann, of Forest Lake, "Faces in the crowd"

Mr James Erbacher, of Rosemount (Sunshine Coast hinterland), "Ethnic Interaction"

Ms Tiffany Bridger, of Everton Park, "Ready for Class"

Crystal Dale, of Hillcrest, "Together Forever"

Sam Conley, of Loganlea, "My Classes Art"

Brooke Heidke, of Bundaberg, "All is One"

I thank the tens thousands of people who attended the first Queensland Multicultural Festival, plus the organisers and participants—including the Queensland Folk Federation, BEMAC, sponsors, entertainers, stall holders and Roma Street Parkland staff.

Staff in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet did a colossal job.

So too did my Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for multicultural affairs, the Member for Algerier, Karen Struthers and her staff.

While the headline acts, Christine Anu and Paul Kelly, are widely acclaimed artists, I'd also like to draw Members' attention to the other performers at the first Queensland Multicultural Festival—

Brisbane Zambia Congo Capoeira Group

Malu Kiai Mura Buai Torres Strait Islander Dancers

Tulca mór with Crocker School of Irish Dance

Xenos with members of Doch

Kurdish Earth

Saikat Bhattacharya with Dheeraj Shrestha

Judaic Temple Project: Ancient music from the Holy Land

Jaleos Flamenco

Gamelan Giri Jaya with Balinese Community of Qld

Tenzin Choegyal

Baatar Sukh

Pejvaak

Spiros Rantos' Greek Trio

Shigeru Yomei Nakajima

Vasil and Vasillini

Zhiva Voda

'Kapela' Polish Folk Group

Cachicamo Latin Harp

Diva Italian Opera—Heather Lee accompanied by Brachi Tilles

Ethiopian Bahil Dance Group

Chile Presente—Rosa and Jorge Cuevas

Spanish Folkloric Dance Group—'Para Siempre'

Darra State School Vietnamese Dance Group

Cook Island Cultural Group of Brisbane North

Te Puawaitanga Maori Group

The Scattered Peoples Choir

Qld World Dance Academy—Chinese Dance Group

Australian Tongan Youth & Community Singers & Dancers

The Hellenic Dancers

Coral Coast Multicultural Community Group

Gaelic Dream

Sudanese Cultural Group of Qld Drummers and Dancers

Breakthrough Church Dance Group  
 'Kalinka' Russian Dance Group  
 Khente Group of Ghana  
 Bolivia Marka Dancers  
 Indian Yoga—Hindu priest Ram S Shastri from the Hindu Temple  
 community at Burbank  
 Chinese Taijiquan—Bruce Yang, Chinese community tai chi teacher at the Evergreen Taoist Temple  
 Multicultural Development Association—children's activities  
 Yorgo Kaporis  
 UQ Indian Students Union Dance Group  
 Yogitha and Rajitha Srikhanta's Bollywood Dance Group  
 Rick Roser, Michael Askill and Paul Lawler  
 Gujarat Assn of Qld community members.  
 Queensland Police Pipes and Drums  
 Umelalona with Papua New Guinean traditional Nara dance and drums  
 Belswagger Morris with celebratory and unusual English ritual dance  
 Master Tom Lo Dragon and Lion Dance Troupe with Chinese culture  
 Pantastic Steel Band with members of the Australian Caribbean community.

I highlight multiculturalism because our emphasis on that is helping us to build exports and build a future.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Reception for Ex-POWs

**Hon. P.D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.00 a.m.): I also want to make reference to a reception I held here last week to honour our ex-POWs, our prisoners of war. I thank them for the contribution they have made. I hope our younger generations understand the sacrifices they made. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

I believe it is important that we not only continue to remember the servicemen and women who died fighting for us, but also those whose lives were permanently scarred from their experiences as prisoners of war.

Our younger generations need to understand just what our prisoners of war went through.

Many of our finest young men spent the best years of their lives behind barbed wire or bamboo.

Many Australian prisoners of war who returned home, had the added burden of "survivor guilt".

Shamefully, some were even made to feel that the surrender of Singapore was somehow their fault.

To have survived all that they went through and to still be around today is a wonderful tribute to their fighting spirit.

As a boy growing up, I heard many stories of the terrible treatment of prisoners on the Burma Railway.

We heard how many men lost over half their bodyweight.

For example, I know that National Reunion Secretary and the Deputy President of the Queensland RSL, Cyril Gilbert, was a strapping 14-stone when he played in the Army Rugby Union team in 1941.

But building the Burma Railway a few years later, he weighed just over six stone.

In February this year, at the official opening of the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat, Chief of the Defence Forces General Peter Cosgrove made a very good point which I think bears repeating.

He spoke of the need of all soldiers to display sudden courage in battle.

But then he went on to speak about the patient, enduring, steadfast courage shown by prisoners of war.

General Cosgrove said: "Their resilience in the most cruel of circumstances, their capacity to endure the most trying of experiences with their hearts and their spirits intact—all that is the stuff of legends."

To my mind, our POWs are legends and on behalf of the people of Queensland, I assured those present at the reception that they have not been forgotten.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Racing Industry

**Hon. P.D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.00 a.m.): I have reported on what has been happening. I will now talk about another industry that I have not referred to yet and the importance of it to Queensland and its future. A smart solution is needed if the

Queensland racing industry is to have a viable future. Every Queensland, whether they like a bet or not, should realise that we need to find a solution because this industry is important to the state.

The Queensland government has already played a major role in improving income for the industry. The restructuring of the TAB racing program to optimise the use of Queensland's major racing venues and deliver a more attractive product resulted in an increase in betting turnover on Queensland thoroughbred race meetings through UNiTAB of 8.8 per cent in the year ending 30 June this year—that is, from \$359 million to \$391 million. This compared with growth in New South Wales of 5.8 per cent and in Victoria of 2.3 per cent.

**Mr Schwarten:** Leading the way in that, too.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Indeed. I take that interjection. Queensland Racing has increased its revenue by effectively programming races that attract the highest wagering, resulting in an increase of \$10 million in prize money from January this year and a further \$5 million from this month.

To survive, the Queensland racing industry needs to keep pace with other sports. It is about to face increased competition from other states, and if it does not modernise now it will not even be a place getter in the sports entertainment stakes. We do not need binoculars to know that at the moment the future of metropolitan racing in Brisbane is not showing good form. The Rugby codes, cricket and Aussie Rules have all modernised the way their codes and games are presented and marketed out of modern facilities, with world-class surroundings for corporate sponsors and the very important public.

South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales are all examining how to consolidate and improve their racing facilities. This could move more money away from Queensland. The Queensland industry has lost generations of customers through failure to modernise its product, image and commercial practices. Today we are going to call a spade a spade.

Our metropolitan race facilities are considered to be the worst in Australia. The public facilities at Eagle Farm are between 50 and 100 years old. Poor conditions have resulted in quality horses not being brought to Brisbane for the winter carnival due to inadequate stabling facilities and safety concerns. If Queensland's nine TAB race clubs had not been subsidised by Queensland Racing in 2002-03 they would have suffered a combined operating loss of \$7.4 million. None would be commercially viable in their own right. That money should be flowing through to the racehorse owners who invest in racing.

At least five of Queensland's nine TAB venues need to refurbish their tracks in the next five years to keep up with industry standards. Continued subsidisation of the clubs is not sustainable and is not an option. The industry must stand on its own two feet. It is now time for action to save the future of racing in Queensland.

Yesterday, cabinet examined two options presented by Queensland Racing on how best to save racing in Queensland. The Racing Minister, Robert Schwarten, advised cabinet of a number of opportunities. One high-profile option was to sell existing tracks and build a supertrack at a new venue at Wacol. The proposal had a major funding shortfall of about \$150 million. I can confirm today that the Wacol supertrack option is dead. It has gone to the glue factory.

Cabinet decided that the future of racing in Brisbane lies at the traditional home of Eagle Farm and Doomben. We will investigate developing Eagle Farm and Doomben under the banner of a Brisbane supertrack project, with both tracks operating in the one precinct. A key focus of the government is not only to provide a future for the industry but also to address important safety concerns involving stabling and the use of Nudgee Road.

The supertrack project will comprise: major track improvements; one major car park for both tracks; on-course stabling facilities shared by both tracks; and improved access and linking across Nudgee Road. A steering committee comprising the directors-general of the Department of Public Works, Queensland Treasury and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet will be established to guide the Eagle Farm and Doomben supertrack project.

The Department of Public Works will start an immediate investigation into the technical aspects and costs of improving the Eagle Farm and Doomben facilities. Costs will not be known until a more detailed plan is available. Funding could come from Queensland Racing, the Queensland Turf Club, the Brisbane Turf Club, the possible sale of Deagon training track and debt funding, possibly through Queensland Treasury Corporation.

The Queensland government will contribute up to \$12 million to provide better and safer access from Nudgee Road, linking the two tracks, improving public safety and animal welfare and meeting our obligation to local residents. Racing Minister Robert Schwarten will report back to cabinet before the end of the year on the result of the investigations.

For the supertrack project to become a reality, the trench warfare that has existed between Doomben and Eagle Farm must end. We must all pull together to produce a supertrack, which will be the only way to save first-class racing in Brisbane. We want to see a single metropolitan racing panel to work with the steering committee, comprising a member from Queensland Racing, a member from the

Queensland Turf Club, a member from the Brisbane Turf Club, a representative from owners and a representative from trainers. Once the supertrack is operational, a new body would be expected to operate as the owner and be independent of the turf clubs.

I would like to acknowledge the input of the member for Clayfield, Liddy Clark—one of my ministers—and the Minister for Racing, Robert Swarten, towards this proposal. I thank Robert for the effort he has put in here. I thank Liddy for her contribution. Finally, I appeal to the clubs involved to cooperate and be part of this exciting project which will give Queensland the best facilities in Australia. The alternative is a slow death.

In conclusion, I say to the clubs that we want to work with them. We want to make sure that this industry has a great future. Doing nothing is not an option. Them fighting is not an option. We want them to work with us to solve it. If not, then we will take appropriate action.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Racing Industry

**Hon. R.E. SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.07 a.m.): As announced by the Premier this morning, the decision has been made regarding the future development of a supertrack.

**Mr Hopper** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I am dying for them, too. I have met with the chair of Queensland Racing, Bob Bentley, and he has welcomed the decision. A greenfield site has been ruled out and we believe that a supertrack development at Eagle Farm and Doomben is the best way forward, which was one of two options put forward by Queensland Racing. As the Premier said, doing nothing was not an option.

This decision, which was not taken lightly, ensures that racing continues at its spiritual home but puts an onus on everyone in the industry to cast aside their own self-interest and act in the best interests of racing. This week we have seen all the media drumming up an issue about bookmakers ripping one another off. But this really is a non-issue compared with the substandard and outdated facilities that exist at our metropolitan tracks, in particular Eagle Farm, which does not even provide disability access or toilets in the members' stand. It is hard for me to understand why a club would let its facilities run down to such a condition while sitting on millions of members' dollars. The fact that they have not in the past addressed the shortage of stabling to attract more involvement in Brisbane based racing from interstate trainers and visitors or have chosen not to fix the problem of the injury prone crossing at Eagle Farm's 600-metre mark is beyond belief.

**Mr Hopper** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** The member is excusing them for that conduct and for not providing toilets for the disabled.

**Mr Hopper:** If you want to ask me a question, wait till after the next election. I'll swap with you.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** The member is a disgrace. He does not think disabled people should be able to go to the races.

While we are used to bookies offering a price service—good or bad—what will attract more people to the sport is better facilities. The southern states have already woken up to this, and South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales are currently examining proposals to dispose of underperforming metropolitan racecourse assets to upgrade more profitable tracks. Our government is prepared to put its money where its mouth is and put up to \$12 million into solving parking and public safety issues by linking the tracks. However, this is conditional upon the clubs cooperating to develop a state-of-the-art racing complex at the spiritual home of racing. This will not work if we have two clubs bickering over parking, stabling or any other nitpicking issue.

It is 2004 and it is time for the land gifted by the taxpayer to these clubs to start working for the betterment of metropolitan racing. Doing nothing is not an option, as both the Premier and the chair of Queensland Racing, Bob Bentley, have pointed out. It is also not an option for the clubs to continue to think that things are going to go on unchanged as they have for the last century. While I acknowledge that the BTC has made some real inroads and is now streets ahead of where it was, it is in no-one's interest to have the 'Gaza Strip' mentality continue. Over the next few weeks a steering committee consisting of Premiers, Treasury staff and Public Works staff will meet with a stakeholder committee consisting of one representative each from the QTC, BTC, Queensland Racing, owners and trainers to agree on a pathway forward so our metropolitan facilities can be developed to rival those anywhere else in Australia. All I ask is for the cooperation of both clubs to act in the interests of racing.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Education System

**Hon. A.M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (10.10 a.m.): A smart schooling system needs to be underpinned by smart laws. It has been 15 years since the legislation governing schooling in Queensland has been comprehensively reviewed, and much has changed in that time. Our government is reshaping the education system from the ground up. We are introducing a new year of schooling from 2007 and from 2006 we are requiring all young people to be learning or earning until they are 17. We need a sound legislative framework that responds to these changes and addresses the challenges that face education today. Our government is responding. Yesterday cabinet endorsed a discussion paper canvassing community views on wide-ranging changes to the Education (General Provisions) Act, and I seek leave to table a copy of the paper.

Leave granted.

**Ms BLIGH:** This act is the legislative foundation for education in Queensland. It sets out the fundamental requirements for all schooling such as the compulsory schooling age and specific requirements for state schools, including their establishment and student management. The proposals contained in the paper cover a range of issues including homework, student behaviour, home schooling, enrolment procedures, truancy, transfer of student information and religious education. We are proposing to allow state school principals to attach conditions to a new or existing student's enrolment to manage their behaviour and to introduce partnership agreements between students, parents and state schools which clearly spell out their rights and their responsibilities.

Education is now more important than ever, and that is why we are also proposing to double the fines for parents who fail to ensure that their children are in education or training. These changes are about giving all children the best chance to succeed. That is why we are also proposing to introduce a new regime to monitor home schooling in Queensland. While all parents have a right to choose the best education for their children, it is important to strike a balance between a parent's right to educate their child and the state's obligation to ensure that all children are properly educated.

Under proposed changes, home schooling parents would be required to register their details and provide an annual report on their children's performance. However, these home schooling families would also receive support to help their child's education. Under the proposal, they would have access to a home schooling support centre staffed by professionals and potentially to a range of approved state school activities such as the school library and sporting and recreational activities. For the first time home schooling students of high school age will also be eligible to receive the textbook and resource allowance. The changes being proposed will have an impact on current and future generations of Queensland students. I hope members will encourage their constituents to contribute to the review, which will shape the future legislative framework governing schooling in this state. Community consultation on the proposals will be held between now and early 2005, with public meetings to begin in the next few weeks. Written feedback is due by 31 March 2005 and copies of the discussion paper are available on the Education Queensland web site.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Seatbelt and Helmet Offences

**Hon. P.T. LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.14 a.m.): Today the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and I will be launching a public education campaign to support the new penalties for seatbelt and helmet offences which come into force on 1 November. As members are aware, my department is undertaking a comprehensive review of all traffic related penalties and sanctions in Queensland. It is part of the Beattie government's Queensland Road Safety Action Plan to reduce our crash fatality rate by 30 per cent to 5.6 deaths per 100,000 within seven years. The Beattie government has already had some success. Queensland's fatality rate has reduced 22.7 per cent since 1997 to 8.9 deaths per 100,000. This decrease is better than New South Wales at 10.5 per cent and Victoria at 17.9 per cent. But we still have a long way to go.

Any death on Queensland roads is one death too many. Driving without a seatbelt contributes to around 15 per cent of the annual road toll, with almost 50 people losing their lives each year. From 1 November, we will more than double the fine for not wearing a seatbelt or a motorbike helmet to \$225 and three demerit points. For the first time in Queensland, passengers aged 16 and over who fail to wear a seatbelt or motorbike pillions who fail to wear a helmet will lose demerit points as well as receive the fine. Numbers of repeat offenders for seatbelt and helmet offences are alarmingly high. Nearly a quarter of motorbike helmet tickets issued in 2003 went to motorists who had been booked at least once for the same offence in the previous 12 months. It is a wonder that they are still around to tell the tale. This figure was 15.8 per cent for repeat seatbelt offences. Given the high number of repeat offenders,

we are introducing a specific penalty to target repeat offenders. If a person commits a second or subsequent seatbelt driver offence within 12 months, they will lose an extra three points. This is an extra three demerit points in addition to the three demerit points incurred for each of the offences. This will also apply to motorbike helmet rider offences.

Car surfing will become an offence that carries a \$140 fine and three demerit points for the driver and a \$140 fine for passengers. There have been many incidents in recent years where young drivers in particular have been killed or seriously injured when someone is surfing or riding in the back of utes or trailers or in the boots of cars. Last year in Queensland overloaded vehicles involved in crashes killed nine people and hospitalised 84. A further nine were killed and 21 hospitalised in crashes where a person was riding in the back of a ute, car surfing or doing similarly dangerous acts. I was amazed to find out that drivers had no legal responsibility if passengers behaved dangerously, unlike the situation with seatbelts where a driver is fined if a passenger is not wearing a seatbelt. But they will from 1 November. The TV campaign starting on Sunday night focuses on seatbelts and uses an emotional approach to create awareness and encourage behaviour change. The ads show the tragic consequences for a young man who is now a paraplegic as a result of a crash in which he did not wear a seatbelt. I thank my colleagues for supporting this tougher approach and increased fines in a bid to save lives on Queensland roads.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Citrus Canker

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.17 a.m.): The detection of citrus canker on a second Emerald district property this month was extremely disappointing. However, this second detection is not expected to create the same problems that the first detection generated in July. This is because the second discovery of citrus canker was on a property already under quarantine restrictions and it was found after the citrus harvest had ended. I am pleased the National Management Group, which is made up of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments as well as industry and Plant Health Australia, supports the response effort. NMG supports the approach employed to deal with the detection of citrus canker on the first Emerald district property. The same process will be applied to the second infected property.

Under the current approved approach, all trees within a 600-metre radius of any infected tree will be destroyed. Destruction of trees will only commence when investigations and surveillance on the second property have determined the prevalence of the disease. The second property has been contained and pathologists are currently on the property undertaking a disease investigation. Intensive surveillance will commence later this week. All commercial citrus properties in the pest quarantine area in Emerald will undergo additional surveillance as part of the nationally agreed response plan developed following the first detection. That surveillance had already been scheduled for January, February and March next year when the wet season provides the best opportunity for symptoms of citrus canker to be evident.

This surveillance may be brought forward if there is an early break to the wet season and significant rainfall is received to increase the chance of the lesions showing. Importantly, the department has regular contact with the growers in the Emerald district and frequent updates are posted on the department's web site. The obvious question is whether there is a link between the two detections in the Emerald district. There is no definitive answer to that question. The pathologists currently working on the second property may be able to clarify the issue. In the meantime, the department has commissioned DNA analysis of the samples taken from both properties.

I want to assure all members, the citrus industry and Queenslanders that we will leave no stone unturned in responding to the latest detection. We are also determined to minimise the impact on growers who are unaffected by the disease. To that end, surveillance has commenced in areas outside the Emerald and Gayndah-Mundubbera districts to secure pest-free area status for these areas by December. This surveillance is being done by two inspection teams. One team will be based in the north, working from the Atherton Tablelands south to Mackay. The other team will be based in south-east Queensland and move north to Rockhampton and inland. It is our intention to complete this surveillance and put a case before the other states and territories.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Energex 'Get Set for Summer' Campaign

**Hon. R.J. MICKEL** (Logan—ALP) (Minister for Energy) (10.20 a.m.): Queensland is in an enviable position when it comes to generating power. In fact, we will again have excess capacity this summer.

**Mr Springborg:** Well, why do you get blackouts, then?

**Mr MICKEL:** Let me say again: they obviously do not like it. Queensland will generate excess power again this summer. We are not facing the scenario which Victoria and South Australia face this summer: potential power shortages. The biggest issue we will face this summer is the elements and their impact on the power system. That is why communication with the community is vital and that is why I was pleased to take part in the launch of Energex's Get Set for Summer campaign last weekend. The program recognises that, whilst it is not possible to stormproof the electricity distribution network, it is possible to be better prepared and to respond faster and more effectively when storms do cause outages. That is the focus Energex is taking in preparing for the coming storm season. The Get Set for Summer campaign aims to enhance the community's understanding of how to deal with electricity interruptions. This brochure lists all the items householders should keep handy in the event of a storm, for example, a torch and a battery-operated radio.

One issue that I became aware of during Saturday's launch was the need for people who normally use cordless phones to keep a plug-in handset or fully charged mobile phone on stand-by. The reason for this is that the cordless phones run off the domestic power supply and are useless in the event of a power failure. I have asked Energex to make sure that they get that message out into the community.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr MICKEL:** I am proud of the 3,000 people who work for Energex. The opposition is not. We on this side of the House recognise that last Sunday night, under very difficult circumstances, they were out there working in the elements whilst the laziest and best-resourced opposition members were tucked away in bed.

As I said, I have asked Energex to get the message out to the community. We have asked people to literally look after their own backyards. By cleaning up around their houses, they will minimise the risk of items such as palm fronds being picked up by the wind and thrown into powerlines, causing outages. The brochure details the way Energex responds to storms and advises customers who to contact in the event of a problem. I hope that all Energex customers will read it and familiarise themselves with the storm procedures.

As I said, outages have occurred as a result of storms over the last 48 hours. While not the severest weather events, they are proving to be a good test for the new response systems Energex has put in place. It is also an opportunity for Energex to iron out any glitches in those systems. Over the last 24 hours I have been made aware of complaints from customers about problems with the new interactive voice system at Energex's call centre and with information being given out by radio 96.5 FM. I will be seeking a full debriefing on these issues when I hold my regular weekly meeting with Gordon Jardine, the acting chief executive officer of Energex, later today. I will be asking for an update on how Energex has responded to those storms and for suggestions on how we can learn from them.

## SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

### Report

**Hon. K.W. HAYWARD** (Kallangur—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 7, 2004*.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Racing Industry

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.24 a.m.): This morning in parliament we saw the government take the advice of the opposition on the redevelopment of the Eagle Farm-Doomben racing precinct. The shadow minister has been advising the government for months that that is the only option. It is a great pity that the Racing Minister and the Premier have put the people of Hendra, Hamilton and Ascot through the heartache and the concerns that they have been putting them through. It is quite clear that the shadow minister knows a lot more about the racing industry than the minister does.

Not only did the shadow minister advise that this was the best option but also he advised the minister in May that Bill Ludwig would be appointed to the Thoroughbred Racing Board of Queensland, and he is right. The minister stood there and said that it was not going to happen. So we have a situation of the opposition in Queensland, the Nationals, leading in the racing policy and the government has had to adopt the position that we have been advocating for a long time.

In relation to Bill Ludwig, is it not interesting! The short-priced favourite has come home. He has left everyone else standing in the barriers. Under this Racing Minister we have seen a modern-day

version of the Fine Cotton affair. The minister knew what was going on. He knew in May that the biggest Labor mate of them all, Bill Ludwig, was going to be appointed to the position—

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. I find the remark that the honourable member made that I knew in May that Mr Bill Ludwig would be appointed to a position in Queensland Racing to be offensive, untrue and I demand that it be withdrawn.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will withdraw.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I withdraw. Quite clearly, he did know in May that Bill Ludwig—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr Schwarten:** You grub.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! This House will come to order.

**Mr Hobbs:** He called you a grub.

**Mr Springborg:** He did.

**Mr SPEAKER:** That is unparliamentary. The minister will withdraw.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before calling the member for Bundamba, could I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Springsure State School in the electorate of Gregory.

### Sexual Violence Awareness Month

**Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): October is officially known as Sexual Violence Awareness Month, which was formally proclaimed by our Premier back in 2002. This campaign was originally an initiative of the Gold Coast Sexual Assault Support Service and is now coordinated by the sexual assault support services in local areas. This month raises awareness about sexual assault, its impact on women, men, their families and the community, prevention initiatives, and support and counselling services. Key participants include the government, local councils, community organisations, schools, media and a host of community and businesspeople.

Teal coloured ribbons are worn internationally to symbolise sexual violence awareness. The theme for 2004 is 'Decide to End Sexual Violence'. Community members are asked to decide what they can do to work towards the elimination of sexual violence. Unfortunately, sexual violence and assault cannot be solved by the government alone. Therefore, a continuing partnership between the government and the community, including work by individuals and organisations within local communities, is required to ensure the safety of women within our communities.

I am pleased to advise that Queensland Health provides funding to 29 sexual assault services across Queensland through the Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program. Twenty are community based services and nine are based within Queensland Health service districts and include a 24-hour 1800 statewide sexual assault help line. The services funded provide community based counselling, support, information, education and referral to women and girls over 15 years who have been sexually assaulted. In addition, Queensland Health provides a specific response to women who have been recently raped or sexually assaulted.

The 2004-05 budget to service providers, including health service districts, is \$5,307,134. Queensland Health also has been a key player in the production of interagency guidelines for responding to adult victims of sexual assault. Recent research suggests that 1.2 million adult women in Australia have experienced an incident of sexual violence since the age of 15. There is currently no real measure of the true incidence of sexual violence amongst the male population, but statistics indicate—

Time expired.

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

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Energex; Electricity Supply

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (10.30 a.m.): My question is directed to the Minister for Energy. I refer to the claim by an Energex spokesman that yesterday's blackouts were unavoidable and that 'virtually all of the power interruptions today were related to storm damage'. Can the minister confirm the information shown on the Energex web site, that 50 per cent of the shown blackouts were in fact due to technical faults rather than storm damage, as claimed by the spokesman?

**Mr MICKEL:** I have not seen the comments of the spokesman, but I will say this: any system that is largely an overhead system is subject to the elements. That was the case when those opposite were in government; it is the case when we are in government today. Today I can give members this assurance about the system: this summer we will be generating excess electricity. Under the National Party, for four days we had power cuts caused not by—

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr MICKEL:** He cannot psychologically handle it when I am going to hang one on him. He has to interrupt. He is a bit nervous. The point is that for four days under the National Party we went without electricity because it did not generate enough electricity. This summer—

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. My question was very simple: are the comments of the Energex spokesman in the paper today correct or is the Energex web site correct? That is all I am asking.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order. Resume your seat.

**Mr MICKEL:** They cannot handle it, because they were the ministers for blackouts. They were the ministers for not generating enough electricity, and they know it. For four days in a row this state was without electricity because they were incapable of generating it.

What we have got in Queensland is what every other state would envy. This year we will be generating excess electricity. Unlike any other state, we are in a first-class position when it comes to the generation of electricity. What are we doing about distribution? We are doing plenty to recognise two challenges. The first challenge is population growth. In other words, we have more people moving to Queensland because they have faith in the economy, as outlined to us this morning by the Treasurer. The second challenge is the growth in airconditioning.

What are we doing about it? We have increased Energex's capital spending by \$113.7 million to \$421 million this year. It is real money to face up to the challenges in the distribution system. What else have we done? We have an accelerated program of works costing \$85 million to provide additional capacity for this summer. To date the program is running to schedule. That is why those opposite cannot stand it. They know that 3,000 people in Energex—professional people—are out there addressing the problems, not shirking their responsibilities in the way that the Leader of the Opposition would have done. They are not plunging the state into darkness the way those opposite did for four days in a row under the Borbidge government, when the member was a minister in that government. I would love to have been sitting around the cabinet table while he tried to explain that one away. We have addressed that generating problem, and those opposite cannot handle it.

### Queensland Racing Board; Mr W. Ludwig

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. I refer the minister to the announcement on 12 October of the appointment of the biggest Labor mate of them all, Bill Ludwig, to the board of thoroughbred racing in Queensland. I also refer to section 11FA of the Racing Act, which refers to the obligations of the chief executive officer. He has to ask the person—

- (a) to give the person's fingerprints to the chief executive or allow the person's fingerprints to be taken; and
- (b) to complete a form approved by the chief executive relating to the person's business reputation, character, criminal history, current financial position and financial background.

Is it not true that at the time of the announcement the required probity checks under the Racing Act had not been conducted on Mr Bill Ludwig?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Let us get a few things straight for a start. When I answered a question in this parliament on 13 May, I was responding to a question that stated in part—

... deal within the ALP that saw the Beattie government sacrifice former Racing Minister Merri Rose due to her prior refusal to appoint Mr Ludwig to that board?

That is the bit that I said was ratbaggery. The whole question was prefaced on that. That is the first part. The second part, which I made very clear in the answer, is that I stand by everything that is in *Hansard*, because the appointment process is not done by me. The sorts of questions that we are seeing come out today are out of spite. The fact is: I said at the time that I did not care who was appointed, whether it be John Howard, Joan Sheldon, Bill Ludwig or anybody else. I have not been part of this process at all, and nor would I be.

Let us look at who the Leader of the Opposition is impugning here, because this is the tried and true tradition of those opposite. It is impugning an honourable firm in this state that oversaw the whole process, including being present at interviews. It is a company beyond reproach. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to get up in this place—or better still go outside this place—and repeat his scurrilous accusations. I challenge him to go out there. The fact is that any probity checks that have to be done will be done.

**Mr Springborg:** Will be done?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Just settle down, you poor unfortunate animal.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Minister, you will resume your seat for a second. I am on my feet.

**Mr Schwarten:** Sit down, you poor unfortunate creature.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Minister! This has become a debacle this morning. I warn everybody in this House now that if members are going to continue this sort of behaviour they will be doing it from the outside, not the inside. You are now warned.

Interruption.

## PRIVILEGE

### Comments by Minister for Racing

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.38 a.m.): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. The minister said in his answer that the requirements will be complied with. I quote for him page 213 of the Racing Act. It states—

11FA Chief executive to make enquiries

(1) To help a selection panel in considering the suitability of a person for appointment to the Thoroughbred Racing Board.

You do them before the appointment, not after.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of privilege.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Queensland Racing Board; Mr W. Ludwig

Resumed.

**Mr SCHWARTEN**, continuing: I was about to get to that point of the question. The appointment is made subject to any probity checks. No-one has been appointed yet, so those opposite should settle down. There has been no appointment made, and they are made subject to probity checks.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr Hopper** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Deputy Leader of the Opposition, this is my final warning to you. Member for Darling Downs, my final warning.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** The reality, according to this group of grubs over here, is that anybody who is in the Labor Party should not serve anywhere.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** You are a grub.

**Mr SEENEY:** Mr Speaker, that is hardly parliamentary.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I actually missed what the minister said because of the noise over this side.

**Mr SEENEY:** The minister made his usual comment about us being grubs that he makes all the time. Surely that is unparliamentary.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I run this place, not you. Resume your seat.

**Mr SEENEY:** I find the comment offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! It wasn't made directly to you, but I will ask the minister to withdraw because it is unparliamentary.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Mr Speaker, I will withdraw anything that they find offensive.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I have asked him to withdraw, but in future I will organise this place, not you.

## Goodwill Bridge

**Mr FINN:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier. The Goodwill Bridge is now very much a part of this city's structure, and it seems to me that more and more people are using it. Can the Premier confirm if this is the case?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the honourable member for Yeerongpilly for his question. I know that many people who live in the electorate of the Minister for Education and in the member's electorate use this bridge, and I understand the member's interest. Three years ago this Thursday the Goodwill Bridge was opened, linking two vibrant precincts to the heart of Queensland's capital. The bridge was named as a symbol of unity in the wake of Queensland's hosting of the Goodwill Games and after the atrocities that shocked and changed the world on September 11, 2001. It continues to serve the purpose of a unifying structure, where people from all over the world cross paths.

South Bank Corporation estimates that in three years an estimated 10 million crossings have been made, and approximately 70,000 crossings are now made each week. That is up from 60,000 per week in the first year. The bridge is a landmark for the new Queensland and a very practical link in Brisbane's transport, recreation and commercial networks. It serves the full diversity of Queenslanders and visitors.

People use the Goodwill Bridge to commute to work and study, which is fantastic; to reach shops, restaurants and concerts; to stroll, wheel, cycle, jog or even skate between the Brisbane City Botanic Gardens, South Bank and Kangaroo Point; to take photographs, eat picnics, meditate—I think today we need a bit more of that—sightsee; and to celebrate the new year and even to get married.

It has been a focal point for many and varied events, and they are too numerous to name. Some of the highlights include Riverfire, Riverfeast, Mother's Day Classic Walk/Run, the Royal Brisbane Hospital Research Foundation Fun Run, Lest we Forget Fun Run and Marathon, 4KQ Night the River Sings, 4KQ Australia Day Barbecue, 2004 River Run, Queensland Week Promotions, Brisbane Festival Events, and various film and media advertisements.

The innovative design of the Goodwill Bridge has seen it receive a number of prestigious awards since its construction. I remember when we were building this bridge that it had its share of detractors, and I have to say that I do not see too many of them now. This is the sort of vision that we have for the Smart State. This is the sort of strategy that we have for the future. This adds to the wonderful lifestyle that Queensland has. I am absolutely delighted to see 70,000 people a week use it as regularly as they do, and I hope more and more people will continue to use it. For those opposite who whinged and attacked us at every step along the way, I say: be positive. Because when they whinge all they do is undermine great ideas, and this government is about great ideas.

### **Queensland Racing Board; Mr J. Lingard**

**Mr HOPPER:** My question is directed to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. Is it not true that recently Queensland Racing terminated its marketing manager and Queensland Racing calendar editor, John Lingard? A massive number of people have now been sacked by Mr Bentley. Will the minister confirm that Mr Lingard was paid full benefits, and is he aware of any additional payments that may have been made on his termination?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** No, Mr Speaker, I am not.

### **Central Queensland; Death of Mr M. Hinohara**

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Apart from good and consistent rainfall, the best news for a region in need of growth and stability is the shoring up of its key employers. Can the Premier detail any gains that central Queensland has received in recent days, other than some rainfall overnight?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I have to say to the honourable member that we are all delighted about the rainfall, and let there be more.

**Mr Mackenroth:** Not on the weekend, though!

**Mr BEATTIE:** The 'Minister for Indy' is getting excited about Sunday, Mr Speaker. Any day when a regional community claims 150 new jobs is a great day indeed. Last week Teys Brothers meats and I, along with the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing and local member Robert Schwarten, announced that central Queensland is set for 150 new meat processing jobs following the success of the recently reopened Lakes Creek plant, and I understand the honourable member's interest in this. Teys Brothers chairman, Mr Allan Teys, and I released details that the jobs will flow as a result of the cooperation between the state government and Teys Brothers. When parliament last sat, Robert Schwarten and I met with the Teys Brothers team. They also joined me in Japan recently.

The Lakes Creek plant reopened just under three months ago after being bought by the Brisbane based Teys Brothers. This announcement is an excellent central Queensland addition to this month's state jobs. September's trend unemployment rate fell to 5.4 per cent, which is below the national figure of 5.6 per cent. Allan Teys said that they started the plant with an initial 200 jobs and are now ready to put on another 150 workers in the next couple of months. This will provide further employment opportunities for local residents, boost the local economy and generate additional millions of export dollars for Queensland.

What is most heartening is that Mr Teys says that this is a result of the success of the plant itself; the confidence that they—that is, the Teys Brothers—have in the Queensland business environment; and assistance from the state government in export market initiatives and in other areas. The member for Rockhampton and Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing correctly points out that the extra jobs will also mean more job opportunities, particularly for young school leavers looking for good money and a long-term career. Teys Brothers is now seeking skilled meats processors from throughout Queensland to crank up production at the Rockhampton plant with the goal to process over 1,000 head a day. I know that that is a great psychological boost for Rocky and the central Queensland beef industry to have 'the creek' back in operation. Early last month I had the privilege of launching a campaign in Japan to promote Queensland beef—Teys Brothers beef—sold by Japanese Seiyu supermarket chain. Teys Brothers is to be congratulated for leading the way for the Queensland beef industry and for being part of the biggest ever promotion of our beef in Japan.

While I am talking about beef, with regret I inform the House of the untimely death in Tokyo on Sunday of Mr Masaru 'Ken' Hinohara of Nippon Meat Packers. Ken moved to Australia in the early 1980s to establish a trading office for the company in Sydney. He grew the company almost single-handedly to be the second largest beef processing and exporting company in Australia. The company has meatworks in Oakey and Mackay in Queensland, as well as in Wingham in New South Wales. The company also owns and operates the Whyalla feedlot in Texas, the New Wave hide processing operation in Toowoomba and the Tong Park piggery at Chinchilla. On behalf of all members of this House, I express our sincere regrets to our friends at Nippon meat in Australia and in Japan, and especially to Ken's wife and children.

### **Cardiac Services, Prince Charles Hospital**

**Mr COPELAND:** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. I refer to the extensive waiting times for cardiac treatment at the Prince Charles Hospital and the government's reduction of cardiac procedures that is resulting in the death of patients on waiting lists. Why has the minister's only response been to import a cardiologist from South Australia to try to discredit the concerns of local cardiologists rather than fund more procedures to save lives?

**Mr NUTTALL:** The question is based on a false premise. I think we need to point out exactly what we are doing to care for people in terms of cardiology services in Queensland. Here are some examples. The number of angiograms performed statewide in Queensland Health facilities over the last two years increased by 8.2 per cent to 463 episodes. In addition, Queensland Health has contracted a further 280 angiograms each year for the private sector in each of the past two years. The number of implantable defibrillators inserted statewide in Queensland Health facilities over the last two years has increased by 62 per cent to 93 episodes. The number of pacemaker procedures performed statewide in Queensland Health facilities increased by 13.5 per cent to 134 episodes over the past two years. The number of angioplasties without stents performed by Queensland Health has actually decreased to 27 episodes over the past two years, and the reason for that decrease is that most patients now receive stents.

The number of stents implanted has increased by 23.6 per cent over the last two years to 316 episodes. In addition to that, Queensland Health has provided an additional \$2 million per annum recurrent in order that drug-eluting stents can be used for those patients who will obtain a clinical benefit. We have an extensive program in terms of looking after people with heart issues. This government has been very proactive in this area. I am disappointed in the comments that have been made in public in the last couple of weeks. These comments are misleading to say the least.

### **Cardiac Services, Prince Charles Hospital**

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN:** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. As the local member I am aware of concerns amongst staff at the Prince Charles Hospital about false and misleading comments being publicly aired which call into disrepute the excellent cardiac services being provided by the dedicated staff at Prince Charles. I ask: can the minister expand on what the Beattie government is doing to face the increasing demand for cardiac services across Queensland?

**Mr NUTTALL:** There have been recent appalling attempts by some people to incite fear among the public about our ability to provide adequate heart surgery. I would like to be very clear about the facts in this matter. The honourable member for Moggill and his friend Dr Con Aroney claim that there is a funding crisis in cardiac surgery in Queensland. There is not. I have spoken previously about funding, including \$7.5 million in 2004 to improve cardiac services across the state on such things as a new \$2.5 million cardiac diagnostic lab at the Gold Coast Hospital, \$2 million for 400 additional angiograms and stent procedures, and half a million dollars for additional implantable defibrillators. Despite the movement away from open to less invasive surgery as a result of technological gains in medicine, in 2003-04 there were 10,497 cardiac procedures performed across all of Queensland in our public hospitals. That is 266 more than in the year 2002-03 and 441 more than in 2001-02, nor is there an argument about more funding for the Prince Charles Hospital. Queensland patients deserve a statewide

cardiac service, and that is why our statewide plan also includes more cardiac services for the Princess Alexandra Hospital, more cardiac services for the Gold Coast and more cardiac services for north Queensland.

The member for Moggill and his friend Dr Con Aroney claim that we are running a Queensland Health investigation. We are not. It is an independent investigation by an Adelaide doctor who is a board member of the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand. He is not being paid for this service.

**Dr Flegg** interjected.

**Mr NUTTALL:** The member for Moggill and his friend Dr Con Aroney claim it is an investigation into the deaths of eight, and now 10, patients. It is not. Dr Leo Mahar, who is a director of cardiology at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, is looking into the deaths of two patients.

**Dr Flegg** interjected.

**Mr NUTTALL:** The member for Moggill has failed to provide any information to me or my department in relation to these so-called other patients.

**Dr Flegg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Moggill, cease interjecting.

**Mr NUTTALL:** Finally, the latest scare tactics about the so-called funding crisis this time is using a patient who is currently on a waiting list for heart surgery. I believe that this patient is being manipulated for political purposes. This patient's care has been determined by a treating specialist who is best placed to determine her priority for care. If that specialist believes her case to be more urgent, the patient could well have been referred to the Princess Alexandra Hospital where the waiting list is shorter.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the Leader of the Liberal Party, I welcome to the public gallery students and teaches of Ormiston College in the electorate of Cleveland.

### **Defibrillator Unit, Royal Brisbane Hospital**

**Mr QUINN:** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given the deaths of a number of patients awaiting implantable defibrillators at the Prince Charles Hospital and the very high risk of sudden death of these patients, I ask: why has the government reduced the number of weekly procedures from 80 to 57? Further, why has a \$1.5 million catheter unit built seven years ago at the Royal Brisbane Hospital and equipped to implant defibrillators never been used?

**Mr NUTTALL:** I have just outlined in extensive detail the cardiology services that this state is providing. As I have always said, and as the honourable members opposite should know, patient care is best determined by the specialist who is looking after the patients, not by the members opposite. Patient care is best determined by the specialist who is looking after the patient.

**Dr Flegg** interjected.

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

**Mr NUTTALL:** We have always said that if the specialist believes that the patient needs to be moved in terms of the waiting list we should have the flexibility within the system to do that. The debate being supported by the member for Moggill is about keeping control of cardiology services only at the Prince Charles Hospital. He needs to determine whether he wants to be a doctor or whether he wants to be a member of parliament. We are providing additional services at the Princess Alexandra Hospital, we are providing additional services at the Gold Coast Hospital and we are providing additional services at Townsville Hospital. We are not about protecting some people and their little fiefdoms. We are about providing the best service possible for all people of Queensland, particularly in the area of cardiology.

In answer to the last two questions I have outlined in great detail the amount of expenditure and the amount of additional services that we are providing to the people of Queensland in terms of their needs for heart surgery. This debate that has been going on for the last couple of weeks is not about better health; this is about the member for Moggill and Dr Aroney using—

**Dr Flegg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member Moggill, I now warn you under standing order 253.

**Mr NUTTALL:** As I have said, if the specialist believes that the patient needs urgent care there is flexibility within the system to look after those people.

### **Sportingbet Concerns**

**Mr LAWLOR:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. I draw the minister's attention to the allegations made by the owner of the Darwin based Sportingbet about concerns with bookmaking activity in Brisbane. Does this affect the integrity of racing in Queensland and what action can be taken over such matters?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** No, it does not affect the integrity of Queensland Racing one little bit.

**Mr Copeland** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I note that the member opposite supports the comments, and I am not surprised because members on that side of the parliament are always wanting to undermine Queensland racing.

The reality is that the day I take notice of Sullivan in Darwin, who has been freeloading on the industry in Queensland, is the day that I will give the game away. The fact of the matter is that provided bookies stick to the minimum bet and pay on the price they have on the board they are within the law. It is not unusual for bookies to complain when they lose when betting against other bookies. I say to any of the others who have made statements in the *Courier-Mail* today: come and show us some evidence. Bring me some evidence about this and we will deal with it.

Last night on television Queensland Racing's chair, Bob Bentley, said that he is quite prepared to deal with it, but no evidence has ever come before him. The chief stewards in Queensland, Railton and Reardon, had an inquiry into this a couple of years ago—last year and the year before—and no evidence was found.

The reality is that when people lose on racecourses they like to blame everybody else. Like any other punter, I have been guilty of that myself from time to time. We all think we are a bit smarter than the bookie and the bookie thinks he is smarter than the next bookie. That is the reality. When punters miss out, that is what occurs.

I do not care if anybody has so much as a dinar with Sullivan. He does not put one cent into Queensland racing. If people are worried about it, I suggest they bet on UNiTAB because that money comes back into Queensland Racing; it is more money for country racing in Queensland because we have tied the future of country racing to the TAB.

I do not care what Sullivan has to say. Anybody who has any evidence—Sullivan included—ought to put up or shut up. Let us see what happens as a result of that. I notice Reid has made comments about race fixing and all the rest of it. Queensland Racing has advised me it is going to ask Reid to show cause in relation to that and to actually come up with the evidence. That is the most harmful statement that can be made about racing—the most harmful comment that can ever be made about racing. Racing competence in Queensland is at its best. We have a good product. The announcement this morning is going to value add to that and, indeed, to the future of racing.

I say to those opposite who want to criticise: keep your opinions to yourself. The opposition has nothing forward to say, no positive suggestion to make about the future, nothing to offer whatsoever in this regard. The day those opposite get a policy on racing, let us know because it will come on top of the non-existent housing policy that was promised 380 days ago. It still has not been seen. The opposition has no public works policy, no housing policy, no racing policy. Nothing!

**Mr Mackenroth:** Not even a document on amalgamation.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Absolutely no document whatsoever. The truth is all they can do is carp and whinge in this regard.

### **Administration of Drugs, Aged Care Facilities**

**Ms LEE LONG:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Some serious changes are being proposed by Queensland Health in relation to the requirements for medication management in aged care facilities that will allow aged care providers to direct unqualified assistants in nursing and carers to give medications to all residents in aged care facilities. This job has traditionally been done by registered nurses and, in some cases, endorsed enrolled nurses. It would mean a significant watering down of the skills required to administer injections, morphine and medications to residents who are not able to ask for help to take their medications, et cetera. Aged care residents have rights similar to others in the community receiving health care and also to the safe administration of medication. I ask: does the minister consider that this proposal may create serious risks to both the residents and staff in aged care facilities?

**Mr NUTTALL:** I have heard about this issue and I understand that there is a standard form of letter that people are signing and are sending to me. I have not yet seen that. From my point of view as the Minister for Health we are not about to, nor will we ever, allow people who are unsuitably qualified to administer drugs to anyone.

### **Stanwell Power Station**

**Mr PEARCE:** My question is to the Minister for Energy. Last week the minister went to Stanwell Power Station in the Fitzroy electorate to inspect what is a world-class power generation facility. Can the minister inform the House about a current maintenance project at Stanwell and the benefits that this project is bringing to central Queensland?

**Mr MICKEL:** I thank the member for Fitzroy, who works so hard for his constituents, and the member for Keppel for accompanying me last Thursday when we were in central Queensland. Yes, it is true, we went to Stanwell. Stanwell is one of Queensland's major power generators with four 350-megawatt generation units. At the stage we inspected it Stanwell Power Station was exporting power to southern states because, as I said, this summer we will generate excess electricity. We will be earning money for Queensland because of that. Stanwell employs 180 people and is a vital contributor to the economy in central Queensland.

I must say I was impressed, and I know the members were impressed, by the obvious pride that those employees take in the job that they are doing, and I want the member for Fitzroy and the member for Keppel to thank them for the work that is being done and for the warm welcome that we were given. That dedication to the job is why Stanwell's unit 4 holds the Guinness World Record for the most number of days in continuous operation—an outstanding achievement.

I am advised by Stanwell Corporation that the power station's availability has averaged 95.5 per cent in the past six years since all four units became operational. At present, Stanwell's unit 2 is undergoing a \$17.6 million scheduled maintenance overhaul. The overhaul will increase the station's capacity and efficiency, but, importantly for the environment, it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will increase the unit's capacity by approximately seven megawatts and efficiency at full load will improve by more than 1.5 per cent. The overhaul involves more than 250 specialist contract personnel and 90 Stanwell Power Station employees. More than half of the budget, or \$9.2 billion, is being spent on contracted services and labour. Of that amount, \$7 million has been spent with companies that have a local presence in central Queensland. Those companies include CQ Crane Hire, Capricorn Cladding and Insulation, EB Plumbing, Coates Hire, AE Bakers and Rocky Cabs. I am pleased to say this project is making a positive contribution to the local economy and to Queensland as a whole.

I would also like to thank the two members for accompanying me to the call centre in central Queensland. I ask the members to pass on my gratitude to the employees there. They have a target—that is being met—of answering 70 per cent of the calls in 30 seconds. Seventy per cent in 30 seconds—an outstanding record! I ask the members to pass on the appreciation of the Queensland government to those employees.

### **Energex; Electricity Supply**

**Mr SEENEY:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy. I refer to the minister's refusal to answer the question that was posed by the Leader of the Opposition in regard to Energex blaming power blackouts on storms yesterday. I will table for the benefit of the House a print-out of Energex's web site taken at 10.30 this morning which shows that currently there are some 19 suburbs in Brisbane blacked out with some 10,000 consumers currently without electricity. Is the minister going to allow Energex to today blame non-existent storms for this current spate of blackouts?

**Mr MICKEL:** I can only repeat what I have said: we have one of the largest overhead networks in the world. I checked on the reliability of electricity and informed the House last week that taking into account storms, including the storms of this year—the most severe in 80 years—electricity in Queensland and in southern Queensland stayed on for over 99 per cent of the time. The jokers opposite could not even get that in the election. The members were crowing this morning about their results; they went backwards two per cent. If the electricity industry went backwards by that amount there would be something to worry about.

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order. A question about extensive blackouts in Brisbane can hardly be answered by abusing us.

**Mr SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. I call the minister.

**Mr MICKEL:** You can see what a glass jaw the member has. The member can get up here and defame anybody and everybody, as he does every single sitting day, and yet when it is handed back to him he crawls under the ropes for protection. The ultimate glass jaw! Let me tell the House what Energex is doing to improve reliability of services—

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Warrego, order!

**Mr MICKEL:** Let me take up what I was saying. There has been \$421 million in capital expenditure. We have installed 23 major transformers at electricity substations.

**Mr Copeland** interjected.

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

**Mr MICKEL:** Eight power transformers have been installed at substations at Brendale, Crestmead, Gaven, Kenmore, Narangba, Nundah, Sherwood and Victoria Point.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

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

**Mr MICKEL:** Four power transformers have been installed but not energised at Archerfield, Enoggera, Gympie and Indooroopilly and are available as stand-by units to move to other sites in the event of contingency situations. Six power transformers have been delivered on site and are being prepared for commissioning at Bald Hills, Booval, Morayfield, Carindale, North Maclean and Bribie Island.

The remaining five units for Burleigh Heads, Eight Mile Plains, Morayfield North, Nambour and Victoria Park are progressively being delivered and prepared for commissioning prior to the end of 2004. The good news does not end there. We are working on the installation of cooling fans. A total of 17 cooling fan projects are planned. Installation of cooling fans increases the capacity of substation transformers. Thirteen projects have been completed at Bethania, Bundall, Caboolture West, Eight Mile Plains, Hayes Inlet, Indooroopilly, Labrador, Lawnton, Loganholme, Mudgeeraba, Newmarket, Nundah and Palm Beach.

But the good news does not end there. We also have the installation of capacity banks. A total of 14 capacity bank projects are planned at substations to provide additional capacity to the network. Seven have been completed at Camp Hill, Sherwood, Currumbin, Palm Beach, Carindale, Miami and Raby Bay. I would like to fully answer the honourable member's question.

Time expired.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the member for Glasshouse, I welcome to the public gallery a second group of students from Ormiston College in the electorate of Cleveland. I also welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Clontarf Beach State School in the electorate of Redcliffe.

### Australian Fashion Design Awards

**Ms MALE:** My question without notice is to the Minister for State Development and Innovation. As the minister knows, on Friday, 8 October I joined him at the Australian Fashion Design Awards. Could the minister provide the House with an update on Queensland's performance at these awards and the health of our local fashion industry?

**Mr McGRADY:** I would like to thank the member, my ministerial colleagues and other members of parliament who joined me on the Friday night before the election. The Australian Fashion Design Awards, which the Queensland government well and truly sponsors, were a huge success. There was nearly a clean sweep of the awards by Queensland designers.

It was my pleasure to present two awards to local businesses. The Queensland Government Innovation Award went to Retro Chef which is run by Greg Dyer who designs and produces a unique brand of corporate clothing for the hospitality industry. I also presented the Rising Star Award to Little Workers who, I understand, come from Paddington. I have been told that their children's fashions have quickly become a nationally recognised label.

These awards are a great opportunity for designers to launch their fashion careers and promote their work to a national audience. In south-east Queensland some 185,000 people tuned in to watch the event live. It will be broadcast across the state at a later date.

Queensland has a fashion industry that we can certainly be proud of. I am committed to seeing this industry reach its full potential. To this end, I am working on setting up a fashion incubator—a place where young talent can design, manufacture and sell, a place where they can be mentored by experienced designers and a place where young designers can be taught the business skills needed to survive in the real world. I have set up a fashion industry working group to pursue this idea. The group comprises designers Daniel Lightfoot and Richard De Chazal. Richard, a gentleman from Mount Isa, designed my wife's dress and everybody said how beautiful it was. He also whipped up a bow tie for me. Everybody said it was very chic.

I have a bow tie with me that is made out of barramundi skin. I will pass it back to my colleague the Minister for Primary Industries. The enthusiasm of all the people working in the industry was there to see. I thank the member for Glasshouse for the question because it allowed me to stand here today and explain to all members of parliament just how well the Queensland fashion industry is going.

**Mr Schwarten:** How did mummy look—stunning?

**Mr McGRADY:** She looked absolutely stunning.

### Cardiac Services

**Dr FLEGG:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. Given that at least six Queenslanders have unnecessarily died this year because Queensland Health was unable to transfer these acute cardiac patients from regional hospitals to major metropolitan hospitals within the accepted clinical benchmark of 48 hours, I ask: why is this government rationing this life-saving treatment to people who live in regional Queensland.

**Mr NUTTALL:** The honourable member for Moggill is gaining a reputation of being loose with the truth. If he wants to take over from the honourable member for Robina when he retires, he needs to understand that he needs to establish some credibility not just within his own party but with the people of Queensland.

The honourable member continues to raise figures and numbers, none of which he can substantiate. If he wants to be a doctor he has a duty of care to advise us about that very early in the piece so that we can address the issue. If, however, he wants to be a politician, he uses it for political gain. That is what is happening today.

**Mr Quinn** interjected.

**Mr NUTTALL:** The challenge I have for the honourable member for Moggill is for him to provide me with the names of these people who he alleges—

**Mr Quinn** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Liberal Party will cease interjecting.

**Mr NUTTALL:**—have not received proper treatment and I will investigate that. That is the challenge for the member.

**Mr Quinn** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of Liberal Party, this is my final warning.

**Mr NUTTALL:** As I mentioned earlier, in the last year we have done over 10,497 heart disease procedures in this state. That is an increase on the year before and a substantial increase on the year before that. Our commitment is on the table for all to see. The member has to now establish his bona fides.

### U-turn Program

**Mrs DESLEY SCOTT:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. I recently attended the launch of the U-turn program at the Logan YMCA, which is in my electorate. Could the minister inform the House about the aims of this project?

**Ms SPENCE:** I thank the member for Woodridge for asking about this very important program. It is one of four pilots around the country. I thank the member for representing me at the launch which occurred at the Logan YMCA. The program is being managed by the Queensland Police Service. Basically, it is aimed at breaking the cycle of offending for young people aged 15 to 20 who have an extensive history of car theft. I am told that of the 20 to 25 participants in the first program, we have an extraordinarily extensive history of car theft. The program involves eight- to 10-week workshops. The training will be delivered by two qualified mechanics and the successful graduates will graduate with a certificate 1 automotive as well as life skills.

A youth worker has also been employed to run the program and to teach the young people life skills, to help them with employment prospects in the future and to help them with future training. Recently I had the opportunity of speaking to that youth worker at an open day for police down at Logan city. She tells me that the participants in the U-turn program are very enthusiastic. They arrive for the program on time. They have shown a degree of enthusiasm that she believes is unparalleled in a course of this kind. I thank them for that.

The Beattie government is interested in promoting the breaking the cycle of crime as well as partnerships with the community. The U-turn project has some great partners such as the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council, the YMCA, TAFE, the Department of Corrective Services, the Queensland Police Service, Education Queensland, the Department of Communities, as well as various community and business organisations in Logan city.

We should be pleased that the level of crime involving automobile theft has reduced in this state. In fact, last year we saw a 19 per cent reduction in the rate of unlawful use of motor vehicles and a 14 per cent reduction in stealing from vehicles. We also need to remember that we have a good story to tell about reductions in juvenile crime. But of course we should not become complacent, and that is why this government is so supportive of programs like the U-turn program which will deal with a very hard-core group of recidivist young criminals to help them to turn their lives around. This is not easy. I have worked with many young people in Logan city. I know it is tough, but they are worth the effort because I believe that we really can change their patterns of behaviour. A lot of goodwill has gone into this program, and I wish all of the participants much success.

### Public Housing, Caravan Parks

**Mr WELLINGTON:** My question is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. Minister, for many years a number of caravan parks in my area of the Sunshine Coast have had caravans available for emergency accommodation and permanent rentals. I understand that, because of

unprecedented requests for accommodation, many of these caravan parks are now full and turning people away, and I ask: will the minister investigate the feasibility of the state government operating and running a new caravan park on the Sunshine Coast because of a lack of emergency accommodation and a lack of permanent rentals now available in caravan parks?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I thank the honourable member for a very serious question, because it is an issue that I have toyed with as minister over the last six and a half years. We actually do own a caravan park in Queensland in the honourable member for Bulimba's electorate.

**Mr Mackenroth:** The Monte Carlo.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Yes, the Monte Carlo, which used to be in the honourable Treasurer's electorate. It is of mixed success; I have to be honest about it. It is not the optimum model that we could have, but it is a model. Yes, I am prepared to look at a specific case on the Sunshine Coast. What it highlights though is that we have just been through a federal election and the word 'housing' was never mentioned once by the Howard government. That is amazing, is it not? It is truly incredible that we are now forced to be looking at options such as this as a result of the direct cutback to funding in this state. I fear the worst is going to continue, because if Labor had won there was a promise to inject capital into the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement which would override any question such as this. The honourable member would not be asking this question if that were the case.

There is no question about it: every single study that has ever been done, be it by the Productivity Commission or anybody else, says that the cheapest way to deliver affordable housing to people—to deliver housing to those who need it—is through public housing. There is no question about that. I am delighted to be part of a government that has very successfully done that over the last six years. Every year the budget has increased and we are now spending on average \$220 million more this year than we spent at the start. So, yes, it is an option that we are quite happy to look at. However, I cannot give the member a definitive answer on it.

I have to say to him that I am not encouraged by the stuff that I have looked at previously. Perhaps there is a model that we can work on, but I will look at anything. I will look at any possible scenario, model or whatever to provide housing for people who need it. This really is something that is going to burden us, especially for those people who live west of the Great Dividing Range, because there is no private rental market out there whatsoever. There is no private rental market in the Torres Strait and none in the cape of Queensland, yet the federal government is continuing to put billions of dollars into the private rental market. It is failing, and it is failing the people on the Sunshine Coast in particular. I cannot understand how those people returned Somlyay and the rest of them as a result of this issue, because this sort of issue confronting the member is only going to get worse. It is only going to get worse. I thank the honourable member again for his intelligent input here today. It is a matter that we will consider.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the member for Toowoomba North, I welcome to the public gallery a second group of students from Clontarf Beach State School in the electorate of Redcliffe. I also welcome students and teachers of Windsor State School in the electorate of Brisbane Central.

### Emergency Services, Darling Downs

**Mr SHINE:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Last week the minister made another visit to the Darling Downs area. Could the minister advise the House of some of the recent increases to Emergency Services resources in the Gatton, Darling Downs and Toowoomba areas?

**Mr CUMMINS:** I thank the member for the question. I acknowledge his ongoing strong support for emergency services right throughout the Toowoomba, Gatton and Darling Downs areas. In fact, the Darling Downs area has received a number of boosts to emergency services in recent times. It is important to support our fire, ambulance and SES personnel right across the whole of the state.

Last week I joined the member for Toowoomba North on a visit to Highfields where we commissioned a new type 2 Isuzu fire truck worth about \$310,000. We also visited the site of the planned joint facility for the QAS and Queensland Fire and Rescue Service in the fast-growing Highfields region. This is a \$825,000 Beattie government commitment to the Highfields community, which, as the member pointed out, is a very fast growing population. At Toowoomba we commissioned another fire vehicle, a Ford F350 4x4 dual cab worth just under \$100,000.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr CUMMINS:** It was actually white and red. It will be used to support wildfire incidents across the region, similar to what we have seen in recent weeks. When the vehicle is not being used in operational incidents, it will be used with the community education trailers and caravans across that region helping to promote community education and awareness in local communities such as schools. Delivering world-class emergency services equipment and training is a priority of this government—something we should all be proud of.

While in Toowoomba I was able to inspect another top-notch piece of equipment. The south-western region has recently taken delivery of a new mobile breathing apparatus training unit. This unit is worth about \$225,000 and will provide highly valuable breathing apparatus training right throughout the south-western region. Last week I also had the pleasure of visiting Warwick and Gatton where I commissioned a new Mercedes Atego fire truck for the Warwick Fire Station worth around \$480,000. These vehicles have been designed primarily for structural firefighting and road accident rescue operations. They will be a very important addition to the local fleet. I also commissioned a new patient transport vehicle worth about \$90,000 for the Warwick Queensland Ambulance Service. It was a real pleasure to hand over that particular vehicle as one of the local patient transport officers, Chris Neave, recently received both state and regional Star Care Awards during Ambulance Week. In Gatton I handed over a \$22,000 flood boat to the local SES—

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr CUMMINS:** No, it has not been used. It is one of 20 flood boats delivered to SES units across the state. I also met with local Mayor Steve Jones to discuss some of the issues following the recent fires.

### South Burnett Beef Pty Ltd

**Mr HOBBS:** My question is to Minister for Primary Industries. I refer to the minister's ministerial statement of 2 September 2004 where he stated that legal action against South Burnett Beef was delayed because of the death of a DPI witness. Can the minister advise the House if his department is continuing with this case to recover \$170,000 owing to cattlemen through the National Disease Eradication Trust Account, of which his department is the agent?

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** The short answer is, yes, the department is continuing with the case. While I am on my feet, I want to make a point in relation to the issue of an American retailer banning products made from Australian wool. I want to make a couple of points about this issue. Firstly, mulesing of sheep is permitted in Australia. Under our animal welfare laws, the approval for mulesing is through the adoption of the national model code of practice for the welfare of animals and sheep. It is not pleasant, but it is warranted. It is a preventative measure against flystrike. Flystrike can kill sheep with a slow and painful death. I believe it could be argued in a number of cases that it would be cruel not to do it. Secondly, I find it ironic that some two months before a trade agreement between Australia and the US is due to start a US retailer would restrict trade against Australia.

### St Paul's, Moa Island, Centenary

**Mr O'BRIEN:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. Recently the Torres Strait Island community of St Paul's on Moa Island celebrated its centenary. Can the minister advise how this occasion was commemorated?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** One minute.

**Ms LIDDY CLARK:** But I have so much to say! I thank the member for the question. I have to say to the member for Cook that, next to Clayfield, his electorate is one of the most beautiful electorates that I have ever been to. Recently, I had the great privilege to travel to the outer islands of the Torres Strait and visit the community of St Paul's for their centenary celebrations. I attended the third day of the week-long celebrations for this community, which included traditional dancing, a street parade and a variety of traditional games and competitions.

I congratulate St Paul's for the strong and caring community that it has become over past 100 years. The people of St Paul's have shown their pride in their home through these celebrations, which adopted the theme 'From Village to Mission to Community'. I am pleased to say that the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy supported this event with a grant towards publishing a book commemorating St Paul's centenary.

I also managed to visit the Kubin, Badu, Yorke, Darnley and Mer communities and met with the local councils' community justice groups and other community groups. On Yorke, I met up with some old friends who were the shooting the miniseries *Remote Area Nurse* for SBS.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Unfortunately, the time for questions has expired.

## MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

### Racing Industry

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 a.m.): In the time available to me, I wish to address further the issue of the government's mess in terms of the racing industry in Queensland and its announcement in parliament this morning. As I pointed out to the House this morning, it is great to see that the minister has been taking the advice of the shadow minister. For

some months now the shadow minister has been advising that the most logical way to achieve what the racing industry in Queensland requires for growth and development in the future is to redevelop the current site. We know that, because we understand the history of the racing industry in Queensland. We understand the significance of the racing industry in Queensland. We understand the history and the significance of those major tracks, which have served all of those who have enjoyed and been a part of racing in Queensland for so long. We understand and appreciate the history and the significance of Eagle Farm and Doomben. We know that. We understand that, because therein lies what imbues the racing industry in Queensland.

Unlike the minister, unlike the Premier and unlike those other members opposite, we do not come into this place with a chip on our shoulder in terms of the racing industry. When I came into this place in 1990, I saw the Labor Party's first Racing Minister Bob Gibbs stand up in this place and say that the committees of the establishment were nothing but prawn sandwich munchers. When the Labor Party has appointed people to the various boards in Queensland that oversee racing, the appointments have not been about ensuring a future for the racing industry; they were about getting even. That is what the Labor Party has been doing. It has been getting even all the way along. I am pleased that the Labor Party has been forced into the ultimate position. I am pleased that the Labor Party has been forced to accept that the Nationals had the best policy, which has been espoused by the member for Darling Downs for some months now, and that is to redevelop the current site.

Not only that, I think that the government's motivation to announce what it has announced today has not been about what is good for the racing industry—even though I would like to think it was—it was about what was good for the member for Clayfield. The member for Clayfield has come under enormous pressure in her own electorate to not sell out the racing industry. She has come under enormous pressure from those people in Ascot, Hamilton and Hendra who know the importance and the significance of that site. The member for Clayfield was faced with a major revolt come the next state election if she had done nothing else. So whilst we might like to think that the Labor Party's motive was noble; it was anything but noble. It was about the preservation of one of its members. It was about the preservation of one of its ministers.

This morning in this place we have seen an extraordinary performance from the Honourable Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. Today, he stood up and said that he did not know in May that Bill Ludwig was going to be appointed. I think that if that is right—

**An opposition member:** 'Big Bill' told him.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** 'Big Bill' probably told him, because we know that 'Big Bill' is the factional godfather of the Labor Party in Queensland. He has been the factional godfather for years. For years he has been the one who has been doing the deals and guaranteeing who is going to get the positions of power in government in Queensland. So 'Big Bill' knew it and everyone else in the Labor Party knew it, because they were talking to us about it.

**Mr Johnson:** The member for Warrego and myself have been witnessing his antics in the west for many, many years and he hasn't changed.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** As the member for Gregory said, he and the member for Warrego have been witnessing the antics of 'Big Bill' in the west for years, and those antics have not changed.

It appears to us that the only one who did not know about this, if we could believe him, was the Minister for Racing. We were being told by members of the Labor Party that it was going to happen. It was a fait accompli. It was a lay-down misere. 'Big Bill' was a short-priced favourite—that 'Big Bill' was going to come home with a clean set of heels, that he was going to be the first one to cross the line. 'Big Bill' left the others standing in the barriers.

We knew that all the way along. So we raised that with the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing in this place and he denied it. He said that it was ratbaggery and now he is trying to reconstruct history. He is in self-denial. He is trying to create his own truth. We knew it and the Labor Party knew it, because they were telling us. The factional heavyweights knew it. The member for Darling Downs, the shadow minister, stood up in this place and he said it and the minister denied it. Who was proven right? We know for a fact that the member for Darling Downs and those Labor Party people who were telling us were proven to be right and those in the racing industry in Queensland were telling us that it was the worst-kept secret and it was absolutely inevitable. It has turned out to be fact and now the minister is trying to recreate his own truth. The minister does not know what is going on. He does not care about what is going on. He is presiding over a racing industry in crisis in Queensland.

This deal was done, it was known to people and the rules were broken by many people in powerful places. I would like to put those rules on the record of this place today. In relation to any board appointments to the Thoroughbred Racing Board in Queensland, the rules states that the chief executive has to make inquiries. These are the rules. They are not optional. We know that, under the Labor Party, the rules are operational, but these are the rules. They should be abided by. The Labor Party is not abiding by its own rules. These rules do not have the subheading 'Optional Rules'. These are the rules.

This government's own rules states that to help a selection panel in considering the suitability of a person for appointment to the Thoroughbred Racing Board as a member, the chief executive must in writing ask the person to give the person's fingerprints. Can members imagine getting fingerprints off 'Big Bill'. That would be pretty impressive—'Come on "Big Bill", come in here, put out your hands.' He probably would say, 'I'm used to seeing hands without fingers, not hands with fingers.' But the rules state that the person must give their fingerprints to the chief executive and complete a form approved by the chief executive relating to the person's business reputation, character, criminal history, current financial position and financial background.

We can see what has happened. They have told 'Big Bill' about the rules and he said, 'You can go and take a flying leap. I want to do it my way without the rules.' That is precisely what has happened. So we saw the minister—

**Mr Terry Sullivan:** No, that's a lie and you know it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** The honourable member for Stafford considers himself to be a learned man. Are these rules optional?

**Mr Terry Sullivan:** No, they're not.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** No, they are not optional rules! The rules state that the rules must be complied with. There is a big difference between the current minister and former minister Rose. Minister Rose was also incompetent. But at least she used to mouth the appropriate words in this place. In relation to other appointments that we talked about in this place, she refused to talk about them 'because it would be inappropriate. It is very simple, the panel of eight has been picked. From the eight, after the probity checking and criminal checks, it then picked five.' So even she knew the rules. On 8 May 2002 she said she knew the rules. But Mr Schwarten knows no rules. He knows nothing. He is trying to emulate Sergeant Schultz. We have in this place the minister emulating Sergeant Schultz. 'I know nothing', he says. 'I know nothing.'

This is typical Labor Party behaviour: the rules are optional. It comes to a conclusion, picks the people it wants appointed to the boards and then legitimises it. It builds a process around it. The minister stood up in here today and said, 'We will do the probity checks.' Even the former minister said that the probity checks should be conducted before. On 12 October the Queensland Racing board issued a media release headed, 'New Thoroughbred Racing Board Members Appointed.' Mr Bentley, who sat in the public gallery today cringing in fear, announced that two new members had been selected to fill the current vacancies on the Thoroughbred Racing Board and one of those was 'Big Bill'. The minister also put out a press release on the same day saying that 'Big Bill' had been appointed. This was announced without a selection process in which probity checks had been done. So they have made the appointments and they are doing a probity check. How absolutely ridiculous can this be? People are appointed and then what happens? Those appointments are announced and then they go out and do the probity checks. Talk about a farce! Talk about corruption!

Time expired.

## Multiculturalism

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Algerie—ALP) (11.41 a.m.): Queenslanders voted with their feet on Sunday, 10 October, when more than 30,000 people embraced the multicultural spirit at Roma Street Parkland in a gathering of many cultures—a great day. This was reminiscent of the former indigenous gatherings held at the historic site more than 200 years ago. Governments may come and go and, as we saw the day before the festival, some will unfortunately stay far too long, but people will always enjoy the celebration of their cultural origins and traditions.

I am proud to be part of a state government that has made a firm commitment to multiculturalism—a government that is actively bringing people together to foster greater understanding and social cohesion. These efforts will pay dividends well into the future, because our social cohesion strengthens Queensland's trade and investment opportunities. Our cultural harmony strengthens our ability to attract international students and visitors to the Smart State. We are fortunate to have a peaceful and productive climate of cultural respect at a time when so much of the world is embroiled in cultural and religious conflict.

The Queensland Multicultural Festival and the associated Images of Queensland photographic awards have put multiculturalism and the world of difference in the Smart State in firm focus. Staff of Multicultural Affairs Queensland, the Queensland Folk Federation, Brisbane Ethnic Music and Arts Centre, staff from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Roma Street Parkland and many community groups all worked well together to host an event that has shown that cultural differences can unite us.

The Beattie government is busy delivering support and services to embed multiculturalism in the Smart State and is currently reviewing the Multicultural Queensland policy to improve policy implementation and outcomes. We are embracing diversity within Queensland schools, with a

framework for refugee students, including homework support initiatives, bilingual teacher aides and staff training. We have established a skilled migration unit within the Department of State Development to increase business migration, skilled migration and migration to the regions. Queensland Health is reviewing its Multicultural Queensland health policy and has undertaken a project to consult with ethnic communities across the state. The Department of Employment and Training has developed a series of initiatives to tackle unemployment within ethnic communities, and the current Breaking the Unemployment Cycle project includes funding for job search support, further training support and a consultative mechanism with ethnic communities.

There is a lot happening across government, and it is great to see multiculturalism in sharp focus in our great state. This stands in stark contrast to the efforts of the Howard government. The Howard government has taken race relations in this country back decades, from the bigger global scale right through to the small initiatives. On the biggest scale, efforts at demonising refugees have tarnished our reputation internationally. On the smaller stage here in Queensland, I was alarmed to hear at the AGM for Radio 4EB that funds for training for ethnic broadcasting have been cut by the federal government. 4EB does a fantastic job, but I was very concerned to hear that it may be hindered in its efforts by this funding cut.

In 1994 the Hawke government demonstrated Labor's commitment to giving voice to the concerns of all cultural groups with a \$3 million commitment to the Australian Ethnic Radio Training Project. This project provided an opportunity for ethnic broadcasters to attain nationally accredited qualifications through vocational and competency based training. Close to 3,000 broadcasters have participated in the project over the past decade, and more than 140 accredited trainers have delivered courses at community radio stations across the country. But this is all in jeopardy now because of the mean-spirited efforts of the Howard government.

This training for community radio stations throughout Queensland benefited not only 4EB FM in Brisbane. Radio NAG in Yeppoon received a grant. Radio 4CCR in Cairns also received grants of this kind. I call on the Howard government to provide immediate and specific training for ethnic broadcasters to maintain the excellent achievements instituted way back by the Hawke government. I call on the Howard government to act in the interests of both community radio and ethnic people whose voices must be and need to be heard and are certainly getting a strong voice within the Beattie government.

### **Skilled Independent Regional Visas**

**Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.45 a.m.): I applaud the Beattie government's participation in the skilled independent regional visa, or SIR visa, process. Without state government sponsorship, Queensland regions would be unable to avail themselves of new arrangements whereby the federal government is allowing visas for up to 4,000 additional skilled migrants per year, providing they live and work in regional Australia. I understand that Queensland's share will be between 500 and 600 SIR visas annually. At least 40 local government authorities, including the Townsville City Council, have indicated to the lead Queensland agency for skilled migration, the Department of State Development and Innovation, a desire to attract skilled migrants to their areas. Up to last Friday, the department's web site had received approximately 11,000 hits about the visa. Around 900 inquiries have so far been responded to.

Initially, from 1 July this year, only people from overseas who were already in Australia, such as students, were able to be considered for the visa, but since the beginning of this month the scope has broadened and applications are now being invited from offshore. I should add that overseas students studying at regional universities, James Cook University, for example, who wish to apply for a SIR visa will receive points towards their visa application approval.

Importantly for Townsville residents and residents of regional centres elsewhere, skilled workers will not be considered for an independent regional visa unless they have a trade or profession for which skills shortages already exist. In other words, they will not be taking jobs away from local people but they will be filling important gaps where their skills are desperately needed. To gain a normal permanent residency visa, applicants must score 120 points. The SIR visa requires 110 points and, apparently, those 10 points can make a very big difference. Applicants meeting SIR visa eligibility will at first be granted a provisional visa for three years on condition that they live and remain in a regional location. There is also allowance for a possible one-year extension. The visa does not provide immediate permanent residency, but it comes with the opportunity to apply for permanent residency once the residential location obligations have been fulfilled.

Last April, when the expanded intake was announced, I wrote to Premier Peter Beattie to say that Townsville would be ideally placed to figure in this program. Townsville has a proven record of welcoming migrants from many countries, and the new arrivals would quickly become part of the community, to the benefit of themselves and of course the region as a whole. I cite as an example the surge in new house and apartment construction in Townsville, which shows little sign of abating and which has caused an enormous shortage of skilled tradespeople. Even getting specialised jobs done around established houses can involve lengthy delays. Migrants skilled in trades such as carpentry,

electrical and plumbing would help to ease this situation. There are many other trades and professions in which skilled people are at a premium in Townsville and other regional locations.

As I have indicated, this will not mean fewer opportunities for young Australian school leavers or for older Australians. In fact, research has shown that migration does not cause higher unemployment and that skilled migrants do in fact create work for lower skilled Australians. Whether the brain drain of Australians is as serious as is often made out to be or not, skilled migrants would at the very least help to compensate for Australians who do depart our shores. At the same time, other lines of research also suggest that migration can help lessen the effects of an ageing population.

The *Australian* newspaper on 18 March carried a story about a new study called Two Australians by author and demographer Bob Birrell, which highlights the failure of other migrant programs designed to divert new settlers away from cities to unpopulated regions. If that is the case, the SIR visa should help redress that problem.

Turning away from the SIR visa to migration of another kind, I refer to people from interstate who make Queensland their new home. Of course, they do not need a visa to do that. What I believe they do need, however, is more encouragement to head beyond the boundaries of Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. Australian Bureau of Statistics' figures show that almost 40,000 people from interstate migrated to Queensland last year and that most of them chose to settle in the south-east corner. There is no doubt that people from Victoria and other southern climes love north Queensland for a holiday, but persuading more of them to settle permanently in Townsville or elsewhere in the north—even if they are considering shifting to the Sunshine State to live—is something again. It is really a matter of spreading the word. After all, Townsville was ranked eighth in Australia's top 25 boom towns in the May edition of *mybusiness* magazine. Of course, north Queenslanders do not want their cities and towns to become overcrowded and bound up in too much traffic, but the objective, as I see it, is to ensure that the north's great lifestyle is maintained while managing sustainable growth and covering skilled workplace shortages.

Recently a *Townsville Bulletin* front page story heralded that the population of Townsville and Thuringowa had hit 155,000. Asked to comment, Thuringowa Mayor, Les Tyrell, said that a shortage of tradesmen could see people from just about any trade move north, where they would have guaranteed work. In the short term, at least, I look forward to seeing more skilled migrants settling in north Queensland to help overcome the skills shortage. In the longer term, hopefully more people from interstate will also discover the joys of living in Townsville and other places in the region.

### **Water Infrastructure, Moranbah**

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (11.51 a.m.): Today the issue which I wish to speak on is one that I have spoken about many times before, that is, the desperate need in the Moranbah mining region for a solid, reliable water infrastructure. Moranbah and the surrounding districts produce \$6 billion in gross revenue annually and contribute millions of dollars to the state coffers, and yet year after year the mines and residents go through what can almost be described as a crisis. There has been a massive expansion in the coal industry, coupled with the population growth of a property boom that includes single men's quarters that cater for hundreds of mine employees, and yet there is not enough water to cater for this boom.

Every year residents are facing severe water restrictions. There is a ban on all sprinklers and soaker hoses. Residents can water their plants only by hand-held hoses between the hours of 5 a.m. and 9 a.m. Outside these hours, hoses must be disconnected from taps. Penalties are imposed for people who fail to abide by these restrictions. There are reports of potential mine shutdowns if there is no decent rainfall this year. This is a very serious issue as these mines continue to expand. SunWater identified a dam sight on the Isaac River, and the estimated cost of the dam is \$50 million—peanuts when one considers the revenue gained by the state government in royalty payments and freight profits, and this will only increase with the coal expansion plans.

The community is extremely concerned that the mines will cease to operate because of the water crisis. The government must come out and tell the Moranbah people what their expected plans are for the town and in the future so that the water problems can be alleviated. No longer can the government rely on intermittent rainfall, especially when there is a high chance that there will be a severe deficiency in the annual rainfall this year.

To solve the dilemma, the government needs to work with the council and mines, and build the people of Moranbah a reliable, constant water supply. The Premier stated earlier in his ministerial statement that the massive increase in export coal in Queensland is because of careful planning. There has been little to no careful planning from this government regarding water infrastructure in the Moranbah region. This government can spend millions of dollars on footbridges, sports stadiums and car races but cannot invest money back into the hand that feeds them.

**Mr Lucas:** Is that right?

**Mr KNUTH:** That is true.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** Six billion dollars in gross revenue and there could be a possible mine closure because the government will not invest money into water infrastructure in a vital region for jobs.

I, along with the residents of the Moranbah mining community, want to know what the Premier and his Natural Resources Minister's plans are for the water infrastructure in the region. They want to know whether the Premier and his minister value the jobs, the people, the region and its economies. They want to know what they are going to do in regard to water infrastructure; otherwise this will continue on year after year.

### Suncoast Plantations Cooperative Ltd

**Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN** (Pumicestone—ALP) (11.54 a.m.): I would like to bring to the attention of the House a remarkable group of like-minded people who have joined forces to create a tea-tree plantation cooperative based, I am proud to say, in the Pumicestone electorate. Suncoast Plantations Cooperative Ltd is the brainchild of three families—the Tiltmanns, the Rudds and the Crandalls—who, with the assistance of Mrs Anne Kinchella from the Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre and our own Department of State Development, have developed a high-quality oil which is sought after here and overseas.

Each family has a medium sized tea-tree plantation and all three farms share an extraordinary common feature: all the trees are cuttings from the one original specimen. This is an important quality as it ensures that the oil produced from the cuttings is of a consistent high quality while the plantations are managed in accordance with the quality standard agreed to by the cooperative.

I was privileged to be invited to tour one of the farms—Reinhard and Margot Tiltmann's south-east Queensland tea-tree plantation. I was amazed to learn that it takes one tonne of natural product to make only 14 litres of oil. The branches and leaves, which are all cut by hand, are placed in a bin, then slipped into a still and the oil is separated in a two hour and 10 minute heating process.

Also grown and harvested on the farms are lemon scented tea-tree and lemon scented myrtle, the latter being a native to south-east Queensland. Both of these oils have been found to be extremely effective in the treatment of various conditions and are found in the value-added products made by the cooperative—that is, antiseptic cream, moisturising cream and a mossie and sandfly repellent. This repellent is a blend of natural oils and is highly effective. I call it my magic potion and can certainly vouch for the product as I have used it successfully on ridding my arms and legs of mosquitoes. I have also given many samples to constituents who have come to me to complain about being bitten by mossies and they have told me that it really repels them. One Banksia Beach resident applies it to her grandchildren as they are allergic to the commercial products. She says that it works, and this is backed by a Queensland Parks and Wildlife ranger who has asked for more because of its effectiveness.

I have kindly been given enough small bottles for each member of parliament to sample, and I encourage all members to try it. I would be very happy to receive any feedback and pass it on to the plantation owners.

**Mr Hoolihan:** Another quality Queensland product from *Leptospermum petersonii*.

**Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN:** I take that interjection from the member for Keppel. He obviously knows his native species, and I will be keen to hear his feedback.

This product is currently being exported in bulk to South Africa, where it is packaged and branded by the importer. Inquiries are now being received from Japan and India. Suncoast Plantations is confident that, once the product has been tested by the importers, there will be no doubt as to its effectiveness and that many orders will follow. Suncoast Plantations is now trialling what is believed to be a very effective 100 per cent natural head lice treatment, and it has made preliminary inquiries with AusIndustry for funding to further this research and undertake the necessary trials and commercialisation of this product.

**Mr Lucas:** Where's mine?

**Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN:** In the bag! Head lice is a worldwide problem, and it certainly would be an incredible breakthrough to rid the world of this problem, particularly with a natural product. I note the Minister for Transport's eagerness to try this product.

The equine industry, including racing establishments, has long been plagued with a common condition known as Queensland itch—and I am sorry the shadow minister is not here—a problem with head lice that exists in humid climates. Once again, Suncoast Plantations have carried out very successful trials with a new product that effectively treats this condition, and interest has already been registered with the horse racing industry in some south-east Asian countries.

In summary, Suncoast Plantations Cooperative is producing premium natural products and is actively targeting specific export opportunities where there is potential to provide a solution to problems that have not yet been resolved with existing commercial products. This is another pilot for

Pumicestone, and I proudly support this very natural initiative. I would like to take this opportunity to wish Reinhard and Margot Tiltmann, Peter Rudd and Jerry and Carol Crandall all the best with their tea-tree business ventures and urge them to continue to find more valuable uses for this wonderful natural product.

### **Dale and Meyers Pty Ltd**

**Mr CHRIS FOLEY** (Maryborough—Ind) (11.59 a.m.): I rise to bring to the attention of the House a wonderful opportunity that I saw recently when I had the privilege of inspecting the Dale and Meyers sawmill at Tiaro. Dale and Meyers is a very progressive company which is expanding throughout Queensland with hardware stores as well. One of the things that really piqued my interest was the potential for cogenerational power. I was shocked to find out that on a best case scenario only 40 to 45 per cent of a log actually becomes usable timber, so there are whole fitches, offcuts, et cetera, which could be used for cogeneration which are currently being wasted.

I also realised that the green community is worried that if all of a sudden that other 60-odd per cent of the log was used for cogenerational power people might be tempted to go out and cut down trees willy-nilly to create power. This, of course, is a nonsense. The maximum price that anyone is paid for waste timber is around \$10 per tonne and the sawmillers are paying around \$150 per tonne. Obviously it would not be economical so that concern is a completely dead issue.

When I stood at Dale and Meyers and saw a pile of burning timber waste I was informed by the mill manager that that sawmill pile had been burning since 1988. It is a tremendous amount of timber which is literally going up in smoke and all of the energy which otherwise could create wonderful opportunities for the environment is being wasted.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr CHRIS FOLEY:** I take that interjection from the minister, and I agree with him—I think it is a wonderful opportunity. I am reliably informed that the figures from Energex show that the sawmill waste at this mill alone would be the equivalent saving of 900 cars worth of carbon monoxide. If we can provide the legislative framework, this is a wonderful opportunity to encourage sawmills to use that 60 per cent of the log which is going up in smoke and being totally wasted. This would give them an opportunity, of course, to put power back into the mills themselves and create efficiencies there. Also, the heat generated from these cogeneration type plants and from the timber resource could be used for kiln drying and to value add products. Finally, of course, that extra power which is generated could be fed back into the grid and again reduce the workload on fossil fuels.

Generally speaking, it is a wonderful opportunity. I agree with the Minister for Transport in his feeling that cogeneration is a great way to go. I commend the idea to the House, and I ask for the House to support this in legislative framework to allow the possibilities to develop.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Shine): Before calling the honourable member for Woodridge, I would like to recognise the principal, teachers and student leaders from Kingston College in the electorate of Woodridge.

### **Kingston College; U-turn Program**

**Mrs DESLEY SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (12.02 p.m.): I commend what happens at Kingston College. Not only do they have a fine high school there, but they have a continuing education centre where we see between 600 and 700 young people returning to do years 10 and 12, so I really appreciate the contribution that they make to my community.

The YMCA has established a fantastic facility in the electorate of Woodridge to work with at-risk young people. They are located in an industrial shed where there is ample room for skills to be taught to young people who are not engaged in any form of work or training and who have left school. The YMCA was a natural choice when the Police Service was searching for an organisation to undertake the U-turn project. Designed to turn around the lives of young people, mostly young men who are recidivist car thieves, the first of many courses is now in its third week.

U-turn in my electorate is one of four locations around the country and the only one in Queensland where this program is being conducted. At the moment, the first intake of young men come to the shed each day on a full-time basis to undertake training in automotive skills. Some of these young men have a high number of charges for automotive theft, so members can see that by turning these young lives around we have the ability to reduce crime by a very substantial amount.

All participants are attending daily, are enthusiastic about what they are doing and usually turn up early to get started. I am informed that one morning when two of them had to attend court they called at the shed to explain their absence—a clear indication that they are gaining a responsible attitude to what they are doing.

Michelle Venables of the YMCA has taken on the role of manager of the program, Gavin Maynard has been appointed senior mechanic, while John Solognis is the mechanical trainer. With Susie

Twemlow as youth worker, this team is set to transform many young lives. This is yet another program sponsored by the Logan Police Service, which plays a leading role in our community and beyond on so many levels.

The launch of this program attracted wide interest and it attracted many high-ranking officials from our government sector as well as various bodies with an interest in crime, particularly those in the motor vehicle sector. I know our minister, Judy Spence, although unable to attend, will take a very keen interest in the outcomes of this program.

Commissioner Bob Atkinson was the enthusiastic MC of events. Distinguished guests included the Minister for Energy, the Hon. John Mickle; Deputy Mayor of Logan, John Grant; Councillor Russell Lutton; director of the office of the commissioner, Dr Ann Scott; Assistant Commissioner of South Eastern Region, David Melville; superintendent of Logan, Paul Taylor and many other police, particularly those involved with young people such as Mel Cowie; David Morgan, chairman of the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council; Ross Melville, CEO of the YMCA youth services; Tony Selmes, Executive Director of MTAQ; Ian Norris, CEO of RACQ-GIO Insurance; Stuart Sumsion, national manager of motor insurance Suncorp Metway; and Graham Jones, manager of the Queensland insurance council. Other enthusiastic participants included representatives from Logan TAFE, Education, Corrective Services, youth justice, communities and many local businesspeople. It was a very impressive opening to what we all hope will be a means of breaking the cycle of reoffending.

The Beattie government is committed to working with these young people and has contributed \$200,000 to this project while the balance will come from the Commonwealth. While it was very heartening to see the huge interest this project has created throughout government, non-government organisations and business, the real story of the YMCA project is seen in the vast number of community volunteers supporting the small number of paid workers.

When people in my community became aware the YMCA was looking for a shed to work with at-risk young people, they immediately went out to search the area and within a small number of days a suitable venue was found. As the shed was in its infancy there were many important tasks to do, not the least of which was to convert a facility formerly occupied by Trend Windows into a safe area where welding, woodwork, automotive training and suchlike could be carried out safely.

Time expired.

## Electricity Industry

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—NPA) (12.08 p.m.): It is approximately nine weeks to Christmas and already I, like many residents of the Burnett electorate, am starting to draw up my gift list. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Pumicestone for giving out an early gift—a bottle of sandfly and mossie repellent, tea-tree oil.

It will not come as any surprise to members that this Christmas one of the most popular gifts that Santa will be placing under Christmas trees in Woodgate, Buxton, Elliott Heads, Burnett Heads, Coonarr, Goodwood, Gooburrum, Moore Park, South Kolan, Avondale and particularly the townships of 1770 and Agnes Water on the Discovery Coast is the gift of candles. Candles are not an optional extra anymore. In the half Smart State of Queensland under Peter Beattie's Labor government candles have become a necessity. Like the rest of Queensland, the electorate of Burnett has suffered from the Beattie government's gross mismanagement of our electricity industry.

For years now townships in my electorate along the Burnett Discovery Coast and hinterland areas have had to find ways of coping with ever-increasing power blackouts and shortages. Unfortunately, candles and battery-powered appliances are going to be very popular this Christmas in the Burnett.

This arrogant and incompetent state government has fleeced record profits from our energy companies. It is common knowledge that the Beattie Labor government has pulled at least \$1.3 billion out of the state's electricity industry over the last five years. It is money which should have been spent on infrastructure, preventive maintenance, overtime, training, safety and more personnel; it is money which should have been ensuring that the Smart State was marching into the 21st century guided by the light of new technology—lasers, LCD computer screens, fibre optics. Instead, under the Beattie Labor government, we have been marching into the brave new world of the 21st century with 18th century know-how. The only light on the hill Labor has supplied has been that of the flickering match.

Earlier this year blackouts ruined Easter for the new Noosa of Queensland: Agnes Water and the Township of 1770. It is a stunning region which is experiencing massive growth: growth of around 30 per cent. The normal population sits at around 2,500 to 3,000 and in peak holiday periods—Christmas and Easter—the population swells to approximately 10,000 souls, the majority of whom are tourists seeking to enjoy the spectacular beaches and the warm hospitality of the residents of the Miriam Vale shire.

The people of 1770 and Agnes Water do not want their Christmas ruined the way that Easter was ruined earlier this year. Power blackouts on both the Saturday and Sunday evenings saw many tourists,

the lifeblood of the Discovery Coast's economic development, leave the region in droves very unsatisfied and disappointed. A power substation has been promised to fix the problem. I have been told by Geoff Hall, the area manager of Ergon Energy, that it will be completed by June 2006.

I call on the new Minister for Energy, Minister Mickel, to guarantee that this long-term solution to the Discovery Coast's power supply crisis is carried out on time. I also urge Minister Mickel to guarantee power to the Discovery Coast. The minister can do that by giving permission for Ergon to install a backup generator. The Discovery Coast wants a guarantee of power, not promises. The Discovery Coast community needs a solution now; it needs a backup generator now, not in two years time.

According to Geoff Hall, the area manager of Ergon, infrastructure for a backup generator is already in place after a very successful trial in recent months. The sooner Minister Mickel approves the backup generator plan the less it will cost the government owned corporation. The Burnett cannot afford to lose its tourists because of a lack of electricity supply. The communities of Agnes Water and the Discovery Coast deserve to have power guaranteed because they have been forced to suffer blackouts for years without any compensation.

If the new Energy Minister wants to guarantee power on the Discovery Coast, he can instruct Ergon to install a backup generator. The decisions rests entirely in the minister's hands. Development in Queensland, and specifically the Burnett electorate, is being held back by lack of basic infrastructure delivery.

### **Logan City Jobs and Business Expo**

**Ms STONE** (Springwood—ALP) (12.13 p.m.): It was a great pleasure to represent Employment, Training and Industrial Relations Minister Tom Barton at the launch of the Logan City Jobs and Business Expo. This is the third year the expo has been staged. By bringing local people—including employers, service providers and job seekers—together, they can inspire each other on how best to approach the task at hand: to reduce local unemployment. In doing so they will be achieving this expo's aim: to create awareness, access, promotion and exposure of employment opportunities to job seekers and businesses in Logan.

The staging of the expo was itself an exercise in getting people into jobs. Through the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative, the state government granted \$161,000 to the Women Re-Entry to Work Association to set up the expo. More specifically, the grant allowed the association to employ 13 unemployed women to set it up. These women were all unemployed but wanting to get back into the work force, which is often harder to do than it sounds. Take a year off—10 or 15 if you are raising a family—and the world moves on without you. There is a steep learning curve awaiting anyone wanting to restart their careers after significant time off. The state government and organisations like the Women Re-entry to Work Association recognise this problem.

This is the third year the government and the Women Re-entry to Work Association have staged a jobs project in conjunction with the expo. At least 18 of the 26 previous participants have gone on to further work after the 2002 and 2003 expos. It is appropriate that we have this key employment-creation expo put together by women who want to work. In 15 weeks the women who have been working on the expo have also picked up experience and developed confidence which will help get them further work. The women have learnt about computing, administration, event management, sponsorship and marketing. Throughout the process they have received strong community support. Seven out of the 13 women who took part have already got jobs and others are in the process of obtaining a position. Their motivation, commitment and skills have put jobs and business at the forefront of Logan's economic thoughts—with the potential to generate many local jobs.

Breaking the Unemployment Cycle operates on the philosophy that local people are best placed to help unemployed people in their communities. By that I mean local people know where the jobs are and what training and experiences people need to get them. It is a model that has produced more than 76,000 jobs across Queensland since 1998.

The day began with a Logan Chamber of Commerce breakfast. Throughout the day a variety of entertainment, stage presentations and free training seminars took place. More than 70 exhibitors participated. They included Logan City Tavern, National Retail Association, Mack and Volvo trucks, Nutrimecs, National Storage Springwood and a number of local, state and federal government departments.

Shailer Park resident Deborah Harvey was one of the 13 ladies who took part in organising the event. Deb is well known around the area for her involvement in the P&C and other voluntary work. Deb is a mother of two and believes she has gained a variety of skills through the opportunity to organise the expo. Some of the training sessions offered included interpreting selection criteria, interview skills and techniques, effective communication, and work life and balance. As I said before, it is appropriate that this key employment event was put together by a group of women wanting to return to the work force.

The Logan expo is a valuable tool for creating business and employment in Logan and its surrounds. There were also a range of seminars and displays that were available to assist business

operators. Some of the seminars included employment and industrial law, marketing your business, financial education made easy, and goal setting and motivation. Small business operators were able to receive information on the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives.

Breaking the Unemployment Cycle funds groups like the Women Re-entry to Work Association to run projects that help local, unemployed people. It also pays cash incentives to private employers who hire extra apprentices in crucial skills shortage industries. There is a whole range of programs under Breaking the Unemployment Cycle, any of which might bring money into local businesses. Staff from the Department of Employment and Training were on hand to give out this information.

I offer my congratulations to the people behind this expo: Logan Employment Task Force, Logan City Council, the Women Re-Entry to Work Association and the Community Jobs Plan participants and major sponsors. I am positive that the efforts of Logan's job expo will become a catalyst for more jobs in Logan.

### Cardiac Services

**Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—Lib) (12.17 p.m.): I refer the House to the Stanley family who are on the front page of today's *Courier-Mail* and in particular to their courage in coming out publicly with what they have had to face personally in order to try to help the many other people who find themselves in the same situation. This is a family who have lost two of their siblings and now face serious uncertainty in relation to their daughter who has been waiting two months on the same waiting list that her brother recently died on because he was unable to access the cardiac treatment that he needed in the Queensland public hospital system.

I praise the family's courage in taking the difficult step of going public in order to bring this issue to the forefront in order to help other people who are in the same situation. It is a tragedy that it is necessary for them to do this. The Health Department and its minister have ignored repeated warnings in the form of letters. Official meetings have taken place with the department and the cardiac unit. Mortality reports have been ignored, as have detailed reports from the College of Cardiologists. The department and its minister have even ignored cardiologists, who in desperation have had to go public to try to get treatment to save the lives of their patients. There are 48 people in the same situation as the Stanley family. They are awaiting implantable defibrillators at the Prince Charles Hospital. These 48 people have a condition that can result in death by sudden cardiac arrest at any minute.

We have heard today in a number of places the spin coming from the government. The spin coming out of the minister, his bureaucrats and his department is, 'The doctors should have told us it was serious.' It is a procedure to stop a person's heart stopping suddenly and they do not know it is serious! The 48 people waiting for this treatment are under the control of a booking officer employed by Queensland Health. Eight people have died in the last two years waiting for this very procedure. The reports are in the minister's office. They tell us that they do not know it is a serious condition. I would say to members that if those involved do not know that a condition that causes sudden death by cardiac arrest is serious, then they should not be in control of the public hospital system. If they are not willing to listen to warning after warning after warning, they are even less fit to be in control of the public hospital system.

This situation was summed up brilliantly by a senior cardiologist who said in the media recently, 'They have stripped the humanity out of the system. They don't care.' As a doctor I cared for patients, including a patient who died on this very same waiting list. Because I am in parliament now I am not going to care any less and fail to raise these important issues. The minister has reports of all of these deaths. They have all been reported. He is not even willing to have a look at those reports and respond appropriately.

**Mr Terry Sullivan:** That is not true. That is why the doctor is coming up from South Australia to look at that. You know it.

**Dr FLEGG:** The doctor coming from South Australia has terms of reference that allow him to look into two deaths only and not all the other deaths.

**Mr Terry Sullivan:** That is not true.

**Dr FLEGG:** The member is wrong. In question time the minister asked me the questions because he is not game to go on the public record himself. But in public he sends out a bureaucrat. Today the bureaucrat claimed in the media that he had never heard of the patient who died when it is this patient who is subject to the inquiry which he wrote the terms of reference for. He is bringing a doctor up from South Australia to specifically inquire into this and he claims that he has never heard of that patient. He follows his minister in trying to shoot the messenger and blame the doctors by saying that they did not tell him it was urgent.

I do not rise to attack the bureaucrat, but the minister should have had the courage to front the media himself. Instead, he sold his bureaucrat a hospital pass. The cost of these defibrillators is now down to \$16,000. We have a catheter lab at the Royal Brisbane Hospital that has sat for seven years

and never been used. This is a matter of life and death. This is not optional. Queensland is affluent enough that it can provide for matters of life and death. This is not optional. This is something that we have to be able to afford.

Time expired.

## Obesity

**Ms MALE** (Glass House—ALP) (12.22 p.m.): Today I wish to draw to the attention of the House one of the most urgent problems facing our state—indeed, our nation—the epidemic of obesity. Obesity is a big and growing problem. This is not only a pun. It represents a real challenge for individuals, families, communities and government. This epidemic is affecting not only adults but also children as more and more of them are increasingly becoming overweight or obese. This is truly distressing and preventable. Many are now so overweight that they are exhibiting the same illnesses and conditions as overweight adults. Type 2 diabetes is an example.

The figures are staggering. Across Australia nine million people are overweight or obese. In Queensland, more than half of all adults are overweight or obese, largely through eating diets high in fat and sugar and low in vegetables and fruit, and not exercising enough. Between 19 and 24 per cent of children in Australia are overweight or obese. This figure is rising at the rate of one per cent annually. In other words, one quarter of our children are overweight.

There are many reasons for this. These days fewer children walk or ride their bikes to school because of parents' concerns about safety and crime, time-poor parents use convenience foods, there is parental ignorance or neglect about serving healthy food and children spend too much time watching television or too many hours playing on the computer. In Queensland in 2001 one-third of young people aged between 15 and 24 were overweight and they are much less likely than adult age groups to eat the recommended quantities of fruit and vegetables. In people aged 65 and older, more than half are overweight or obese. Obese women with breast cancer are more likely to die from the disease than women of normal weight.

The amount of physical activity people in every age group engage in is decreasing. Only 56 per cent of children in Queensland are involved in sufficient physical activity to gain health benefits. For a nation to be healthy its people need to be of a healthy weight. To perform to our optimum at school, work, leisure or in our community our health is vital. Being overweight or obese has a profound influence on an individual's health.

So, what are the consequences of obesity? For the individual there is a greater likelihood of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis, stroke, kidney and gall bladder diseases, respiratory problems and cancer. Overweight children are more likely to be asthmatic. For people of any age, and particularly for children, being obese can lead to social and psychological problems. For government, the consequences of obesity are huge—principally, the cost to the health system. For instance, type 2 diabetes costs Australia a staggering \$3 billion each year.

I am one of the founding members of the Queensland Parliament Diabetes Support Group. I was keen to be part of this group because it is essential to raise awareness of the increasing prevalence of diabetes. We will work hard to promote to the community the value of healthy eating and physical activity programs.

In most people the onset of type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented by adopting health eating habits, engaging in appropriate exercise and reducing weight, even by as little as five or 10 per cent of body weight. Health is a shared responsibility and we can fix the problem only by working together. Since I wrote about obesity in my newspaper columns, several constituents who share my concern have contacted me. Marek and Libby Malter are keen to develop a program in the community to help reduce obesity. Mr Bottomley is pushing council for more footpaths in residential areas to allow and encourage residents to walk safely.

The focus of government policy and programs is on children and their families and on schools, recognising that the family, particularly parents, and the school have an important role in helping children maintain a healthy weight. The Beattie Labor government has committed more than \$6 million over the next four years for initiatives to improve the nutrition and physical activity of children. The safe and healthy schools policy provides funds for improving nutrition and physical activity of Queensland children. The government is committing a further \$2 million to additional projects over the coming years.

The Smart and Healthy Schools Fund has been allocated over \$1.5 million over three years. The idea is to make sport and being physically active enjoyable for students. I was thrilled to see Glenview State School receive funding to purchase exercise and fitness monitoring equipment in a program titled 'Balancing calorie intake against energy expenditure'. Glenview has a proud record of encouraging young people to be active through their annual health expo, classroom teaching and the new Walk to School program.

Tullawong State School also received funding to purchase additional fitness equipment and teaching resources to expand their very successful sports development centre, which has seen a large increase in active children at the school. Tullawong also participates in a school walking program and has worked hard to encourage school-club links to promote after-school sport.

Other schools such as Caboolture State School have turned their attention to a curriculum focused on healthy eating and lifestyles. I was thrilled to see the results of the Kids in the Kitchen program. My daughter's class focused on healthy snacks and rewards. The tuckshop embraces the principle of providing healthy food and snacks.

There should be goals the community takes on which look at strengthening families and communities with knowledge, skills, responsibility and resources to achieve optimal weight through healthy eating and active living. There is an excellent program which is funded by Queensland Health titled '10,000 Steps'. I encourage community members and health care providers to consider implementing this program. There is an excellent web site found at [www.10000steps.org.au](http://www.10000steps.org.au) which details how people can get involved. I urge everybody to do all they can to address the problem of obesity. People should encourage their school communities to participate in healthy programs, be role models in healthy eating and exercise and support the not-for-profit groups who organise these sorts of activities.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Shine): Order! The time for matters of public interest has expired.

## STATEMENT OF UNFORESEEN EXPENDITURE 2003-04

**Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.28 p.m.): I table a statement of unforeseen expenditure to be appropriated for 2003-04.

## APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

### First Reading

**Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.28 p.m.): I present a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for departments for the financial year starting 1 July 2003. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine) read a message from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

### Second Reading

**Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.29 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I rise today to introduce a supplementary Appropriation Bill for departments as stated in the schedule attached to the bill. The Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2004 provides supplementary appropriation for unforeseen expenditure incurred by departments in the 2003-04 financial year. For each department, the total amount mentioned in the schedule is appropriated for the department for application to its departmental outputs, equity adjustment and administered items for the 2003-04 financial year. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

## APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)

### First Reading

**Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.33 p.m.): I present a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay an amount from the consolidated fund for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service for the financial year starting 1 July 2003. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine) read a message from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

### Second Reading

**Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.34 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I rise today to introduce a supplementary Appropriation Bill for the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service for the financial year starting 1 July 2003. This bill is consistent with the recent convention and ensures that the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service's appropriation is separate from the supplementary Appropriation Bill for the other activities of government. The Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2004 provides supplementary appropriation for unforeseen expenditure incurred by the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service in the 2003-04 financial year. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

## SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### First Reading

**Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.36 p.m.): I present a bill for an act to amend the Governors (Salary and Pensions) Act 2003, Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957, Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1970, Superannuation Legislation Amendment Act 2003 and Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine) read a message from the Acting Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

### Second Reading

**Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (12.36 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill includes amendments to the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1970 which will close the Queensland Parliamentary Superannuation Scheme and require new members of the Legislative Assembly to become members of QSuper. This will apply to any new member elected at a by-election or general election after this legislation has passed, irrespective of whether they have previously been a state member of parliament. This is consistent with moves in other jurisdictions to close their current parliamentary superannuation arrangements and offer future MPs superannuation benefits aligned to the arrangements offered to their respective public sector employees. Amendments contained in this bill will also vary the method by which pensions within the parliamentary scheme are indexed and will bring the Queensland scheme in line with the way pensions are indexed in the Commonwealth scheme for its parliamentarians.

The bill will incorporate amendments made to the Commonwealth's Family Law Act 1975 into the Governors (Salary and Pensions) Act 2003 and the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957 to enable the former spouse of a member to be paid a portion of a member's superannuation benefit either at the time of the split or at a specified time in the future. Provisions in the bill describe how to value and split a member's entitlement with their former spouse. In addition, the bill amends the Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990 to implement the changes I have outlined by providing QSuper membership to new members of the Legislative Assembly as well as former spouses with benefits from the judges' and governor's schemes as a result of a family law benefit split. Further, the bill contains amendments which will reduce the rates of surcharge in accordance with the Commonwealth's Superannuation Budget Measures Act 2004 and also makes minor technical amendments to the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1970, the Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990 and the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Act 2003. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

## EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### First Reading

**Hon. A.M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (12.36 p.m.): I present a bill for an act to amend acts administered by the Minister for Education and the Arts. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

### Second Reading

**Hon. A.M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (12.37 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I present to the House a bill to amend five acts dealing with the administration of education in Queensland. The bill will amend the Education (Capital Assistance) Act 1993 under which the state government provides capital assistance to non-state schools and the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 to allow for the collection and use of financial data from non-state schools and the criminal history checking of mature aged students in certain state educational institutions. The bill also includes minor amendments to the Grammar Schools Act 1975, the University of Queensland Act 1998 and the Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988.

#### Education (Capital Assistance) Act 1993

The Queensland government provides significant capital assistance to non-state schools to assist them in undertaking infrastructure projects. Capital assistance is provided under a range of programs from building new schools to refurbishing existing classrooms and the provision of information and communication technology infrastructure. As well as this general infrastructure assistance, a 50 per cent subsidy is paid in relation to external infrastructure costs. The installation of airconditioning is also subsidised in northern schools.

One of the central rationales for the introduction of the Education (Capital Assistance) Act 1993 was to ensure that government assistance to non-state schools was allocated on a needs basis. These amendments further clarify that capital assistance is provided on the basis of need by specifying that capital assistance authorities have regard to other applications within each application round. The amendments are also aimed at increasing the efficiency of the schemes' administration and reducing the administrative burden placed upon schools. The amendments will continue the successful arrangement of having the schemes administered on behalf of the government by two capital assistance authorities: one nominated by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and one by the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland. Under the amendments, the capital assistance authorities will have the discretion to set dates when applications may be made for assistance and to vary assistance amounts by up to 10 per cent if unforeseen circumstances have altered the costs of a project. These variations will be funded from savings that have been made in respect of capital projects and will not result in any additional cost to government.

To ease the administrative burden on schools, the amendments will also streamline accountability arrangements. Schools will no longer be required to provide annual accountability returns to their relevant capital assistance authority. Capital assistance authorities will still be required to provide to the government the same accountability information, but they will have greater flexibility in determining how the required information is sourced and collated. Capital assistance authorities currently hold an extensive range of information and do not need to burden schools with additional reporting requirements.

#### Education (General Provisions) Act 1989

##### Non State School Financial Information

Non-state schools receive substantial recurrent annual financial assistance from the state in the form of general recurrent grants. While the overwhelming majority of grants to non-state schools are paid simply on a per student basis, the level of assistance allocated to each non-state school varies according to certain measures of each school's need. These measures include private income, parental socioeconomic status, school isolation and student needs. The government intends to continue using these four measures of school need to determine a proportion of funding to independent non-state schools. However, there is a need to update the index used to determine the private income of a school. A new updated index which accurately measures a school's private income will be developed over coming months. School financial data needs to be collected to develop and use this new measure.

Non-state schools do not presently provide such financial data to the state. However, non-state schools currently provide the financial data to the Australian government through an annual financial

questionnaire. In order to reduce the impost of the new collection, the data that schools will be asked to provide to the state will be the same as that currently provided to the Australian government in the financial questionnaire. The data will be protected by a confidentiality provision so that it will be an offence to disclose the information supplied by the schools other than in accordance with the act.

The amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 will provide a sound legislative basis for the collection and use of financial data so that grants paid to non-state schools more accurately reflect an individual school's need. The amendments will also refine the legislation applying to the payment of state general recurrent grants.

#### Mature Age Students

Honourable members in this House may recall an incident in May this year which attracted significant media attention, where a mature-age student of a state high school was charged with attempted murder following a serious assault. The 21-year-old student was subsequently found to have a criminal history that included armed robbery, stealing, assault and fraud. The school was unaware of this person's criminal history until after the most recent charges had been brought against him.

Whilst this incident was unusual, it brought into question the policies and procedures relating to the attendance of mature-age students in state schools and what steps are taken to ensure as much as possible that adult students are not a risk to the best interests of children also attending those schools. In June this year, 2004, cabinet gave its approval to conduct, by consent, criminal history checks on the current cohort of mature-age students attending state educational institutions, other than special schools and schools of distance education. This process is currently under way.

This bill takes that process a step further by implementing a legislative regime that will enable the chief executive of the department to check the criminal histories of all persons seeking to enrol as mature-age students in certain state schools such as state high schools, state primary schools with secondary departments—known as 'high tops'—and centres for continuing secondary education where adults enrolled as mature-age students are learning alongside children in classroom settings. This will not include state special schools or state schools of distance education.

Based on the criminal history, the person will be issued with either a positive or negative mature age student notice for the particular institution at which they have applied to enrol. Unless the mature age student notice is positive, that is, the notice declares them to be suitable to be a mature-age student at the particular school, they will not be able to be enrolled in that particular school. In cases where the person is issued with a negative notice and they wish to continue studying, that person will be encouraged to apply to enrol instead in a state school of distance education. The provisions in this bill concerning mature-age students will not apply to students who simply turn 18 whilst they are at school.

Additionally, there will be some limits on the application of the requirement to apply for a mature age student notice prior to enrolment. For example, a person who has been out of the Queensland school system for a period of less than 12 months prior to their proposed first day back in a state school and who, during that time, has turned 18, will not be required to apply for a mature age student notice. Because there would be relatively recent school records in Queensland concerning this person, there would not be a need to check this individual as compared with someone who may have been out of the school system for a longer period.

Any person who was 18 at the time of their enrolment in a state educational institution, other than a special school or school of distance education, and regardless of whether they had to apply for a mature age student notice prior to enrolment, will have ongoing disclosure obligations. These persons must disclose any changes in their criminal history, including charges and convictions.

Confidentiality of this criminal history information is ensured. Departmental officers will commit an offence if they disclose this information outside of the conditions set out in the act. These amendments will further enhance the child protection measures that this government has implemented in schools.

I seek leave to have the rest of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

#### Grammar Schools Act 1975

Honourable Members will recall that the Grammar Schools Act 1975 was last amended by the House on 16 October 2003 to provide greater clarity in the establishment and governance of grammar schools.

Mr Speaker, while the implementation of the new Act has gone smoothly, some minor machinery amendments have become necessary to clarify the intention of Government policy.

The Bill addresses three matters:

- Casual Vacancies;
- By-Law Making Power; and
- Regulation-Making Power.

Mr Speaker, the Bill does not affect the substance of the Act. The amendments are consistent with the results of earlier consultation with the grammar schools sector in 2003.

**University of Queensland Act 1998**

This Bill also includes a transitional amendment to the University of Queensland Act 1998 to extend the term of office of the current members of the University Senate until the end of December 2005.

As part of the reforms to higher education introduced by the Commonwealth Government in 2003, public universities, established by authorising Queensland legislation, are implementing new National Governance Protocols to qualify for increases in their base funding grants. Amendments are necessary to the enabling Acts of all public universities in Queensland, including the University of Queensland, to achieve consistency with the National Governance Protocols. These amendments will affect the size and composition of all university governing bodies and will necessitate the reconstitution of most university governing bodies in Queensland during 2005.

The term of office of the current Senate of the University of Queensland expires on 31 December 2004. The transitional provision in this Bill will extend the term of office of Senate members for a further year to avoid the expense, disruption and other logistical difficulties associated with reconstituting the governing body of the University two times within a 12-month period.

**Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988**

A provision has been inserted into the Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988 to provide a power to extend the term of office of the appointed members of the Board for up to 2 years. If an extension is made, all members must be extended and they may only be extended once.

This will provide flexibility in situations where the appointment term runs short of the amount of time the Board is required to be appointed for, due to some event or occurrence. For example, it is more appropriate for the existing members of the Board to remain in their appointed office until the current review of the Act has been finalised and any subsequent reforms implemented.

The onerous cost and administrative impact of carrying out the nomination and election process far outweighs any benefits of appointing new members for a short period of time.

By granting a power to extend appointments in these circumstances, the Board's financial reserves and resources will not be unduly depleted and will allow the Board to continue to efficiently exercise its functions and powers.

Any amendments relating to the membership of the Board resulting from the current review of the Act may end the extended period upon implementation of the new structure.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

## **WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL**

### **First Reading**

**Hon. T.A. BARTON** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.44 p.m.): I present a bill for an act to amend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003, the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995, the Electrical Safety Act 2002 and for other purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

### **Second Reading**

**Hon. T.A. BARTON** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.44 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

When the Queensland Labor government came to office in 1998, it committed to restoring balance and equity to Queensland's workers compensation scheme. Since that time the government has enacted a range of reforms that delivered on this promise, with amendments introduced in 1999, 2001 and 2003. The reforms since 1998 continue to build on one key theme, that is, that the scheme be fair, balancing the rights of injured workers against the need for competitive and affordable premiums for employers, while maintaining a secure and viable workers compensation scheme.

These latest reforms are directed at improving worker entitlements and improving the efficiency of the scheme while at the same time allowing the WorkCover Queensland board to maintain low premium rates. Queensland currently has the lowest average premium rate for employers in any Australian state—at 1.55 per cent. In fact, it has been at that level for four years. In contrast, the Australian average premium rate in 2002-03 was 2.42 per cent. This gives Queensland employers a competitive advantage where they trade interstate or compete for the export market. Under the Beattie Labor government, employers and workers have achieved the nation's best and fairest workers compensation system in Australia. We are indeed the envy of all the other states.

The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Other Acts Amendment Bill 2004 continues our well-planned and structured reforms to Queensland's workers compensation system. As well, it introduces a number of amendments to the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 and the Electrical Safety Act 2002 to provide greater certainty for employers and workers. The bill aligns the definition of 'wages' for the purpose of calculating workers compensation premiums with most Australian

jurisdictions and aligns with the definition contained in the Pay-roll Tax Act 1971. The amendment broadens the definition to include superannuation contributions.

The WorkCover Queensland board says this will see an adjustment to the rates used in premium calculation, allowing the average premium rate to be reduced. For example, WorkCover NSW was able to reduce its average premium rate by 10 per cent—\$2.87 to \$2.57—as a result of expanding their definition, while remaining revenue neutral. Aligning Queensland's definition of wages with other states will not result in WorkCover collecting an increased total premium because it will adjust the industry rates and F factors to offset the increase in wages declared.

This amendment is good news for employers who conduct business in more than one jurisdiction. It will mean that they are less likely to make errors in the calculation of their workers compensation premium and it will allow employers to have simplified administrative arrangements. The bill also enhances business efficiency for employers by abolishing workplace registration fees under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 from 1 February 2005. Members would be well aware that the imposition of workplace registration fees has been a contentious issue with employers for many years.

I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Under the existing Act the only enforcement option available to workers' compensation scheme regulator—Q-COMP—is to refuse to renew a self insurer's licence. To ensure Q-COMP can appropriately regulate the behaviour of insurers, the Bill will enable the Q-COMP Board to recommend that the minister make a code of practice that prescribes how an insurer should perform its functions, exercise its powers, and meet its obligations under the Act.

A code of practice gives Q-COMP greater authority to ensure effective claims and rehabilitation management practices by linking failure to comply with these procedures to offences for which Q-COMP could initiate prosecution.

To ensure a fair and effective review and appeals process, the Bill provides for:

- Q-COMP to set aside a decision of an insurer and refer the matter back to the insurer for a new decision where new information has been obtained, or where the information is based on unsatisfactory evidence, or when natural justice is not observed in making the decision;
- Q-COMP to have the power to review decisions of an insurer to reject a claim for compensation for medical treatment expenses only, such as when an injured worker continues to work but requires ongoing rehabilitation; and
- appeal rights for summary offence (such as fraud) against rulings made by an industrial magistrate will be clarified for appeal through a district court judge.

The Bill introduces new provisions that balance the different knowledge, judicial, conciliation, arbitration and mediation needs of decisions and parties when Q-COMP has reviewed a decision. In particular, it provides that:

- a worker or employer can elect to have certain review decisions considered by either the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission or an Industrial Magistrate;
- prescribed decisions, such as the setting of a premium or the self-insurers' levy, will continue to be heard exclusively by an Industrial Magistrate; and
- Queensland Industrial Relations Commission decisions will be able to be appealed through the Industrial Court just as industrial magistrates decisions can be appealed in this way.

To expedite resolution of claims for damages at minimum expense the requirements in the common law pre-proceeding process have been fine tuned. In particular, the Bill clarifies an insurer's ability to obtain a medical examination and/or an assessment of cognitive, functional or vocational capacity at the same, or at different times and allows a consolidated final offer to be given where multiple claims have been considered at a compulsory conference.

The Bill adopts the Queensland Court of Appeal recommendation to clarify when an award of damages for gratuitous care is prohibited.

A Court is prevented from awarding damages for the value of domestic services where these services have been, are to be, or ordinarily would be provided gratuitously to the worker by a member of the worker's family or household. In line with the original policy intention of the Act, this also clarifies that where gratuitous care has previously been provided to a worker, the worker is not entitled to damages for paid future care.

The Bill provides for the Q-COMP Board to approve an amount payable under an industrial instrument on application of an employer. This amendment will allow the scheme regulator to approve an amount payable as weekly compensation and addresses the potential for confusion where industrial instruments roll up wage rates which include amounts outside the Act's definition of wages.

Mr Speaker, the Bill also includes a number of benefits for workers. It reduces the time an insurer has to make a decision on a claim for workers' compensation to 40 working days for injuries other than psychiatric and psychological claims and fatalities. The time to make a decision on psychiatric and psychological claims and fatalities will be maintained at three months due to the complex nature of these claims.

The total amount of compensation payable to a worker is calculated on a graduated scale.

When the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996, was introduced the first step-down was reduced to 26 weeks from 39 weeks. For the first 26 weeks a worker receives the greater amount, being either 85% of their normal weekly earnings, or an amount payable under their industrial instrument, or 70% of a Queensland full time adult's ordinary time earnings (QOTE).

The Queensland Government wants to ensure that the step-down balances the role of providing a strong incentive to return to work, while ensuring that more seriously injured workers are provided with adequate compensation.

The Bill provides for an additional step-down. For example, award and non-award employees who receive 85% of normal weekly earnings for the first 26 weeks will receive 75% of normal weekly earnings (previously 65%) between 26 and 39 weeks and 65% from 39 weeks.

The nexus between the statutory maximum paid by an insurer for lump sum compensation and weekly benefits has been separated in the Bill.

A worker will now be entitled to weekly compensation to the statutory maximum, which is currently \$174,625 and lump sum compensation to a maximum of \$174,625. Mr Speaker, this is a major win for the workers of this state. Previously, they were entitled only to a combined maximum sum of \$174,625. This legislation doubles that amount.

An expected consequence of this amendment is that more claimants will be encouraged to accept a statutory lump sum and a subsequent reduction in the number of common law claims.

Mr Speaker, the Bill also includes a number of amendments to improve the operation of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 and the Electrical Safety Act 2002.

The amendments to the Workplace Health and Safety Act include restricting the definition of workplace strictly to those places where work is performed by a worker or a person who conducts a business or undertaking. They also align the definition of employer with the definition in the Electrical Safety Act 2002.

The titles of "advisory standards" and "industry codes of practice" are changed to "codes of practice" to align the term with that used nationally and reduce complexity for obligation holders. The time a code of practice remains in force, is extended from a maximum of five years to a maximum of 10 years to be consistent with the Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997 and statutory instruments generally under the Statutory Instruments Act 1992. This extension will provide greater certainty for employers and workers.

In relation to electrical safety, the Bill clarifies work activities that do not require an electrical work licence under the Electrical Safety Act 2002. For example, electrical work excludes the mechanical work involved with fixing electrical equipment in place, or installing electrical equipment which has not been connected to a supply of electricity.

The Bill also provides for an order to be made against an unlicensed person responsible for defective electrical work. The chief executive is provided with power to direct an unlicensed person who has performed defective electrical work to have a licensed electrical contractor rectify the work.

The definition of electrical equipment will now include extra-low voltage equipment in hazardous environments. This ensures that extra low voltage equipment capable of producing explosive situations in hazardous environments by creating an arc or spark can be regulated.

Mr Speaker, this Bill highlights the Queensland Government's commitment to safe, fair and prosperous workplaces.

The reforms incorporate initiatives that provide benefits to both workers and employers, and reflect our ongoing commitment to ensure that Queensland is positioned to have the best and fairest workers' compensation scheme in Australia. Importantly, the amendments of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 and the Electrical Safety Act 2002 clearly provide greater certainty for both employers and workers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the chairman of WorkCover Queensland, Mr Ian Brusasco, the chairman of the Workplace Health and Safety Board Mr Vince O'Rourke and QComp chairman Paul Braddy for their assistance in bringing these reforms before the Parliament today.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### First Reading

**Hon. D. BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (12.49 p.m.): I present a bill for an act to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994, and for other purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

### Second Reading

**Hon. D. BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (12.49 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 makes critical amendments to several pieces of environmental legislation in Queensland. This timely and important bill continues this government's commitment to effective environmental legislation in the Smart State. It is designed to protect Queensland's environment and enhance our nature conservation measures while improving our administrative efficiency by—

- enhancing the regulation of coastal developments;
- streamlining the South East Queensland Forests Agreement and Wet Tropics forest tenure transfer to protected areas tenure;
- implementing the legislative amendments recommended by a major wildlife management review carried out last year;
- making better use of the moneys for conservation research provided by the Meaker Trust fund;
- enhancing the environmental regulation of petroleum and mining activities; and
- introducing transitional arrangements for the currency period for certain development applications.

This bill will enhance the environmental regulation of coastal developments by amending the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997. The Coastal Protection and Management and Other Legislation Act 2001, which commenced on 20 October 2003, made the assessment of tidal works and works in a coastal management district assessable development under the Integrated Planning Act 1997.

A number of minor amendments to the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995 and the Coastal Protection and Management Regulation 2003 are required to clarify certain procedures and provisions. Minor amendments also help to streamline interaction with the Integrated Planning Act 1997 and reflect the new terminology introduced by the amendments to these acts.

These amendments will also give greater clarity to local government about development assessment processes. Importantly, the requirement for applicants, which are mainly local governments, to seek approval for minor works that will not have an impact on coastal management, has been removed. This reflects the willingness of the Environmental Protection Agency to work with local government to resolve issues, resulting in a positive and sensible outcome without compromising coastal management outcomes.

This bill fulfils commitments made by this government to convert forest reserves to protected areas under the South East Queensland Forests Agreement and Wet Tropics tenure transfer process. The South East Queensland Forests Agreement and the Wet Tropics forest reserves involve certain land previously dedicated as state forest, and managed under the Forestry Act 1959, to be transferred to the protected area estate.

The bill will facilitate tenure transfers by allowing beekeeping to continue in national parks and national parks (recovery) until 2024 and transitioning commercial tour operator permits and land subject to leases under the Land Act 1994. The conversion of the majority of South East Queensland Forests Agreement and Wet Tropics forest reserve lands to national park or national park (recovery), without making special provision for continued access through statutory mechanisms, could result in—

- the demise of the beekeeping industry in Queensland;
- forestry permits being cancelled under the Forestry Act 1959 only to be reissued under the Nature Conservation Act 1992; and
- over 1,000 leases being cancelled under the Land Act 1994 only to be reissued under the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

These amendments are important to streamline the transition between tenures, reducing costs for government and industry while ensuring these lands can be given appropriate protection under the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

The bill also includes amendments to the Nature Conservation Act 1992 arising from the wildlife management review. This review fulfilled an election commitment by the government to streamline wildlife management, reduce red tape and simplify the Nature Conservation Regulation 1994 and the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994. The review recommended amendments to the Nature Conservation Act 1992, the Nature Conservation Regulation 1994 and the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994. The recommended amendments to these regulations were made on 1 March this year.

These amendments will improve the administration and regulation of wildlife in Queensland by providing a more diverse range of enforcement tools for minor offences and enable the Environmental Protection Agency to confirm more efficiently whether certain offences have been made against the Nature Conservation Act 1992. For example, the bill amends the Nature Conservation Act 1992 to provide for infringement notices to be issued for lower level instances of taking, keeping or using protected wildlife.

The government has agreed to a request from the descendants of the Meaker family to allow for the release of the Meaker Trust funds from the Raine Island Corporation. Accordingly, the bill will repeal the Meaker Trust (Raine Island Research) Act 1981. The Australian Rainforest Foundation, a non-profit organisation, will, in accordance with its current charter, manage the donated funds as a trust for research, education and rehabilitation of Australian tropical rainforest. A memorandum of understanding between the Raine Island Corporation, the Australian Rainforest Foundation and the Environmental Protection Agency has been approved by the corporation's board to facilitate transfer arrangements.

The bill will amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to provide for the environmental regulation of the petroleum industry upon commencement of the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 and the Petroleum and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004. It is necessary for the petroleum amendments to commence with the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 and the Petroleum and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004 when the new arrangements for coal seam gas extraction commence on 1 January 2005. Features of the new provisions for the environmental regulation of petroleum activities are—

- continuing our commitment to cutting red tape. One environmental authority will be issued for the life of each petroleum development. A relevant environmental authority is required to be issued prior to the granting of specified tenures under the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004. This will enable environmental requirements to be known when native title issues are addressed in conjunction with the granting of tenure under the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004;
- There will be two types of environmental authorities—
  - A 'code compliant authority' will be able to be issued automatically if the applicant certifies that they can comply with the standard environmental conditions of a relevant code of environmental compliance, and
  - A 'non-code compliant authority' will be issued if the applicant requires conditions other than the standard conditions;
- Existing environmental authorities for petroleum activities approved under the Environmental Protection Act 1994 will be taken to be 'non-code compliant environmental authorities';
- Securities for environmental matters held under the Petroleum Act 1923 will be transitioned to financial assurances held as a condition of an environmental authority for a petroleum activity held under the Environmental Protection Act 1994; and
- Compensation and access provisions under the Environmental Protection Act 1994 will enable the completion of rehabilitation or remediation after the petroleum tenure lapses. Features of the new provisions for the environmental regulation of mining activities are—
  - A 'code compliant authority' will be able to be issued automatically if the applicant certifies that they can comply with the standard environmental conditions of a relevant code of environmental compliance unless the application deals with a mining claim or mining lease;
  - If there is a relevant mining claim or mining lease, an application for a level 2 mining project will be assessed as if it is an application for a level 1 mining project. This will preserve the current arrangements where these authorities are considered as draft environmental authorities that are subject to public notification. If a 'code compliant authority' is not considered appropriate following the objection period then a 'non-code compliant authority' may still be issued;
  - A 'non-code compliant authority' will be issued if the applicant requires conditions other than the standard conditions;
  - The current uncertainty that an existing environmental authority may be cancelled when an application for additional surface area of a mine is sought will be removed; and
  - References to an environmental management overview strategy will be replaced by references to environmental management plans.

I seek leave to have the remainder of the speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Mining Legislative Review Committee recommended these changes in a 2004 report. This committee comprised members from the mining industry, agricultural industry, Indigenous groups, environmental groups and government.

The Bill will also amend the Integrated Planning Act 1997 by introducing a transitional arrangement to extend the currency period for certain development approvals until March 2006. This amendment is made in response to difficulties regarding the lapsing of development approvals for material changes of use involving works before the works are complete and the relevant use can commence. The amendment to the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to introduce transitional arrangements for the currency period for certain development applications will provide certainty to applicants whilst a more permanent solution is being negotiated with stakeholders.

The proposed amendment will establish the currency period for development approvals for material changes of use, given any time after the Integrated Planning Act 1997 came into effect, as 30 March 2006, or the longer period already provided for under the approval, provided the associated works have commenced within their own currency period, and within that for the material change of use.

The Bill will also make minor technical and consequential reference correction amendments to the Environmental Protection Act 1994, the Nature Conservation Act 1992, the Marine Parks Act 1982, the Mineral Resources Act 1989 and the Land and Resources Tribunal Act 1999.

The Government has undertaken extensive consultation on these amendments. Key stakeholder groups including government agencies, the Queensland Resources Council, the Queensland Conservation Council, the Queensland Environmental Law Association, AgForce, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association and other industry stakeholders have been consulted on proposed amendments contained in the Bill. Feedback was considered and the Bill was amended as a result of this process.

Mr Speaker, the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Queensland's environmental legislation, provide important linkages with interrelated legislation and streamline the transition of forest reserve lands to protected areas.

Mr Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Male): I welcome to the gallery staff and students of Biloela State School in the electorate of Callide.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Jarratt): Order! I welcome to the public gallery teachers and students from Biloela State School in the electorate of Callide.

## ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL

### First Reading

**Hon. R.J. MICKEL** (Logan—ALP) (Minister for Energy) (2.00 p.m.): I present a bill for an act to amend the Electricity Act 1994. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

### Second Reading

**Hon. R.J. MICKEL** (Logan—ALP) (Minister for Energy) (2.01 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Electricity Amendment Bill 2004. This bill delivers on a key commitment of this government. It requires electricity retailers to source 13 per cent of the electricity they sell in Queensland from gas-fired generation from 1 January 2005. The '13 per cent gas scheme', as it is commonly known, is an important initiative for Queensland's future. By delivering on this commitment, we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create economic opportunities, particularly in regional Queensland. The government, through this bill, is protecting Queensland's future and preparing Queensland for the future.

The Queensland greenhouse strategy, which cabinet approved in May this year, highlights some of the challenges Queensland faces if we do not do anything about climate change and global warming. As the Smart State, we are determined to tackle these challenges head on. The 13 per cent gas scheme is a major part of the government's strategy to address these issues. It will reduce the greenhouse intensity of our electricity production and diversify our energy mix. In 1999, electricity generation accounted for close to one-third of Queensland's greenhouse gas emissions.

Queensland's population is projected to grow from 3.8 million in 2003 to 5.3 million people in 2026, reaching 6.5 million people in 50 years. Our population, therefore, is growing at a rapid rate which, in itself, means greater electricity demand. This is compounded by a growing trend towards higher residential electricity use spurred on by rising rates of airconditioning installation and increased electricity consumption in the commercial and industrial market segments due to Queensland's strong economic growth.

The 13 per cent gas scheme, like similar schemes in other states, is needed to fill a policy vacuum at the national level. The Howard government is refusing to meet its responsibilities despite the fact that this is a national issue. In 2002, electricity generation contributed to approximately one-third of national emissions. In the absence of real national action, such as an emissions trading scheme, and a lack of direction on Australia's commitment to reducing our emission levels, the Queensland government is taking the lead and initiative to prepare us for a sustainable energy future.

Electricity generation using gas produces half the greenhouse emissions of more traditional coal-fired generation. It is estimated that the 13 per cent gas scheme, together with the government's encouragement of a gas-fired power station in Townsville, will deliver approximately 26 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emission reductions over 15 years. That is the equivalent of taking about six million cars off the road for one year—a significant environmental outcome that does not end with the scheme.

The scheme will encourage the construction of a gas-fired generating plant which has a long life span of 30 to 40 years. The environmental benefits of the scheme will extend over the life of that plant and contribute to a long-term sustainable energy future for Queensland. We are already seeing some exciting investment occurring on the back of this scheme. The newly converted gas-fired power station in Townsville and the recently commissioned Swanbank E Power Station will benefit from the scheme. There is also a range of other smaller gas-fired generation projects either under construction or planned for the near future in regional Queensland.

Sustainability is not just about meeting our environmental challenges. It is also about creating jobs and economic opportunities. The power plant construction and gas field developments spurred by the scheme are supporting hundreds of construction jobs and providing ongoing employment in regional Queensland in areas like Roma, Oakey, Injune and Moranbah. The scheme's ability to support small-scale, gas-fired electricity generation is expected to improve network stability and reliability in regional areas, particularly in times of peak demand when a gas plant's ability to come online or increase generation quickly is a significant advantage.

The scheme has encouraged the development of the State's coal seam gas resources. Coal seam gas production has grown rapidly since the announcement of the scheme in 2000. Then it supplied less than five per cent of Queensland's gas. Today it supplies around one-third of Queensland's gas which shows the potential of the scheme to support growth in gas production. Queensland is now the leader in coal seam gas exploration and development in Australia, promoting upstream competition between gas producers and further diversifying our energy supply options.

Both Swanbank E and the new Townsville power station have contracted for gas supply from coal seam gas producers in the Surat and Bowen Basin fields near Wandoan and Moranbah. The great news is that this upstream growth has resulted in new value adding opportunities downstream in the industrial and commercial market segments.

A number of new commercial arrangements have been announced between coal seam gas producers and major industrial users in Gladstone. These developments and commercial arrangements mean jobs for Queenslanders and improved regional economic performance, including potential growth in the service industries in regional centres. These are just a few examples of the benefits of the 13 per cent gas scheme. In short, the scheme complements this government's priorities of successfully developing a sustainable, reliable energy future for Queensland.

Let me outline some of the features of the Electricity Amendment Bill. The bill provides for a new chapter—Chapter 5A—which will deal exclusively with the 13 per cent gas scheme. Chapter 5A will enable the operation of a certificate based scheme, similar in design to greenhouse measures currently operating in the Commonwealth and New South Wales. Rather than reinventing the wheel with this scheme, we have adopted a broad model that is proving to be successful both here and overseas.

Chapter 5A has two key components. Firstly, it sets out rules and provides a process for the accreditation of gas-fired power stations. These power stations will be able to earn tradeable gas electricity certificates, or GECs, for electricity generated from an eligible fuel above their baseline representing existing gas-fired generation as at May 2000 and which is delivered to Queensland. The use of a baseline ensures only new or additional gas-fired generation is rewarded. That means the scheme will deliver real greenhouse emission reductions that contribute to the achievement of Australia's emissions targets. The second and most important component is the 13 per cent liability. Specifically, Chapter 5A will require licensed electricity retailers to surrender to the regulator GECs equal to 13 per cent of the electricity they sell in Queensland. This will deliver, as I mentioned earlier, 26 million tonnes of emission reductions.

While retailers are the main liable party other liable parties have also been identified. This will ensure that the obligation to support gas-fired generation cannot be avoided by simply cutting the retailer out of the supply chain. These other liable parties are involved in arrangements that essentially bypass a retailer in some way. They include parties selling electricity under a special approval issued under the Electricity Act 1994, self-generators, generators supplying end users directly and large consumers purchasing their electricity directly from the national electricity market. Failure to surrender sufficient GECs will result in these liable parties being required to pay a monetary penalty per GEC shortfall. The penalty is expected to effectively set a ceiling on GEC prices with the penalty level equating to the additional price per megawatt hour required to enable new efficient gas-fired generators to compete in the electricity market. Importantly, the compulsory nature of the liability will create a guaranteed market for GECs and therefore an incentive for investment in gas-fired generation. That is, the scheme will not mandate participation by gas-fired generation but instead relies on a market based mechanism to encourage their involvement.

To reduce complexity and ensure cost effectiveness of the scheme, small electricity loads will generally not attract the 13 per cent liability. This includes electricity supplied on small regional electricity grids—a feature which will ensure that there is no barrier to investment in regional communities.

Chapter 5A also provides for a limited number of exemptions from the 13 per cent liability. A state development exemption ensures that the electricity loads of extremely large consumers—typically metal smelters and refineries—will not incur the liability and hence the costs of the scheme. This delivers on an energy policy commitment to consider the needs of large users and ensures that Queensland can retain and continue to attract very large industrial projects. The substantial economic benefits delivered by such projects shows why they are worth the special consideration. Another exemption removes liability from electricity loads supplied from renewable energy. This removes any distortion of the Commonwealth's renewable energy target scheme and also rewards the greenhouse benefits of renewable energy.

With this bill we have also taken the opportunity to make some minor changes to the existing provisions of the Electricity Act. Firstly, some refinements are being made to the operations of the Energy Consumer Protection Office, which was established in 2001 to deal with disputes between electricity entities and their customers. Secondly, amendments are proposed to clarify the statutory authorities of electricity transmission and distribution entities in relation to their electricity lines over land. Thirdly, it is proposed to provide electricity entities with additional powers of entry to take remedial action

in relation to damage caused to land by their operating works. Lastly, an amendment is proposed to ensure employees of government owned corporations—GOCs—transferring to subsidiary corporations can retain their previous employment conditions.

In light of the length of the speech, I seek leave to incorporate the rest of the speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Firstly, to the amendments dealing with the operations of Energy Consumer Protection Office. Mr Speaker, the first and most notable amendment is one which will, in effect, limit access to the Office's dispute resolution services to domestic and small business consumers. Mr Speaker, the scheme is a "no cost" service to the consumer.

It is reasonable for an industry funded dispute resolution scheme to be reserved for smaller consumers, particularly franchise customers and small business customers. Where larger contestable consumers are in dispute with their energy supplier, normal contractual resolution procedures should and do apply. In fact, very few large customers have sought the services of the Office since its inception in 2001.

In addition, several retailers have pointed out that they should not be forced to fund a service that realistically would not be accessed by their customers. In terms of the specifics, the Office's client base will be limited through an amendment imposing a consumption limit of 200,000 kilowatt hours per year below which electricity customers can request its services. As a result of this, another amendment proposes to remove the current requirement for retailers only servicing large customers to contribute to funding the Office.

The remaining amendments are for practical or administrative purposes. There is a change that will ensure the Regulator is not obliged to progress frivolous and vexatious disputes. This will reduce the administrative and cost burden of such claims and bring the Energy Consumer Protection Office scheme in line with dispute resolution procedures in all other jurisdictions. Another amendment will remove requirements on the Regulator to provide the parties in dispute with the contact details of the nominated mediator or arbitrator. This will ensure there can be no perceived bias or undue influence from parties being in contact prior to a hearing.

The amendment dealing with the statutory authorities of transmission and distribution entities is intended to clarify the authorities currently held by these entities. Mr Speaker, these entities have clear statutory obligations to transmit and supply electricity, and also have authority to operate their networks.

However, recent court proceedings highlighted that there is no explicit authority to transmit or supply electricity over land on which the network is built. The amendment will overcome this technical deficiency by specifically authorising these entities to transmit or supply electricity through transmission or distribution lines built on land over which the entity has an easement or some other licence.

Mr Speaker, the amendment to enhance the powers of entry for electricity entities will ensure there is no doubt that an electricity entity is allowed to enter land to make good any damage or harm caused to the land by the entity's works or operations. Specifically, it is proposed to provide electricity entities with a specific power to enter land with the occupier's consent or with prior notice having been given, to make good any damage caused to the land by the entity's works or operations. For example, where a pole-mounted transformer leaks oil which damages not only the land where the pole is located, but also adjoining land, this new power allows the entity to enter the affected land, including the adjoining land, to fix the damage.

The amendment also allows an entity to enter land at any time and without notice to fix damage to the land if the damage is serious and the need to fix it is urgent. For example, even though a landowner may not be immediately contactable, urgent attention may be necessary to contain the damage and prevent the situation from worsening. To protect the interests of the affected landowners, Mr Speaker, the new power to enter land to carry out remedial work is qualified by a provision which places a clear obligation on the entity to perform the work in a way that minimises inconvenience to the landowner.

Finally, the GOC employment amendments flow from Energex and Ergon Energy forming jointly-owned companies to provide shared services to the Corporations, such as billing and customer data warehousing. The new provisions will provide a mechanism to ensure that employees transferring from energy GOCs to such subsidiary companies continue to be covered by the relevant awards and have the benefit of special electricity industry conditions, such as the preservation of leave entitlements and long service leave provisions.

But Mr Speaker, the number one reason why we are here today is because of the 13% Gas Scheme. In a nutshell, this Scheme is about reducing the growth in greenhouse gas emissions from our electricity use. It's also about diversifying our energy mix and encouraging the development of our gas industry. This is good news for Queensland.

It will ensure a more sustainable energy sector for Queensland's long term future—a goal that is top priority of this Government.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

## NATURAL RESOURCES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 7 October (see p. 2881).

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—NPA) (2.13 p.m.): I acknowledge that by introducing the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill to the House the Minister for Natural Resources, Stephen Robertson, intends to improve the administration of a number of acts and pieces of legislation which are impacting on communities and individuals around my electorate—the Burnett electorate—and it is for that reason that I rise to contribute to this debate.

I note that these amendments have been described as 'uncontroversial' by the minister and are intended to improve administration. They have also been described by the shadow minister and opposition spokesperson for natural resources, the member for Callide, as 'routine'. I, too, express my support for the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. As listed in the minister's second reading speech, the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 affects six acts—the Land

Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, the Surveyors Act 2003, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003, the Valuation of Land Act 1944, and during consideration in detail amendments will also be moved to the Petroleum and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004 and the Vegetation Management Act 1999.

Part 2, clauses 2 through to 21, of the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 refer to changes to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002. From the minister's second reading speech I understand that pests like the red-eared slider turtle pose a threat to the environment, especially in Brisbane's north. This legislation is addressing that threat through amnesties, as the minister says—

... strengthening existing provisions and providing more certainty for their implementation by local governments, which have the major role in the implementation of this Act.

There are three local governments—Isis, Burnett and Miriam Vale shire councils—in the electorate of Burnett, all of which are actively involved in the implementation of the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, and all of which will be affected by this legislation.

To the best of my knowledge, the red-eared slider turtle is not a pest which the Burnett local governments are focusing their resources on, but one pest which is on—and has always been on—the council's hit list is the wild dog and dingo. The Burnett, like many parts of Queensland at present, faces a threat from wild dogs and dingo crossbreds. It was reported in the *Sunday Mail* recently that wild dogs cost Queensland more than \$33 million every year. That is broken down to \$18.3 million in livestock losses, \$9.4 million in losses due to the spread of disease in the cattle industry, and \$5.4 million spent on controlled measures such as baiting, fencing and trapping. It is not just the loss of livestock that I am concerned about. I am concerned about the high risk that these wild dogs and dingoes pose to our children and our communities' safety as the dogs enter suburban areas in search of food and shelter. The risk was tragically and graphically highlighted by the dingo attack on the Queensland schoolboy Clinton Gage on Fraser Island.

This problem cannot be taken lightly. These feral dogs and dingoes are dangerous creatures. Some locals are even questioning how long it will be before a child is severely injured or fatalities occur within my electorate. In my electorate, the Agnes Water-1770 area is having a great deal of trouble with these wild dingoes and crossbred dogs. It is not uncommon for locals to see wild dogs roaming the street. I personally witnessed one of these animals roaming on the outskirts of Agnes Water a couple of months ago after I had been there for a visit. I was heading out of town and, sure as eggs, there was a wild dog trotting along the side of the road.

The community is having so much trouble that the local council has had to employ a private contractor that rids communities of the wild dog population and also educates communities on the behaviour of these animals. Mark Goullett is a private contractor who specialises in live trapping these wild dogs and dingoes in the Miriam Vale shire, Caboolture, Pine Rivers and in some state parks. I believe that these wild dogs are then taken to a vet in Inglewood for DNA testing before being killed. These DNA tests often show that these wild dogs which are caught, and have been caught in the Agnes Water-1770 area, are mostly dingoes and some are crossbreeds of dogs. Mark is vital and his services are vital in a community like Agnes Water. It is not hard to believe that business is booming for the man as the feral dog/dingo population continuously grows in these areas.

In just nine nights of trapping, Mark caught 13 pests throughout the Agnes Water township, consisting of a mixture of pure dingoes and dingo dog hybrids. Not too long ago Mark caught a dingo in the local Agnes Water State School grounds. I am told that children often tell their families of dingo sightings around the school. Families are regularly chasing dingoes off the verandahs of their properties. It was reported that a lady was forced into deep water by a dingo after an early morning walk along the beach. Dingo attacks on domestic dogs at front doors are also a recurring experience.

One anecdote that I heard when I was in Agnes Water was of a lady who was seemingly jogging along the road being followed by what some people thought were her pet dogs, and when a gentleman stopped his car this lady dived in the back seat and another couple of dingoes appeared out of the bush and she was nipped at. There was a grave dingo problem.

Mark Goullett is doing his work because of his love of Australian native wildlife. Mark has established his organisation, *Ferals Out*, in order to reduce the decline in our native wildlife by removing these wild dogs and feral animals from our very sensitive ecosystem. Mark's preferred method of capture includes using humane mechanical traps, such as soft catch traps that are rubber padded, bridger traps, sterling traps, offset jaws, Collarum traps and cage traps which do not hurt the animals, or at least hurt the animals in a minimal way. Mark's services in the Agnes Water-1770 area are being funded by local government and the Miriam Vale Shire Council which recently contributed between \$5,000 and \$10,000 for the program, and for this year alone he received over \$100,000 from the federal government to assist his activities.

The question has to be asked: what has the state government contributed? All my research shows that the state government has squirmed out of its responsibilities to reduce the wild dog population but has since placed the wild dog burden back on local government. Although Mark receives

these funds from the federal and local government, wild dog control is not cheap. Each trap will cost anything from \$100 to \$200, including modifications, and Mark carries approximately 100 traps or \$10,000 worth of equipment at any one time to ensure success. Due to the high costs involved, Mark's services will consequently cost the local government or private land-holder around \$35.20 per hour—it is a standard program; it may take 100-plus hours to complete—plus an additional \$100 per pest animal caught, plus GST.

Communities near state-owned natural parks are also being exposed to wild dog attacks but their safety is being neglected once again by Mr Beattie and the Labor state government. Our state government needs to take some responsibility by funding wild dog control contractors, because 1080 baiting that is carried out by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service cannot be carried out within five kilometres of a town, naturally enough, or two kilometres of a house.

**Mr Robertson:** That is not true.

**Mr MESSENGER:** The Beattie government cannot keep neglecting these people. The government cannot sit back and wait until an innocent child is attacked. The minister interjects and says I am wrong. I stand to be corrected. If the minister can correct me in his summing up speech I would be most grateful. Although the dingo population is not quite at the critical stage, it is becoming a problem for not only my constituents but also communities within our state and Australia wide. Under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 the responsibility of reducing wild dog numbers on properties is placed in the hands of all landowners.

As pointed out by the member for Callide and shadow minister for natural resources, Mr Beattie's government should clean up its own backyard and reduce the numbers of wild dogs on state-controlled lands. The state government needs to act now and assist in funding feral trapping contractors before there are more attacks and fatalities.

It is a widely held belief that private land-holders, local governments and federal governments are carrying the Queensland state government in relation to this issue. Another useful fact to note is that the Victorian Environment Minister, John Thwaites, announced on 30 June 2004 additional funding of \$300,000 to combat the wild dog problem in East Gippsland and the northeast of the state.

When it comes to vegetation management and land clearing laws there is still a heck of a lot of confusion within my electorate. That confusion exists within not only primary producers and landowners but also the professionals who service and assist rural and regional Queensland.

Part 3, clauses 22 through to 33 of the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004, changes the Surveyors Act 2003 and addresses issues such as surveyors' competency and training. I know that surveyors in the Burnett will welcome any legislation that will raise standards and clarify issues. I am going to read some correspondence I had with a surveyor who was left shaking his head after recent dealings with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. It reads as follows—

Rob, this is the latest reply from Brisbane. The advice to contact the local expert has a slight problem: one cannot get to discuss these matters with the local experts. I have even attempted to go in the back door by asking my regular contacts at the DNR&M if I can speak to the local officers. The reply given is that I have to contact the 1800 number. As I have mentioned to you previously, it took five weeks for a reply the first time around. This is just not acceptable. Since our meeting I have had advice that even if clearing is an exempt activity under the Vegetation Management Act, you can still find yourself in court if you destroy endangered, rare species under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. I am not sure if we have to have an environmental expert to go in front of the dozer.

As you have just heard, we have a highly trained professional trying to do the right thing and work within the constrictive and, might I say, socialistic vegetation management environment that the Beattie Labor government has established in Queensland. There are a number of things to follow: firstly, they were trying to establish what the rules were and, secondly, follow them and conduct their business. All that person got was a run-around and an instruction to ring a 1800 number and then wait five weeks for a reply. Unfortunately, I think that it is the rule and not the exception that many professionals are being stymied by a lack of clarity and the lack of ability of those public servants to get back to them for whatever reason—maybe they are overworked.

It would be a welcome relief for many professionals, rural producers and landowners, whose livelihoods depend on the dissemination and transfer of this vital information from the DNR&M, to have a guarantee from the minister that basic services and courtesies such as phone calls do not take five weeks. I commend this bill to the House.

**Mr FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (2.28 p.m.): This legislation is an omnibus bill to make a number of amendments to legislation within the portfolio of the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, including the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act, the Valuation of Land Act, the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route) Management Act, the Surveyors Act and, by foreshadowed amendment, the Vegetation Management Act.

Those amendments are minor but very necessary to follow through on the clear and stated intent of this government's policy to end broadscale clearing in Queensland. That was a policy that was resoundingly endorsed at the ballot box in February this year and a policy resoundingly endorsed by the parliament in April this year. This is a policy opposed resoundingly by the National Party, which claimed

during the last sittings to be the greatest defender of the environment in this state. That is a claim that I am sure all members would agree is as flimsy and as insubstantial as a cardboard cut-out at a polling booth.

As members would recall, in early 2003 the Beattie government first publicly announced its intention to phase out broadscale clearing by the end of 2006 under a cap of 500,000 hectares. When Queensland and the Commonwealth jointly announced that intention Queensland put a halt on all broadscale applications received by the Department of Natural Resources on or before 16 May 2003. Any areas that were approved to be cleared were then to be subtracted from the 500,000 hectare cap. That balance of 500,000 hectares was then the subject of the ballot process.

The halt on applications was introduced to prevent a rush of panic clearing applications while the details of the package were finalised. At that time existing applications were restricted to prevent any application being changed to increase the area proposed to clear for the same reason. As we all know, the Howard government became mired in coalition infighting and inaction on this issue. Despite the recent breathtaking audacity of the federal Liberal Party's claims in the federal election campaign about its responsibility for ending Queensland tree clearing, we all know that it did not do a thing—it did not cough a cent. In the face of the Howard government's intransigence and factional in-brawling between the Nationals and Liberals on this issue, Queensland went it alone to implement one of the most important environmental policies in our history.

We need to add to the Vegetation Management Act to remedy and identify limitation in the act's transitional provisions relating to applications and approvals for broadscale clearing received before the 16 May 2003 halt on accepting applications. A technical ambiguity in this legislation has been identified by the courts. This ambiguity could lead to a potential appellant appealing against a decision on one of those applications being able to apply to the Planning and Environment Court to amend the application to consider an area outside the original application. The result of such a decision could result in significant additional areas being approved through the appeals process, which was certainly not the intention of the laws.

Of the 500,000 hectare cap 200,000 hectares has been made available through the ballot process but, unless the ambiguity is rectified, clearing exceeding the 500,000 hectares could occur. As all members would agree, this would not be in line with the government's election commitment. We are therefore right to introduce these amendments to clarify the matter. These amendments clarify that after an application is decided it cannot be changed to increase the size or location of the area proposed to be cleared. However, until the application is decided or finalised, applicants will still be able to change the location of the area proposed to be cleared if it does not increase the overall area and meets other conditions.

Without these amendments land-holders who have submitted applications to clear before the halt on applications could try to amend their applications which could be significantly disadvantageous to other land-holders who have applied through the ballot process. We cannot allow a situation to subsist in which original applicants use their applications as a wedge in a door to then abuse the process and apply for a greatly expanded area for clearing.

This amendment is about embracing the spirit and the intent of the Beattie government's tree clearing legislation and prevents exploitation of administrative ambiguities. It is a fair and reasonable amendment that will dispel any uncertainty and contribute to the most visionary policy in Queensland's history. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr HOPPER** (Darling Downs—NPA) (2.33 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill. I would like to follow on from some of the comments made by my colleague the shadow minister. This bill provides for the establishment of an amnesty period for illegally held pests. In his second reading speech the minister spoke of the red-eared slider turtle. I know where he is coming from. A number of people think it is great to have these pets but do not understand the repercussions of their actions. Most of the feral animals affecting our rural producers were at one stage an introduced species. They have escaped or been introduced into the wild for what some people thought would be the betterment of the environment.

Take for instance the cane toad and all the research that went into the official release of that species. It was released into our cane fields in far-north Queensland. Now we are faced with cane toads right across the state. I know that when they first hit our area we never saw a snake for about two summers. I believe the diet of a snake consists mainly of small animals such as frogs. We should all know that anything that eats a cane toad either gets very sick or dies. Recently, we found some dead toads that had been turned over by crows. Their stomachs had been eaten out but the poison glands around the back of their necks had not been touched. This is nature's way of dealing with the problem. I believe they may become part of the ecosystem, but it may take about 200 years.

I tend to agree with what this bill is designed to do. I am happy to support it and allow the amnesty to be put in place. There may well be species out there that we do not yet realise will be of detriment to the environment. It will make people aware that their so-called pet may be a hazard if it were to be released into the environment.

**Mr Robertson:** Perhaps I should declare you.

**Mr HOPPER:** All right. This legislation will allow an education program to be put in place. One can imagine the uproar if we suddenly put feral cats on the list. I believe these animals should be classed as one of the most destructive animals known to the environment. The feral cat is simply out of control. It can kill up to five birds a day. That is not to mention the other wildlife it will destroy. We all know where the feral cat came from.

I would personally like to see strict legislation put in place for the keeping of domestic cats. So many cat owners say goodnight to their cats and put them outside. Even if they are fed well it is in their nature to hunt and kill. Who knows the devastation they cause to the environment. I am not speaking about the people who look after their cats properly. I refuse to own a cat as I have seen what they can do.

Members will recall the crisis we had after the introduction of water buffalo. I remember seeing the devastation that these animals caused in the cape. They always followed the one watercourse—the course to water. This created massive wash-outs, causing erosion, not to mention the threat that they posed to our stockmen. My parliamentary colleague the member for Callide could no doubt tell members about his experience with these animals.

The eradication program cost millions. The TB and brucellosis programs were taken on by the DPI. I have quite often wondered how this government would handle such a program, although I must congratulate the Primary Industries Minister on his handling of the citrus canker outbreak. No doubt that is still going on at this very moment.

There are quite a number of animals—all introduced species—that could be put into the category we are referring to. One is the common goldfish. Everyone has the right to own a fish. However, with that right comes a responsibility. When the time comes to dispose of their pet goldfish, people have to make sure that they do it properly; goldfish should not simply be flushed down the toilet and therefore let into our waterways. We should know exactly where the European carp came from. Our waterways and rivers have been devastated by the destruction caused by this introduced species. Originally, it was the family pet that was let go and flushed down the toilet. Our natural fish stocks have been devastated by this species. Take for instance the Murray cod. Its numbers have been reduced massively due to the presence of European carp. Then we have feral pigs, brumbies, birds, rats, mice and rabbits. I cannot help but mention the one rodent that has caused and continues to cause trouble in Queensland—the fox.

I will speak for a moment about feral dogs and dingoes. Recently the Department of Natural Resources and Mines released an economic assessment of wild dogs. Some of the conclusions that it came up with were that Queensland alone loses about \$33 million annually in terms of control costs, livestock loss due to predation by dingoes and wild dogs, and diseases spread by these pest animals. This is actually said to be a very conservative estimate. We will never know the actual cost.

I have spent the majority of my life on a property and I have studied the habits of these animals in great detail and with a hands-on approach that I can say very few Australians would have experienced. I know that there are many so-called experts studying this field. However, when I hear their opinions I sometimes wonder what planet they are on. In saying that, I do believe there are some who are not bad at their job. But this seems to be a subject on which a lot of people have a professional opinion. It is a bit like the *Crocodile Dundee* syndrome.

Before I was elected to parliament I was a dogger for the Wambo shire. For the benefit of members opposite, I should explain that a dogger is employed to control feral dogs and dingoes in a shire. One would be paid a much bigger sum than the royalty that the shire paid if a farmer brought a scalp into the shire. A scalp is a strip of skin taken from the dog's back from the nose to the tip of the tail. This provides proof to the shire so that the royalty can be paid.

On a number of occasions I received phone calls from farmers who had a bad dog problem asking me to move in and take care of the problem dogs that were causing so much devastation to their stock. On a number of occasions I would have to spend quite a lot of time getting a problem dog, thus giving me a knowledge that very few possess. As a matter of fact, over the years my children have taken great pride in being able to call a dingo or dingoes up to them while waiting for the school bus. The point I am trying to make is how this ties into the legislation. Quite often the crossbred dog is the one doing most of the damage. Where does the crossbred dog come from?

Crossbreeds originally come from dogs that we have introduced into our country which have bred with dingoes. People say that it is very easy to get a crossbred dingo. It is not. The dingo is a very dominant dog. Before a dog breeds with a dingo, there is usually a massive fight with the male dingo. Therefore, it is a strong dog that finally gets to breed with the female and those genetics mean that the crossbred dog is already a strong dog. He is very high up in the chain. As a result, the dogs that are born in that litter of pups have very aggressive, very fit and very strong genetics.

Let me tell the House a few facts that I have discovered about dingoes. The dingo is usually a pack animal. I have mostly seen them in twos or threes, and very seldom does one see them in a

greater number. However, on odd occasions I have seen them in packs of up to eight. Recently I read comments reported in some papers about packs of 100 dogs. I can honestly say that the people who came up with this suggestion are either walking past the pound on the way home from the pub or they have just arrived on the latest spaceship. We have to get realistic. This has to be the best so-called urban myth I have heard. In saying that, I must say that I can understand the stories I am hearing about feral dogs coming into our suburbs. This is one of the biggest threats to human life that I can see facing suburban and regional residents. From what I have seen over the years, familiarisation is our biggest enemy.

Quite often the most cunning dog was the one that had to become familiar with my presence before I could trap or shoot it. This sometimes took weeks on end and even the worst dog would eventually let his guard down only if it became familiar with my presence and eventually thought that I would not be a threat to its day-to-day existence. That is exactly what is happening with the dogs that are inhabiting our suburbs and regional areas. These dogs are the highest animal on the food chain except in far-north Queensland where there are crocodiles. There seems to be a lifestyle for our urban dwellers that has developed that suits these predators down to the ground. We leave pet food readily available, sometimes 24 hours a day, and rubbish unattended. We have created a perfect environment for these dogs to live in. Just how to address this matter is of deep concern to me. I do not claim to be an expert, but for me the only teacher of the habits of the wild dog is the wild dog itself.

There is an inbuilt instinct in that if they are hungry and something runs that instinct naturally cuts in and they attack. If we remove their feed source and we stop that food source happening, it will become very difficult for them. If they happen to come into contact with a child or children in a backyard or park, that instinct will cut in if the child runs and God forbid there may be a human death. No-one in this House wants that to happen, and let us hope it never does. I know the answer to this problem, and the answer is that these dogs have to be destroyed. I personally have some very good ideas about ways to do this, but if the department does not act soon there could well be a tragedy.

I have worked closely with our shires on baiting programs, and no doubt these programs work. For our rural producers, currently this is the only means of mass control. However, dingoes do not know that the baiting programs are caused by man. The point I am making is that the country has developed an ecosystem over 200 years where if a farmer or grazier came into contact with these animals they would be shot. Only until a few years ago, these animals feared humans to a much greater extent. I feel that I must speak my mind here and say that our current gun laws must be made more lenient for genuine property owners. I believe that a farmer should be able to take the bolt out of his rifle and only lock the bolt up. He should be able to leave the rifle and the ammunition in his vehicle. When he gets up in the morning, he needs to get the bolt. That means that he has a tool with him all day.

Farmers and graziers simply do not carry their rifles with them as much as they used to for fear of prosecution. It is simply too much trouble to lock everything up every time they want to go around the property, so wild dogs and dingoes have become way too familiar. I firmly believe that this is a major part of the problem facing us with the familiarisation of these predators. They simply are not scared of vehicles or humans. I will now give the House a perfect example of the familiarisation that I have been speaking about. Recently we went to Fraser Island for a trip. The department has worked very hard in that area since the loss of that little boy in that dingoes have ear tags and the rangers are monitoring them very closely. However, on the way home we saw a gentleman fishing with his 12-year-old son. A big healthy dingo was running at the son, who was trying to hit the dingo with his fishing rod.

There are still problems on Fraser Island. The brumbies were removed and people now have to bury their fish scraps. We have taken away an ecosystem that has been built up with those dingoes on that island for a long time. Those dingoes do not have many natural animals to hunt in that area, but they have an instinct to hunt. As they grow up, they pull each other down when playing. Their attack mechanism is natural and they learn to hunt each other and pull each other down. This is why it is so easy for them to attack a child. The good education program run by the rangers says that you should stand your ground and look them in the eye to outstare them. The dingo is a predator. If you outstare him, he will be scared of you. But if you run from him, that instinct cuts in and there will be trouble. I am not sure of exactly what we are going to do to get on top of the Fraser Island dingo problem.

The second part of the bill I want to speak about relates to the tree clearing issue. Constituents of mine have asked DNR staff to visit their properties to confirm tree clearing issues. The type of timber on their properties sometimes differs from what stands on maps. The lines can be wrong. There are a number of areas to discuss. Consequently, landowners' future business prospects are very often held up until that visit. Constituents are hearing that the DNR is just so busy. A lot of them are put on a waiting list for months on end because the department is just so busy, and that is because of the laws that we have recently implemented regarding tree clearing. Piggery extensions and the break-up of land for cultivation cannot go ahead until DNR staff further investigate the landowner's particular situation, and I think the minister is aware that this is happening.

My constituents Wayne and Sonia Carroll received a visit from DNR staff to investigate the Carroll's ringbarking of nine trees on their 100-acre block. The Carrolls were issued with a \$1,500 fine.

After much correspondence with the state government, the DNR fine was withdrawn about two months later, and this situation put much stress and pressure on them. At the same time farmers want to shift contours because there is a massive erosion problem and they will lose tonnes and tonnes of soil. So the energy of the DNR staff was put into nine trees that had been ringbarked compared to hundreds of tonnes of soil that will be washed down the creek. We really have to get on top of this. Water issues have to be addressed by a visit to the affected properties to fully investigate these issues, and that is a very big issue.

Some friends of mine wrote a very eye-opening letter to me. I want to read parts of this letter to the House. It states—

We wish to draw your attention to apparent inadequacies in the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to satisfactorily service the jurisdiction for which they are responsible.

As landholders, ratepayers and taxpayers on floodplain country on the Darling Downs, the inability of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to resolve an issue of concern for approximately the last eighteen months, indicates that there are problems within the system.

Factors such as the closure of the DPI office in Pittsworth and the corresponding workload placed on existing personnel in DNR in this area, make it physically and emotionally impossible for them to address problems that occur to a satisfactory conclusion. Logistically it is impossible for them to address satisfactorily specific issues in the huge area assigned to individual personnel and enjoy some quality of life with their families.

These people are just worked down to the ground. The letter continues—

In our case we have witnessed a neighbour slowly but surely redirect the flow of water that has taken the same course for fifteen of the sixteen years we have owned this property. Evidence such as old maps, a road culvert and the gully through our property suggests, that has been its chosen course for many decades. To counteract the effects of flooding and consequent costly soil erosion on our property, we built a dam to facilitate flood mitigation. Now we see the bulk of the input being directed in a path that (a) threatens our son's home, (b) creates alarming erosion problems on properties further down (c) is concentrated with other waters on an arterial road. This has occurred since the imposition of the moratorium on water issues.

Constantly there are people changing elements of the landscape; trees mysteriously die on roadsides, hot fires destroy clumps of remnant scrub, banks are built, drains are dug, etc. Seemingly no one is able to impose the ruling against these actions and insist on their implementation because it appears ministerial backing is lacking.

We appreciate the small nucleus of departmental personnel responsible for dealing with these issues does their best.

I for some years on a purely voluntarily basis chaired the Upper Condamine Floodplain Project. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent to identify the causes of problems, so they could be addressed rather than the spending of millions of dollars patching-up after a flood had occurred. Good work that should be used by authorities such as Local Government to deal with catchment issues. It is an example of a project, which was instigated by a farmer, the late John Higginson, not being used to its full potential.

Soil conservation is the basis of good farming practices, be it for the life-style or a professional farmer. We are bound to adopt certain practices by the imposition of government legislation. The lack of personnel to police what has been enacted and the failure of the hierarchy to support the available strategies that could be used to effect resolution hamper maintaining these laws. Justice is surely fostering a desirable environmental outcome that benefits all stakeholders and complements Best Management Practices that adhere to sustainable land use. Not something that has to be fought over in the courts at great cost to all. Unfortunately, some landholders fail to acknowledge that as custodians of the land they must also consider others, not simply their own perceptions of what should be done to benefit only them. Therefore it is imperative that DNR personnel for example have the authority to negotiate and enforce rulings that benefit all stakeholders.

The DNR has to be able to do this. It has to have that authority. The letter continues—

Great expectations are imposed on farmers to adhere to for example Best Management Practices, but we question our ability to be sustainable farmers if the law-makers do not enforce the rulings made that are supposedly designed to help protect our resource base physically and financially.

The point that I am trying to make is that we have our contours and we have problems occurring. The staff of the DNR are not available to get out there and police what is happening. So much emphasis has been put on to vegetation management since that legislation has come in that it is very, very hard to police everything. The letter concludes—

On behalf of fellow landholders we ask the government ministers, who make the rulings and assign funding, acknowledge that what is happening now needs immediate revision because it really is not working.

They are the words of a farmer. For the sake of time, I will not go through the other correspondence, but a number of concerned people have written to me. I would like to quote just one little part of a letter that was written to me from the DNR. It states—

At the recent meeting it was agreed that a joint meeting be arranged between the two parties, with a view to resolving any runoff co-ordination concerns ... Due to the existing commitments of the Department officers the earliest this joint meeting can be held is about mid-October.

That letter was written in September, so there is a massive waiting list. Another letter refers to there simply being a shortage of staff. In saying that, I hope that the minister has heard me address those problems within DNR that we are facing.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr O'Brien): Order! Before calling the member for Lockyer, I acknowledge in the public gallery students from the Harlin State School in the electorate of Nanango.

**Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—NPA) (2.52 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to this bill. The main amendment contained in this bill is an amendment to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002. This amendment provides for an amnesty for illegally held pests. These pests can be taken to the Queensland Museum or the Queensland Herbarium. Hopefully, that amnesty will stop people from dumping illegal pests in appropriate places. Unfortunately, in the past the

environment has suffered because of pests—the rabbit, the carp, et cetera. The problem that pests have created in the past has been severe. Until the calicivirus virus, rabbits created disaster in our environment. The red-eared slider turtle, which has been found in north Brisbane, is one of the reasons for this amendment bill. Unfortunately, this native of South America has made its way into our waterways. The red-eared slider turtle is very aggressive and has been listed in the top 100 worst invaders by the World Conservation Union.

There is great concern about the disease that could also be carried by some of these exotic pests. Surely, it is good government for people who end up with exotic pests to be able to hand them in to the appropriate authorities and not have to dump them into the environment. We want commonsense to prevail. We hope that this amnesty is advertised extensively throughout the pet industry and to the general public. I hope that the minister will ensure that this amnesty is a success. We do not want exotic pests in our environment.

When I was involved with agripolitics prior to my arrival in this place, I and other members tried in vain to have the federal Labor government and the federal coalition introduce small fees onto shipping containers, of which we have some 4,000 arriving in Australia daily, to help combat the eradication of declared pests entering Australia. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in having that fee put in place. That is a shame, because since this process was not put in place when we asked for it to be so we have had fire ants, which arrived in shipping containers and ended up near a nursery, and which then spread to a lot of areas around Brisbane and Ipswich. The clean-up teams are still working diligently to try to clean up those fire ants. Unfortunately, this process goes on and on. It has cost the state government millions of dollars to try to clear up those fire ants. Fire ants could actually destroy our way of life if they got a hold of our country. We have also discovered crazy ants near the Brisbane fruit and vegetable markets. That is another pest that we do not want spread around. Such pests are becoming more and more prevalent. Unfortunately, other exotic pests, such as the papaya fruit fly and the spiralling white fly, create enormous problems for our most valuable primary industry, the horticultural industry. We must continue to be vigilant about these exotic pests. It is much simpler to keep the exotic pests out of Australia rather than to try to eradicate them after they have established themselves in our horticultural areas. Let us ensure that these pests do not get here.

Citrus canker is one such exotic disease that has been a problem this year. I must congratulate the DPI staff for the way in which this issue has been handled. But if the federal and state departments had been working together earlier, they could have resolved the citrus canker problem without the exorbitant costs involved. This problem has gone on and on and on. Unfortunately, more properties are being discovered to have the citrus canker disease. It is going to become a bigger problem. Some citrus is grown in my electorate. I would hate to see the disease spread any further. If it does, it will become a real problem for the whole state's citrus industry. Unfortunately, a lot of the time such problems are not solved because of bad government. I hope that the minister will ensure that the amnesty is a success. We do not need exotic pests in our environment.

The bill also amends the Valuation of Lands Act to correct out-of-date terminology and to provide clarification. It is unfortunate that there has not been a 2004 valuation produced by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. Some of the shires in my electorate have unfortunate processes whereby they have had to pay for a valuation when current valuations are way out of kilter. The Shire of Laidley went to great pains to say that some of its valuations were out by 100 per cent. Unfortunately, this has created false valuations in some areas. Those valuations will have to be altered dramatically when the councils eventually receive their valuations. I am sure that I will receive plenty of complaints into my office when that happens.

Across Queensland this issue has cost councils some \$7.2 million, which the government has received under false pretences. This process should never have been allowed to happen. The department has produced no new valuations, yet the government has charged the government's councils \$7.2 million for the service. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr WILSON** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (2.58 p.m.): I rise to support the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. In particular, I would like to address the amendments to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002. We all know that invasive weeds and pest animals pose one of the greatest threats to the biodiversity of the world's ecosystems. Queensland has the most diverse flora and fauna of anywhere in Australia. It is essential that we make every effort to prevent exotic animals and plants becoming established and endangering our unique ecosystems. This bill's provisions to restrict the keeping of exotic animals in the state to certain approved purposes are sensible, allowing enterprises such as zoos and circuses to continue and not hindering scientific development but preventing them from being owned as pets.

A pest animal of class 1 is either not present or not established in the state but has the potential to cause an adverse economic, environmental or social impact. The maximum penalty for keeping a class 1 animal is \$60,000. The American red-eared slider turtle is an example of a class 1 pest that has the potential to wreak environmental havoc in Queensland waterways. We have had a recent narrow shave with this creature, and we need to ensure it is not repeated. The turtle is aggressive and will compete

with native species for food and space. It is larger and can lay more eggs than most native species. It can readily survive in brackish water and is likely to spread to lakes, wetlands, rivers and creeks. It is a prolific breeder and, with a life span of around 50 years, can reproduce from the age of five or six years. The turtle eats fish, frogs, insects and vegetation.

A pest assessment carried out by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines rates this species as an extreme risk, scoring 13 out of a possible 14 points for its potential to establish in Queensland. Climatic modelling indicates that the species can readily establish colonies in Queensland as well as in other parts of Australia. Colonies have been, regrettably, found in New South Wales.

The red-eared slider turtle is a native of the USA, but its proclivity to spread beyond its native range means it is regarded as a feral pest even in some places in that country. An estimated three million were sold each year throughout the 1970s in France, with many released accidentally or deliberately by owners. They are now considered serious ecological pests throughout southern and Mediterranean Europe. Since February 1990, the importation and sale of the species has been illegal in Europe. They have naturalised in areas of South-East Asia, the Far East, South Africa, the Caribbean Islands, Israel, Bahrain, Mariana Islands and Guam. They are now the second most common turtle in Taiwan.

Its distinctive red stripe behind each eye makes the turtle attractive to collectors. Elsewhere in the world, many people purchase the cute looking, small, young sliders only to find that when they mature they can become aggressive, with the potential to inflict a painful bite. People will often then dump the pets into local creeks, where the animals are capable of breeding and consequently threaten the survival of other animals and native plants. In Queensland, slider turtles cannot be kept as pets. They can only be kept under a permit by zoos and for other prescribed purposes.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service advised the Department of Natural Resources and Mines on 23 January 2004 that two red-eared slider turtles had been handed to them from two suburbs in the Pine Rivers shire, Kallangur and Mango Hill. Subsequently, an interdepartmental task force, together with officers of the Pine Rivers Shire Council, seized 23 slider turtles from a private residence at Lawnton, some distance away from the two previous occurrences. It was clear that there was a possibility that people were keeping this animal not knowing that it was illegal to do so. Media releases by the department urged people to report sightings and surrender any turtles in their possession.

An important management tool in this case would have been the declaration of an amnesty for the species. However, there is no provision for an amnesty in the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002. An amnesty enables the surrender of the pest without penalty. This strategy is preferable to prosecution as it encourages the surrender and destruction of animals being kept. As there is a substantial fine for the keeping of class 1 pests, owners would be tempted to otherwise release their pets into the wild, thus worsening the situation. Coincidentally and fortunately, the Australian government declared a national amnesty on exotic reptiles between March and May which resulted in the surrender of some turtles. This amendment means that we will not have to rely upon fortunate coincidences a second time by providing for an amnesty in similar situations. This is a sensible and fair-minded amendment that will produce sensible and appropriate results in the fight against pests in Queensland.

I acknowledge the fine work of officers of the Pine Rivers Shire Council, which covers about two-thirds of my electorate of Ferny Grove. The bottom third of the Pine Rivers shire is in my state electorate. The wildlife officers in that council work extremely hard, as do other officers, in doing whatever they can to cooperate with state authorities to protect the environment. I commend them for that approach and for the good work they did with the slider turtles. I also acknowledge the fine work of the Parks and Wildlife Service in conjunction with the department.

I put on the public record an acknowledgment of the fine work of Mountains to Mangroves, which has recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Mountains to Mangroves, for those who are not aware of its activities, involves 16 suburbs connecting from the Mount Nebo and Mount Glorious area in my electorate and at the southern end of the D'Aguilar Range through a range of suburbs in the north-eastern direction and ending up at the Boondall Wetlands, going through the Aspley, Everton, Kallangur and Nudgee electorates as well as a couple of other state electorates. A large number of volunteers have worked with Mountains to Mangroves over those 10 years, substantially supported by the Brisbane City Council. I commend the council for its ongoing support for Mountains to Mangroves.

I acknowledge the fine work of the outgoing chairman, Cam Mackenzie, who has been actively involved for many, many years in that capacity on environmental issues and in other areas as well. I draw attention to the delightful appointment of Terry Hampson, a former councillor with the Brisbane City Council, who is now the chairman of Mountains to Mangroves. One of the fine features of Mountains to Mangroves is that it brings together a whole range of state and local authority personnel and officers from across the political spectrum, working cooperatively together for the good environmental management of the Mountains to Mangroves corridor. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (3.06 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. This bill provides for an amnesty period for illegally held pests so that

those people who might have them will be less likely to dump them into our natural environment. It also allows for declared pests to be taken to the Queensland Museum or the Queensland Herbarium for identification. There are other minor amendments of essentially a technical and housekeeping nature. The amendments to the Valuation of Land Act 1994 are also, I believe, of a fairly mundane nature. Changes to the Surveyors Act 2003 are in a similar class.

The amendments to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 will help protect our environment from invasive pests, both plant and animal. This is vitally important. There is insufficient protection now, as is apparent with the battle against fire ants in the south-east and crazy ants in the north, the spread of *nuova sedge* and giant rat-tail in my electorate, the incursion not so long ago of the spiralling white fly, and the list goes on. Previous speakers this afternoon have spoken about the dingo and wild dog problem. There are similar problems in my electorate with wild dogs becoming cheekier, coming in closer and closer and causing a nuisance very close to our built-up areas.

Our external borders are the responsibility of the Commonwealth, and I believe that it is doing a pretty poor job of keeping them secure. We also need a highly proficient, well-resourced and intelligently organised state system of controls. I do not agree that individual landowners in the bush should have to pay to control pests when individual landowners in Brisbane do not. I do not agree with the low funding levels and resources—so poor that while we in rural areas battle to keep class 1 and 2 pests under control we cannot seem to stop class 3 and other pests from devastating our productive capacity.

I turn now to the amendments to the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. In essence, these amendments are in line with the overall goal of the Beattie government's broadscale clearing bans. They do serve to clarify certain issues, particularly relating to attempts to amend vegetation clearing applications. Of course, the fact that these amendments are in line with existing Beattie government policy is not to suggest that the policy is at all praiseworthy. Indeed, the clearing bans have had a catastrophic effect on constituents in my electorate and in other rural electorates across Queensland. And the compensation package, I am certain, will be as useless as all of the other compensation, adjustment, restructuring and other deals issued by governments intent on massacring the bush.

These deals might ease the conscience of city folk who insist on these policies but they produce no real good to the families, the farms, the businesses and the communities who cop the brunt of the impact. The bans have stripped away existing businesses and have wrecked the future productive potential of vast stretches of rural land. Perhaps there is an environmental argument for this—perhaps. If so, it is totally unfair for the community to insist on an environmental argument but not be prepared to help carry the cost. That is what has happened with the broadscale clearing bans, and these amendments do nothing to address that basic issue. The people of the bush know exactly what it means to get a fair go, and they know they are not getting it on tree clearing.

**Mr COPELAND** (Cunningham—NPA) (3.10 p.m.): I rise today to participate in the debate on the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. The amendments to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act involve two new initiatives. Firstly, there is a provision for establishing an amnesty period for illegally held pests to prevent people from dumping their illegally held live animals into the natural environment when they first become aware of the law and become fearful of prosecution. This amendment will allow Queensland to participate in national amnesty programs coordinated by Commonwealth wildlife enforcement agencies. Secondly, there is a provision allowing people to take declared pests to the Queensland Museum and Queensland Herbarium for identification purposes. That will certainly be a useful amendment because there are a lot of people doing the right thing in trying to identify pests of all sorts of descriptions but they may not have the expertise to do so, and that will be of assistance.

The minister in his second reading speech raised the issue of the red-eared slider turtle, which has prompted these amendments. This is the latest in what has become a long and sorry line of pests that have become a problem—both animal and plant pests. The red-eared slider turtle is a particularly nasty creature. I remember when it was first detected in a dam on the northern outskirts of Brisbane. The experts who were interviewed said that the turtles, even if eaten as small animals, are able to eat their way out of the gut of a fish. Hence, they are very difficult to control. They will not have any predators at all in the natural environment and could easily become a very dominant species, which would have devastating ramifications for our natural fish populations. We need to try to clean this up so that it does not become the sort of problem that many other animals have become.

This is an example of where people have held the turtles as pets, released them into the environment and they have become a problem. That has happened with a whole range of different animals. I have to say that I am very glad rabbits, for example, are still illegal in Queensland. Rabbits do terrible damage to the environment. They are a huge cost, and it is only due to some of the successful control measures such as myxomatosis that this pest has been able to be controlled.

I went to the markets in Melbourne a little while ago and in one of the pet shops they were selling rabbits. They might look cute and cuddly and furry and friendly in a cage in a pet shop. However, if children become tired of looking after them after they have been taken home and they are released into

the environment, they are no longer cute and cuddly; they are potentially a real problem. It is good that both sides of politics when in government have continued the commitment to not allow these animals to be kept as pets. They are illegal animals. I think that is a very good move. I do not think there will be any change to that commitment from either side, which is excellent.

There is a whole range of other animals that are in need of being controlled in the environment. Many members have outlined them, including those which have been a problem in their own areas. Foxes, of course, have long been with us. Cane toads were introduced with the very best of intentions to try to control another problem in the sugarcane industry. That failed, but they have been very successful in establishing themselves right across Queensland and now extending into the Northern Territory and down into New South Wales.

In the cooler areas around Toowoomba and the Darling Downs we do not see a lot of cane toads—certainly not as many as when I lived in St Lucia or, as Minister Pitt is indicating, in north Queensland—but in most parts of Queensland they are a very severe problem. As the member for Darling Downs said, there is anecdotal evidence that native birds are learning how to devour them. We can only hope they become even more clever and more species are able to prey on them. That may act as a control measure as well.

A lot of people probably do not recognise that the deer is a feral animal. In Queensland there are substantial areas that experience feral deer problems. I know someone who hit one on the outskirts of Brisbane at Blacksoil, just west of Ipswich on the Warrego Highway. One certainly would not expect to hit a deer when driving along the Warrego Highway. Some of these animals can have a productive use. In the Jimna Range behind Kilcoy, for example, there is a very successful deer farming enterprise established. One of my uncles who lives in that area has a very successful deer farm. It can be a lucrative and very productive industry. However, we do have to control feral animals. They come right into the outskirts of Brisbane. As the member for Moggill stated previously, in his electorate it can be a real problem.

Wild dogs and dingoes I will speak about separately because they are two different issues. Even though they cause similar problems and have similar control measures, they are two separate problems. There are some real difficulties with the regulations that people have to comply with now to trap dingoes. Markers have to be put up where traps are set and there are restrictions on the sorts of traps that can be used. It is proving very difficult for people to use those control measures to overcome what is a real problem, particularly for livestock industries.

Traps have to be marked with red tape or red ribbons so that people can avoid them, but it is a giveaway to the dogs as well. They are not silly animals; they are pretty cunning, as we have seen in the way they adapt and have made a nuisance of themselves in a lot of locations. Whilst we have to look at the safety and animal welfare issues associated with traps, we have to realise that they are a dangerous, feral animal. Wild dogs and dingoes are pest animals, and we need realistic measures to trap these animals.

Feral pigs are a problem right across the state, as they are in my electorate. The real fear I have with feral pigs is the very large numbers of them in Cape York and the disease incursions that may come from our close neighbours in the north, particularly Japanese encephalitis, for example, which has been found on the mainland in the past. If that gets into the pig population and is able to be transmitted, then that will have very severe ramifications. Not only would there be damage caused by the pigs; if we were to have large scale outbreaks of diseases, that would have a significant impact on our health budget and on tourism.

We do not often talk about birds as being pests but in the Darling Downs, in particular, there has been an explosion in the Indian myna bird. They have taken over a lot of nesting places which native birds would normally use, and that has had an impact. I do not know whether there is anything we can do about it other than live with them. I have heard them described as the rabbits of the skies, and that is certainly how it looks. They really are everywhere. They are a nuisance and they are having an impact on our native bird species. European carp has been mentioned previously. I think the Carpbusters program instigated in southern Queensland is a great initiative. We can only hope that we can control it. I do not think we will ever be able to eradicate that species, but it will be good if we can limit the further expansion of areas where those infestations are felt.

Feral cats have been mentioned. They really are a problem. Having just lived through a plague, I have to say that mice still are a real problem for us. As I was living in an old Queenslanders through the mouse plague, it was particularly unpleasant, but mice have an economic and health impact on our community.

**Ms Jarratt:** You need a fox terrier for those.

**Mr COPELAND:** A fox terrier is needed for them. We had so many of them I do not think a fox terrier would have been able to survive. I know there were more fat cats and fat dogs than you could poke a stick at. Luckily, touch wood, we have lived through that and the populations have declined, but they are a real problem.

Now, at the end of all of that list, we have the turtles. Hopefully we are able to contain the outbreak and that we do not experience any further infestations because it really would have a dramatic effect on our native fish populations, particularly, as I said, as predators do not stand much of a chance against them.

The same comments could be made about plant pests. We have had an awful lot of plants which have been introduced particularly as nursery species into Australia, particularly for the garden or ornamental use, which have taken to our environment unbelievably well. They have adapted and they have overtaken large tracts of land right across the country. Of course, different plants will pose a different problem to different areas. What may be a problem plant in one particular area may not be regarded as that in other area, depending on how successful it has been in adapting to that area.

It really frightens me to think of what other nursery plants may be out there waiting to be sold or are being sold and going into backyards, or indoor plants, that we are going to have to face up to in the future. There could be any number of plants that people are buying all across the country now that next week may be the problem we are faced with. There are so many of them. The cactus, for example, was introduced as an ornamental plant, and look at the problems that were faced with that plant. Why on earth anyone would want a cactus as an ornamental plant—

**Mr Robertson:** Lantana.

**Mr COPELAND:** I was coming to lantana, because I have spoken about that previously in the House. I have referred to the difficulties, particularly on the eastern side of my electorate and the escarpment areas of the Toowoomba Range. Lantana is a particularly difficult problem to address. Large infestations take over the ground canopy and drown out any other species that should be able to survive or should be able to grow. Lantana just takes over. The difficulties that land-holders have in trying to control those infestations, because of the requirements of the Vegetation Management Act, for example, make it very, very difficult to get into. In areas of difficult geography or where the infestations are particularly thick the only way that people are allowed to control it is to spray it with poison, but they may not be able to get in to spray it. A bulldozer, for example, may be the only way to effectively get in and clear the lantana, but we are not able to do that.

**Mr Robertson:** Yes, you are, with weed control measures.

**Mr COPELAND:** We corresponded on this some time ago, Minister, and at that stage we were not allowed to. If we are able to do that, I will gladly take that back to the constituents who had the problem originally. If that is the case, that will be fantastic, but I will get those details to—

**Mr Robertson:** Not broadscale.

**Mr COPELAND:** No, it is not broadscale. I will get those details and it will clarify that, which would be very good. That sort of problem really does exist. In other areas of Queensland, of course, there is prickly acacia. Other woody weeds have become a real problem economically and in some cases they cause health problems. For example, parthenium has particularly nasty side effects on the health of people who come in contact with it.

The issue of stramonium and Noogoora burr came up in my electorate some time ago when they were taken off the declared list, but they are still a problem in a lot of the agricultural areas. Some of the councils have put them on their own lists so that they can enforce land-holders to actually control those weeds. Another problem, of course, is Lippia, which is becoming a bigger and bigger problem right across the Condamine Basin. It is a ground cover which grows absolutely wild.

**Mr Robertson:** I saw it at Warwick.

**Mr COPELAND:** Yes. It is unbelievable and very, very difficult to eradicate. I understand that it was introduced as a substitute for lawns. It would be great at that because it cannot be killed and it is a lush ground cover. It is a low-growing plant so people do not have to mow it, but it is very, very difficult to kill. Along the waterways through the Condamine Basin it is becoming a real problem.

**Mr Pearce:** What about the mother-of-millions? That's pretty!

**Mr COPELAND:** Speaking of mother-of-millions, at a school fete that I went to they were selling mother-of-millions in a pot as a pot plant. I just could not believe that was happening.

**Mr Shine:** How many did you buy?

**Mr COPELAND:** I bought none. I have seen too many of them and I have seen how difficult it is to eradicate them through the Brigalow Belt particularly. That just goes to illustrate what does happen where people sell these plants as nursery plants or garden plants. They really are a dreadful problem.

As I said, what is a problem plant in one area may not be so much so in another. I was listening to Penny McInlay on the radio when I was driving down to Brisbane. The member for Toowoomba North would know Penny well. She is a very high profile gardening identity from Pittsworth and has a terrific nursery from which I buy a lot of plants. Penny was bemoaning the fact that plants such as camphor laurels and chinese elms are no longer to be sold, as I understand it. Camphor laurels in Toowoomba do

not grow like weeds as they do in some of the coastal areas, for example. I know that one of her pet projects is based on the fact that some of those plants should still be sold.

**Mr Robertson:** If you refer back to your concern about the Indian myna, I think you come up with the answer.

**Mr COPELAND:** Yes. Toowoomba City Council has done a very good job of getting rid of privet. It has had a very big eradication program. The Middle Ridge golf course is now a lot easier since the privet has been taken away. There was a lot of privet there. All local governments are doing their best to try to eradicate these pests, both animal and plant.

I would like to congratulate the Condamine Catchment Management Association on the work it has been doing in the area. Prior to speaking in this debate, I logged on to its web site. It has a very good web site with some good information about pests, animals and weeds. It is only one of the areas that it covers. It goes through all of the high impact weeds, high impact pest animals, the management of pest animals and weeds, what the current condition of the Condamine catchment is and the work that it is trying to do to address those problems. Those catchment organisations are doing some very good work when it comes to this issue.

It is not only private land-holders and catchment organisations that need to do the job; the state government does have a responsibility to be a good land-holder. It holds significant parcels of Crown land, whether it is national parks or other land. The government must put in the resources to be able to manage these pests on Crown land. It is a huge concern to all those land-holders who border, for example, national parks or state forests that the pests that they see flourish largely unchecked on Crown land. We need to make sure that the state government puts in the resources and has the personnel on the ground to be able to manage those pests.

That brings me to my favourite issue—I know the minister would be very disappointed if I did not raise it—that is, the vacancy of the DNR officer at Pittsworth. The member for Darling Downs has outlined a letter that came from one of my constituents from Pittsworth and the difficulties they are having. I will not read that again because the member for Darling Downs read it into *Hansard*. That is very typical of the response that I am getting from that area. The minister visited that area and saw the terrific work that was being done particularly in soil conservation. I come back to the soil conservation work. It is not a trendy issue; it is not a really 'in' environmental issue, but the biggest results which have been occurring in environmental action in my part of the world have been through soil conservation works that have been going on. Without that personnel on the staff to provide on-farm advice to land-holders, then we really are in danger of losing some of those great advances that have been made over a 20- or 30-year period. I urge the minister to relook at how that advice is provided.

I have real concerns about transferring the responsibility of the catchment associations, notwithstanding the good work that they do. With the difficulty that the minister has said that the government has in attracting good staff, those catchment organisations are certainly not going to be able to attract good staff when they are on short-term contracts, short-term funding and are not able to offer the benefits that the state government is able to offer. We are in real danger of losing some of the great work that has gone on at that level. As I said, the member for Darling Downs read into the record the frustrations that a family in Pittsworth is having. We need to address that issue.

The last minute amendment that was tabled in the House prior to this debate beginning during the previous sitting week relates not to those two initiatives but to the Vegetation Management Act, an act that we have heard so much debate about in this House. As the member for Tablelands said, it might be in line with what the government's policy is but that does not mean the policy is worth supporting. There are ongoing problems and difficulties in relation to compliance with this act. There are ongoing difficulties with the economics that this act is going to entail. The unfairness of the ballot that has just been conducted is unbelievable. In my electorate where there are the cyprus pine, brigalow and the thickening issues, it is very difficult for land-holders who are trying to comply.

I had a constituent who came in with a map showing me where he wants to clear some regrowth and the advice I gave to him was to get everything in writing. Land-holders cannot be assured of the advice that is being given; that advice may be revoked.

**Mr FINN** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (3.30 p.m.): I rise today to address the amendments to the Valuation of Land Act 1944 proposed by this bill. While these proposed amendments are routine and uncontroversial, I know there is a lot of interest in them in my electorate of Yeerongpilly, from Yeronga to Coopers Plain—perhaps not as much interest as the sections of this bill that deal with running dogs or the red-eared slider turtle but enough interest nonetheless. It is important to place on the record the resource savings that these amendments will afford the government and, by extension, the taxpayers of Queensland. I congratulate the minister's commitment to ensuring that his department continually works to improve its business practices to better deliver valuation services.

Any amendment that streamlines the requirement of valuation resources, while maintaining service quality, is to be applauded. The proposed amendments which refine the definition of owner fall into this category. In certain situations the current definition of owner in the act recognises a lessee of

land as an owner. In these cases the lessee would be responsible for local government rates and the lessor, where applicable, would be responsible for state land tax. Owing to a lack of specification in the current definition of owner, there also exists a requirement that a valuation provided to the lessee, who is defined as an owner for rating purposes, also be provided to the lessor. Conversely, it is conceivable that a valuation provided to a lessor who is defined as an owner for land tax purposes should also be provided to the lessee.

The computer system that stores and maintains valuation property records and produces valuation notices, the QVAS system, is a large, complex database and forms the electronic valuation roll. As anyone who has had contact with large, complex computer systems would know, changes to these systems can be a time-consuming and expensive process. The QVAS system is able to create a separate record for the one property and for local government ratings, state land tax and state land rental purposes. Valuations are created for these records and, where required, maintained and valuation notices are produced and issued to the responsible owners and relevant authorities. However, the system does not have the capability to create duplicates of these records with different owners and produce valuation records for these notices. The issue these amendments address is that there is no need for a second notice in either of the cases I have mentioned. Until now, staff have produced these unnecessary valuations manually and this process takes time and effort that could be better spent elsewhere.

If the current definition of owner remains, the QVAS system will need to be changed to be able to store these duplicate records and produce the required notices at significant cost and possible disruption to the production of valuation notices. The current requirements to provide these redundant valuations requires the allocation of valuer, administration and system resources. The fact that these redundant valuations are provided also means that they can be subject to statutory objection and appeal processes which again require resources to be allocated to a process that is wholly redundant as the valuation in question is not being used by the second person to whom it is issued. It is important to note that the rating, land tax and state land rental valuations are and will continue to be provided to the owners responsible for the payment of rates, land tax and rental, allowing for full objection and appeal processes. The point I make to those members in my electorate listening to this over the Internet is that this continues to protect the rights of the relevant owner in each case. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (3.34 p.m.): I rise today to speak on this Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. At the outset I want to concentrate much of my address on the issue of land clearing. I also want to discuss the issue relating to the valuation of land being amended to correct anomalies that may arise because of the existing definition of owner and to correct some out-of-date terminology.

In recent times we have witnessed court cases in relation to land clearing in this state. It is very important to recognise that there can be mistakes made on both sides. It is absolutely paramount that we recognise that here today. The minister stated in his second reading speech—

Where land owned by a Government Owned Corporation is leased, the lessee is the 'owner' under the Act and is responsible for the payment of local government rates. In this case, a valuation is provided to the lessee as the 'owner' responsible for rates.

The existing definition of 'owner' in the Act requires that this same valuation be provided to the GOC, but this valuation is redundant, as the GOC is not responsible for the rates.

However, there are many things that some land-holders are not conversant with. I believe the relationship between the Department of Natural Resources and many landowners over recent times has broken down due to some ill-conceived legislation that has been ramrodded through this House. The issue of land clearing is a very fragile debate. In recent times we have witnessed the ballot concept for people who have made application for the clearing of land in this state. I believe it is one of the most unfair forms of reality that we have ever seen. There are fair dinkum people out there. I have had people in my own electorate ring me. I have seen the minister in the House shake his head and not even want to know about the issue of the maps.

I know a lot of these maps have not been made available to people to assist them in filling out applications for the land they want to clear. They are realistic. I have even spoken to the director-general about this. The point I make here is that boundaries can change just by the curve of a line or even by a straight line itself. A boundary fence can cut off land that is fragile—it could be a swampy area or it could be a mountainous area or even some other endangered habitat. I believe that all of us who have been custodians of this land and who use it for rural, agricultural or some other purpose have been responsible in the way we go about it.

The minister knows as well as I do that probably only one per cent of the population has violated this act. What they have done is drawn the crabs for those people who have been honest. I find this a little bit hard to wear. I have mentioned on numerous occasions in this House the issue of good departmental people who are honest in their dealings, who are fair dinkum, and who want to make certain that we have outcomes advantageous to the department but also that we have outcomes that will be advantageous to the rural producers who want to clear the right land and do the right thing. One of those people who comes to mind straight away is Ashley McKay from Torres Park at Augathella. I

have been there and seen that property. I have been around that property with Mr McKay and I have seen the honesty and decency of this man. I have seen how he has been persecuted and tortured by the courts because of an honest mistake.

When the commercial viability of the timber in question is looked at, there is certainly country that has been harvested for pine in the past. There is a situation where those logs are laying on the ground. I would love the minister to go to Torres Park and look at some of those logs. Out of all that timber that was cut probably 30, 40 or 50 years ago, I wonder how much of it had any commercial value at all. It is because of the honesty of Ashley McKay that he pulled up those bulldozers. And what has happened to him? He has been put through the courts for that honesty. That man is one of the most decent, honest and leading citizens in the country. He is highly respected by all facets of the industry. It is unfortunate that he has been subjected to this course of action.

It is a travesty of justice to see what has happened in this situation. I hope in the future that we see some of these anomalies corrected. We have been talking about surveyors. Even surveyors can get it wrong. I heard my colleague the member for Warrego say that a line on a map can mean 400 metres. Regardless of who we are talking about, we find that people are violating the law through no fault of their own. I believe that we have to be more realistic and more flexible in dealing with this situation.

I believe that common decency and honesty are being thrown out the door on this occasion. I am passionate about this. The one thing that I cannot stand is the unfair treatment of honest people who are trying to achieve and do the right thing. When we evaluate the things that these people are doing in their own community, this is evident. One only has to go anywhere in south-west Queensland and anywhere in the cattle industry in Queensland to find out what decent, honest, God-fearing people Ashley and Doris McKay are. This is not only applicable to them. There are a lot of other people out there like this.

I know that I have a couple of constituents in my electorate who have violated this system and snubbed their noses at it. They make it hard for the decent, honest people. Ashley McKay has been grilled and grilled and he has been crucified by an unfair and unjust system and by people who have a vendetta against honest, decent people. It is not going to work. I believe in time we will see this legislation come back and haunt the department and a lot of other people. I will stand beside Ashley McKay all the way—and anybody else in this state who upholds the tradition of honesty in the execution of their authority. I believe he has done the right thing.

The other issue I wish to speak about today is declared pests. It was only yesterday that I learnt through my colleague the shadow minister Jeff Seeney about the red-eared slider turtle. He said that people keep these things as pets. The member for Cunningham made mention of rabbits in his contribution. We can list them. Whether it is the turtle in question, rabbits, foxes or wild pigs, they are pests.

I heard the member for Cunningham say that wild pigs are a problem in the far north. Wild pigs are a scourge across Queensland—whether in the cattle country, channel country or sheep country. They are a scourge for sheep growers. I have seen them take lambs regardless of how old they are. A lot of people think they will not do this. I have witnessed this with my own eyes on my place at Quilpie.

I believe we need to see leadership from this minister and this department in terms of the eradication and destruction of some of these feral animals. We can throw the dingo into the same basket. We have virtually seen the demise of the wool industry in western Queensland because of dingoes.

**Mr Robertson:** Wild dogs.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Okay, wild dogs. I take that interjection from the minister. Dingoes are a problem. When I have driven from Tambo to Alpha—which I have done on many occasions and which I will do next Friday afternoon on my way from Emerald to Charleville—I have never not seen dingoes. I mean the mickey mouse article. One only has to drive outside one of those towns to see that what I am saying is true.

I remember that when I was a councillor on the Quilpie Shire Council in the early 1970s a motion came before the council to bar people from bringing alsatians and Doberman pinscher dogs into the shire. As time went on those laws were changed. I had a wool classer at my place once who had two Dobermans. He would let them off the chain in the afternoon and they were out of control. They have eye teeth an inch and a half long. They would tear a sheep to bits in half a minute.

When these dogs get out of control we have a real problem on our hands. A local in Winton who used to be a contractor but is now working for the local shire told me that the shire has gone from having about 1.4 million sheep to having 200,000 sheep. We should look at the economy of that town. All the dollars that come out of the shearing industry are usually spent in the local towns—whether it be Winton, Hughenden, Julia Creek, Richmond, Longreach, Blackall, Cunnamulla, Charleville, Quilpie or St George. They are dollars we are not seeing anymore because of the demise of that industry and downturns of various types.

In the 100 kilometres between Tambo and Blackall, what used to be the heart of sheep country in western Queensland, there is not a sheep on any of the properties. They are now all cattle properties. I have no problem with cattle, but the incomes that are derived from those properties that go back into the towns are negligible compared to those derived from the sheep industry. They do not need so many men or women in the shearing sheds or on the stations. One or two people can manage a herd of cattle on smaller places. It would need five or six or eight or 10 on the bigger ones.

The only industry to replace the shearing industry is the roo shooting industry or macropod harvesting industry—to put it in modern terms to appease the greens and those out there trying to knock that industry on the head too. We have real problems in that country. We have people in Europe today who are trying to cut out the macropod or kangaroo industry in Australia because they believe we are eradicating the kangaroo.

Over the past 200 years—since European settlement—we have seen kangaroo numbers multiply seven or eightfold. The quota is never met on a yearly basis. I know this is outside the portfolio area, but it relates to what we are debating today. It all comes back to land management, productivity and commonsense. It is a sad state of affairs when people pay lip-service to these issues and then all of a sudden we see the demise of an industry and country towns close down.

I do not know whether those opposite have been to some of these western towns. Cunnamulla is a classic. Blackall is another one. They were the heart of the wool industry going back 15, 20 or 30 years. They were wealthy towns. They generated a lot of dollars. One can walk along the streets in those towns now and every second shop is boarded up. Nobody is there. People have moved out.

The best export industry we have in western Queensland—brought about by a lot of this mismanagement—is the export of our kids. Kids go away to the coast to go to university or to seek jobs and they never come back. This is a situation that we have to look at. Members might think I am getting off the track, but I am trying to make members and the minister realise what a fragile situation we face. The government talks about the population being concentrated in the south-east corner and it is taxing people for the use of water, electricity, roads, schools and hospitals and yet the place where I live and the places where some of my colleagues in this House live—I can see a couple who represent country seats in this chamber; my colleague the member for Callide is here—are damn good places to live.

I believe that the people who have managed the land over time have done it right. We just need some support in the right direction. I beg the minister to make certain that some of these anomalies are corrected. We all make mistakes. Let us come back to the land clearing issue. I know people on both sides who have made mistakes but, at the end of the day, there was only one bloke who was perfect and he did not pick 12 good blokes for a start—he had a brumby, too. We know what happened there. That goes to prove that we can all be wrong sometimes.

The other point I want to raise is exotic pests in this country in terms of plants. The Blackall shire is a classic example with a real infestation in recent times of mother-of-millions. I heard the member for Cunningham say that he has seen that plant for sale at a fete or a street stall in pot plants. Those who drive out on the Warrego Highway going towards Chinchilla and Roma will see it growing on the side of the road. This damned stuff is a real confounded pest. It is a problem. If we get good summer rains—and please God we will in the next couple of months—it will take off like wildfire. Again, this is a pest that is strangling good grazing lands. Years ago when I was a councillor on the Quilpie Shire Council Mexican poppy was a problem. If that was growing anywhere, the council ranger would cut it out with a hoe or would spray it and landowners were told to get rid of it. But now it is growing wild everywhere in the western area. All of these issues come back to one thing: the economy in those regions. People do not have the men on the land anymore. The ringers are not there. It is a real problem. We have to look at measures where wide-scale operations are put in place to help eliminate some of these problems.

Another issue I want to touch on relates to the citrus canker outbreak at Emerald, and again this comes back to pests. I do applaud the Minister for Primary Industries for the work that he and his departmental officers have done. It has been a very difficult situation. There is another outbreak there at the moment, and please God that will be arrested and eliminated without too much heartache to the property involved. However, many people do not realise that it comes back to what I was saying a moment ago about the demise of the wool industry in western Queensland. If there is the demise of the citrus industry around Emerald, that situation could spread right across the citrus industry in Queensland. We do not need that to happen, because those country towns will suffer. When the industry is in full swing at Emerald, it is worth a couple of million dollars a week to the town. Those sorts of dollars are not generated every day of the week. These are the issues that many people do not understand. Situations such as this create problems for the people whose net income comes from growing citrus. Some of them are not on the international market. They have to deal with the domestic market, and that is where there is another problem. Those problems are out there all of the time.

There is one other issue I want to touch on in the last few moments available to me, and I refer to the parthenium weed and national parks. National parks are out of control in this state because of mismanagement and because of poor government policy. This minister and this government are looking at removing rangers from those national parks, and that is totally unacceptable. The government has

spent countless tens of thousands of dollars doing up homes. The Minister for Environment told me in a letter that I received from her in recent times that they are taking those rangers off those parks because they want to base them in town because it is too lonely for them to live in remote areas. For God's sake, many people have lived in those remote areas forever and a day—me, my wife, my father, my mother, our grandparents and it goes on and on. Some of them lived in those areas in the time of the horse and buggy and today there are radios, telephones, the whole bit. The minister also talks about workplace health and safety. I do not know how many times I have been pitched off a horse. I know my old mate down there the member for Callide has been pitched off a few times, too. In terms of workplace health and safety, we were the blokes who kept the job going; we got up and got back on again.

What is this minister doing? She is moving them into town because it is not safe to work there. As a result, there are going to be feral animals running rampant and noxious weeds running rampant. The government will not be able to do anything to stop those things in national parks because there will not be anybody there. When there is a deluge in the summertime on those channels in western Queensland, we know that there will be infestation of those noxious weeds right down those river systems because those national parks will be a haven for breeding noxious weeds and feral animals. I do not say this lightly, but it comes back to one thing: not only dollars and cents but commonsense. I ask this government and the ministers responsible to show some leadership and reverse this idiotic policy.

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (3.54 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to speak on the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill particularly as it relates to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act. I also want to touch on the Surveyors Act. Might I just say in passing that one appreciates the passion of the honourable member for Gregory, who has just spoken in this debate, and the basic commonsense that he makes in a lot of his remarks. Whether we agree or disagree in relation to some detail, there is never any doubt about his passion and his representation of the area from which he comes.

The Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act amendments relate to several matters, one of which is the possession of a pest for identification. Because I have leave today, I want to raise a couple of specific matters that may also be dealt with in the consideration in detail stage by the minister. I note that no offence is committed if a person keeps or supplies a declared pest for identification by either the Queensland Museum or the Queensland Herbarium. It would be easy for one to say if found in possession that that was the reason why one had it. I just ask the question as to who has the onus of proof in relation to that issue and what is the standard of proof, whether it is a criminal or a civil standard of proof. The other matter of particularity that I want to refer to is in relation to the amnesty provisions. I refer to the provision whereby an amnesty is given for keeping particular declared pests, and there is provision for the situation where many people are keeping animals of a particular type that are a declared pest. There is the ability, therefore, to declare an amnesty. I ask the minister to indicate to the House what is the definition or suggested definition of the word 'many'. Is it, say, five, 50 or 500 people?

Today many speakers have spoken in relation to the amendment about the variety of natural pests and exotic plants, et cetera, that we do have in Queensland. This topic of course has also been covered in legislation before the House on other occasions introduced by the Minister for Primary Industries. We have had occasion in the past to consider the implications of mad cow disease and other disastrous diseases that can be introduced into this country. In this House we have heard today and on the day on which discussion on the bill was commenced topics ranging from rabbits, wild pigs or feral pigs, feral cats, fire ants, exotic pests including birds, wild dogs, dingoes, cane toads and the list goes on. I refer to an article in the *Courier-Mail* of 2 January this year which referred to the problem of rabbits, wild pigs and the cost to the economy of the state and to the nation. It indicated that feral animals cost the Australian agricultural sector more than \$500 million a year. Common pests such as rabbits, feral pigs and dogs, cats, goats, foxes, mice, cane toads, minor birds and the European carp are the main offenders in damaging crops, reducing yields, preying on livestock and threatening native animal species. The article referred to a study conducted by the Bureau of Rural Sciences which found that the direct short-term economic loss caused by pests was at least \$420 million per year mainly in lost agricultural production. Also, controlling pests costs government and land-holders more than \$60 million a year and about \$20 million was spent annually researching how best to control the creatures.

Rabbits are the biggest problem, estimated to cause damage amounting to about \$200 million a year. Feral pigs are the next most damaging animals, causing about \$100 million a year damage to livestock, habitats and watercourses. In an effort to control the feral pig population and reduce the cost on the agricultural industry, the Cattle Council of Australia, with the support of the National Farmers Federation, is calling on the federal government to take a national approach to tackle the problem head-on. The council believes that about 23 million feral pigs are running wild in Australia. The council also believes that, as feral pigs disregard state boundaries, the issue is a federal government responsibility. Feral pigs present a tremendous disease risk to the nation, which places the issue on the federal agenda. Inroads can be made only through a nationally coordinated strategy where all agencies and stakeholders agree on the approach and work together to achieve the ultimate objective.

Feral pigs carry about 20 different exotic diseases, including diseases that can affect humans. Such diseases are swine fever, nipah virus and foot-and-mouth disease. An outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease could cost the country anywhere between \$2 billion and \$13 billion. Those figures are not exaggerated if we look at the cost involved in similar outbreaks of the disease in the UK. Feral pigrooting leads to erosion and loss of regenerating forest plants. Feral pigs also eat native plants; damage water resources, including bore outlets; prey on newborn lambs; damage fences; and reduce yields of cereal, grain, sugarcane, fruit and vegetable crops.

A very interesting article appeared in the *Courier-Mail* in January this year. I urge the minister to take the suggestion that was put to the federal government. It is indeed a national problem and one that should be taken up by the newly elected Howard government.

As I said, the types of feral animals that we have know no bounds. The problem has been around for quite some time. An example of a shire council trying to do what it can to eradicate feral cats is the Richmond Shire Council, which earlier this year put \$30,000 aside and introduced a \$5 a head bounty on the animals because of their detrimental effect on wildlife and so on. That raised cries from the RSPCA of the council being inhumane. Sometimes it is a difficult situation when, notwithstanding the good efforts of local authorities to tackle the problem, they are subjected to criticism by what I could only describe as ill-informed groups. Feral cats are amazing predators. They eat marsupial mice, budgerigars, darts, bilbies, finches and numerous other bird life.

Other members have spoken at length, to the Minister for Primary Industries in particular, about fire ants. I merely raise the topic in the context of this legislation. Also, care needs to be taken with birds. I note that an article, again in the *Courier-Mail*, in October 2002 referred to owners of exotic pets having to take steps to make sure that their animals do not escape or run amok. This article referred to a report that recommended that penalties be imposed in that regard, particularly in relation to non-Australian rainbow lorikeets. The article suggested that such pets might have placed in them microchips to track them down in the event of an escape.

Reference was also made earlier in this debate to cane toads. An article in my local newspaper in 1998 referred to the fact that cane toads were gradually heading towards Kakadu National Park. Friends from the Northern Territory tell me that, unfortunately, cane toads have reached the park now. There are great fears of what might result in that natural treasure as a result of the migration of cane toads. I know that when I was young, in the Brisbane Valley there were a great many black snakes to be seen. Now they have been replaced by brown snakes. The explanation by some is that the black snakes ate cane toads, which had the effect of poisoning them. So that is one theory as to the effect of the spread of cane toads in Queensland.

This article referred to a CSIRO scientific program that came tantalisingly close to a biological solution earlier in 1998 when scientists isolated a Venezuelan virus that was deadly to the toad. Initial tests showed promise, but experiments were abandoned when a batch of Australian native frogs succumbed. One can only ask the minister and the government to encourage further research into the elimination of the cane toad, which is having a disastrous effect on our natural habitat as well as causing economic effects, which, of course, are self-evident.

On many occasions today reference was made to wild dog problems—dingoes and foxes. It is good to see that the government has supported campaigns to eliminate wild dogs as best as possible. I will refer to that matter in more detail shortly in terms of my region. The honourable member for Cunningham made reference to pest trees and plants, camphor laurels in particular. I know in my garden I have quite a number of camphor laurel trees. Toowoomba is famous for them. But they are indeed a pest, along with celsus trees and privet.

**Mr Robertson:** Is that a guilty plea?

**Mr SHINE:** I certainly did not plant them. One just has to look when travelling up the Toowoomba range at the infestation of privets and the like on the range to realise that it is a mammoth task to eliminate this great pest.

Another pest that I want to mention is the dingo and the good work that is being carried out in relation to the maintenance of the dingo barrier fences throughout my region. I also want to acknowledge the good work being done by Peter McRae and others out at Charleville for the preservation of the bilbies. We usually hear about bilbies at Easter time, but it is worth while in the context of this legislation before the House to mention them again.

I also want to pay tribute to the government activity in terms of pest management funding. I am pleased that in my region, from Toowoomba out to the south-west district, recently \$158,000 was allocated to assist in the control and management of pests and weeds, including feral animal control under the pest management initiative funding for 2004-05. In addition, a further \$67,718 has been allocated for joint pest and weeds projects with the Capricorn district and \$100,000 has been allocated for wild dog management as a joint project with the Toowoomba district. Funds will be utilised for the control of feral animals such as pigs, wild dogs, foxes and cats, and weed species such as parthenium and mother-of-millions in national parks and state forests. I think that initiative comes under the

auspices of the Environmental Protection Agency as opposed to the minister's department. Nevertheless, I acknowledge and thank the government for its concern in that regard. I also encourage that further and worthwhile attention be given to the problem.

Finally, I make reference in passing to the early surveyors in Queensland—people like Robert Dixon—who laid out, in a sense, the beginnings of Brisbane, and assistant surveyor Henry Wade. That history makes fascinating reading. I will not take the time of the House by going into this, but there is a book in the Parliamentary Library—

**Mr Lawlor** interjected.

**Mr SHINE:** Despite the pleas of the honourable member for Southport, I will refrain from the temptation. I encourage him to read this book, *Squatters, Settlers and Surveyors*. For those who have a historical bent, particularly those who are interested in the origins of Brisbane and the Brisbane Valley and so on, I refer them to that book. I will return it to the library very soon. I will pass it around the House in the meantime. I do want to pay tribute to the work of those pioneer surveyors: Robert Dixon, J.J. Galloway, H.C. Rawnsley, A. McDowall, Alan Fox, Stapyton, who was killed by Aborigines at Mount Lindsay, and so on. Perhaps on another occasion—

**Mr Purcell** interjected.

**Mr SHINE:** That may well be the case. I am sure the honourable member for Bulimba is well blessed to solve that problem for his constituents.

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (4.10 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. In particular I wish to confine my comments to the amendments to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 as it relates to pests in my area.

At the outset I thank the minister for his support for our trial partnership program, which happened a couple of years ago. He and the Maroochy Shire Council put money on the table to look at the eradication of some of the wild dogs in my electorate of Nicklin on the Sunshine Coast. From that early beginning, we are still working in partnership in the area. For the benefit of the minister and all members, I table a copy of the minutes of the July meeting of the Mapleton Wild Dog Watch Committee. It was modelled on the Neighbourhood Watch program. We have people sitting down around a table, working together and trying to resolve the problems, because we know that the wild dog problem is not simply the responsibility of one party and one party only.

**Mrs Carryn Sullivan:** Is the council involved?

**Mr WELLINGTON:** The council certainly is involved. We have support from state government departmental representatives and local land-holders. I understand that recently a monitoring program was undertaken to see what the wild dogs were doing in the area. Unfortunately, it has been very dry and they did not find any wild dog tracks. They did not find any wild animal tracks either, but surprisingly they did find wild cat tracks. Notwithstanding that, Anne and Denis Bower—the minister has written to them; they are involved in the Mapleton Wild Dog Watch Committee—have removed, either directly or indirectly, almost 14 wild dogs from their property at Mapleton. I take this opportunity to acknowledge their support, their patience and their commitment in trying to come up with a realistic way of responding to the wild dog problem in my electorate and especially in the area that surrounds the Mapleton forest.

I take this opportunity to urge the minister to ensure that we have regular, reliable staff permanently in the department, on the ground, working with our communities. There is nothing worse than having someone there in the department one day and their being transferred the next. Then next minute someone else is filling in in the position for a while and then someone else is appointed. I urge the minister to see, if it is at all possible, whether we can have regular people appointed in full-time positions to be networking with our community, because we do need to ensure the continuation of the goodwill on the part of all parties.

I also take this opportunity to stress that the minister should liaise with other ministers to develop a whole-of-government response to the pest problems we have, not only in the electorate of Nicklin but also throughout the whole state. I again use Mapleton forest as an example. At some stage in the near future the Minister for Environment will make a decision about who can go where in Mapleton forest. One of the issues relates to where horse riders will be able to go if the forest—or parts thereof—is to be designated as national park. We see a real drain of resources from the state government agencies in terms of people on the ground. I think this provides a wonderful opportunity to network with volunteers who are committed to working in our forests, working with the government. It would be good to find a win-win situation whereby the horse riders can have reasonable access to certain areas and, in exchange, do some real community work in helping to police and look after our wonderful Mapleton forest area.

Wild cats are a major problem. We seem to have focused a lot of our effort on the wild dogs crossbred with dingoes. I urge the minister to do whatever he can to assist in the area of eradication programs for wild cats. I think that would be favourably received by constituents in the electorate of

Nicklin and also across the length and breadth of this great state of Queensland. I look forward to the bill being considered in detail, when I will have further things to say.

**Hon. K.W. HAYWARD** (Kallangur—ALP) (4.15 p.m.): In rising to participate in the debate on the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill, I would like to address the amendments the bill makes to the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003. That act is a companion to the Surveyors Act 2003, which deals with the competence and professional conduct of surveyors, while the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act deals with standards for surveying. It establishes and maintains key data sets that are important to the administration of land and to the community generally. Because of their general application, these data sets are referred to as infrastructure and, in this information age, are as relevant as physical infrastructure such as roads and telecommunications.

The state control survey is the most fundamental of these data sets. This is the system that is used to accurately describe position anywhere in the state for activities as diverse as navigation, mapping, construction of large engineering or mining projects, or even bushwalking. The current amendments make the chief executive of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines responsible for establishing and maintaining this survey.

The advent of satellite navigation systems such as GPS has created new challenges and opportunities for the state control survey. GPS has been beneficial in establishing a very precise survey control framework and relating it to international systems within a few centimetres. But it has placed new demands on the operation of the state control survey, as the increasing variety of use means that it needs to adapt continually. A number of other data sets are built on the framework provided by the state control survey, including the system of land boundaries across the state.

Firstly, the chief executive is responsible for maintaining a digital cadastral data set, which is a computerised map of all property boundaries in the state. This data set provides the basis for the land information systems of state and local government and is also widely used in business activities. Secondly, the chief executive sets standards for cadastral surveys to ensure they are carried out in a way that meets the needs of the public and contributes to the overall integrity of the land boundary system.

Thirdly, the chief executive keeps information about all cadastral surveys and makes it available to surveyors and other members of the public. This ensures that surveyors can build on the work done by others and continually add to the quality of the system. One of the ways in which this happens is by ensuring that whenever surveyors carry out a cadastral survey they provide the chief executive with a plan so that it can be placed in the public record. The Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003 requires that a plan be given to the chief executive within 40 business days of a mark being placed. In some instances the surveyor may also already have lodged the plan with the registrar of titles in this time, so the current amendments remove the requirement to provide a copy to the chief executive in these circumstances to prevent duplication.

The act also recognises the importance of providing strong links between the cadastral boundary system and the state control survey. One of the ways this is achieved is by connecting cadastral surveys to permanent survey marks, such as those many of us have seen on street corners. This bill amends the act so that when a permanent mark is placed on a cadastral survey a plan of the permanent mark is given to the chief executive at the same time that the plan of the cadastral survey is given. This ensures that all information relevant to the survey is made publicly available at the same time.

The new surveying legislation that commenced in August this year was the result of a long process extending over approximately 10 years, and I know that officers of the relevant departments work with representatives of the surveying profession aiming to balance the aspirations of the profession with the interests of the government in a way that benefited both parties. During that time there have been some significant changes in the surveying profession. A new professional body has been formed to include surveyors, mappers and others involved with analysing and interpreting land related information.

The new legislation accounts for these changes that have occurred in the profession. It is designed to allow the profession greater involvement in the regulation of its members in a way that does not compromise the legitimate interests of government, particularly in relation to surveys of property boundaries for land titling purposes. Although this bill is very technical, it is important to the proper planning and management of our land and for the smooth operation of our community often in ways that we do not realise. The proposed amendments to this bill contribute to this efficient operation. I commend the bill to the House.

**Hon. K.R. LINGARD** (Beaudesert—NPA) (4.20 p.m.): I want to take this opportunity to bring to the minister's notice the concern that is certainly out there in areas like my electorate, which is semiurban and rural, the feeling that the government is not doing enough in its eradication of pest plants and animal control. Something which will come up in the next few weeks is the issue of fireweed, especially as the rain is now coming after a very long dry. Fireweed is a plant that was never heard of once, but it is a real problem in the electorate of Beaudesert. It does very well in the wet season but always manages to survive in the dry. For many years much debate over the control of fireweed has

been discussed, and in 1990 surveys were carried out in Madagascar and South Africa. There is no doubt that people in urban areas and semirural areas believe it is the government's responsibility to conduct research and, if possible, come up with a means of overcoming a pest like fireweed.

One has to wonder if alternative research is going on and whether any money allocations are being made. In December last year and before the election the ALP made several promises about what it was doing about researching these sorts of weeds. I recently wrote to the minister and received an answer, but that answer was based on research done in 1990 and it did not seem to me as though the government was taking part in any up-to-date research into fireweed.

Fireweed is extremely toxic, and presently the only way to control it is to pull it by hand. That is all very well if you own five acres but it is an impossibility where farms cover wide expanses of land. In an area like Beaudesert, people are virtually throwing up their hands. They are not able to control what is happening. I know from travelling to the Border Ranges near the national parks that some people believe it is also coming in from the parks. I know from experiencing fireweed at my own place that it can be pulled out by hand, but that only eradicates the mother plant. The millions of seeds left on the ground will come up like hairs on a dog's back. For those who attempt to pull the weed out, it is necessary to wear gloves because blisters will form on their hands.

Those people who have had experience with fireweed will know that, when cattle and horses eat it, their livers are attacked and death is very slow. Whilst cattle seem to avoid eating this toxic plant, horses are more likely to munch on it and the complaint is often not diagnosed until the animal is close to death. I would like to hear the minister's comments on what this government is doing about putting extra money into researching a difficulty such as fireweed.

The other problem I have heard people talking about is that of wild dogs. The number of wild dogs on Mount Tamborine is unbelievable, considering it is an extremely urban area. But because these dogs can escape to national parks it is quite amazing the problem that exists there with wild dogs. I believe that bounty payments and better coordinated baiting programs could help put a lid on Queensland's problem, and it would also provide employment opportunities in rural areas.

The Rural Management Partners' report into the economic impact of wild dogs in Queensland revealed the state government was spending less than \$2 million a year to combat the growing menace of wild dogs. Obviously these wild dogs are forcing graziers out of the sheep industry, but it is important for us to realise that it is not only in the sheep industry but also in close urban areas like Mount Tamborine, which I have just mentioned, Logan Village and Greenbank. All of those areas are affected by roaming wild dogs. They not only take sheep and livestock but also spread cattle diseases in rural areas. These feral pests are also threatening the safety of residents and their pets on the outskirts of Brisbane and on the Gold and Sunshine coasts.

I would be interested to hear the minister's comments about whether he believes this is a problem for the councils, whether this is a problem for the people themselves or whether this is a problem which the state government has to face. There is no doubt that people believe it is a state government problem. The Department of Natural Resources should have people who are doing research and conducting programs into the control of these feral animals.

The RMP report found that the state government funds only about 30 per cent of the total wild dog control costs—that is, about \$1.5 to \$2 million—but the rest is borne by graziers and ratepayers. If it is that the people themselves have to fund it, I believe the government should be saying, 'This is what we are going to do. This is what is going to happen with all the dollars.' Something definite has to be done about the control of these wild dogs.

I support a state government funded bounty. I think that would be effective because, whilst baiting is still the most popular and potent weapon in the fight against wild dogs, it is clear that baiting needs to be better coordinated and that baiting alone will not solve this problem. I believe a realistic state bounty would provide an incentive for professional shooters to hunt wild dogs, removing the risk of potential attacks and saving millions in lost production.

I note also that some of the researchers are making comments, and I believe they are barking up the right tree in their push to develop a new dog poison with an effective antidote. Many land-holders refuse to take part in the coordinated baiting programs because they fear losing working dogs or family pets in the 1080 baits. There are still too many gaps in the offensive to significantly bite into the wild dog population. We need more people involved in this coordinated program.

The introduction of the new, easier to handle 1080 baits such as Doggone baits, which were cleaner to use and broke down more quickly than injected fresh meat baits, is helping to encourage more people to engage in baiting programs. But many people are going into these programs not knowing exactly whether they are doing the right thing or the wrong thing, and I believe it is the Department of Natural Resources which must coordinate this program and make sure that something definite is being done.

Wild dogs not only have an effect on sheep, pets and cattle—and in my area calves being taken is a very serious problem—but also cause continual problems in my area for motor cycle riders and horse

riders. Just recently dogs attacked a horse at North Maclean, which is the northern part of the Beaudesert shire. Once again, people making the complaints continue to say to me that it is the state government's responsibility to research the issue so we can work out exactly how to control these feral animals.

I also want to emphasise the problems in the national parks. In an area like mine, with the Scenic Rim going right across the southern part of the electorate from Cunningham's Gap to Mount Tamborine, there is no doubt that the worry of national parks and the animals that are in them coming down to those people who are bordering these national parks is certainly a concern. I believed at the start of this year, in January, the government promised it was going to do something about fireweed and feral animal management in all of our national parks. I believe money was promised. However, I believe some of that money went into the purchase of national parks and there has not been a significant increase in the amount of money being spent on weed control and feral animals management as far as the national parks are concerned.

If the minister would like to tell me differently, then certainly I would accept that comment. But people in my electorate who border those national parks certainly do not believe that the government is doing as much as it should do. I note the memorandum of understanding between state governments and local governments. If this is something that the minister believes is going to control it, then that is good.

The government should also be taking a far more positive role in relation to the control of lantana. Lantana is a problem weed. A clearing program is needed and then future growth needs to be controlled properly with the correct chemicals. This is something that should be carried out by the state government so that all people who have smaller properties—20-acre properties—can control the outbreak of lantana in their areas.

Finally, I want to compliment the rural fire brigade. My own home was under threat recently while I was away. It is amazing that some people—generally city people—do not understand what happens in a fire. One has to experience fire coming through trees or experience fire running along grass to understand what can happen. In my own situation, it was amazing to watch how a fire with wind behind it could skip across a lawn—which was mown continually and virtually like a bowling green—in a matter of seconds. People just have to experience a fire coming through trees to realise the threat.

I do not think that most people who are living on the edges of a city understand what a fire does when it comes through trees. They do not understand what happens with the whirlies that virtually throw fireballs 40 to 50 metres away. Most people look at a tree, they see a three or four metre gap to the next tree, and they just cannot conceive of the speed at which a fire will move with the wind behind it. Maybe it is a matter of the government showing on TV films which demonstrate to people who live in urban areas with many trees around them just what happens in a massive fire.

I compliment the rural fire brigade not only for the fight that they put up but also for the fact that they stayed there all Sunday night waiting for burns to start again, which did occur. They spent all Sunday night there and all Monday there. I can only compliment them for the work that they do. As I say, most people need to better understand what happens in a fire. Many city people move out onto 40 or 50 acres and they just cannot conceive of what happens when a fire starts to roar, especially when the wind is behind it and it is going uphill.

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.32 p.m.): I support the purpose of this bill, which is to provide routine administrative amendments to several pieces of legislation including the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002. A new exotic pest, the red-eared slider turtle, has been found in the Pine Rivers shire in the greater Brisbane region and poses an extreme risk to the biodiversity of Queensland and Australia. These animals were unsuspectingly kept as household pets. In response to the incursion the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy established a specialist task force comprising the Pine Rivers Shire Council, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Primary Industries, the Queensland Museum and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service.

A native of the Mississippi Valley area of the United States, the turtle is now a well-established problem in many parts of the world. It has been nominated among 100 of the world's worst invaders by the World Conservation Union and is considered a major threat to biodiversity. Members of the public finding these turtles were asked to place them in a secure container with a small amount of water, call the turtle hotline and take them to an official hand-in point so that they could be identified. No turtle should be re-released into the environment unless an expert has identified them as a native species. Instead of threatening prosecution of people who have these animals as pets, this bill will enable amnesties to be declared for this situation and similar situations in the future. The amendments will inhibit people from dumping harmful pest animals into our environment to get rid of them.

The environmental groups in Mount Ommaney have not alerted me to any sightings of this turtle in our bushland areas. However, they will be pleased with the bill in relation to amendments to the Vegetation Management Act 1999. They have been lobbying me intensely to make sure that we get it right. This bill clarifies any ambiguity with the act to ensure the integrity of the broadscale clearing ballot

that was held on 17 September 2004. The amendments prevent an applicant changing the location of an area to be cleared when this change is proposed while the original decision is being appealed. This will not, however, restrict the Planning and Environment Court or the Land Court's power to rectify incorrect decisions. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—NPA) (4.34 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. I do support this bill, but I have major concerns with the added amendment for a number of reasons, which I will explain shortly. Firstly, however, I will detail the main provisions of this bill, which include the changes to the Surveyors Act to keep the previously appointed Surveyors Board in place until a new board is appointed. It also includes amending the Valuation of Land Act to correct the out-of-date terminology and to provide further clarification. Included in this also are minor amendments to the land protection act, including pest and stock management, and minor amendments to the Vegetation Management Act 1999. I propose to discuss each of these main provisions in turn and will raise the issues that we have concerns with as they come up.

As regards the Surveyors Act, first there is the issue of the handling of the previous Valuer-General's Department, turning it into what is now the Land Valuation Service under the auspices of the Department of Natural Resources. Once upon a time this department was highly respected by landholders and local authorities and was utilised by councils to set their rates. Of course, traditionally these valuations were conducted to impose state government land tax. Unfortunately, as we are all aware, in parliament this year the state government introduced legislation that excused the department from providing these valuations when it realised that it was not in a position to supply the data. Because of a lack of funding—whether it was poor organisational planning or otherwise—many local authorities were furious that they were being billed for services that were not delivered.

I personally received correspondence from the Bowen Shire Council which outlined its disappointment at having to pay \$33,000 for nothing. In particular, as a result of the urban sea change taking place in the Bowen area, the council was quite concerned about the loss of rateable income due to the incredible rise in property values. Similarly, the chief executive officer of Cooloola Shire Council wrote to me asking to express its strongest objection to the state government's demands, given that valuations were not going to be produced in 2004. Cooloola Shire Council described the imposition of costs by the Department of Natural Resources as 'immoral' and, like the opposition as a whole, objected to the state government introducing retrospective legislation denying them an opportunity to defend their case in court.

As the shadow minister for natural resources, the member Callide, put it during his speech last sitting, it is clear that this matter has not been forgotten by local authorities in Queensland and especially not by the Local Government Association. Like Mr Seeney said, this subject always manages to rear its ugly head whenever I speak to local councils. Within the electorate of Burdekin I have five local council areas. I know that people are never happy paying for services that are not delivered. I find it extremely disappointing that, despite the protests of local authorities and members on this side of the House describing in great detail these problems, the problems of administering the Valuation of Land Act are not being addressed by the minister or the government.

Secondly, within this bill are the proposed changes to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, which will provide an amnesty period for illegally held pests to prevent people from dumping them into the natural environment. This amendment relates to the severe impacts caused by a range of pests that have been released in domestic situations. Amongst many other pests this, of course, includes the cane toad, which was brought into Australia as a biological control agent for cane grubs and has since become a terrible pest. Given my electorate of Burdekin is a large canegrowing area in Queensland and has encountered the wrath of the pest that necessitated the introduction of the dreaded cane toad, I would like to quickly point out the even greater problem posed by the greyback cane beetle, or *dermolepida albohirtum*, to the sugar industry and the incredible damage incurred in crops. The cane beetle is a major pest but I must point out that it is not an introduced pest. The CSIRO estimates that Queensland is the only state inhabited by the greyback cane beetle and that it is a home to all 19 species of cane grubs which are the result of beetle larvae. Some of these species cause significant cane losses and their impact has cost the industry millions of dollars.

Over time, the BSES, or Bureau of Sugar Experimentation, has directed a great deal of research resources and effort toward finding cost-effective and practical cane grub management solutions that will cause minimal impact on the environment. The reason for the major effort to control cane grubs is that in 2002 they were responsible for damaging more than 800,000 tonnes of sugar cane in northern Queensland, including farms in my electorate of Burdekin. Calculating into these figures the loss of annual income to farmers, who witnessed their livelihood being eaten by grubs, the annual cost is close to \$20 million.

However, the unscientific and, in hindsight, terrible decision to import the cane toad to combat the impact of cane grubs on the industry was a total disaster and has had an enormous effect on the environment and natural fauna species. It is well documented that many species of native vertebrates will die if they eat the cane toad, its eggs or tadpoles. Only a handful of species can safely prey on them.

Interestingly, though, a certain amount of evolution seems to be taking place, as members have pointed out today, such that certain species, particularly birds, seem to be adapting to attacking and eating toads. Wildlife officers tell us that they are finding toads overturned with their insides being eaten but the animals are learning to steer clear of the poison glands. That is quite incredible.

Having grown up in the bush, I have seen the impact of the cane toad on the sand goanna. It used to be extremely prevalent where I lived but after the introduction of the cane toad it disappeared. However, we have noticed that the sand goanna is starting to come back gradually. Perhaps these creatures are also learning to adapt.

The full extent of the cane toad's impact on native wildlife is not and, according to scientists, may never be fully understood. Although it was introduced as a biological control for the cane beetle, it was totally unsuccessful at that task. As we know, the cane toad has rapidly spread from its place of introduction and is still advancing.

There is a long list of introduced animal pests that we have heard a lot about today, for example, the feral pigs, the wild dogs and the deer. I commend the government for its concern about the introduction of the red-eared slider turtle. Further with regard to introduced pests, there is a long list of plant species which have been released into the natural environment and have become pests. Many land-holders, including my constituents, have spent large amounts of money attempting to control these pests on their properties. In my area, these include rubber vine, chinee apple—which is the popular name for *Zizyphus mauritiana*—and prickly acacia. Slightly further west, particularly around the Collinsville area, in previous years, prickly pear and harrisia cactus were huge pests. The success of the biological control methods for both harrisia cactus and prickly acacia is a real tribute to our scientists and officers of the Department of Primary Industries.

Currently, another plant pest in the Burdekin area is hymenachne in the waterways. Hymenachne is actually a marvellous stock food but, due to the unique nature of the Burdekin waterways, it is starting to run rife and is becoming a major pest. Needless to say, the shire council is well aware of this and is doing its best to maintain control, as are the various water boards.

Grader grass is a new environmental pest that has entered our area. It is carried by cars or vehicles or—as the name grader grass indicates—by graders. The Burdekin Shire Council's environmental department has a chemical subsidy program which allocates funding of \$30,000 to help local land-holders fight vegetation that is threatening to take over their land. The council provides a 50 per cent subsidy to those land-holders who are actively engaged in weed management control. The council estimates that a further \$100,000 is expended each year for their own environmental controls of these pests.

I would like to take this opportunity to express the council's request that the state government give consideration to allocating more funds to projects of this kind, given that the Burdekin area has been classified as a significant area for weed management by the Department of Natural Resources. The comment has been made that, if the government is really serious about weed management, it will seriously consider further funding this resource.

The government's approach towards broadscale land clearing in Queensland defies all commonsense. Obviously, like the rest of the opposition, I still believe it is a travesty that people such as Graham Acton and other land-holders have been slugged with massive fines, including the receipt of government revenue in the amount of \$100,000 for better utilising their land and making it more profitable. When I read *Queensland Country Life* last week—which I suggest that metropolitan members might like to do so that they have an understanding of what goes on outside the south-east corner—it stated that Mr Acton had cleared 5,320 hectares of remnant vegetation to enable his property to carry 1,370 beasts instead of its previous 430. Obviously these cattle were netting Mr Acton a profit. However, it was a profit that would be shared by the entire industry and provide net gains to the Queensland economy. Mr Acton, who is an industry leader and who has been responsibly and sustainably developing land for grazing for over half a century, was being penalised and, in turn, was filling the government's coffers—for the greater satisfaction of a number of members who may not have been past Ipswich or even care to do so.

I often wonder if the same members who own property in the metropolitan areas would be so happy if they were told that they were not able to build a residential development or construct an industrial site because their land was not theirs anymore. I have property owners saying to me that they are forced to cope with production losses of over \$1 million because they cannot clear land. The combination of this with the fire threat from the lack of cleared vegetation must be considered by the government as a very real threat. It is not just the loss of some trees. Of course, as was evidenced in debates earlier this year during the introduction of the property rights amendment bill, the government cares not a lot about the property owner, as long as its mates in the World Wildlife Fund and Landcare are happy. As has been clearly indicated by members previously, the whole purpose of the amendments is purely political. The government is keen to ensure that land-holders are denied the right to lodge appeals in relation to the department's handling of vegetation management and they will be denied their

right to modify their applications so they can meet the government's objectives and obtain a just outcome.

I wish to bring to the attention of the parliament the constant problems encountered by graziers who wish to use the stock routes of this great state. Ask any pastoralist who regularly drives his cattle down one of this state's great traditions—the stock route—and they will tell you that it is one of their greatest bugbears. Ask any local authority that is representative of the stock routes board and that is essentially in control of these droving roads what one of its greatest headaches is and it will tell you that it is the operation of the stock routes. If the government was totally serious about providing clear legislation, it would be more open to suggestions from Greg Hallum and the LGAQ on what is required in this area. Clearly there are access issues with stock routes and the fact that there seem to be rules for some and not for all.

Recently I spoke to a grazier in Richmond who drove 1,500 head of cattle down the stock route from Richmond to Roma. Along the way he encountered all number of problems relating to access. At some sections of the stock route there were land-holders who had fenced off sections of the stock route for their own use or to deny the droving of cattle. Many land-holders have stock routes which traverse their properties but the implementation of gates means that a drover can make his way through.

There is a perception amongst those in the beef industry that sometimes fair is not fair when it comes to the administration of this resource. For the droving cattlemen we can obviously understand the problems involved with having to shift cattle off the route, including the water, feed and associated infrastructure they have to contend with. When some local authorities seem to not issue permits to drive parts of the route for unknown or ridiculous reasons then graziers have every right to question the administration of the service.

I, like the rest of the opposition, cannot support these amendments to the natural resources legislation because of the obvious ignorance of the government in terms of a number of issues involved in the legislation. When the people of Queensland are not being listened to, I cannot come into this House and support legislation of this kind.

**Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (4.50 p.m.): I rise to support the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill. According to Planet Ark, Australia has been invaded by 90 species of animals since white settlement. It is hard to understand why anyone would keep pronounced pest animals, but apparently lots of people do otherwise this amendment bill would not be necessary.

We all know what damage the rabbit did to Australia and the enormous amount of money and effort required in bringing it under control. Feral pigs, the European red fox and other introduced species kill native wildlife and farm animals and are a continual threat to farmers' livelihoods. Land degradation from animal pests and introduced plants cost Australia dearly in money and resources.

From time to time I have seen programs or news items on television about very odd pets that are kept in suburban situations. I know that recently there was an item about a man who kept a lion in an apartment. I think he was in New York. I am also aware of a woman who once kept wolves in the backyard of a small house in London. While I really hope that nobody in Queensland is keeping a lion or a wolf in their house or on their country property, there will no doubt be many who are keeping animals that they should not have. I heard this morning on the radio that a man came in with eggs from another country and he had them in his undies.

The worst possible thing people could do is dump them in the wild to avoid prosecution. My concerns about pest animals being released into the environment extends to fish and other marine species. Minister Robertson has referred to the discovery in the north of Brisbane of the red-eared slider turtle. That is a major pest that may have been kept as a pet.

I can only begin to imagine the consequences if the voracious South American piranha was released into our waterways and how terribly hard it would be to bring it under control. The fallout from such a dangerous, exotic fish species finding its way into Australia's rivers and streams is too terrible to contemplate.

I do support an amnesty period that will enable people keeping animals illegally to turn them over to authorities without the fear of action being taken against them. The firearm amnesty was successful; so, too, should be an amnesty on the illegal possession of potentially invasive exotic pests. Australia has borne the brunt of exotic pest invasions. It is vital that everything possible is done to minimise future harmful impacts. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—NPA) (4.53 p.m.): I am pleased to speak in the debate on the Natural Resource Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. This is supposed to be an uncontroversial bill containing some minor amendments. Quite clearly, the amendments before us today are controversial and need some discussion. As the shadow minister has outlined, we will be supporting the legislation, but we will certainly not support the amendments.

The bill establishes an amnesty period for illegally held pests to prevent people from dumping their illegally held live animals in the natural environment. I do not think anyone can argue with that line

of thinking. It also allows Queensland to participate in a national amnesty program coordinated by the Commonwealth's wildlife enforcement agencies. The provision allowing people to take declared pests to the Queensland Museum and the Queensland Herbarium for identification is a step forward. It allows people the opportunity to move these species around for identification purposes.

The amendments to the Surveyors Act 2003 provides for a smooth transition from the Surveyors Act 1977, which was repealed on 1 August 2004, to the commencement of the Surveyors Act 2003. It also clarifies a number of technical matters regarding the registration of a corporate as a surveyor.

The Valuation of Land Act is also amended in this bill by refining the definition of owner in the act to be the person responsible for the payment of local government rates or state land tax or state land rental relative to a specific valuation and by correcting out-of-date terminology that is used. These types of amendments come up all the time. No doubt we will see how that amendment goes.

There are also amendments to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002. This is an interesting one because local governments presently do manage the stock routes throughout this great state. I believe that the changes to the recent act have restricted local government doing that properly, particularly in relation to the agistment term they can offer. If the councils are the responsible body they should be able to determine the length of agistment time allowed for a person in a particular area.

We certainly find in the larger areas that the season might be okay in one part of the shire where a stock route is and no-one has a need to use that reserve, but another part of the shire can be severely affected. That happened in our area last year. Unfortunately, the person who was in a lot of trouble because it was very dry had to move his stock after two months. So the period is too short. It should be up to councils. They are responsible for it. They have to make sure that there is enough grass left on the stock routes for travelling stock. They should have more flexibility. That would make a big difference.

Water facility agreements are also particularly important on the stock routes. They have to be maintained and run probably. One of the great fears I have—and this trend has been seen for quite some time—is that the rates that landowners are actually being slugged with for the provision of water keep changing. These stock route facilities were originally on a person's property. In some instances land was handed over to the councils to put the dam on or maybe the dam was already there. In some instances the property owners did the maintenance on some of the stock routes. It has to be fair to everyone concerned. If land-holders do obtain a regular water supply from those watering facilities they have to be prepared to pay a reasonable rate. They should not have to pay an exorbitant rate. That is the trend.

Clause 17 inserts a new section which provides a legislative basis for requesting criminal history checking by police services to obtain a person's eligibility for membership of the Land Protection Council. That is very interesting. Those opposite did not even do that for Bill Ludwig on the racing board. For the Land Protection Council one has to be finger printed and have a criminal history check, but 'Big Bill' can get away with it. It is ridiculous. It is incredible how the government comes up with something like this.

**Mr Robertson:** I rise on a point of order. What is incredible is the dishonesty of the member opposite in the allegation he just made. He knows that that is untrue. I cannot allow him to continue to spin this nonsense the way that he has just done.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Male):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr HOBBS:** There is no point of order. The fact is that I am right and the minister knows I am right. He is particularly sensitive to the issue. He should be sensitive. This morning in this parliament we saw a ridiculous situation.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I rise to a point of order. The allegation that I am sensitive on this issue is untrue and offensive. I ask that it be withdrawn. I was merely correcting the record so that the honourable member opposite—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr Robertson** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Warrego has been asked to withdraw.

**Mr HOBBS:** I withdraw.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I would remind the member for Warrego to return to the bill and not debate the clauses at this point.

**Mr HOBBS:** The amendments to this bill that the government is putting in place today are trying to fix up—patch up—its disastrous tree clearing legislation. It has been a debacle all the way through, and the amendment within the amendment is the same. The National Party has argued for a long time that what it was doing was wrong. It has third-party endorsement from many people who back up that stance we have taken. For instance, I refer to Walter McLean from Abbieglassie, Mitchell. An article quotes him as saying—

Under the new legislation, vegetation cannot be thinned using broadscale means such as tractor and chain, even though landholders argue it is the most economic method.

It continues—

Mr McLean speaks on behalf of the Mulga Lands regional vegetation management committee, on which he sat as an adviser for several years while the new vegetation management policy was drawn up by the State Government.

'Quite frankly, we don't know what our role was because they threw out a lot of our final draft plan,' he said.

If the minister recalls, when we debated this legislation in the House he said that these regional committees did their final reports and, therefore, it was the regional groups that put it together. You were wrong. We told you that you were wrong at the time. You were wrong, and here is another case where a person who was on that committee says you were wrong. I do not know why you cannot recognise the fact that you want to bulldoze this thing through—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Warrego will address his comments through the chair.

**Mr HOBBS:** Absolutely, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not see why the minister sat there during debate on that legislation and now sits here again and think that the regional committees support what he was doing. They are not, and here is a very good example of why they are not. Mr McLean also goes on to say—

We never really got to it (defining thinning) because the final policy virtually came solely from the Government.

As he says, the final policy virtually came solely from the government. That is exactly what we said would happen, and that is exactly what happened. There is also the issue in the Napranum community in relation to the Billy's Lagoon development. There was a real possibility of creating 100 jobs generating \$4 million a year. What has the government done? It has just wiped them out. This amendment legislation that we are debating today will not help them one bit at all.

Another producer Anthony Coates from Eidsvold fears that the new restrictions will force landholders into regrowth control activities earlier than is economically or environmentally sensible to do so.

**Mr Robertson:** Why?

**Mr HOBBS:** If you do not know by now, Minister, I would be very surprised. But I will tell you. I am pleased you asked the question. You asked why. I will tell you. The article states—

Illustrating his concerns, Mr Coates said trees grew and re-generated prolifically in his area, and regular timber treatment was an accepted part of responsible land management.

Timber treatment played an important role in helping to recycle nutrients in the landscape ...

What he is really saying is that, in situations when it is dry and perhaps the economy is not so good and you want to hold back on your timber treatment, it may not be opportune to treat the regrowth, or you cannot get in there if you have remnant vegetation and it is thickening. In that case, you cannot get in there to do anything with it. It is as simple as that.

**Mr Robertson:** Are you talking about regrowth?

**Mr HOBBS:** No, I am talking about both.

**Mr Robertson:** No, you talked about regrowth, and that is why I interrupted you.

**Mr HOBBS:** Rubbish! You do not even know what you are talking about, Minister.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fraser):** Order! There will be no conversations across the chamber.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr HOBBS:** You are right. The member for Callide says that the minister does not know what he is talking about; he cannot see the wood for the trees. He cannot even see the wood for the trees. What we have here is a situation where this country will become thicker and thicker because of your stupid tree clearing legislation.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The member is misleading the House. He is clearly—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Is this a point of order, Minister?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** It is a point of order. He is clearly misleading the House. He was referring to regrowth. He is now alleging—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order, Minister.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** No, he is misleading the House because he is alleging that regrowth cannot be managed in the way that he is talking about with respect to thickening. That is dishonest and—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The minister will resume his seat.

**Mr HOBBS:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The minister is entirely wrong. He is trying to wriggle out of this desperate situation he has put himself into simply by the fact that he cannot even tell the truth in relation to the ownership of the legislation. It is your legislation. You are trying to say that it belonged to the regional groups.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I rise to a point of order. I find the allegation by the member offensive and I ask him to withdraw. He has made allegations against me personally.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The minister has asked the member for Warrego to withdraw.

**Mr Robertson:** I do not need your help, brother! I'll get to you later.

**Mr HOBBS:** I withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! It has been withdrawn.

**Mr HOBBS:** Further to back up my argument is the fact that not only are producers are saying this but so is the Productivity Commission report, Minister. I suppose a few other speakers may have mentioned some details of this, but I would not mind running through a few of them again. This is another endorsement that what you are doing is wrong, wrong, wrong. The notable criticisms of the Productivity Commission report related to the cost of vegetation thickening, the loss of property rights and the lack of recognition of regional environmental differences, and those are the issues that I was referring to a while ago. You were trying to nail it back to regrowth. That was not the situation. It is a matter of thickening. You are ignoring 40 years of science in Queensland. That is what you are doing. You are ignoring the advice and you are basically thundering on trying to put in place a political scientific decision, and you are the one responsible for that. What you should do, Minister, is listen to what is going on instead of trying to walk out of the chamber skulking like a mongrel dog.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Warrego, that is unparliamentary and I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr HOBBS:** I withdraw. The Productivity Commission also noted that the emphasis on prevention of clearing native vegetation rather than the promotion of desirable environmental outcomes could lead to a perverse effect. This is what it said about your legislation that you brought in. One of those perverse effects was inhibiting routine management—routine management—in this legislation.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I rise to a point of order. The Productivity Commission report that the honourable member refers to was not an analysis of our legislation. I ask that he withdraw. That is wrong.

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

**Mr HOBBS:** It certainly was, Minister. You are wrong. It is about time you woke up to that fact.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Warrego will address his remarks through the chair.

**Mr HOBBS:** The inquiry found that thinning methods—that is, selective removal of individual trees as permitted under the new laws—was not an economically viable option for the control of vegetation thickening. I am talking about vegetation thickening, Minister. I am not talking about regrowth; I am talking about thickening. This is 40 years of science that he is ignoring in relation to this legislation. The only statewide guide for Queensland is the unsanctioned report into the economic impacts of woodland thickening prepared by Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and the DPI staff last year, but it was not submitted. The government did not even have the courage—did not have the guts—to put in a submission to the Productivity Commission. It knew that if it put a submission in it would have to somehow try to get close to the truth, because it would be blown out of the water if it did not. So it did not even put a submission in. Of course, the report that we do have now that the Prime Minister eventually got out of the Premier said that the estimate of the net present value of the community wide economic impact is about \$900 million. What has the government put up? A handful of silver is all it has put up. It is noted that the work in Queensland's regional vegetation management committees was now largely redundant as the framework within the RVMPs was developed and changed significantly since the introduction of the Vegetation Management Amendment Bill.

The Productivity Commission's report also noted the incompleteness of scientific knowledge about the cause and effect of environmental regulation. The minister did not even do the science. He ignored 40 years of science to try to put in place his own political legislation. The type of thing that the government is trying to put on to the community is disgraceful.

I also raise a particularly important issue in relation to dingoes. Many accusations have been made about the relocation of dingoes from Fraser Island to my area. I know that that issue has been debated in this House a few times. I would like the minister, in his reply, to again give us an assurance that there is no relocation of which he is aware of any dingoes from any areas to other areas within this state, and particularly from Fraser Island. There is a genuine concern

**Mr Seeney:** They wouldn't tell him. The mail wouldn't go through.

**Mr HOBBS:** Yes, that would be right. The mail would not get through. The Glenmorgan Queensland Country Women's Association wrote to me and in their letter stated—

The CWA has been made aware of rumours abounding in the district regarding the possible relocation of dingoes from Fraser Island to this area.

Feelings are running high among some people and our branch would like to have the matter clarified. As our local member we think you would be able to confirm or deny these rumours for us.

We look forward to an early reply to this matter.

Can the minister assure this House that there are no dingoes being relocated from Fraser Island to the mainland?

**Ms BARRY** (Aspley—ALP) (5.11 p.m.): I rise to support the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004—a bill that amends a number of acts within the Natural Resources portfolio. This bill will ensure that our legislation remains relevant to changed circumstances and to provide for administrative efficiency. The bill amends the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route) Management Act 2002, the Surveyors Act 2003, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003 and the Valuation of Land Act 1944. While commending the minister and the department for their work on the entirety of this bill, I would like to limit my comments to the amendments in the bill that relate to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route) Management Act.

Most members would be aware that recently the minister took action to bring to our attention the presence of a new exotic pest within Queensland, the red-eared slider turtle, which was found within the Pine Rivers shire. The turtle, while one of the most common turtles in the world, is not native to Australia and as such poses an extreme risk to our native species. As a number of members have described today, the turtle is aggressive both in terms of food and space and it is highly reproductive. It will have an impact on our rivers and biodiversity to such a degree that the turtle is a declared pest. So it was a timely decision by the minister to declare this turtle a pest given that it was found that some people within the Lawnton area in Pine Rivers were unwittingly keeping these turtles as pets.

In response to the incursion within the Pine Rivers shire, a specialist task force was set up, which included the Pine Rivers Shire Council, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Primary Industries, the Queensland Museum and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service. The task force is collecting data on the turtle and implementing management programs. Of course, also at the time of the sighting of the turtle, the minister enlisted the help of the public and the help of MPs in reporting sightings.

Those of us who live in the Pine Rivers shire know that the rivers of the shire are its greatest feature—or should I say, its second-greatest feature; the first being, of course, the people who live there. The rivers of Brisbane north are also the envy of many. In the electorate of Aspley, the North Pine and South Pine rivers, Dohles Rocks and the Tinchy Tamba wetlands are places of real natural beauty that are important to boaties, fishers, locals and visitors as well as many people like my family who live along the banks of the river. Few people within metropolitan Brisbane can actually sit out in their back yards and watch dolphins swim by and catch a decent flathead and bream. Natural fauna and flora prosper both in the north Brisbane and Pine Rivers shire areas and, as such, people flock to the area to live and visit. So protection of this environment is a critical role of the government and the councils.

These amendments provide for a process that when a pest such as the red-eared slider turtle is kept illegally, an amnesty period can be declared to prevent persons fearful of prosecution from illegally dumping such pests into the natural waterways, thereby preventing the spread and escape of such pests. Persons in possession of such pests will be encouraged to surrender the pest appropriately. This new provision is welcomed and is a sensible approach to managing the dangers to our natural environment, particularly around my part of town. The bill also provides appropriately for a process that allows persons to transport pests such as the red-eared slider turtle to the Queensland Museum or the Queensland Herbarium for identification.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister and the departments involved, as well as the work that was done by the Pine Rivers Shire Council, for the considered and efficient way in which they have sought to deal with the red-eared slider turtle within parts of my electorate and for the sensible approach to the future management of such pests. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I rise to a point of order. It is worth noting that that was the honourable member's maiden speech on natural resource management issues in this state.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fraser): Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (5.15 p.m.): This bill provides an amnesty period for people to surrender illegally held pests in order to discourage them from dumping them on the natural environment—for example, the red-eared slider turtle, which is a major pest animal in Brisbane and which can cause great harm to the environment. It amazes me that this government says that it is concerned about the environment when it is spending million of dollars buying up national parks, yet all that has resulted is a breeding ground for feral animals and noxious weeds. I believe that this government needs to clean up its own act before it asks people to clean up their back yards.

I would like to draw the attention of members to a serious pest that has unsettled the people of Charters Towers. It is a more serious threat than the red-eared slider turtle—so serious that the

government's public health unit has issued a warning for people to keep away from these pests. In the past four years, Charters Towers residents have been plagued by flying foxes inhabiting residential areas. Every Queenslanders has a basic right to a safe and healthy living environment.

**Ms Nolan** interjected.

**Mr Seeney:** You go and live with them and see how long you last.

**Mr KNUTH:** If you had 3,000 bats at your house, you would like them removed, wouldn't you?

**Mr Seeney:** Absolutely.

**Mr KNUTH:** You would like to have 3,000 bats removed from your home.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fraser): Order! Members will come to order. I remind the member for Charters Towers to address his remarks through the chair.

**Mr KNUTH:** It is a very simple process. Every Queenslanders has the basic right to a safe and healthy living environment. Usually, when this quality of living is disturbed, health departments, environmentalists and compassionate governments would be moving to help. But the residents of Charters Towers are being denied this right.

The residents of Charters Towers have had to put up with flying foxes ranging in numbers from 100 to 5,000 in their back yards. I am not talking about bats; I am talking about people. These people cannot sleep because of the noise; they cannot peg their clothes on the line without being covered with bat excrement. When they turn on their airconditioners in 40 degrees heat, the stench enters their homes. In some cases, this stench has made many people physically ill. I ask members to just remember that I am talking about people, not bats.

This problem has affected the majority of my community at one time or another. Adults, children of all ages from babies to high school students, and the elderly and infirm have suffered from a lack of sleep, high levels of stress, and a substantial decrease in the quality of their lives. A health warning has already been issued telling the general public not to attempt to touch these animals or pick the dead or injured flying foxes off the ground in fear that they may contact lyssavirus.

This matter is a state government issue. Under the federal government's biodiversity act, the black and red flying foxes are a non-threatened species. I ask the government, the Premier and the ministers to stop pandering to the Greens and look after the people at the grassroots. As evidenced by the electoral backlash that the federal Labor Leader, Mark Latham, copped following his support of the Greens in Tasmania, the federal election proved that when the Labor Party backs the Greens they lose votes.

These bats have been flapping around for four years. They have been living on top of people's homes. As I said, the public health unit has issued a warning for people to keep away from these bats. But the government is too afraid to get rid of them in case of a green group backlash. The government has plans to do something about the red-eared slider turtle. What are its plans to get rid of this scourge from Charters Towers?

This is a very simple process. The problem is that there are restrictions on permits. We cannot remove those flying foxes after 7 o'clock in the morning. What on earth is the point of scaring the bats away at 5 o'clock in the afternoon? They are ready to flap away to feed anyway. The time restriction should be removed so that we can harass the bats and get them out of town. Then the problem will be solved. We have wasted hundreds of thousands of dollars when this problem could have been solved three or four years ago. It is a simple process. It is also not about killing animals.

**Mrs Carryn Sullivan:** You want to kill them all.

**Mr KNUTH:** We would like to kill a hell of a lot of them.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fraser): Order! I remind all members that we are not going to conduct a quarrel or a debate across the chamber.

**Mr KNUTH:** I am more concerned about the people of Charters Towers. I am more concerned about mothers, health and people. As I said, hundreds of thousands of dollars has been spent, wasting time chasing bats around the town, when the problem could be solved if the government removed the restrictions on the permit. All we need is a decent permit so that we can harass the bats out of town.

I take this opportunity to talk about another pest that is becoming a particular major concern for a large number of Queenslanders. Most of my state colleagues have raised this issue before. Feral dog attacks on sheep and cattle are estimated to cost producers \$18.3 million in direct livestock losses. The cost of controlling feral dogs through baiting, fencing and trapping is estimated at \$5.4 million. These pests are causing considerable damage, and people have been reporting the loss of calves, sheep, kangaroos, ducks and other farm animals. They also consume native wildlife. People are becoming increasingly frustrated with these wild dogs' arrogance as they are becoming more confident and roaming around the towns.

Just like the incident on Fraser Island, it will be only a matter of time before someone is injured. Earlier this year one landowner in my electorate was attacked by a small pack of wild dogs and was extremely lucky not to be seriously injured. Another person out pig shooting was stalked by a group of dingoes. In Charters Towers, a couple who bred miniature horses for 20 years had finally got their perfect miniature breeding horse, worth over \$20,000, but this was mauled by a pack of wild dogs and is no longer able to be used for breeding purposes. Last week two parents with young children had a pack of five wild dogs running around their home.

It is time the government took a commonsense approach similar to the attitude of the Blackall shire. This council offered a \$50 bounty and a \$1,000 reward to whoever picked up the most scalps. Fifty-eight scalps were brought in in less than four weeks. I am a supporter of blanket baiting, but I believe that it is very difficult to manage and some locals are concerned about the impact baiting will have on domestic and native species.

The wild dog is more abundant than ever and, as such, is becoming more and more of a nuisance. I raised this issue earlier in the year in parliament. I believe that a government-funded dingo bounty of \$60 or \$70 a scalp would provide the incentive needed for roo shooters and recreational hunters to shoot the dingoes which would in turn reduce the potential risk of attacks on people as well as save millions to the Queensland economy. I support this bill but not the amendment.

**Mr ROWELL** (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (5.23 p.m.): The Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 is a very wide spectrum bill. It seeks to amend the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act. It also deals with pests and their reproduction and the keeping of declared pests, which is another big issue. One of the major issues I am concerned about is the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act, which includes elements of fisheries.

I note that the proposed amendments fail to address a number of issues relevant to Queensland and particularly to north Queensland. The Queensland feral pig strategy was published in April 2004. This document appears to confirm that the control of feral pigs is a state government issue. According to section 6.5 of the strategy, authorised officers under the Queensland Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 are requested to assist with the implementation of the feral pig program. However, the fact sheets produced by DNRM place the burden for control of the pests upon landholders and farmers. For example, the Feral Pigs in the Wet Tropics fact sheet states—

Land managers should consider each pig problem individually, and select the best method or combination of methods to solve their particular pig problem.

Right throughout Queensland, and particularly in the Wet Tropics area, there are enormous problems in terms of damage to the rainforest regions caused by feral pigs. I think a lot of the concern that has arisen over a period of time—that relates to run-off and to soil getting into the likes of rivers, creeks and streams—has been brought about very much by feral pigs, because they have some very severe impacts on the environment. We see them uprooting shaded areas of rainforest, and the effects are extremely detrimental. We see them intruding into crops such as banana and sugarcane crops. They cause a great deal of damage.

Wild pigs are omnivorous animals: they eat plants and they eat flesh. In the grazing areas—in the hinterlands and into the southern part of the state, where people are growing out lambs and young calves—we see a major concern about the ability of wild pigs to have a great impact. At times we see herds of pigs on Cape York—up to 400 pigs in one herd. There is an estimate of something like 50,000 pigs in Lakefield National Park. The number of pigs that are in that region is quite horrendous.

Pigs are nocturnal. They stay under cover in the daylight hours. They prefer to go into the scrub areas and camp there during the hotter part of the day, which makes it very difficult to identify and find them and, of course, control them. Pigs are an opportunistic feeder. They feed on grain, sugar cane, fruit and vegetable tubers and so on. This causes enormous damage, cost and concern to people who are growing a range of crops. I think it is particularly important that we recognise the very detrimental impact they have.

Pigs have few sweat glands. This causes them to wallow in low, swampy areas where there is water and mud. They cool off in the hotter part of the day if that is necessary. Of course, they do an enormous amount of damage. People who have been through rainforests or into national parks will often see the evidence of pigs. The damage they cause and the impact they have on the areas can be seen.

It is quite common for a pig litter to be in the order of 10 to 12 piglets. It could be as low as four in some instances, but that depends on the age of the sow. Young sows tend to have smaller litters whereas the older sows have much bigger litters. I am raising these issues because they are particularly important in terms of the damage pigs do. It is not just about damage to crops; it is also about damage to the environment. I do not know that enough significance is given to the problem by DNRM.

The other big issue as far as pigs are concerned is that they carry disease, such as foot-and-mouth disease. They have the ability to do this. I believe that if we ever had the introduction of foot-and-mouth disease into the cape area—it is an area it could logically come into—it would be extremely

difficult, if not impossible, to deal with the issue. Pigs are really a virus factory. TB, brucellosis, leptospirosis, or Weil's disease, and Q fever cause major problems for people working in the region, as does Japanese encephalitis, which comes about from mosquitoes biting pigs on the snout. They can of course be a carrier of rabies. These particular pests are not given enough significance.

I know there have been some efforts to control them with traps, but that is very limited in accordance with the external amounts of food that are available to them. If it is in dry sclerophyll areas or in dry regions it probably will be more successful because they will be looking for a feed source. That is usually the way they are brought into a trap. If they are in a very lush area where there is an unlimited amount of feed, there is not much of an inducement and it is not very enticing for them to go into the traps. There are methods such as 1080, which is a sodium fluoroacetate, and authorised persons need to carry that out. We have heard about using this for dingoes and dogs, but once again with this process we have to be careful to target the right animals.

Shooting with dogs is another method of controlling them, but that takes a fair degree of time and a lot of effort. It is disappointing that we do not see better acknowledgment of its ability to deal with these pests. Aerial shooting is another method that has been used. Helicopters are used quite often to do this, but they have to be in open savannah country before one can get to them and see them so that the shooting can occur. An estimate of the cost of doing this is \$26 per pig. So it can be quite effective.

I know where crops adjoin areas where pigs are very active that a mesh fence or an electric fence can be used, but once again there is an enormous cost. We have to try to reduce their numbers so we do not see them breeding at the level they are at this present time. If we do not do something about it shortly, we will have to face all the issues that I have raised—damage to crops, damage to young animals and the prospects of disease such as FMD, TB and brucellosis being contracted is a very significant factor. As I said, they are really a virus factory. I think we have to acknowledge that more so than we have done in the past. There is the ability to use them as a game meat. There are chiller boxes around but we need to be particularly careful about whether they are infected with the likes of TB and so on.

In addition to attempting to pass the burden of responsibility for the problem onto the shoulders of land-holders, there appears to be no evidence that any measure or action has been taken by DNRM officers during the last 12 months to reduce the numbers of these pests in Queensland national parks, in particular, because that is the area they are particularly prevalent in. According to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, the cost to Queensland agriculture per year is approximately \$600 million, and approximately \$628 million per year is spent by local authorities annually on the control of the pest. However, the pigs breed in national parks and state forests and emerge onto private land to create havoc and damage.

Feral pigs are a very serious pest. According to DNRM's information, feral pigs are capable of transmitting parasitic and viral diseases which are sometimes fatal, including exotic diseases such as Japanese encephalitis, as I have said. Given these facts, what share of responsibility is the state government presently taking, apart from signing an MOU last year with local governments? Nothing it would seem. DNRM's guidelines on the control of feral pigs states that landowners have the responsibility for the 'destruction and control of pest animals'; local governments for 'compliance, surveillance, local planning, mapping and raising awareness' and DNRM for 'statewide planning, mapping, coordination, raising awareness and research'. So, while wild pigs continue to multiply, the state's apparent extent of responsibility is to raise awareness rather than to actually do something to remedy the problem.

I was recently contacted by a constituent who expressed strong concerns regarding the problems he was having with wild feral pigs coming on to his property from an adjacent national park. Upon contacting the local council, he was advised to go to DNRM with the issue. Upon contacting the department, he was advised that it was a local government issue. Suffice it to say that no assistance to the constituent has been forthcoming to date. I note that there has been no amendment proposed in the bill to deal with this particular problem. As the feral pigs are coming from a national park, I have written to parks and wildlife about the issue to see if they are prepared to do something about it, but I have some severe doubts as to what prospects that will yield.

I would like to talk about the payment of rates by government owned corporations and other lessees of state lands. In clause 41, proposed subsection (4) (b) reads as though any lessor in Queensland has the right under the proposed amendment to reclassify the lessee as the owner and to place the burden for the payment of rates upon the tenant. The definition of 'valuation of lands for rental purposes' used in the Queensland Valuation of Land Act 1944 refers to section 15 of the Queensland Land Act 1994 for a definition. According to section 15, 'valuation for rental purposes' means the valuation under the section of land in a lease, licence or permit granted or issued under the Land Act 1994. Section 183(2) of the same act, the Queensland Land Act 1994, makes it clear that 'valuation for rental purposes' does not include freehold leases as follows—

- (1) The rent for a lease, licence or permit is the amount calculated by multiplying the amount of the most recently made valuation for rental purposes by the rate prescribed under the regulations.

- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply to—  
(a) a freeholding lease ...

I would like the minister to take that into account and comment on it. In clause 41, proposed subsection (4) (b) would therefore provide greater clarity of meaning if it stated: 'In relation to a valuation of the land for rental purposes as defined within the Land Act 1994—the person who is responsible for payment of the rental.' I therefore consider that the proposed subsection should be questioned as it is presently worded.

I would like to go on to some of the issues raised by some of the shires. The Hinchinbrook shire is presently experiencing difficulties in controlling hymenachne, which has the potential to clog up waterways—a particular concern where this weed occurs upstream of the rivers and creeks in the shire. In addition, we have pond apple, salvinia weed, water hyacinth and sickle pod. So we have a whole range of pests and problems which are accumulating in the area. The council's major animal pest is the feral pig, which harbours in national parks and forests, as I have said. They come out of these areas to inflict damage on agricultural crops and the land.

The state is presently devolving responsibility for the control of local government to local government. However, the council has insufficient resources to deal with any of these pests at present beyond what it is currently doing and has currently budgeted for. Why was responsibility devolved to the local authorities? The whole issue is that they do not have the resources to do it. Overall, these pests present an enormous problem to the council. The council has also recently expressed its concern regarding the possible infection of waterways in the shire with tilapia, a noxious fish species capable of consuming many important fishes. I know that this is in the current bill which has been put forward, but how are we going to go about this and who is going to be responsible for it? Where are the resources coming from to do it?

Another council is most concerned about siam weed and limnocharis. Measures are presently being undertaken to eradicate all declared pests known to be present within the city council area. Siam weed is currently presenting a threat which is beyond the council's resources to control. Whilst the council is not presently having difficulties with the implementation of the act, it does object to the fact that there is no mandatory provision for the 1080 baiting of feral pigs. That is a very significant issue because we are seeing that these types of pests are out of control.

In my few remaining minutes I would like to deal with flying foxes. As the member for Charters Towers said, they carry lyssavirus. They are particularly ferocious when fruit crops are reaching maturity. I have seen massive losses occurring because of flying foxes. They are unwanted, they are unannounced and they cannot be controlled. That is something which has to be recognised by the minister when we are dealing with these pests. Some people might love them, some people might think they are great, but I can assure members that to the primary producers who have to deal with them they are a pest which cannot be controlled, and they are not wanted.

As the member for Charters Towers said, there was an MOU with the Charters Towers Shire Council about cleaning up the flying foxes in Lissner Park. There was a business directly under trees which was very badly affected. In fact, they were losing business at a rate which they could not sustain. Inevitably, some 18 months to two years ago, they had to put the motel on the market. The devaluation of the price of the motel reached a point where they would have been very lucky to get out of it with anything at all in their pocket.

The member for Charters Towers has talked about the showgrounds and what is happening there. We can see instances of what the government is trying to do with the red-eared slider turtle. That is an issue which has to be managed. It is a classic example of a lot of things that have happened in the past. When the government gets to a point where it cannot do anything about it, it throws its hands in the air and says, 'Bad luck. Lets somebody else try to clean it up.'

In my remaining time I would like to talk about the Vegetation Management Act, because I know that over a period of time a number of people have invested funds in land that had trees on it. They had the prospect of developing that land, but what has happened now is that they are unable to clear that land unless they have been part of the ballot and have been successful. What it means is that the prospects for the likes of the sugar industry have been reduced substantially. There is a very limited ability for the industry to expand. This is of great concern—

Time expired.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (5.43 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill, which covers a significant and diverse number of acts. Some of the changes are minor and inconsequential and some of the changes are significant. In particular, I wish to speak about the amendments to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act. For a lot of years now local governments have been administering at least the principles of that act in terms of local land management. I believe that most local authorities have done a good job. There are some local authorities that take a lighter hand in terms of ensuring that the provisions are adhered to. If a council does not strenuously administer all of the facets of the destruction of weeds, the adjoining local

authorities bear an additional cost. Those local authorities, freehold landowners and leasehold landowners, who may judiciously clear the land of noxious weeds, then have reinfestations when and if we do have wet weather, flooding of creeks and carriage by birds and wind. I commend those local authorities that administer the eradication particularly of plant pests. There is a significant cost involved in that. There is also a significant cost to landowners, and a high level of diligence is required.

Where a lot of local authorities are frustrated, however, is in situations where council land, leasehold land or freehold land adjoins state government land. The legislation requires a pest management plan to be prepared by each local authority. I assume that they will be regional plans, and then local plans will reflect broader pest management issues and then localised pest management issues. My question to the minister is: where, and at what point, is the preparation of the state government's pest management plan in relation to land under its authority? When will that plan be available to councils and, just as importantly, to graziers whose land adjoins state government properties, national parks, forestry reserves and other parcels of land which are held by state government?

In many instances the encroachment of weeds on to private property or leasehold property is out of these crown areas. That is a great frustration to landowners because the sphere of government that is requiring them to keep their land free of pests is the sphere of government that is reinfesting their land, whether that is with weeds or whether it is with animal pests. The same thing applies in terms of fire. A lot of the fires come out of national parks or forestry reserves and sweep down and clear out the landowners' feed. I would be interested in the minister's response to when the government plan will be available both to councils and to graziers for them to be able to scrutinise the provisions that the government is going to require itself to abide by.

Many members have raised the issue of dingoes and probably in ever growing proportions crossbred dogs. These are particularly problematic where rural residential development is growing out of what was previously a rural area. Most of our coastal towns would have subdivisional areas where there could be five-, 10- or 40-acre lots in areas which have been one block or two blocks—two tenures—and they previously have been able to be dealt with as a rural block in terms of baiting programs. With the subdivision the problem pests—the dingoes, the wild dogs, et cetera—do not disappear but the management of them changes in terms of the density of occupation.

We had one area, and continue to have an area, at Mount Morris which is an area between the two councils. It is administered by two councils because of its geographical location. One council is quite used to managing pest animals; the other council is more urban based and it has some difficulty in understanding the implications of not managing particularly the crossbred dogs. Landowners who have purchased land in those areas in good faith are finding that the wild dogs are becoming more and more bold. That is particularly so when droughts have been prolonged and their food source has diminished or disappeared all together. They become bolder because of their survival instincts. They come closer and closer to human habitation to source food, whether that is a resident's chook pen, whether it is pets or whether it is a small amount of domestic stock. The risk is not only to the stock but also to children and adults, but more particularly the children of those people who have chosen to live in those areas. It is critically important that councils retain not only the ability but also the willingness to manage those pest animals in those areas where there is a transition from totally rural to rural residential lots.

This legislation, as members have said, was provoked particularly by the red-eared slider turtle. I commend the minister for the amnesty in relation to illegally held pests. In a lot of communities, people believe they are being compassionate by releasing kittens into the wild. They do so because they do not have the heart to euthanase them in some way or take them to the RSPCA or pay a vet to euthanase them. They feel that they are being kind by releasing domestic kittens into the wild. In turn, the animals do a great deal of damage to native wildlife through their opportunistic feeding. The release of illegally held pests, particularly some of the more invasive ones, would be very detrimental to our environment. I commend the minister and his officers for the amnesty provided for in this bill.

It is critical that information in relation to the amnesty and the types of animals it covers is well publicised. Some young people and their parents could be looking after pets without realising that they are actually declared pests or illegal. An animal breeds, so a kid gives it to his mate at school and that kid takes it home. Mum says 'Where did you get that?' and the kid says 'Freddy gave it to me,' and it all seems really good. Unless the community is advised and given photographic or other identifiers, it will be difficult for people to know that their pet is a pest and illegal to own. I seek a comment from the minister in relation to his plans for advising the community about the pests that this legislation will address.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee raised concerns in relation to clause 4 of the bill. It allows the chief executive to make declarations to be tabled in parliament, subject to disallowance, but not gazette notice. Earlier in my time as a member of parliament, the gazettes were posted to electorate offices, which was very handy. It gave us the opportunity to flick through, to see what was actually placed in the gazette notices and whether it applied to one's area or was a generic issue across Queensland. Supply of the hard copy was stopped and when we inquired, we were told that the

gazettes were available on the Internet. I do not know whether the process has improved recently but at the time of that change, my staff found it very difficult to identify where the gazettes were on the Internet and to download and print them. As a result, we stopped regularly, or as regularly, scrutinising those gazettes. However, at least it gives people a central place to look for information.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee requested information about how the public would be informed of the making of the declaration. The minister advised that the best way was by a ministerial media release. I understand the minister's response but I feel that there needs to be an understanding of two things: firstly, not all of a minister's press releases are processed in the same way; secondly, not all media releases receive coverage in terms of publication. Even if they are publicised in regional and Brisbane based papers, not everybody purchases a paper. It is important that information is available to the community through rural newspapers and through print and TV to ensure that people are aware of issues and declarations as much as possible.

The legislation allows for a process for cancelling and changing DOGITs. It has been a fairly complex process—justifiably, I think—to cancel or freehold a DOGIT. The protections afforded by those deeds of grant in trust were given for a particular reason. A change in DOGIT needs to be done with thought given to the implications of a change or cancellation. Our RSL was partly freehold and partly on a deed of grant in trust. The departmental officers in Rockhampton assisted us greatly in having that reviewed and freeholded. Tragically, the RSL building has now been sold. However, I still believe that the cancelling or changing of a deed of grant in trust into, say, freehold or other tenure needs to be done with a great deal of thought, particularly in terms of the initial intention of the granting of the deed and its public and community purpose.

The legislation changes the process for the revocation of reserves. The explanatory notes state that the amendment clarifies the reasons for revoking a reserve by including a situation where the minister is satisfied a more appropriate tenure is required. The current reasons for revoking a reserve—that is, no longer needed for a community purpose or needed for a different use in the public interest—do not cover the situation of an operational reserve, for example, a reserve for police purposes, that should be held under a more appropriate tenure such as freehold. I find that explanation contradictory. A police reserve is used for police purposes and is still needed for community purposes. It is still in the public interest and, therefore, the tenure of police reserve would adequately cover that situation.

The only advantage in changing many of these reserves over to freehold title is that it will allow the government to sell the asset. The government goes through its asset register and disposes of land on a regular basis. Sometimes—and it is not specifically this minister—this is done imprudently, because governments in the past have very wisely set aside land for a specific purpose. It ensures that future needs, in terms of government services, can be met because land has been set aside. One of the greatest costs to the development of government assets is the purchase of land, particularly in heavily populated areas such as the south-east corner. Exercise of the power of revocation of reserves needs to be done with the proper intent; that is, to genuinely benefit the community by any change in tenure, rather than just reclassifying property to freehold to allow for its disposal and the return of the income from that disposal to government coffers.

Members have spoken about the problems in rural and regional areas in terms of the infestations of pigs, rabbits, toads and weeds. A number of plants which are not declared weeds—and probably should be—are often sold through nurseries and do not have, and should have, proper identification of their potential risks and dangers to families if they are placed in a garden. One plant that is becoming more noticeable along the side of our roads is the castor oil plant. Many people do not realise that the contents of the seed, the sap, the leaves, the stalks and the fumes from burning it are all poisonous to humans. It is much like angel's trumpet. Ingestion of any part of the plant or inhalation of smoke from the destruction of the plant is poisonous to humans and also to some animals, if not all. Plants which can appropriately be sold in nurseries and do not pose a risk as far as overtaking native vegetation if they spread outside a suburban garden, but which have the potential to impact on human health and safety, should actually have some sort of notification on them.

There have been a few plants that nursery groups have voluntarily taken on and marked to ensure that purchasers understand the potential health implications. I believe a comprehensive assessment needs to be done. Any plants that have the potential through sap, ingestion or fumes from burning to cause human or animal health problems should be marked. That does not stop people getting them. It alerts them to the dangers should they actually purchase that plant.

I am concerned about the amendment that was circulated. It is concerning that an amendment that has the potential to retrospectively affect people has not gone through normal scrutiny. It is unclear to me what consultation took place. We are told that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet has been consulted on the proposed amendments. I question whether the stakeholders—those who are going to be affected by these amendments—have actually been contacted. It is not hard to do this. There are overarching rural groups that would be pleased to talk to the minister about the changes. I would be interested to hear from the minister whether these groups have been given an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes.

The changes appear to be retrospective. I seek clarification as to the quantification of people who could be disadvantaged in relation to the restriction on changing vegetation clearing applications received before midday on 16 May 2003. I am sure that the minister's staff have quantified the potentially affected people. I seek clarification of those impacts.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr O'Brien): Order! Before calling the member for Maroochydore, I acknowledge in the public gallery students from the Lourdes Hill College and the Principal, Narelle Mullins, in the electorate of Bulimba and also students from the Pomppuraaw State School in the great electorate of Cook.

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (6.01 p.m.): In rising to speak in the debate on the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill I wanted to raise an issue that other members have raised—that is, the problem that occurs when domestic animals become feral and cause problems particularly in country areas. A lot of people will assume that this is the case only in true country or bush areas. With the advent of rural residential areas on the outskirts of urban areas, it is a problem, and one that is very close to home on the Sunshine Coast.

On Monday of this week I attended a broad hectare study release. It showed that the greatest number of developments on the Sunshine Coast, in land volume terms, were rural residential lots. The greatest amount of land being developing is in rural residential areas even though the greatest bulk of lots is in smaller areas. It highlights that there has been an increasing urbanisation around the fringes with rural residential lots. People might have horses or other animals and therefore for lifestyle reasons move to those areas. Some people have had domestic animals which become feral and then become a threat to those who have domesticated animals whether they be dogs, cats or horses.

This is an issue on which I want to seek particularly the minister's assistance. There was mention that a report had been done by the department into the problem of feral dogs, but that has still not been released. We need all the assistance possible. This has caused a lot of distress to people. There is a difficulty with appropriately eradicating domestic animals that have become feral and are a threat not only to domestic animals and livestock but also to native animals.

When there is so much effort across the political divide to do our best to look after our native animals, it is a real tragedy that some domestic animals have become feral and are doing so much damage. Obviously, we know that cats are part of that problem as well. The damage that feral dogs do is pretty frightening. It can be frightening for humans as well. There is the potential for humans to be subject to quite fierce attacks. These animals are not only in truly country areas but also on the edge of urban areas.

I raise this issue as it affects people on the Sunshine Coast and those in parts of my electorate. We need the support of our local shires. We need the support from the minister's department to address this issue more effectively. It is not going away; in fact, it is worsening. We now see mixed use developments. Animals which no longer have owners and have gone wild and bred in the wild are causing damage to people's livestock and their domestic animals and also, most worryingly, causing damage to our native animals.

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (6.05 p.m.): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Natural Resource Legislation Amendment Bill 2004, which deals with fairly routine amendments to several acts that fall within the portfolio of Natural Resources and Mines. The opposition is reasonably comfortable and supportive of most of the amendments to that particular bill.

As has been pointed out by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition during his speech in the last sitting of the parliament, the government has now included a major amendment to the Vegetation Management Act 1999, which basically has very little to do with the sentiments in the original act. This is something that we continue to see from this government. Quite often in the later stages of debating reasonably benign pieces of legislation an amendment is brought in that is very controversial—an amendment which the opposition is usually strenuously opposed to. When we actually support the bill but find that we cannot support the amendment, it certainly makes it difficult for us to get the message across that we are totally opposed to a part of the bill and actually in support of the good commonsense legislation that was in the original bill.

I think it is quite a sleight of hand and quite corrupt for this government to do this within this legislative framework. It is not fair on anybody to be in a situation where they are supportive of the majority of the bill and then have to speak strenuously against another part of the bill. As most members would be aware, the opposition has strenuously opposed the introduction of the Vegetation Management Act from its very inception in 1999. We have actually opposed every single amendment since that time. I can assure members that this amendment will be no different. We will strenuously oppose it. It takes away the rights of people who earn a living on the land. It takes basic rights away from Queenslanders. The Vegetation Management Act, as I have said previously in this House, takes away not only the rights of people on the land but also the basic rights of people right across Queensland.

We are very supportive of the amendments to the original act. They include amendments to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, the Surveyors Act 2003, the Survey

and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003 and, of course, the Valuation of Land Act 1944. The amendments to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 basically relate to two new initiatives. They are the provision of the establishment of an amnesty period for illegally held pests. We would hope that this would prevent people from dumping illegally held live animals in the natural environment when they first become aware of the law and are concerned that they may be prosecuted. The provision also allows people to take the declared pest to the Queensland Museum or the Queensland Herbarium for identification purposes and exempts them from charges if they do that.

The amendments to the Surveyors Act 2003 provide for the transition from the Surveyors Act 1977, which was repealed on 1 August 2004, to the commencement of the Surveyors Act 2003 and deals with a number of technical matters. The amendments to the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003 clarify the requirement for the provision of plans to the chief executive. The amendments to the Valuation of Land Act 1944 refine the definition of 'owner' to negate the requirement to supply redundant evaluation notices and also does some minor housekeeping. As I said, the opposition supports all of those amendments; it is commonsense legislation. However, as I said before, we need to place on record some comments specifically in relation to the Valuation of Land Act 1944.

The explanatory notes state—

The current definition of owner in the Valuation of Land Act 1944 (VOL Act) (in certain circumstances) recognises more than one owner of a property, which requires the issue of redundant valuation notice. The requirement to provide redundant valuations places an additional workload on Departmental staff and systems and could result in the valuation being used for a purpose other than that for which it was provided.

The explanatory notes go on to state—

As an example, where land owned by a Government Owned Corporation is leased, the lessee is the owner under the VOL Act. In this case a valuation is provided to the lessee. This is the valuation used by the local government for the assessment of rates and the lessee, as the owner is responsible for the rates. The current definition of owner also recognises the GOC as an owner, which requires that the valuation that is provided to the lessee for rating purposes, also be provided to the GOC. This valuation, in the name of the GOC, is not used for the assessment of rates or land tax and is therefore redundant (a separate valuation is provided to the GOC for land tax purposes). As the redundant valuation is issued to the GOC, grievance rights apply—a resource intensive process that is not appropriate, as the valuation is not used for local government rating or the assessment of land tax.

Earlier this year, because of the unresolved industrial situation with the state valuations officers, this government failed to provide an updated valuation roll. The increased workload on the departmental staff due to the increases in valuations owing to a sea change and the property boom has created a huge load on the valuation services. Indeed, the unusual part about that was that even though the valuations were not provided, the local government was still billed \$7 million for the valuation roll. The government went on to pass an amendment through the parliament which retrospectively excused it from the preparation of annual valuations in exceptional circumstances. Those exceptional circumstances could be industrial action, computer failure or natural disaster. This was get-out-from-under sort of legislation and again showed not only the incompetence but also the arrogance of the government.

The government introduced retrospective legislation even though last year the Premier and LGAQ signed a protocol in which the government agreed to consult with the LGAQ prior to any laws or policies affecting local government being brought into the House or approved. At the first test, the government failed. Unfortunately, that is very typical of what is happening within the government.

As I have said previously, there are six local shires in my electorate and I keep in very close contact with them. Indeed, currently I am the shadow minister for local government and I have pleasure in having contact with most local governments throughout Queensland. I assure the House of the fact that local governments throughout Queensland were incensed by the fact that the government retrospectively negated its obligation to do the valuation roll, simply because for some reason it was not able to negotiate an industrial dispute and get valuers back out in the field.

This has created some concern for a lot of local governments, particularly on the coastal fringe of Queensland where we have seen an escalation in valuations. The councils are stretched to such a point that they are having problems providing infrastructure to their areas and need the extra funding that would have come from those increased valuations. They would have been able to recoup some of their expenditure by possible increases in rates.

**Mr Robertson:** They can do that anyway. There is nothing to stop them from increasing their rates if they have a demand for infrastructure.

**Mr MALONE:** The minister is trying to excuse the issue, but the fact remains that the roll was not provided. They were not given the time frames to enable them to actually do the revaluation. Unfortunately, they were not able to recoup the extra valuations through taxes. Local governments do a magnificent job in maintaining and developing our communities, in a lot of cases under extreme economic, social and environmental constraints. Their main concern is always to provide the best services possible for their ratepayers within those constraints and ensure that their rate base is kept up to speed in the best possible way.

There was no consultation between local government authorities and this government before, during, or after this disgraceful situation, even though a protocol had been signed by the Premier stating

that consultation would always be part of future impacts on local government authorities by the state government. It is disappointing, although not unexpected, that there is no sign of any amendment within this bill that would address the administration of the Land Valuation Act to prevent such a situation occurring in the future.

The amendment in relation to the Land Protection (Pest Stock Route Management) Act 2002 provides an amnesty period for illegally kept pests to encourage people not to dump those illegal pests in our environment with the result that they could wreak havoc on our land and waterways. The red-eared slider turtle is not the only pest that we have to deal with, and they are not necessarily all four-legged either. The ones I am talking about will not necessarily be four-legged, otherwise defined as pests. Certainly between Rockhampton and Mackay—and I have spoken about this in the House before—the giant rat-tail grass is a huge problem. Probably about six months ago I received a letter from the minister's departmental staff explaining what they are trying to do in relation to it. The problem is that giant rat-tail grass is very hard to distinguish from other native species. Indeed, if a property is fully infested with giant rat-tail grass, it becomes virtually worthless. The grass is totally useless for stock. They will not eat it. The only way to identify giant rat-tail grass from other grasses is to grab a handful and twist it. If it will not break, it is giant rat-tail grass. It is very stringy and almost impossible to destroy. It is also very difficult to poison because it is very similar to most of the other grasses.

The reality is that once giant rat-tail grass gets into timbered land, spraying, et cetera, becomes almost impossible to do. The seed is reasonably sticky and is carried by wallabies, pigs and even birds. So it spreads fairly profusely. Of course, in the flood plains it is carried by water. Giant rat-tail grass is becoming a huge issue. It amazes me that quite often we hear particularly the green-aligned groups talking about damage to vegetation when, in reality, our country is being destroyed by pests and diseases.

Lantana is another introduced pest. Many years ago it was introduced as an ornamental plant and it is now infesting probably millions of hectares right throughout Queensland and probably right throughout Australia. Unfortunately, it can exist in remnant vegetation. The only way that we can actually get lantana out of remnant vegetation is to go in and dig it out with a mattock. Under the stringent rules contained in the Vegetation Management Act it is impossible to put any machinery into land that is classed as remnant vegetation. Over a period, starting from probably a year or so ago when people were not allowed to clear their land, we will have quite large areas of totally useless country that is overgrown by lantana. When we get a fire in it, all the vegetation that is on that piece of land, plus all the animals that live in it, will be destroyed totally. Over the past few weeks there have been a number of fires in my area that would have done just that. There would be probably a couple of hundreds acres that I could think of from which, just a week or so ago, not one animal would have come out alive. With the current drought, I would go as far as to suggest that most of the vegetation will be killed as well.

We also have a fairly bad infestation of sicklepod. We have been trying to control that with helicopters, particularly on the hillsides. There now seems to be a move to make land-holders go through an application process in order to use a helicopter. The days of people carrying knapsacks around hillsides spraying sicklepod and being paid for doing so are long gone. Currently, the only economical way of spraying sicklepod is by helicopter. Even though it is a terribly expensive method, it is still reasonably effective. One of the problems is that quite often people have to wait for two weeks to three weeks before they not only get a helicopter but also have the right conditions so that the helicopter can actually spray on the hillsides. If people have to go through an application process to get a helicopter, and that takes some time, that window of opportunity could soon slip by. Once the sicklepod seeds, people are then stuck with a huge infestation that will be there for another 15 years or 20 years. That is how long the seed will last in the soil.

We have plenty of other pests such as rubber vine. In terms of cane toads, foxes, rabbits, carp, wild dogs, feral pigs and cats, I think that possibly the role of the feral cat is underestimated. They do enormous damage to our wildlife in our national parks and even on the fringes of farmland and in our forestry. The number of small birds and animals that are killed by feral cats is unbelievable.

Other members on this side of the House have spoken about wild dogs. Wild dogs are certainly becoming a huge problem. As the member for Darling Downs explained, the crossing of domestic dogs that have got away and turned wild with dingoes is creating dogs that are far stronger, fearless and will pull down with ease quite large animals such as yearlings. It is just remarkable. Just last Sunday I was checking my cattle and I had quite a large dog running among the cattle. Unfortunately, because of the gun laws, I was not carrying a rifle. So I could not fix up that situation.

The amendment to the Vegetation Management Act is certainly a difficult amendment. In relation to the ballots that took place recently, in my own area, there were 2,750 hectares in the area between Rockhampton and Proserpine that were available for clearing. Seventy people were able to put their applications in on time. That was an issue because it was a rather forced period. I am sure that many more people—probably hundreds—would have put in applications if they had the time and the money to go through the process to do so. With the maximum allocation of 250 hectares per applicant, it would

really take only about 12 people to get their maximum allocation to exhaust the total land that was available in that huge area.

Under the legislation, one would assume that there is some sort of compensation available. The reality is that those people will never be properly compensated for the fact that they cannot clear their land. In fact, my next door neighbours have about 600 acres locked up on their property. They purchased it about 20 years ago to give them a superannuation benefit. That is totally useless now. It is all remnant vegetation. It is just a resource that nobody can use. My next door neighbours will be paying rates on it for the rest of their lives. The problems go on.

Sitting suspended from 6.25 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

**Hon. S. ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (7.30 p.m.), in reply: First of all, I thank all honourable members who participated in the debate—

**Mr SEENEY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I call your attention to the numbers in the House.

Quorum formed.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I would like to thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for drawing attention to the fact that there is only one National Party member in this House during this important debate that has so much of an impact on rural Queensland. There are no Liberal Party members, no One Nation members and no Independents present. So I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for highlighting the absolute lack of interest on the part of the opposition in this state in relation to this particular bill.

As I was saying, the Beattie government recognises the need for coordinated action to manage wild dogs and lessen their impact on grazing industries and our communities. Land-holders, local councils and state agencies all have a role to play in controlling wild dog numbers. In fact, since 1944 land-holders have been responsible for pest management on their land.

The state government has taken the lead and in recent years has implemented Queensland's first comprehensive wild dog management strategy plus a range of on-the-ground programs to control wild dogs on a statewide basis. These include funding and maintaining the wild dog barrier fence, providing 1080 at no cost for baiting programs, providing extensive aerial and ground baiting programs and working with communities in semiurban areas to address problems with wild dogs.

I am pleased to inform honourable members that my department will soon sign a new memorandum of understanding with Agforce and other organisations to better coordinate management of wild dogs inside the wild dog barrier fence. We are currently in the consultation stage of that memorandum of understanding. This stage will identify and clarify the roles and responsibilities of my department, Agforce, the Darling Downs local government association, the south-west Queensland local government association and the EPA. I will also be tabling for the information of the House a report I had commissioned to determine the economic impact of wild dogs and dingoes in Queensland. I seek leave to table that document.

Leave granted.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The report found, as members have mentioned, that wild dogs cost the state \$33 million a year in livestock losses, control costs and diseases spread by wild dogs. The other problems identified include loss of flexibility in the choice of sheep and cattle combinations and secondary impacts on rural communities through sheep being replaced by cattle. Evidence of impacts from wild dogs on urban and semiurban areas is also addressed.

My department will use the information in the report to ensure that future management programs remain focused on the important issues. This will include minimising the economic impacts of wild dogs on the sheep and cattle industries and, in conjunction with local government and land-holders, ensuring the social impacts of wild dogs are managed in urban areas.

The report provides a good summary of the economic extent of the wild dog problems in Queensland and clearly identifies the problems associated with urban and semiurban dogs. My department will use the information in the report to ensure that future management programs are focused on addressing identified issues.

With respect to the issue of management of national parks, some members opposite raised the question as to why land-holders have to manage their weeds when the state's performance is allegedly lacking. All land-holders have had the responsibility to manage pests on their land since 1944—something that, clearly, members opposite have refused to recognise. Since 1944, land-holders, including local government, which is entrusted with state reserves, have had that responsibility. The state looks after the protected estates such as national parks and state forests. That is why we made an election commitment of \$7 million to go to pest and weed management in national parks.

A state land pest management committee has been formed for the first time. It includes representatives from my department, the Department of Primary Industries, the EPA and the Department of Main Roads. A key objective of that committee is to improve the management of pests on

state controlled lands through the enhancement of communication, coordination and collaboration between key stakeholders such as government agencies, local governments, industry groups and other important partners. The committee will also initiate and coordinate multiagency pest management activities for state controlled land and provide oversight of the state agency pest management plans and their integration with broader natural resource management strategies and planning processes.

Under this Labor government, this is the first time any government has tackled the issue of departmental responsibility for managing pests on its land. It was not the National Party. It had 34 years to do this and it did nothing. It has taken a Labor government to actually get departments to accept their responsibilities for pest management on state owned land.

I turn to the issue of dingoes on Fraser Island. A couple of members raised this issue. Whilst that is a matter for my ministerial colleague the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women and not directly relevant to the bill, nevertheless I would be more than happy to respond to the issue that was raised. That is, the EPA has not, to the best of anyone's knowledge, relocated a single dingo from Fraser Island to be released on the mainland. Dingoes have been humanely put down on Fraser Island. It may well be that the issue raised by the Country Women's Association that was referred to is just one of those urban myths but, as I said, to the best of anyone's knowledge there has been no relocation of dingoes from Fraser Island. There was, however, one case from about 12 years ago when two dingo pups were moved off the island and put into Fleay's nature reserve. That hardly constitutes being released into the wild. I hope that we do not see a repeat of this myth, unless of course evidence can be brought forward to suggest otherwise. But that is the information that has been provided to me by my department and by the EPA.

**Mr Seenev:** You'd be the last to know.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The member is a genius, an absolute genius. With respect to the issue of 1080, much more needs to be done than just 1080 baiting. Some members have suggested that bounties have a role to play. It might be useful for members opposite to know that in the last couple of weeks I have spent some time in Charleville speaking to a number of land-holders about exactly this problem. In fact, I had a long conversation with Darcy Volz out at Charleville and I sought his views on the effectiveness of 1080 baiting. Darcy's views were simply that the coordinated 1080 baiting campaign that he had recently been involved in had proved to be very successful but that, nonetheless, there was also a role for further follow-up using doggers. He in fact had used a dogger on his property to some useful effect. That is why, when I recently met with the chair of the Land Protection Council in my department, Murray Jones, I indicated to him that I would like the Land Protection Council to consider the usefulness of integrating with 1080 baiting campaigns other ways to improve the effectiveness of those campaigns. The Land Protection Council will in fact be considering that question and providing advice to me.

One of many issues which concern me in this portfolio and which I have a significant interest in is that of wild dogs, particularly their impact on areas that have traditionally had a very strong and productive sheep industry. Members opposite have been seeing evidence and receiving deputations from land-holders, as I have, about the impact of wild dogs and the decisions being taken by some land-holders to move away from sheep and into cattle. That will have an impact on regional economies, and that is something I am very sympathetic to. If we can find ways to improve the effectiveness of our campaigns—that is, state government, local government and land-holders' campaigns against wild dogs—I will be more than interested to hear useful suggestions in that regard. That is why after the member for Darling Downs's contribution to this debate, which I thought was a well-considered contribution, I invited him to meet with the chair of the Land Protection Council to discuss a number of the suggestions he put up and talk those issues through with the Land Protection Council. The member for Darling Downs indicated to me that he would be prepared to take up that offer, which I certainly hope he does.

The member for Burnett's contribution was challenging, as it always is. First of all, he criticised the pest numbers in state controlled lands. I have already indicated increased funding for the EPA over three years, which was one of our election commitments that will go some way to addressing that issue. He then went on to say that there are mandated distances and limits on laying baits and that, in relation to semirural or urban areas, that was proving to be a problem with respect to the use of 1080. I indicated to him at the time that that was not a mandated distance—that is, around about two kilometres of any habitation including any dwelling other than the owner's without the permission of the owner or five kilometres of town area—and that those distances can change with the approval of a Land Protection Council. Baits can be laid closer than two kilometres if the person laying those baits has the owner's permission to do so. So there is flexibility in relation to those distances that inform people how to conduct 1080 baiting campaigns.

The member for Cunningham said that some land-holders in his area could not clear lantana due to the Vegetation Management Act. That is not true. Whilst he has made representations to me in the past, I suspect there are some peculiarities attached to the issue that he mentioned which did not allow for lantana to be cleared, if that is in fact the case. We have made specific provision for weed control in

the vegetation management legislation, including the selective clearing of land using appropriate means. That includes the clearing of lantana. I would suggest to the member for Cunningham that he again contact my office for information on how the interests of the particular land-holder that he may be dealing with can be accommodated.

The member for Gregory mentioned, among other things, that the amendment to the Vegetation Management Act was circulated at the last minute. Claims that this was a secret amendment are completely untrue. This amendment was circulated at the beginning of the last sitting week. My department gave the opposition a full briefing on this issue and made every attempt to ensure that there was no suggestion that we were trying to rush this amendment through by stealth.

I appreciated, as always, the positive comments of the member for Nicklin on how state and local government communities can work together better in both rural and urban areas. I certainly commend the work of the Mapleton group that has been addressing wild dog areas in that part of the state.

The member for Gladstone wondered when state government pest management plans would be available. All four state agencies, as I have already mentioned, and Queensland Rail have released their state agency pest management plans in accordance with the new legislative requirements and have agreed to the finalisation of implementation plans by the end of the year. With respect to her concerns about the vegetation management amendment, I can indicate in case she does not speak in the consideration in detail stage that there is no retrospectivity attached to this. The vegetation management amendment is not retrospective. Anyone with an appeal in the system will not be affected by this amendment.

Finally, I turn to the contribution by the member for Warrego. There is so much to respond to with regard to the member for Warrego that I hardly know where to start. Rather than take up the time of the House, I thought I would highlight one of his more—

**Mr Schwarten:** Inane?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Inane; I thank the minister for his help. In one of his inane suggestions he suggested that members of the Land Protection Council were friends of the government—Labor mates. I thought I would assist the member for Warrego in relation to that allegation by saying exactly who is on the Land Protection Council. It is of course chaired by Murray Jones, who is the chair of Agforce Grains. He is assisted by Councillor Dougal Davidson, from the LGAQ; Councillor Anne Portess, from the LGAQ; and Judy Harvey, from the LGAQ. Roz Burtenshaw, from Agforce Queensland, is obviously another Labor mate! Christine Donaldson, from Agforce Queensland, is also a Labor mate! Then there is that well-known Labor mate Stephen Tully from Agforce!

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Absolutely. There is John Bishop from Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers and Michael Cantamessa from Queensland Canegrowers, who would have to be suspect! Peter Huth is a community representative. Tim Low is from the Queensland Conservation Council—

**Mr Seeney:** What about him? He's a Labor mate. Representing the community? That's a joke!

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I would have thought someone with his experience in local government would have been a valuable asset. Then there is Lindsay Volz, from the Queensland Dairyman's Organisation, who is assisted by three departmental officers—a veritable hive, a cabal, of Labor mates! Not that we expect it will happen, but I think the member for Warrego owes these fine people who are making an investment in the future of Queensland, an investment in rural communities, an apology. As I said, we do not expect it, because that is the kind of slander this mob carries on with. It is absolutely disgraceful and it does the member for Warrego no credit. With those words, I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

### Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

**Mr SEENEY** (7.49 p.m.): Clause 8 amends section 45 of the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002. It adds a new subsection, subsection (3), to section 45. This new subsection requires both the supplier and the person who receives a 'thing', as it is called under the act, to keep a copy of a written notice about declared seeds. It requires that written notice to be kept for five years.

I am curious as to why this is included in the bill because it is not that long ago—2002—when the original bill passed through this House. As I recall, at the time we debated this issue of the inclusion of declared seeds within fodder and grains and things such as that. Have instances arisen since 2002 that are the justification for this amendment to be before the House tonight? It seems strange to me that after two years we are back in the House adding another section, which is seemingly innocuous enough in

itself, but it does impose upon people who are trading in grains and stock feeds to keep records for five years that they would not otherwise keep.

I am always concerned about imposing any further requirements on people. If that requirement is being imposed for a particular reason, then we should understand what that reason is. If there is not a particular reason for this requirement—if it is being imposed because somebody in the bureaucracy thought it was a good idea or if it is simply for the sake of imposing more record keeping requirements upon these people—then I will have difficulty supporting this particular piece of the bill. The minister did not address this in his second reading speech or offer any explanation as to why this new subsection is included. At this point I am interested to know why it has been included only two years after the original bill passed through this House.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I am informed that the reason for this particular amendment is that copies of the written notice would be required as evidence in any legal proceedings taken. I am informed that to date there has been no case where this issue has arisen, but it is a precautionary measure. As the member can imagine, such documentation, should a legal issue arise, would be very useful and important, particularly when it came down to the case of one person with the document—perhaps the originator of the document—saying, 'I sent Billy Bloggs the document' and Billy Bloggs says, 'No, you didn't. I never received it.' By virtue of the amendment there is a requirement on those two parties to maintain documentation should a legal issue arise. As a precautionary measure it makes good sense.

**Mr SEENEY:** Given that explanation, it raises the question: why five years? Would not the statute of limitations set the period of legal action at seven years? We have lots of lawyers and legal people in this House who like to stand up here and give us free legal advice from time to time. Perhaps they could give the minister some legal advice as to why five years has been selected as a period of time if the reason is that this documentation needs to be kept for the eventuality of a legal action.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): If I could make a comment, member for Callide. I have been in this place a long time, and I can tell you that when you get free legal advice in this place you get what you pay for.

**Mr SEENEY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with you. The free legal advice that I have seen given in this House has been worth exactly that, as you indicated.

There is an issue here. The point the minister makes is very valid. I agree that in instances where this type of material is supplied there would be a responsibility and it would make good sense, to use the minister's words, for both the supplier and the receiver to keep that documentation. It is a big jump from recognising the good sense of that to making it mandatory for that to happen. It is taking the responsibility off those individuals and it is making it mandatory for that to happen.

If it is going to be made mandatory for that reason, then surely the time frame should be the same as the time frame that is available to either of those parties to take legal action. Unless I am mistaken, that time frame would be seven years, yet a time frame here of five years has been used. I do not think, under those circumstances, that the explanation that the minister provided makes much sense or contains much logic.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I am advised that the five-year limit was recommended by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the framing of this bill. We would be framing it on the basis of their recommendations.

**Mr SEENEY:** I would like to put on record that I do not find the explanation terribly satisfactory. However, it is not an issue that I will divide the House over. I put on record that I do not find that explanation satisfactory at all. It is not logical. It does not follow that any logical advice would suggest that the period of time that the records have to be kept would be different from the period of time that legal action could be instituted if the very reason for making the keeping of those records mandatory is for use in legal actions.

I agree with the minister that it would be good commonsense, but it is an individual's responsibility; it is an individual's call as to whether or not they exercise that good sense. We cannot mandate in this House or any other law-making place for good sense. In the end it has to come down to the individual. I do not think this has been terribly well thought out. That has been demonstrated by the answers that the minister has given to the inquiry that I made. However, I will not divide the House at this point.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

**Mr SEENEY** (7.56 p.m.): Clause 9 amends section 79 of the act, which deals with extending the compliance period, but it makes what seems to be a somewhat pointless change to section 79. For those not familiar with the bill before the House, I point out that what it does in subclause 1 of clause 9 is omit the word 'person' from the act and substitute it with 'landowner'. I have looked through the explanatory notes and I could not find an explanation, and I struggled to understand why such an amendment is necessary. Perhaps the minister can enlighten us as to why section 79 subsections (1),

(3) and (4) had to be amended, just two years after the original bill passed through the House, to remove the word 'person' and substitute it with the word 'landowner'.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Purely as a matter of consistency. Right throughout the act the term 'landholder' is used. When an omnibus bill such as this is being dealt with, simply making those minor changes in terminology from 'person' to 'landholder' makes sense.

**Mr Purcell:** That makes a bit of sense, doesn't it?

**Mr SEENEY:** I will take the interjection from my learned colleague from Bulimba. It sounds reasonable and it would make sense if it were the case. It is not the case. I could turn this computer on and find half a dozen examples. I think there is an example even in that clause where the word 'person' continues to be used. In the bill before the House the word 'person' is used a number of times. In clause 12, which we have not reached yet, the word 'person' is used. It just does not make sense.

It is all very well for the minister to come in here with these amendments to the bill and, when questioned, stand up and provide an explanation that might sound logical and is probably the best the poor fellow can do under the circumstances, but I have an obligation to place on record that it is simply not the case. Anyone who wants to have a look at the 2002 act will see that it is demonstrably not the case because the bill that we are debating before the House tonight does not have the consistency that the minister talks about. It is a nonsense. It is only a small issue, but it serves to illustrate how incompetent this minister is. It also serves to illustrate how the only consistency that we have in this place with respect to natural resource legislation is the sloppiness with which it is brought before the House and the lack of logic and the lack of commonsense which is presented to this parliament in its consideration.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 10 and 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—

**Mr SEENEY (8.00 p.m.):** Clause 12 is an amendment to section 116 of the Land Protection Act. It adds a new subsection to section 116(2) (c). It expands subsection (c) in a way which, once again, I find puzzling. My purpose for speaking on this clause—

**Mr Lawlor** interjected.

**Mr SEENEY:** Do you know what it does? Would you like to stand up and explain what it does? You would not have a clue. You would not know what this bill is about.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras):** Order!

**Mr Lawlor** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr SEENEY:** You come in here and make inane interjections—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Callide.

**Mr SEENEY:** —about something you do not have a clue about.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Callide.

**Mr SEENEY:** That is a good example of your interest on the matter and your whole attitude.

**Mr Lawlor** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Do not get too excited. Can I suggest that the member for Southport interject from his own chair and that the member for Callide address his comments through the chair. That is the way this parliament must proceed and I demand that from both of you. The member from Southport will interject from his own seat and the member for Callide will speak through the chair. Thank you.

**Mr SEENEY:** I am only too pleased to direct my comments through the chair, but when I get an interjection from that quarter of the House, I cannot be blamed for responding—but I will resist the temptation

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member should not allow himself to be so tempted.

**Mr SEENEY:** I will resist the temptation. I will begin again in relation to clause 12. As I said, this clause amends section 116. I query why the amendment to clause 116 is necessary. For those who have not read the bill—like the member for Southport—clause 116 deals with the issuing of permits by local authorities for grazing of stock routes. It sets out a number of conditions that control the issuing of those permits. It adds a new condition to the issuing of those permits. At this point I would ask the minister to explain or at least to read the explanation that he has been given as to why this amendment is necessary. I might then make some comments about the minister's explanation.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I am sure the member will and I look forward to them. I am happy to read the explanation for the member because I am always prepared to help him try to understand the legislation. I know it is a challenge for the member at times. It states—

Clause 12 amends section 116(2) (c) (i) to allow all local governments to identify areas of relevant land that may be available for agistment after considering the needs of travelling stock. All local governments in the state contain relevant land and the ability to allow agistment should not be restricted to those local governments that are required to prepare a stock route management plan under s 104 (as per the current provision). However, where a local government is required to prepare a stock route management plan, the areas available for agistment must be identified in the plan.

**Mr McGrady:** Good answer.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I thank the minister very much.

**Mr SEENEY:** Thank you, Minister. The question is: was that not the case under the 2002 act?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Clearly not.

**Mr SEENEY:** What the minister has done is add the new subsection (b), which I will quote for the minister because obviously it is not in his briefing notes. It states—

**Mr Robertson** interjected.

**Mr SEENEY:** It states—

Otherwise—relevant land the issuing entity is satisfied contains more pasture and water than is needed for the use of travelling stock.

Does that not repeat section (a), which states—

If the issuing entity is a local government prescribed for section 104—relevant land identified in the issuing entity's stock route network management plan as land containing more pasture and water than is needed for the use of travelling stock.

That is subsection (a). Subsection (b) has been added, which states—

Otherwise—relevant land the issuing entity is satisfied contains more pasture and water than is needed for the use of travelling stock.

What is the purpose of adding subsection (b)? That is my question.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** As I outlined before.

**Mr SEENEY:** For the sake of the record, I would have to say, once again, that the minister does not have a clue what this particular clause does. He explained what the original clause does. I understand what the original clause does. I also understand that subsection (b) seems to repeat the original subsection. The only way I can read it is that the 'otherwise' applies to situations where the issuing entity is not a local government prescribed under section 104. If that is the case—and I half expected that to be the answer and perhaps the minister's staff could indicate to him that that may be the case—then what issuing entities are we talking about here? What other issuing entities are there? Perhaps the minister might get some advice and tell the House if that is what it means. Does subsection (b) relate to situations where the issuing entity is not a local government, and what other issuing entities does the minister foresee will be issuing permits for grazing stock routes? I am interested in that, my constituents are interested in that and the people who need these permits are interested in that. As far as I know, the only entities that issue these permits are local governments.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** That is right.

**Mr SEENEY:** Is the minister suggesting that there is some anticipation that there will be another entity that will issue these permits? Will that role be taken away from local government and given to someone else? Is that why this has been put in the legislation, or was it just put in there because somebody had nothing to do for a day and wanted to write it? There has to be a reason. The minister's explanation did nothing towards explaining the reason. All he did was explain the original clause. I certainly understood that before the minister's explanation. I would like to know why subsection (b) is included. Is the minister proposing to take away the role of issuing permits from local councils and give it to someone else?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** It is a sad day when the National Party spokesman has no idea how stock routes are managed in this state. I will help him out.

**Mr Seeneey:** Good. That will be a change.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Some local governments are required to prepare stock route management plans; others are not. This provision allows for local governments that are not required to prepare stock route management plans to nevertheless be able to issue permits. That is what it covers. I thought I explained that first up. Perhaps next time I will speak a bit slower for the member.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—

**Mr SEENEY** (8.07 p.m.): Once again, this appears to be another innocuous amendment to the act which was passed in this House in 2002. Clause 14 and the amendment it makes seem to be in direct contradiction to the minister's explanation about clause 8. Clause 14 amends section 159 and it does the opposite to clause 9. It substitutes the word 'landowner' for the term 'permit holder'. When I asked the minister about clause 9, he said that 'landowner' was included for the sake of consistency. I very clearly demonstrated that that was nonsense and could be seen to be nonsense. This is the direct opposite of that. The word 'landowner' is now being taken out and substituted with 'permit holder'. Fairly innocuous stuff, but the question is why? Why, two years after the original act was passed, are we changing all these terms and swapping words around in legislation that is only two years old? I think that members deserve an explanation if we are to avoid the conclusion that it was simply sloppiness on the government's part.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I say to the member for Callide that clearly the reason we have to do this is that he gave insufficient scrutiny to the bill the first time around. Had he picked it up we would have fixed it back then.

**Mr SEENEY:** I think the minister is treating the House with the contempt that we usually get.

**Mr Robertson:** Just you.

**Mr SEENEY:** That is right. There is absolute contempt every time we debate a piece of legislation in the House.

**Mr Robertson:** Guilty as charged, Mr Deputy Speaker Fouras.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): Order! Can I suggest that we get away from personal reflections and get to substantial debate on the clauses. I actually have a very sore throat and I do not want to talk any longer. I do not think that members should be allowed to reflect in that way on each other. I am not going to allow it to happen any longer.

**Mr SEENEY:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not particularly interested in making any reflections on the minister's ability. However, I do think that the House deserves an explanation of why it is necessary to consider this bill tonight in order to make this change. On the face of it, it is an innocuous change. I do not understand why the change is necessary. There is nothing in the explanatory notes which explains why the change is necessary. If this House is going to fulfil its function, if this consideration in detail process is going to fulfil its function, I think it is a legitimate question. Why is it necessary to change this terminology two years after the original act was passed?

I think we can let the record show that the minister treated this House with contempt and was not prepared to make an explanation as to why this change was necessary.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SEENEY:** Do members opposite know? Perhaps one of them might like to explain it to me.

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr SEENEY:** The member for Rockhampton might like to explain it to me.

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr SEENEY:** I saw the minister in the House this morning trying to explain things in his portfolio. He had absolutely no idea either.

**Mr Schwarten:** There is something wrong with your head.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr Schwarten:** He keeps saying things to me.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I am in chair, Minister. I suggest that the member address his comments through the chair. I do not think that the member is entitled to ask other members of the House to explain a clause. That is not in the standing orders. Therefore, I am not going to allow the member to do that.

**Mr SEENEY:** I apologise. Once again I was responding to an interjection.

**Mr Schwarten:** No, you weren't.

**Mr SEENEY:** I was. It was a pretty poor interjection at that.

**Mr Schwarten:** I said that there was something wrong with your head. I was right.

**Mr SEENEY:** That is hardly parliamentary. I find that offensive and ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr Schwarten:** I withdraw it.

**Mr SEENEY:** I will leave the issue there with the observation that the minister has not been able to make any explanation to the House.

Clause 14, as read, agreed to.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! We still have a few clauses left. I am not going to allow this debate to degenerate into a slanging match where people make personal reflections on people's character. Can we get to debating this bill.

Clauses 15 and 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—

**Mr SEENEY** (8.14 p.m.): Clause 17 inserts two new sections 195A and 195B into the bill. The new sections insert an element into the legislation which I find difficult to accept. The two new sections allow investigations about the eligibility of appointments to the Land Protection Council. The minister actually read out the names of those on the council before in his attempts to avoid the obvious truth that the member for Warrego mentioned—that is, that people like Peter Huth were appointed to that board simply because they were Labor mates and they had no expertise in the area at all. The government could not avoid that. That was the point that the member for Warrego was making.

Peter Huth is a failed Labor candidate, a man who left the Gayndah shire and went down to Maryborough and ran as a Labor candidate in Maryborough and got defeated and then got defeated again when he came back to Gayndah with his tail between his legs. He now makes a living out of being appointed to boards because of his Labor connections. That is the type of person that the member for Warrego was talking about. That is the type of person who we have appointed to this council.

These two new sections allow the chief executive to have a police check done on people who are put forward as appointees to these boards. I cannot see the necessity for that. This whole process of doing police checks on people is getting way out of hand. It is almost as though the Minister for Natural Resources has to do a police check on everybody who comes in contact with his department.

I well remember the debate we had in this House when dealing with the vegetation management legislation. That legislation gave the compliance officers, the so-called tree police, the ability to conduct police checks on property owners before they went out to check their vegetation. That totally unnecessary provision was put into the Vegetation Management Act. Now we have a similar provision being placed in this legislation that allows the chief executive—and there one can read the minister—to conduct police checks on the background of people who may be putting themselves forward for inclusion on the Land Protection Council. It is ludicrously unnecessary. What does the minister expect to find and what does the chief executive expect to find when they conduct this police check? Are they protecting themselves in some way from some axe murderer who is going to get himself appointed to the Land Protection Council and then wreak havoc on his fellow board members? What on earth are we dealing with here?

It is almost Stalinist Russia stuff that they have to do a police check on anybody who is going to be appointed. I find it an affront that it should be suggested that there is some danger to be protected against in the appointment of people to this particular board. It is on the grounds of it being totally unnecessary that I say that this House should not accept this clause that amends section 195 unless there is a particularly good reason that the minister can provide.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The hypocrisy of the member opposite is absolutely breathtaking. Here we have yet another personal attack. In this case it is on Peter Huth, a member of the council. The allegation is that the only qualification that Peter Huth has is a local government qualification. If being a mayor of a rural shire is an unsatisfactory qualification for sitting on the Land Protection Council then the member for Callide should resign his commission immediately. The only qualification that he has is local government experience.

You cannot have it both ways, you hypocrite. He attacks Peter Huth because he has local government experience and he stands there barefaced, his only qualification being that he has had local government experience. That is absolute hypocrisy.

**Mr Seeneey:** Mr Deputy Speaker, if you are not going to—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): Order! There is a point of order. The word 'hypocrite' is unparliamentary. I ask the minister to withdraw.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I withdraw, but he is acting in a hypocritical manner. The hypocrisy continues because just this morning he attacked the Minister For Racing on the basis of probity checks. In fact, throughout all of this term members of the National Party have been on their feet arguing about every appointment that this government has made and claiming that the necessary probity checks to ensure the suitability of people to sit on government appointed boards were not done. He is nothing but a hypocrite.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Minister, again I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** He is demonstrating nothing but hypocrisy.

**Mr SEENEY:** We do battle to keep the standards up in this place. Be that as it may, once again the minister has offered no explanation for the inclusion of this clause. This clause allows a criminal history check to be done on someone who is seeking appointment to the Land Protection Council. The

Land Protection Council is not like the Thoroughbred Racing Board, which deals with huge amounts of money.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Callide that standing orders state that he must not be repetitive. He made that argument very well the first time he spoke. He may speak another two times, but I will not allow him to make the same argument three times.

**Mr SEENEY:** I am not. With respect, I do not think that I had made the comparison. I am responding to the minister's assertion that my suggestion was hypocritical because this morning we had made an issue about Bill Ludwig and the Thoroughbred Racing Board. As it turned out, he was not subject to the same checks. Because it was Bill Ludwig, he got through without doing the checks that everyone else would have had to do. The minister told us that he was going to do it afterwards. Perhaps he might like to correct us.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. We know that the National Party wanted to allow criminals onto this board.

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

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, the comment made was offensive to me. I ask for it to be withdrawn. It is untrue.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! It was not a personal comment.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** It was a reflection on me. The comment was that I appointed Bill Ludwig without any checks whatsoever. That is not right. I ask for it to be withdrawn. The last time I looked at the standing orders it said that if I found something offensive I could ask for it be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** If the minister finds it offensive, I ask for it to be withdrawn.

**Mr SEENEY:** Whatever the minister found offensive I will withdraw. The relevant point is that we saw that those requirements were not complied with in that particular case.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. My point of order is that the law has been complied with 100 per cent.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The minister will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Then I will make it a point of privilege.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It is not a matter of privilege either.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** It is a matter of privilege.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am in the chair, Minister. It is not a matter of privilege. It has nothing to do with privilege. The comments are not personally directed at the minister. I suggest to the House that if people are listening to this debate on the Internet, they will be thinking, 'What a childish debate.'

**Mr SEENEY:** All I am trying to do is get an explanation as to why it is necessary to conduct police checks and criminal history checks on people who are seeking to serve on the Land Protection Council. I think that is a fair question.

**Mr Robertson:** I am happy to help.

**Mr SEENEY:** The minister did not help the first time. When I asked the question the first time, all I got was a tirade about comments I made about Peter Huth. I put it on the record that Peter Huth is a mate of mine. I have known him for a long time. I worked with him in local government for a long time. Perhaps the minister can explain.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I am happy to explain, if the member will sit down. He does go on!

With the Land Protection Council, it is not mandatory: 'The chief executive will undertake investigations which may include', and so on. For example, if someone had been convicted of a serious tree clearing offence, that is, that person had illegally cleared trees on their land, I do not think that it would be appropriate for that person to serve on the Land Protection Council. It would seem to me that that would be somewhat of a contradiction and inappropriate. However, one will not know that unless the necessary checks are made.

Could members imagine if I appointed to the Land Protection Council someone who had been convicted of a serious illegal offence? I would be laughed out of this place not just by members opposite but also, I suspect, by government members as well. In that case it makes sense to do checks.

**Mr Seeneey:** No.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Of course it does.

**Mr SEENEY:** The explanation that this House is being offered is lame in the extreme. Obviously there are eligibility criteria for people who are seeking to be appointed to the Land Protection Council. Obviously there are. It is incumbent on a minister who is charged with the responsibility of making those appointments to know the character of the people he is about to appoint. The minister read the list before. We are talking about people who represent industry groups and who are leaders in their

particular field. They have to be. With the exception of the token Labor mates who they struggle to find jobs for, most of the appointments to that particular board represent sections of the industry. Why on earth would it be necessary to do a criminal history check? Why on earth would it be necessary to subject those people to that sort of intrusion when they are trying to represent their industry bodies?

The explanation that the minister offers is lame and I do not think it justifies the inclusion of this provision in the legislation. As I said at the beginning of the consideration of this clause, this provision is being inserted into legislation with an alarming regularity. Somewhere or other we have to say that it is not appropriate to give people the power to conduct police checks on individuals simply because they are going to be appointed to what is a semi voluntary role. It is a a nonsense and there is no reason for it. The minister has not given an explanation for it.

Nothing has happened in the two years since the original act was passed to make this relevant. I make that point again, because it is very pertinent: two years ago we passed the Land Protection Act 2002. What has happened in the past two years that can possibly warrant the inclusion of this intrusive provision in the bill that is before the House tonight? There is no way that it should be included.

**Question**—That clause 17, as read, stand part of the bill—put; and the House divided—

**AYES, 54**—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E.Clark, Croft, Cummins, E.Cunningham, Fenlon, Finn, Foley, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Reilly, Reynolds, N.Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Smith, Stone, Struthers, C.Sullivan, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T.Sullivan, Nolan

**NOES, 18**—Copeland, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Menkens, Messenger, Quinn, Rickuss, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg. Tellers: Malone, Hopper

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clause 18—

**Mr SEENEY** (8.35 p.m.): Once again, clause 18 has been included with no apparent explanation and no justification offered to the House. Clause 18 amends section 224 of the original act—and once again it is worth making the point that that legislation was passed through this House less than two years ago. Now the House is being asked to consider an amendment that amends section 224, which deals with the qualifications for appointment to the Land Protection Council.

The question that I ask is the one that I have asked a number of times tonight and I hope that the minister can provide the House with a better explanation than he did in response to those previous requests. Why is it necessary to amend section 224 of the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act two years after it was passed through the House? Why is it necessary to amend it, as this particular clause does, to allow a regulation—and I will quote it for those members who have not read the bill—to allow—

... a regulation establishing a pest operational board may prescribe residential or land ownership or occupation requirements as qualifications for appointment as a director.

Once again, as I acknowledged in the consideration of the previous clause, it is easy enough to understand that people who have been considered for appointment to these positions would have certain prerequisite qualifications. That goes without saying. They would have to have certain abilities and understandings of the issues involved if they were going to be appointed to these positions. But this clause is inserting into an act that we passed two years ago the provision for a regulation to be drawn up at the minister's discretion—remembering that regulations are drawn up at the minister's discretion—that will allow the prescription of certain factors as necessary qualifications. Those factors would apparently be residential, or land ownership or occupation requirements as qualifications for appointment as a director. The question is why. I think that we are deserving of an answer. We are deserving of a better explanation than we have had to the previous clauses that have made up parts of this bill.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I refer to my answer to the previous clause.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Can I suggest to the member that he has asked the question. He cannot keep on repeating the same comments. The member has referred to the two years. He is repeating himself. I know that the member is entitled to speak to a clause for 10 minutes, but he just cannot keep on repeating himself, because it gets a bit boring.

**Mr SEENEY:** I am entitled to seek answers. That is what the process is for. I am entitled to seek answers.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** He gave you the answer.

**Mr SEENEY:** He did not give me the answer. What was the answer? He did not give me the answer. You do not have a clue. Nobody in the House has been informed as to why—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member will address his comments through the chair and the minister will stop interjecting.

**Mr SEENEY:** The purpose of this whole process of consideration in detail is for the House to seek explanations as to the reason for the inclusion of these provisions in the bill. I seek that explanation. Why is it necessary to amend section 224?

The minister's initial response was nonsensical. This provision has nothing to do with the previous provision, which allowed for police criminal history checks. This provision allows for the prescribing of a regulation that sets parameters for the appointment of people to a pest operational board. What has happened in the last two years since we passed this legislation that warrants the amendment of this section for the inclusion of the right for the minister to prescribe a regulation? That is a fair question that deserves an answer.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Callide can say the same thing again.

**Mr SEENEY:** No, I am not going to say the same thing, because obviously it is a waste of time. What I do want to put on record is that the minister's lack of response illustrates the contempt with which he treats this parliament. It illustrates the contempt with which every piece of legislation that deals with the management of our natural resources is treated in this parliament. It demonstrates, as the member for Burnett says, the total arrogance of a minister who comes in here, with a huge majority behind him, and refuses to participate—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr SEENEY:** No, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am entitled to make these comments. I am entitled to put on record for people who will read this debate—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Resume your seat. All you are doing is making a series of personal reflections against the minister. That is actually against the standing orders. I suggest that the minister has made his position very clear. He is not going to answer like that. You are debating a point that is not relevant at all. I am going to put the question. Resume your seat.

**Mr HOBBS:** I have been quite intrigued that the minister really has not explained it. Can't the minister simply explain to this House exactly what he means?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! If that is what your argument is going to be, that is repetition.

**Mr Hobbs:** It isn't.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Resume your seat. You are repeating the argument. Resume your seat.

**Mr Hobbs:** Come on.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I am on my feet. Resume your seat. I am going to put the question. I am in the chair. You are not going to repeat the arguments of the previous member. I am not going to allow you to make a joke of this institution. I am now going to put the question.

Clause 18, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 19 to 21, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

**Mr ROBERTSON (8.42 p.m.):** I table the explanatory notes. I move the following amendment—

1 **Clause 21—**

At page 13, after line 12—

*insert—*

**'Part 2A Amendment of Petroleum and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004**

**21A Act amended in pt 2A**

This part amends the *Petroleum and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004*.

**21B Amendment of s 19 (Replacement of s 25 (Limit to number of permits and leases))**

Section 19, inserted section 25L(2) (a), 'renewed'—

*omit, insert—*

'replaced'.

**21C Amendment of s 104 (Amendment of s 159 (Obligation to lodge proposed later development plan))**

Section 104(2), '*omit,*'—

*omit.*

**21D Amendment of s 153 (Amendment of s 409 (Requirements for making application))**

Section 153(1), '*omit,*'—

*omit.*'

**Mr Hobbs:** Can you explain it?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Can I?

**Mr Hobbs:** Yes.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I am glad you asked that. These amendments to the Petroleum and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004 are minor and correct typographical errors which would have had unintended consequences. In clauses 21C and 21D, the omission of the very important word 'omit' will be rectified by this amendment. The term 'renewed' will be omitted in clause 21B and the word 'replaced' inserted. This correction is needed as it is impossible for an authority to prospect under the Petroleum Act to be renewed under the new Petroleum and Gas Act. Instead, the holder of the ATP is required to apply for a replacement tenure. This amendment ensures that the two acts are operating consistently.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 22 to 42, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

**Mr ROBERTSON** (8.44 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

- 2 **Clause 42—**  
At page 22, after line 3—  
*insert—*
- 'Part 6** **Amendment of Vegetation Management Act 1999**
- 43 **Act amended in pt 6**  
This part amends the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.
- 44 **Amendment of s 22H (Modifying Planning Act effect on changing broadscale application)**  
Section 22H(b), after 'increases'—  
*insert—*  
'the size of'.
- 45 **Replacement of ss 76 and 77**  
Sections 76 and 77—  
*omit, insert—*
- '76 Existing applications (pre VACA) and development approvals**
- '(1) Despite the Planning Act—
- (a) before an existing application (pre VACA)<sup>1</sup> is decided, the application can not be changed in any way that increases the size of the area proposed to be cleared; and
- (b) from the day the application is decided until the day the development approval for the application has effect<sup>2</sup>, the application can not be changed in any way that—
- (i) increases the size of the area proposed to be cleared; or
- (ii) changes the location of the area proposed to be cleared; and
- (c) from the day the development approval has effect, the approval can not be changed in any way that—
- (i) increases the size of the area approved to be cleared; or
- (ii) changes the location of the area approved to be cleared; or
- (iii) extends the currency period for the approval.
- '(2) Subsection (1) (b) (ii) does not apply to an application decided before the commencement of this section if an appeal against the decision was started before the commencement.
- '(3) Subsection (1) (c) applies to a development approval even if the approval had effect before the commencement of this section.
- '(4) Despite the Planning Act, section 3.5.21,<sup>3</sup> the currency period for a development approval for an existing application (pre VACA) must end no later than 31 December 2006.
- '(5) In this section—
- existing application (pre VACA)** means a development application, as defined under the Planning Act, involving the clearing of vegetation and made before midday 16 May 2003.
- location**, of an area proposed to be cleared in an existing application (pre VACA), means—
- (a) the boundary delineating the area in the property vegetation management plan for the application; or
- (b) if the application was amended before it was decided—the boundary of the area described in the amendment.
- '77 Existing applications (pre VACA) and permits under the Land Act 1994**
- '(1) An existing application (pre VACA) must be dealt with under the *Land Act 1994*, as in force on 20 May 2004.
- '(2) Despite subsection (1)—
- (a) before an existing application (pre VACA) is decided, the application can not be changed in any way that increases the size of the area proposed to be cleared; and
- (b) from the day the application is decided until the end of the appeal period, the application can not be changed in any way that—
- (i) increases the size of the area proposed to be cleared; or
- (ii) changes the location of the area proposed to be cleared; and

- (c) from the end of the appeal period, the permit can not be changed in any way that—
- (i) increases the size of the area approved to be cleared; or
  - (ii) changes the location of the area approved to be cleared; or
  - (iii) extends the term of the permit.
- '(3) Subsection (2) (b) (ii) does not apply to an application decided before the commencement of this section if an appeal against the decision was started before the commencement.
- '(4) Subsection (2) (c) applies to a tree clearing permit even if the appeal period, in relation to the permit, ended before the commencement of this section.
- '(5) Despite the *Land Act 1994*, section 264,<sup>4</sup> the term of a tree clearing permit for an existing application (pre VACA) must end no later than 31 December 2006.
- '(6) In this section—
- end of the appeal period** means—
- (a) for an application for an internal review of a decision under the *Land Act 1994*, section 263—the day the Minister makes a review decision under the *Land Act 1994*, section 426; and
  - (b) for an appeal against a review decision—the day the court decides the appeal under the *Land Act 1994*, section 429; and
  - (c) otherwise—42 days after notice of the decision is given to the applicant.
- existing application (pre VACA)** means an application for a tree clearing permit, made before midday 16 May 2003 under the *Land Act 1994*, chapter 5, part 6, as in force at that time.
- location**, of an area proposed to be cleared in an existing application (pre VACA), means—
- (a) the boundary delineating the area in—
    - (i) the property vegetation management plan for the application; or
    - (ii) the map requested by the chief executive under the *Land Act 1994*, section 260(2) (b)<sup>5</sup> for the application; or
  - (b) if the application was amended before it was decided—the boundary of the area described in the amendment.<sup>6</sup>

#### 46 Amendment of s 78 (Existing applications (post VACA) under the Land Act 1994)

Section 78(2)—

omit, insert—

- '(2) Despite subsection (1), the chief executive must refuse to issue the tree clearing permit, without considering the issues stated in the *Land Act 1994*, section 262<sup>6</sup>, unless the applicant satisfies the chief executive—
- (a) the proposed tree clearing is necessary for 1 or more of the following—
    - (i) a project declared to be a significant project under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*, section 26;<sup>7</sup>
    - (ii) a project that is of major significance because of its regional, State or national benefit;
    - (iii) supplying fodder for stock in a drought declared area;
    - (iv) weed control;
    - (v) ensuring public safety;
    - (vi) establishing a necessary fence, road or other built infrastructure if there is no suitable alternative site for the fence, road or infrastructure; or
  - (b) the area proposed to be cleared is an area of regrowth vegetation.
- '(3) In this section—
- existing application (post VACA)** means an application for a tree clearing permit made at or after midday 16 May 2003 under the *Land Act 1994*, chapter 5, part 6, as in force at that time.
- tree** has the same meaning as in the *Forestry Act 1959*.<sup>1</sup>

1 References to VACA relate to the *Vegetation (Application for Clearing) Act 2003*, repealed by Act No. 1 of 2004.

2 See the Planning Act, section 3.5.19 (When approval takes effect).

3 Planning Act, section 3.5.21 (When approval lapses)

4 *Land Act 1994*, section 264 (Terms of tree clearing permit)

5 *Land Act 1994*, section 260 (How application for tree clearing permit made)

6 *Land Act 1994*, section 262 (Issues chief executive must consider)

7 *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*, section 26 (Declaration of significant project)

This amendment to the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* ensures the integrity of the broadscale clearing ballot. In particular, the amendment prevents the situation where an applicant can change the location of the area to be cleared during an appeal of the original decision. It will not restrict the Planning and Environment Court or the Land Court's powers to rectify incorrect decisions, and it will not affect the right to appeal.

The moratorium on further clearing applications introduced in May 2003, after the state and the Commonwealth jointly announced our intention to end broadscale clearing, was put in place to prevent a

rush of panic clearing applications. Any applications received before the moratorium was introduced were to be assessed and any areas approved would be subtracted from the 500,000 hectare cap. The balance of that area would then be allocated through a ballot process.

Legislative restrictions were placed on all pre 16 May 2003 applications to prevent applications being amended to increase the area proposed to be cleared. In early September 2004, 200,000 hectares was prescribed under the regulation for allocation through the ballot process. This was based on an estimate of the likely extent of the area to be approved under all pre 16 May 2003 applications.

A recent Planning and Environment Court hearing identified an ambiguity where an appellant in the course of an appeal against a decision on a vegetation clearing application could apply to the court to amend a clearing application to consider further areas outside the original application. The repercussions of this case mean that land-holders could seek to move the footprint of an application through the appeal process until the full extent of the area originally applied for was met, including the assessment of additional areas not included in the original application.

Less than 35 per cent of the total area applied to be cleared under pre 16 May 2003 applications has been approved. If all of these applications—over 300—were to go to appeal and additional areas progressively considered until the total area of each application is approved, clearing approvals would exceed the 300,000 hectares previously estimated, thus either affecting the 200,000 hectares put aside for the ballot process or exceeding the 500,000 hectare cap we committed to. These amendments are necessary to ensure the integrity of the broadscale clearing ballot and protect the interests of all land-holders who have participated.

**Mr SEENEY:** As I indicated in my contribution to the second reading debate, the opposition will be strenuously opposing this amendment. This amendment has nothing to do with the bill as it was introduced into this House. The original bill that was introduced into this House did not even mention the Vegetation Management Act. This amendment has been tacked onto the bill before the House, once again to solve a political problem that the government has. In the explanation, so-called, that the minister read out as to the reason for this amendment, the minister gives the real reason for this amendment.

In amongst all of that gobbledegook, which the minister did not understand, there was a short section where he referred to an action in the appeal court. The government is once again seeking to legislate itself out of trouble. It is seeking to legislate away an appellant's rights. That is what this is about. The reason it is doing that is to meet its own crass political purposes. That should come as no surprise to any member of this House or indeed to anybody who has even a fleeting knowledge of the vegetation management legislation and the way it has been treated in this House and in the community generally since it was first introduced in 1999. It has always been political legislation.

Vegetation management has always been about meeting the government's political goals. It has always been a political football. The rights of the people who are affected have always been ignored. The dishonesty has always been there when the government talks about what it is trying to achieve with the Vegetation Management Act. Here it is again tonight in this amendment that is before the House. We see further dishonesty from the minister in his explanation to the House of why this amendment has been tacked on to the land protection bill.

The government has never been about achieving good outcomes from the vegetation management in Queensland. It has never been about achieving sustainable development. It has never been interested in achieving the good outcomes that good land managers have been striving for. It has been about achieving its political goals and achieving its slogan-type outcomes that it needs for its political purposes in urban areas where these issues are all too easily misconstrued and all too easily misrepresented, as they were in the last election campaign.

Essentially what this amendment does is ensure that the government meets its political objective of ending broadscale clearing by December 2006. It does that by taking away the rights of land-holders to adjust their applications for permits to meet the government's stated outcomes. In other words, the government is not prepared to let land-holders meet the outcomes that they have set. If it allowed that process to progress, if it allowed land-holders to meet the stated outcomes, it would mean that the whole process would take a little more time than the government has and it would not meet the 2006 deadline. The government is more interested in meeting the 2006 deadline—the arbitrary, politically set deadline—than it is in achieving the good outcomes that land managers are striving for.

Essentially what happens is that land-holders apply for a permit, and when it is assessed by the department certain decisions are made—and they are arbitrary decisions. I and other members have spoken about that issue in this House a number of times. They are fairly arbitrary decisions about how that particular application meets the government's stated outcomes. Those outcomes vary from application to application, but they are based on things like achieving biodiversity, wildlife corridors and wildlife refuges, protection for sensitive areas, stream buffers and things such as that.

The department says that a particular application does not conform because it does not meet these particular stated outcomes. If the government were serious about achieving positive outcomes, if

it were serious about all the rhetoric we hear spouted about protecting the environment and providing sustainable management outcomes from the process, what it would do is allow the permit application to be adjusted to meet those outcomes. Outcomes could be met not by increasing the area that would be cleared but by shifting the areas which have been applied to be cleared in the permit. So, whatever stated outcomes the government has, they could be met. How those outcomes can be met and what the land-holder has to do can be established through the appeals process.

What this amendment does is take that right away. It prevents land-holders from making the changes that are necessary to their applications to meet the outcomes that the government has set. The government is not interested in achieving those outcomes. It is not interested in achieving good land management outcomes from the vegetation management legislation. It is interested in its political slogan outcomes. It wants to set up this political process so that by the end of December 2006 we will have some political fanfare with broadscale clearing coming to an end. No-one in this government cares about whether or not the land clearing that happens between now and then is a good environmental outcome. There is no consideration for the environment in this whole process—none at all. It is about getting through the process to a politically motivated timetable. If there were, this government would be prepared to work with land-holders to give them an opportunity to progress their applications through that appeal process in a bid to meet the outcomes that are defined. That is what the government would be doing. That would be the sensible thing to do—to work with land-holders to give them an opportunity to adjust their land clearing applications to meet the outcomes that the government sets.

The government is not interested in that. It accords with the approach the government has taken right from the start, because no single piece of legislation has done more to alienate Queensland land-holders from the state government than this vegetation management legislation which once again is being amended tonight. We have opposed the vegetation management legislation from the very beginning. Time has proven that the arguments that I have mounted in this House since 1999 are dead right. They are dead right because the vegetation management legislation has produced without fear of argument more bad outcomes than good outcomes.

That is a tragedy for any of us who value sustainable land management. It is a tragedy for any of us who value the environment of rural and regional Queensland. The government has never understood the impact of its legislation. It has been more interested in political outcomes for digestion in urban electorates, and so it is with this amendment before the House tonight. It should be rejected. The government has learnt nothing from the debacle that it put in place over the last five years. It has learnt nothing from the great tragedy it has visited upon rural and regional Queensland, and this amendment will only make that situation worse. It will prevent land-holders from achieving those good environmental outcomes which they want and which the government does not want.

Time expired.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): Order! The sessional orders indicate that the adjournment debate motion is to be moved by 9 o'clock. So the member for Warrego does not have five minutes.

**Mr HOBBS**: I would like the minister to explain to us the exact circumstances that prompted this amendment. I would like the minister to share with this parliament the reasons why this amendment is before us tonight. What is the sense of talking? He is not even listening.

**Mr Lawlor** interjected.

**Mr HOBBS**: I can tell a joke if you like. I might as well. Have you heard the one about—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order! The minister is seeking advice from the table. He is entitled to do that. You can wait for him to come back but I will not allow you to reduce this place to a joke.

**Mr HOBBS**: No, the minister has already done that, Mr Deputy Speaker, but you are quite right.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order! That is a reflection on the chair.

**Mr ROBERTSON**: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. That is a reflection on me. I find it offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr HOBBS**: I withdraw.

Interruption.

## SITTING HOURS; ORDER OF BUSINESS

**Hon. S. ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (9.01 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That notwithstanding anything contained in the standing and sessional orders, for this day's sitting, the House do continue to meet past 9.00 p.m. to consider government business until the adjournment is moved, to be followed by a 30-minute adjournment debate.

Motion agreed to.

## NATURAL RESOURCES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Consideration in Detail

Resumed from p. 2990.

**Mr ROBERTSON** (9.02 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** No, he sat down.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): He does have the call still.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** He sat down.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** No, he has the call.

**Mr Hobbs:** Is the minister going to respond?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Yes.

**Mr Hobbs:** I do not mind.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The member for Warrego sat down. I am happy to respond. The explanation is contained in the explanation I provided in introducing this amendment, that there is a case which was before the Planning and Environment Court where the applicant sought to amend the original tree clearing application to go beyond the bounds upon which he had initially applied. That is the circumstance that we believe should not be allowed to occur and it is the reason for the amendment.

**Mr SEENEY:** There are two elements to this amendment. One deals with what the minister spoke about, which is the issue of increasing the area that the permit covers. I do not think anyone has too much issue with that, that the area should not be increased once the initial application is made.

The other and more important and more critical part of the amendment is the one that prohibits the applicant to move the footprint, to use the minister's words. Basically, it prevents the applicant from appealing and, as a part of that appeal, adjusting the application to meet the requirements that the government has set. That is what it does. The minister outlined in the address that he made when he moved the amendment that it is about meeting the political timetable. It is about preventing people from going through the appeal process and adjusting the areas within their application to meet the government's defined outcomes—to meet the objections or the problems that are identified by the government in its initial consideration of the application.

That does not make any sense to anybody who considers the issue logically. If the government was honestly interested in achieving environmentally sustainable outcomes—in achieving good land management outcomes—it would be working with land-holders. It would be giving land-holders every opportunity to adjust the footprint, once again to use the minister's terminology. Here is a situation where the government is refusing to do that. Here we have a situation where land-holders are trying to work with the government. They are trying to adjust their property management plans. They are trying to adjust their applications not in terms of total area—not in the terms that the minister spoke about quite erroneously and quite deliberately erroneously—but in terms of the areas that their clearing application covers as part of the appeal process in an effort to meet the government's outcomes. The government is saying, 'No, we're not interested in that. We're not interested in working with you land-holders to achieve these outcomes. We are interested in achieving our outcome, and our outcome is to get this whole process through and the whole thing done by 2006.' That is what has not been explained, because it is a tight time frame. We had the nonsensical, lucky dip ballot. How ridiculous was that? We had that three weeks ago where land-holders' very futures were decided by the draw out of the hat.

Now we are on a very tight time frame. This amendment is necessary if the government is going to have any chance of sticking to that tight time frame, but ask yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker—and every member should ask themselves—why is it necessary to have that tight time frame? The answer is a political one, just as the motivation for this legislation has been political from day one. The answer is that the 2006 deadline is about a month and a half or two months before the next election is due. That is why 2006 has been chosen. It has not been chosen because that produces the best land management outcomes and it has not been chosen because it produces the best environmental outcomes. It has not been chosen for any reason other than the fact that it is just before the next election. Members can see what the government is doing. It is setting the whole process up for the next election campaign. That comes as no surprise to anybody because that is what vegetation management has been about from day one. It has been about a political opportunity for the Labor government. It has been about a political opportunity for people who do have not a clue about natural resource management. We saw that political opportunity exercised by a range of members in the last election campaign.

This amendment is about protecting that political opportunity in the next election campaign. It is not about sustainable land management. It is not about any concern for the environment, and it should

be rejected by any member in this House who has any concern about the environment and who has any concern about the management of natural resources in Queensland.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** When all the personal invective is put aside—all of the offensive personal attacks and all of the insults—what is left when it comes to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is an appalling lack of knowledge about how tree clearing applications are handled by my department because the very things that he accuses my department of—

**Mr Messenger:** Five weeks to get back any phone calls. That is not good enough.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The very thing that the member alleges is, in fact, not the case because at the time of application the department actually works with the land-holder and—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Callide has been listened to by the minister for 15 minutes on this clause so far without any interjection. You do not know how long you go on and on and on, member for Callide. I would ask you to give the same courtesy to the minister.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** What happens when the tree clearing application is assessed is that the vegetation officers in my department actually sit down with the land-holder, and where the footprint can be moved it is done at the time of the assessment of the application. The flexibility that the member has been talking about that he wants to see is, in fact, the case. That is the day-to-day work that is done by vegetation management officers who assess applications.

What we are talking about here are situations of appeal after consideration has already been given by the department to moving the footprint based on the initial application. That is why it is not appropriate during an appeal to allow further consideration since that consideration had already been given on the original application which had become subject to the appeal.

**Mr SEENEY:** The minister, as he often does, is providing the House with a misleading indication of what the situation is. What he says is not untrue, but it is not the whole truth. It is deliberately not the whole truth because the minister seeks to misrepresent what this amendment does. The minister's comments are true to the extent that consideration is given while the application is being prepared. As I said before, these decisions are arbitrary decisions. When the departmental officers who come to talk to land-holders do eventually talk to them—and if I had time I could illustrate the extent to which the land-holders become frustrated about that whole process—they do go through this process that the minister outlined of trying to meet these arbitrary indicators that the department has.

That is all very well, so long as the land-holder agrees with the departmental officer and does not argue or have a different opinion and does not try to use the benefit of their local knowledge that has been acquired over generations of management of that particular piece of land. As long as they do not seek to do any of those things and just accept the department's opinion or assessment without any quibble at all, then they are able to adjust the area that they want to include in their application. However, they may have a different opinion or their understanding may be different from that of the departmental officer—and why wouldn't it be? Surely it would be surprising if it was not. We are talking about, on the one hand, land-holders who have generations of experience and understanding of a particular property and, on the other, in the main, very young departmental officers who turn up in a government Toyota with a satellite map and think they have all the answers.

Obviously there will be differences of opinion about how those arbitrary outcomes I spoke about at length before will be met. Of course there will be differences and of course there needs to be a process to resolve those differences—that is the appeal process. In effect, this amendment blackmails the land-holder into accepting the 'suggestion' made by the departmental officer. If they go to appeal and seek to have their case adjudicated by somebody else, the government will legislate away their right to adjust the areas covered by the permit and will legislate away their right to make any adjustment in order to achieve the government's stated outcomes. That is a nonsense and that is the effect of this amendment. It is here because land-holders have been successful in doing that. The arbitrators of those appeals have been fair-minded enough to recognise that the outcomes can be met by the types of adjustments which this amendment is seeking to take away.

That is what this is about and every member of this House should understand that. It is about ensuring that the government can meet its political outcomes. It is about ensuring that departmental officers can reinforce their power over land-holders and use that power to blackmail land-holders into accepting their suggestions without the right to have any differences heard by a third party.

This amendment is a continuation of the dishonesty and the injustice of the Vegetation Management Act and it should be rejected by this parliament. It will certainly be opposed by every member of the National Party opposition, just as we opposed the injustices of the Vegetation Management Act from day one. We believe in sustainable management, not political management, of Queensland's natural resources.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): Order! The member's time has expired.

**Mr HOBBS:** Perhaps the minister can clarify something for members relating particularly to the freehold land under the Integrated Planning Act. Is this more about avoiding compensation payments under the Integrated Planning Act in relation to applications on freehold land? If an application is made under that act and it is rejected, I believe that compensation should be paid. Can the minister explain whether that is right or wrong, and the issue in relation to leasehold land. What exactly is the difference between the two?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I will answer the member's first question and that will suffice for the remainder. They will become irrelevant because the answer is no.

**Mr HOBBS:** Does the minister really know that? Why would an application under the Integrated Planning Act on freehold land not incur a compensation principle?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): Order! I have been advised by the Clerk that the member for Warrego has had his two opportunities and that is it.

**Mr HOBBS:** I would not think so.

**Question—**That the minister's amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

**AYES, 55—**Attwood, Barry, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E.Clark, Croft, Cummins, Fenlon, Finn, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Langbroek, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, McArdle, McGrady, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Quinn, Reilly, Reynolds, N.Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Smith, Stone, Struthers, C.Sullivan, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T.Sullivan, Nolan

**NOES, 18—**Copeland, E.Cunningham, Foley, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Lee Long, Lingard, Menkens, Messenger, Rickuss, Rowell, Seeneey, Simpson, Springborg, Wellington. Tellers: Hopper, Malone

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

### Third Reading

**Hon. S. ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (9.23 p.m.), by leave, I move—

That the bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): I remind the member for Callide that he cannot bring up any matters that have been discussed during the second reading stage of debate. The member has to bring something new into the debate. That is very challenging.

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (9.24 p.m.): I simply want to put on the record that the opposition would have liked to have supported the bill as introduced into the House. Because it was saddled with an amendment which was totally unacceptable to us, we will oppose it at the third reading stage of debate. We did not oppose the bill at the second reading stage because we were dealing then with the bill as introduced. With the passage of the amendment that was just carried by this House we will be opposing it at the third reading stage.

**Question—**That the bill, as amended, be now read a third time—put; and the House divided—

**AYES, 55—**Attwood, Barry, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E.Clark, Croft, Cummins, Fenlon, Finn, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Langbroek, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McArdle, McGrady, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Quinn, Reilly, Reynolds, N.Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Spence, Stone, Struthers, C.Sullivan, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T.Sullivan, Nolan

**NOES, 18—**Copeland, E.Cunningham, Foley, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Lee Long, Lingard, Menkens, Messenger, Rickuss, Rowell, Seeneey, Simpson, Springborg, Wellington. Tellers: Hopper, Malone

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

## PETROLEUM (SUBMERGED LANDS) AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 17 August 2004 (see p.1842).

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call the honourable member for Callide.

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (9.30 p.m.): Mr Speaker—

**Mr Robertson** interjected.

**Mr SEENEY:** You can go if you like; nobody would miss you.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! We will have no more of that tonight.

**Mr SEENEY:** I am trying to respond to the interjection, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I have made a ruling.

**Mr SEENEY:** The minister interjected before I began to speak. I am entitled to respond to the interjection.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! All I have heard today is that when the Springsure kids were here, this place was in uproar and when other children were here, this place was in uproar. I am saying that this place will come to order. If I have to throw the lot of you out, I will do it tomorrow. I now call on the member for Callide and I ask for civility and respect for the parliament and respect for the chair, and also from the government benches as well. I will not brook any more of this behaviour.

**Mr SEENEY:** I am happy to make this contribution on behalf of the opposition to the consideration of the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Amendment Bill 2004. The bill before the House is being introduced to ensure that state laws remain valid when the Commonwealth offshore petroleum act is enacted and to ensure that the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority can function as it was intended by the Commonwealth government as the national regulator of offshore oil and gas facilities.

The opposition has no problems with this legislation and recognises the need for it. Therefore, we will be supporting the bill. While Queensland does not have any offshore petroleum facilities, the industry is very important to the national economy with about 50 petroleum facilities in Australian offshore waters ranging from fixed and floating mobile drilling rigs to support barges. According to a Commonwealth Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources fact sheet, domestic production can meet 70 per cent of Australia's oil requirements and all the gas used by industry and domestic consumers in the west and south-east of the continent. Australia is a major supplier of liquified natural gas to Japan and a \$25 billion 25-year deal was recently signed with China.

Following a review of offshore safety in 2001, the Commonwealth recommended the development of a single national offshore petroleum safety agency to regulate activities in both Commonwealth and state waters. This effectively dispenses with the piecemeal approach to offshore safety that has applied across Australian jurisdictions. The new authority will replace six existing regulators, ruling out many of the problems that may arise from having separate state-based systems.

A consistent and comprehensive safety regime should increase Australia's attractiveness for potential petroleum investors. Further, a local oil and gas industry relies on a secure, consistent supply at a competitive price and this new national body should help guard against serious disruptions to that supply.

I understand that the Commonwealth government has allocated some \$6.1 million over three years to establish the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority, which will be a statutory body managed by a board whose members are selected by the Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources. It will be funded by industry levies.

This bill provides for a safety authority board that will give advice and make recommendations to governments on policy or occupational health and safety issues on offshore facilities. I believe that the industry is right behind the new authority, with Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association Executive Director Barry Jones stating in a media release on 1 December 2003, 'Consistency of administration nationally will mean greater work force mobility and lower industry compliance costs.'

The opposition has long had a record of supporting industry needs and supporting industry positions on issues such as this. We will do so again tonight. We have no problems with the bill and we are happy to support its passage through the House.

**Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (9.34 p.m.): I rise in support of the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Amendment Bill. The intent of this bill is to make federal and state laws consistent and to help make offshore facilities safer and healthier workplaces. The background to the bill is straightforward. In 2001 the federal government's Department of Industry, Science and Resources, working collaboratively with the offshore petroleum industry and the unions, prepared a report on offshore safety. The report identified serious inadequacies in the regulatory system, including overlapping and inconsistencies between the federal and state jurisdictions.

In response, the Australian government created the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority to regulate occupational health and safety matters on offshore facilities. The Australian government has already amended its own legislation so the safety authority can undertake its regulatory activities in Commonwealth waters, along with the safety authority having the ability to fully recover its operating costs through industry fees and levies.

As a party to the offshore constitutional settlement with the Australian government, Queensland is obliged to enact legislation to allow the safety authority to carry out its important work in state waters. This is the thrust of this legislation. The bill replaces current state laws relating to offshore facilities. This bill is about a collaborative occupational health and safety approach to offshore petroleum facilities to ensure that an incident such as Piper Alpha in Victorian waters never occurs.

To refresh members' minds, I want to reflect on that terrible accident which occurred just after 10 p.m. on 6 July 1988. That night, of the 226 workers on the oil rig 165 died, along with two people from rescue vessels sent to assist. It was the world's worst offshore disaster. The cause of the accident can be traced to earlier that day when work ceased on repairing a backup propane condensate pump, leaving a hole in the pump where a valve had been. Just before 10 p.m. a new shift started. When the

primary propane condensate pump failed, the new shift workers were unaware that the backup pump was inoperable and they started it up. The first explosion was caused by gas escaping from the valve hole. The firewalls separating different parts of the facility failed, igniting oil stores. A few minutes later gas risers on other platforms burst. These pipes were carrying gas at 2,000 pounds per square inch. When people said that they saw the flames from 85 miles away, members can understand why.

There had been no full safety drill on that rig for three years prior to the disaster. Training and safety procedures were virtually nonexistent. New staff had not been familiarised with the rig layout and problems raised by previous safety audits had not been fixed. Anybody who has ever watched the award-winning documentary *Paying for the Piper* will know that these things were spelt out in that moving documentary.

We can look back to the Longford Esso gas plant explosion on 25 September 1998 as another reason why it is important for all the states and the federal government to work together, whether it immediately affects us or not. The Longford gas plant explosion occurred when a pump circulating lean oil to a heat exchanger in gas plant No. 1 stopped and stayed offline for several hours. The heat exchanger, operating at 48 degrees Celsius, continued to cool vessels at low temperature. However, lean oil was being added to this at 230 degrees Celsius, causing a brittle fracture. Plant No. 1 had been listed as requiring a hazard and operability study, but none had ever been carried out. Approximately 25 tonnes of hydrocarbon vapour was released. The resulting fire and explosion killed two men and injured eight.

Relocation of all the plant engineers from the Longford plant to Melbourne badly affected operations at Longford. The resultant lack of communication meant that operators and supervisors were not trained adequately and procedures were also inadequate. Some of the lessons that came out of that were that adequate hazard identification must be a prerequisite for producing a safe system and that carrying out safety audits is only useful when corrective actions are enforced.

I want to acknowledge the vital role that Australian unions have played in pioneering safe work practices for offshore facilities. The perseverance of unions is to be greatly applauded. The unions' concern that lean production and lean maintenance inevitably lead to lean safety has meant that federal and state governments have developed strong legislation to protect health and safety on offshore facilities. The vital role that unions play in protecting the interests and safety of workers is acknowledged by the state government and should be acknowledged by this House. Queensland does not have an offshore petroleum industry, principally because the state government is strongly committed to protecting our unique coastal environment and the Great Barrier Reef.

It must be remembered that the petroleum industry supports and provides Australian communities with their domestic gas requirements. It is a vital part of our export market and attracts significant investment from foreign corporations. This bill, in line with the federal legislation, enhances the longevity of this important industry and, equally importantly, the safety of its workers. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (9.40 p.m.): I welcome Minister Robertson's statement in his second reading speech of this bill in which he reaffirmed that the Beattie Labor government is committed to preventing any exploration on the Great Barrier Reef. Last month in this House I expressed fears that the federal coalition had kept open the possibility of oil exploration in or near reef waters and that the Marion and Townsville plateaus just outside the reef were viewed as priority areas for petroleum drilling.

The federal member for Herbert, Peter Lindsay, responded the following day by saying that that would happen over his dead body. Two days later on Saturday, 2 October, the following letter was published in the *Townsville Bulletin*—

So Peter Lindsay will only allow the drilling for oil and gas on the Great Barrier Reef over his 'dead body'?

Past history (ie the port access road and the invasion of Iraq) has shown that Mr Lindsay will do a backflip on any issue if told to do so by Canberra.

Mr Lindsay's promise about drilling on the reef is as trustworthy and set in concrete as John Howard's promise that there would never, ever be a GST.

That letter was signed by John Holland of Charters Towers. Unfortunately, the federal election result has not put lingering doubts to rest. The objectives of the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Amendment Bill are admirable. A uniform safety regulatory regime for Australia's offshore petroleum is in the interests of everybody who works in the industry. It is encouraging that agreement on the way forward has been reached with the Commonwealth after prolonged negotiations.

Although the only area of Queensland where an offshore lease has been granted lies in the Gulf of Carpentaria north-west of Weipa, it is necessary for Queensland to be in tune with the establishment and objectives of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority. Workplace health and safety should be paramount in all occupations. This bill gives greater impetus to safety in offshore gas fields whether in Commonwealth or state waters anywhere in Australia. It deserves the solid support of all members. I commend the bill to the House.

**Hon. S. ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (9.42 p.m.), in reply: I thank both the member for Mundingburra and the member for Mackay for their contributions to this debate. I thank the opposition for its support.

The offshore petroleum industry supports thousands of jobs and provides Australian communities with most of their domestic natural gas requirements. It is a major export contributor to the Australian economy and attracts significant foreign investment for exploration and the development of new oil and gas fields. Offshore safety on petroleum facilities is regulated according to whether the facility lies in Commonwealth or state waters.

In August 2001, with the support of the industry and the work force, the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Science and Resources prepared a report on offshore safety. The report found that the current system of regulation was inadequate, with unclear limitations, overlapping acts and inconsistent application between Commonwealth and state jurisdictions. The Commonwealth responded to the report by initiating the creation of a National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority to regulate occupational health and safety matters and offshore petroleum facilities in both Commonwealth and state waters.

The Commonwealth has already passed legislation to enable the authority to undertake its regulatory activities in Commonwealth waters and to provide the safety authority with the ability to fully recover the cost of its operations through industry fees and levies. All the states are party to the offshore constitutional settlement with the Commonwealth, which supports consistent offshore regulation. This obligation requires Queensland to enact legislation to mirror the legislative changes made by the Commonwealth to enable the safety authority to carry out its occupational health and safety role in state waters.

Currently, Queensland does not have any offshore petroleum facilities and we do not plan to have any. The state government, as pointed out by the members for Mundingburra and Mackay, is committed to preventing any exploration that would affect the Great Barrier Reef. The state government has prepared a reef protection plan to address the issue of reef water quality, particularly from mainland run-off of pesticides and fertilisers. Each jurisdiction has mirror legislation of the Commonwealth's Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1967 and has committed to enacting legislation that will confer the powers and functions of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

### Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—

**Mr ROBERTSON** (9.45 p.m.): I table the explanatory notes for the amendment to be moved by me. I move—

1 **Clause 12—**

At page 12, line 21, after 'section 14'—

*insert—*

*' the cooperative scheme under the Crimes at Sea Act 2001 or the Acts Interpretation Act 1954, section 9'.*

The objective of the amendment is to provide that the Crimes at Sea Act 2001 will apply criminal laws in the adjacent area to reflect the Supreme Court interpretation that the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 enables Queensland acts to apply extraterritorially.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 87, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

### Third Reading

Bill, as amended, read a third time.

### ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. S. ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (9.47 p.m.): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

### Wide Loads

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (9.47 p.m.): Tonight I wish to bring to the attention of the House a dangerous situation that is developing on Queensland roads, especially roads leading into the mining areas and the western areas of the state in relation to wide loads. In recent times I have witnessed first-hand wide loads moving late of an evening or early of a morning—at hours that I believe inappropriate for wide loads to move, especially with police escorts. This evening, I have been tipped off about a wide load moving in the western part of the state from Amby towards Mitchell at 7 o'clock tonight.

This movement of wide loads seems to be a common occurrence and, with police escorts, I would have thought that this is an irresponsible act. There is nobody more pro police than I am in trying to make absolutely certain that we get the best for our police and that they are not subjected to criticism, but I have to say that I witnessed this situation first-hand. Last Saturday week my wife and I were going to Emerald for the annual Emerald 100 race meeting. My wife was driving. We encountered a wide load just three or four kilometres west of Emerald. A large dump truck was going to the mines, probably at Mount Isa. Robyn moved right over. She could not go any further as there was a high embankment. The police pulled up beside her and said, 'Get over' in an angry voice. I asked, 'My God! What's going on here?' Robyn could not move another inch. If Robyn had moved another half an inch, that vehicle would have tipped over. I have to say that that is not the only time that that has occurred. We have been witnesses to this on many occasions.

This evening I call on the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to make absolutely certain that these wide loads, whether they are large dump trucks or whether they are carrying buildings, are not travelling after dark and not travelling before the daylight hours of a morning. In terms of the safety of other road users, it is not only unfair to them; it is also dangerous.

It is a situation that cannot continue. I trust that we will see sanity prevail and that those vehicles will stop well and truly before darkness creeps in and that they continue their journey well after the sun comes up in the morning. This is just commonsense and it must happen. I hope that both those ministers will make absolutely certain that the relevant people in their departments will oversee this and achieve the appropriate outcome.

### Ergon Energy

**Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (9.50 p.m.): As I sit in this House, it worries me that criticism is being levelled at our electricity industry and very little thought is being given to the people who are being denigrated in that criticism. Last Thursday I had the benefit of visiting the national contact centre in Rockhampton and the Glenmore Road workshop for Ergon Energy with the Minister for Energy. There are 150 employees at that national contact centre. They are all residents of Rockhampton and they work very hard at providing an excellent service to the community. They provide 24-hour service, and their aim is for 75 per cent of the calls that come into that contact centre to be answered within 30 seconds. It is a personal answer; it is not an automated answer. I would like people to think about the number of calls received. The centre takes 180,000 connection and disconnection inquiries per year. In the off-storm season it takes an average of 10,000 calls a month in relation to difficulties with electricity supply for whatever reason. Those calls are answered by a person. These workers take great pride in what they do. They have a very effective system which they have developed themselves. That is tied into the workshop, which deals with the repairs.

We went to the workshop and met a number of people who are just so proud of the work that they do. They were preparing replacement poles. Those people go out in all types of weather and at all times of the day and night to ensure that the people of Queensland receive the electricity that is being supplied by both Ergon and Energex. They take great pride in what they do, and they are very hurt that their efforts and their goodwill in doing that sort of work and providing that service are being denigrated time and time again by members on the other side of this House criticising the energy industry.

**Ms Male:** They do not care about the workers.

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** They are very, very good workers. I think it is high time that all the people of Queensland gave them the credit they deserve.

### Japan and Friends Day

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (9.52 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, with your indulgence I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the campaign director for the Surfers Paradise campaign, John Lainer, and his wife, Julie. I thank them for their efforts in delivering the seat of Surfers Paradise on 7 February.

I rise in the House tonight to acknowledge the wonderful celebration of Japan and Friends Day 2004, held at Evandale Park on the Gold Coast on 10 October. The event was the fifth time this annual festival has been held. As has been the case since its inception, the festival was much bigger this year

than it was last year. Japan and Friends Day 2004 had it all, from demonstrations of traditional Japanese instruments to a workshop on the ancient art of bonsai.

Takenori Yamazaki, Consul General of Japan in Brisbane, said the event was aimed at emphasising the attractions of the two countries and promoting bilateral exchange. The event certainly achieved this. It is a credit to the Japanese Society of the Gold Coast and their president, Mr Noa Hirano, and their ongoing work. The society is to be congratulated not only for putting on this event but also for its tireless work throughout the year in promoting Australia-Japan relations on the Gold Coast.

I must admit that the day was made all the more satisfying by virtue of the fact that the events of the previous night and day, 9 October, were so wonderful that I could not wipe the smile off my face all day. I would like to say to members opposite that, for all of their efforts in this place to push the substandard policies of their federal mates, it was all to no avail. I also love the line 'we won the campaign but lost the election'. As a bit of free advice for the Labor Party—maybe they can take this advice back to their federal colleagues—the Australian people do not like being told what they should and should not do. The Queensland Labor Party would do well to look at why Australians relate to John Howard rather than just despise him and assume that Australians will do the same.

When the members opposite pontificate about the alleged raw deal Queenslanders have received from John Howard, they should remember that this type of soapbox preaching turns the electorate off, as was evidenced on 9 October. To quantify that evidence, let us look at the performance of the parties in Queensland. The Australian Labor Party had a swing of 0.16 per cent in its favour on primary votes, while the Liberal Party had a swing of 3.25 per cent. This is in contrast to what the Minister for Energy would have us believe when he said this morning, 'The jokers opposite were crowing this morning about their election results. They went backwards by two per cent.' Well, in actual fact, if the minister is referring to the National Party, it received a swing towards it of 0.49 per cent, some three times the swing the ALP received. Perhaps the minister should spend more time looking after the woeful energy industry in Queensland by preventing transformers falling onto roads and starting grass fires, as they did on 11 October, than concocting false facts and figures about an election that sees his factional mates and enemies arguing with one another on the front page of national newspapers. If he does not start paying more attention to the things that matter, maybe he should come with me to Japan and Friends Day—

Time expired.

### State Schools

**Mr POOLE** (Gaven—ALP) (9.55 p.m.): Along with all other members of this House, we are privileged to represent state schools in our electorates. I am constantly amazed at the ability teaching staff have of nurturing and realising young talent. Schools in my electorate of Gaven, such as Pacific Pines, Nerang, Gaven, Helensvale and Oxenford state schools, continue to impress not only me but also the young students' own parents.

Several times each year state schools present a showcase of talent. Usually the students perform in such locations as the Gold Coast Arts Centre or simply their own school's auditorium. Recently Helensvale State School presented their talent on the stage at the arts centre. I remember telling this House last year how wonderful it was, but this year it was even better. Sad to say, the maestro behind the talent, Mr Ille Grant, has retired. I think this year will have been his last. Maybe that is the reason the young students played or performed to their best, knowing that they needed to send Ille off on a good note. Of course there will be others to take his place, having been able to work alongside him at the schools he has taught at.

The standard of education and attitudes has certainly changed since the days that I went to school. To see preschoolers and those in other junior grades stand up in front of hundreds in the audience and never make a mistake is quite impressive. This style of modern education can only be character building and great for kids' self-esteem and confidence.

I recently went to Gaven State School's extravaganza. Gaven State School is one of the oldest schools on the western side of the Pacific Motorway. It is only 10 years old, but it has created a culture of confidence that can easily be identified through the students who have graduated from secondary education. Seeing those students now performing their concerts and plays could easily make one think they were performing as professional acts that one would gladly pay to see. Those students have carried the culture through to Pacific Pines High School, where a lot of them are going now.

I would like to compliment the principals of those schools—Bob Coupland from Pacific Pines High, Kathy Edwards from Pacific Pines State School, Bob Pascoe from Helensvale State School and a really special plug for deputy principal Geoff Woodgate from Gaven and deputy principal Peter Brown at Helensvale. Those guys pull everything together. To see the students' admiration and respect for them and the staff makes me realise the worth of our state schools' values.

A special thanks in recognition of the parents who deliver and wait for the children during practice and rehearsal sessions should also be mentioned in this address. How times must have changed for the better.

### **Bushfires**

**Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—NPA) (9.58 p.m.): The much-welcomed rain over south-east Queensland not only helped the farmers and gardeners but also helped relieve the fire threat that has been so prevalent since August this year. After good rains in March, the weather turned dry. With no substantial rain for eight months the whole of south-east Queensland was just a tinderbox.

Rural and auxiliary fire crews have been on call and fighting fires now for several weeks. It shows some real guts and determination by these crews to line up day after day, quite often at expense to themselves and taking them away from their families for many hours over many days. I would also like to congratulate the families for supporting the firefighters. Extra strain is put upon the family unit when one or sometimes more than one of the family members is volunteering to fight fires. This includes not only the rural and auxiliary firefighters but also the SES and other voluntary groups such as Lions clubs, the Country Women's Association and members of the community who not only help the fires but also direct traffic, supply food and water to the fire crews and generally help out.

I would also like to congratulate and thank the businesses and small businessmen who give up their time and employees to help out. I have been speaking to the district rural fire inspector about the area and have been advised that a series of debriefings will take place. I am sure that through these debriefings some minor changes will be made to procedures and systems. There has been some group planning with SES, local councils and police. We require all of the emergency services, local councils and state departments to work together.

In the west of my electorate at Helidon we have a large precinct where there are two explosive factories and a government magazine for the storage of explosives. Helidon Carrying Company is also based in the area, with the transportation of explosives being carried out by this company under the strictest guidelines. So it is very important that the government, local bodies and agencies work hand in hand to achieve the best results.

This precinct not only employs a lot of people but is also needed for our vast mining industry. So we need all levels of government to understand what needs to be done in this area. It is very important to Queensland, so let us manage it properly. I once again congratulate everybody who has been involved in any way in fighting the fires and helping out others and supporting others. I thank them for their support.

### **Department of Housing Garden Awards**

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.00 p.m.): On Friday, 8 October I had the pleasure of presenting the Brisbane south-west area Department of Housing Garden Awards for 2004. The award ceremony took place amongst beautiful gardens in the grounds of public housing seniors units in Brushbox Close, Corinda, in my electorate of Mount Ommaney. As members would know, these annual awards are open to all tenants of the Department of Housing. The awards are a great way of rewarding and encouraging residents to enhance their properties with landscaping or gardens.

This year there were more than 60 entries from across the Brisbane south-west region, and the judges of the competition advised that there was a very high standard of entries from across the area. The awards are a great initiative of the Department of Housing and are strongly supported by the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing, the Hon. Robert Swarten. I thank him very much for continuing these awards in 1998. This was one of the first decisions he made on becoming the Housing Minister in the Beattie government.

The Garden Awards are now in their seventh year since their reintroduction. The Garden Awards are a simple and enjoyable way for many residents to be part of the community spirit, which the awards foster each year. There has been an increase in participation this year, with almost 1,700 garden entries in the competition across Queensland. The awards are free to enter, and one of the most significant things about these awards is that tenants do not need to have a big or expensive garden to win as judges look at gardens that reflect pride in a home or a neighbourhood.

Individual categories cater for all types of gardening excellence, including small gardens for units, verandas or even a little section of a backyard, house gardens, gardens created by children, group gardens, newly established gardens, native plant gardens, environmentally friendly gardens and practical gardens. All entrants receive a certificate, a photo of their garden and a plant or voucher for garden products. Special prizes and certificates are given to winners.

Residents of my electorate receiving major awards were Denise and David Martin-Worland, who received first prize in the Practical Garden Category, and Ann Roberts, who tied for a second place in the New Garden category. A number of other residents at Brushbox Close received recognition awards

in the competition. It is great to see these people taking the time and making the effort to take pride in their gardens and their community wherever they live.

### **Horse Riding, State Forests**

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (10.03 p.m.): Horse riding in state forests has been a tradition in Queensland ever since our state was first settled, and today many horse riders are still riding those very same trails that their parents and grandparents rode without damaging our forests. When the first Beattie government announced as a result of the regional forest agreement that there would be no net loss of access to state forests for recreational users, we listened to the government's assurances that recreational users would not be ignored. Further, we listened to assurances that Dr Aila Keto's view was not necessarily the view of the government when it came to horse riders having access to our forests.

On 29 September I led a delegation of mayors from Maroochy, Noosa and Cooloola councils together with horse riding enthusiasts and the member for Gympie to meet with the Minister for the Environment. We offered to work in partnership with the government to continue to protect and enhance our state forests. We spoke about the importance of horse riding trails linking areas and about the wonderful opportunity offered to this government to access the enthusiasm and energy of horse riders in the region to assist in protecting our wonderful forests.

We spoke about how horse riders for the first time were networking amongst themselves and were prepared to give up access to many kilometres of riding trails in exchange for certainty over the ability to have reasonable access to some very important horse riding trails. We offered the minister the opportunity to visit our region and see first-hand why we feel so strongly about this matter. Today I extend that invitation on behalf of my region to all ministers and members of the government to come with us and see for themselves what we are talking about—that is, before this matter is considered by cabinet and before the government forms a final position on this very important issue to the people of the Sunshine Coast and south-east Queensland.

To date I have tabled many petitions in this parliament from Queenslanders supporting horse riders having reasonable access to our forests along conservation corridors, and this evening I table a further non-conforming petition signed by 1,348 people supporting the horse riding cause. I also table for the benefit of all members a copy of a report from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation on the horse industry's contribution to the Australian economy.

Tomorrow the Clerk of the Parliament will read another petition on my behalf which reads as follows—

The petition of residents of the State of Queensland draws to the attention of the House the threatened loss of horse riding enthusiasts' rights to ride horses in South East Queensland State Forests. The community is concerned that the loss of reasonable access by horse riders to the Forests may result in:

1. Horse riders being forced to ride on gazetted roads, which will create safety risks to both riders and motorists.
2. The adverse effects of the loss of revenue currently generated by this growing and valuable industry.
3. The possible breakdown of the partnership between the State Government and horse riding enthusiasts in their role as guardians of our forests. Horse riders using forestry areas are voluntary, consistent monitors of forest tracks and fire breaks.

We support this, and we urge the minister and all members of government to think seriously about this issue. Come and visit with us the great trails on the Sunshine Coast and, in particular, the pivotal area of Mapleton Forest in the heart of my electorate of Nicklin.

### **Noosa Electorate**

**Ms MOLLOY** (Noosa—ALP) (10.06 p.m.): I never cease to be uplifted by the community in which I live. Last Friday night I was honoured to open the Noosa District State High School years 11 and 12 Fine and Contemporary Arts and Ceramics Exhibition. On entering the Cooroy Butter Factory, I was immediately struck by the sophisticated and stylish appearance and atmosphere of the event. I must remind the House that it is young people and their families, the school community and the broader community who all worked very hard to bring this wonderful evening to fruition. I was struck by the works on show. I moved through the warm and friendly crowd and was greeted by Cate McMillan, the school principal, and was introduced to the head of department, Rosie, and the class teacher, Anne, who both had had so much to do with the students and their work. What a pleasure it is to meet these staff who are undoubtedly a great asset to the school and our school community.

Further to this, other departments from the school threw their weight behind this great evening, with the students and staff from hospitality putting on a veritable and delicious feast accompanied by wine and soft drinks with all tastes being catered for. I was honoured to be the invited guest to open this wonderful exhibition. Again, I would like to congratulate the artists on their very inspiring work, much of which I found highly evocative—art that was both striking and memorable.

I congratulate the artists, Mrs Cate McMillan, Anne and Rosie, the school community and the helpers who give their time and wealth of knowledge to our children to help them reach their full

potential. If there is anyone I have left out, well done to you and thank you. It is this caring and fostering of people in our community that marks the Noosa electorate as a very special place with a unique character of its own.

On the matter of the suggested amalgamation of the three Sunshine Coast councils, I would like to put on the record in the House that I will not allow this to happen to Noosa as long as I am the state member for the Noosa electorate.

**Mr Lawlor:** That will be a long time.

**Ms MOLLOY:** That is right; it will be a long time. I thank the member for Southport for his interjection.

The unique character of the Noosa electorate is what we intend to protect and build on. Today I was presented with a petition from Mr Stan and Mrs Rae Chandler and their band of merry workers, accompanied by Mayor Bob Abbot. The petition is an anti-amalgamation petition signed by 18,743 people collected by a highly committed troop of community workers to whom we are all indebted for this terrific effort. I have written to the Premier and have personally discussed the community's strong anti-amalgamation position with Minister Desley Boyle.

We all understand that the only people who would benefit from an amalgamation would be the developers, and it is the developers who are trying to destroy the character of Noosa shire. It is to their own detriment because we all understand that its green character and the unique—

Time expired.

### Intergenerational Transfers

**Mr COPELAND** (Cunningham—NPA) (10.09 p.m.): I recently received correspondence from some constituents of mine at Brookstead which has highlighted an anomalous situation when it has come to the intergenerational transfer of a farming property within their family. I would like to read that letter for the benefit of members. It states—

My wife and I are farmers in the Cecil Plains district and we would like your assistance in the following situation.

We purchased an irrigation property in July 2000 and along with our own property, my father ... offered his property as extra collateral to the bank. My father has now offered to transfer his property to me by way of a generational transfer, which should attract no stamp duty charges. However, we have now been informed that due to the fact that we have leased his property (to provide my parents with an income), we are now liable for stamp duty of approximately \$42,000.00. This is because it is deemed that the business is changing from rental to farming, even though we will still be farming the property. Our solicitor...has said with the current guidelines we will have to pay stamp duty. The lease agreement ceased on 30 June, 2003 (due to their circumstances changing) and of course with the current weather situation, the stamp duty bill will be a blow to our finances.

I have deleted the names from that correspondence to protect the privacy of the people involved. I have written to the Treasurer asking if this situation can be reviewed. The Treasurer has written back to me confirming that this family will have to pay stamp duty on the purchase of their parents' property. To me it seems that this is an unfair situation given the family circumstances that exist with these properties, with the parents and the children involved in the transfer. Obviously the parents still live on that property. Due to their own circumstances they have not been able to continue farming it. Their children have taken over the running of that property and have paid a lease for the use of the property. It has continued to be a farming property—there has been no change in that—and yet now that the offer of a generational transfer has been made Treasury officials have deemed that stamp duty will be payable on this property.

I find that is a very regrettable situation. I would urge the Treasurer to look at the circumstances in which this family finds itself because it is obvious that the family has continued using this property as a farming property. It is a very pedantic interpretation to say that the parents have been operating it as a rental property. I would urge the Treasurer to look at this case. There would have to be other people in the same situation around the state. If the law is that strict, this situation certainly would fall within the spirit of what is intended for a generational transfer. As far as I can see, it certainly should be exempt from the stamp duty charges that would be applicable as advised to me by the Treasurer.

### Prince Charles Hospital

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (10.12 p.m.): The Prince Charles Hospital is the largest cardiac hospital in Australia and one of the world's leading cardiothoracic hospitals. This week it celebrates its 50th anniversary. Last Sunday another famous Queensland institution, the Hon. Vince Lester, joined in to help promote the Prince Charles Hospital. Vince generously gave of his time and boundless energy to promote the Prince Charles Hospital and to raise funds for cardiac research for the Prince Charles Hospital from his Heart to Heart walk, that is, from the heart of Brisbane, the city mall, to the heart of the hospital at Chermside, walking backwards with his group of supporters. The group of supporters included three of Charlies Walkers. They are a group who started walking around the hospital oval as part of their cardiac rehabilitation. That was Stan Bissell, John Neighbour and Pam Fung, who was one of the nurses who started off Charlies Walkers. There was also a group from the

Centro Properties Group. These were Mr Bill MacDonald, the state manager; Mr Andrew Proven, the regional manager; and Ms Maureen Verco, Queensland regional marketing manager, who were great supporters for the group. Bill Storey, the husband of the development officer for the Prince Charles Hospital Foundation, Alana Kenny, organised the logistics of the walk.

Vince also had members of his family present. His daughter Veronica Baker was there, as was his niece Cathy Doyle, and Vince was met by his wife Mary and two of their grandchildren on the last leg of the journey. I was also able to accompany Vince on this walk. It started off in Queen Street before going onto Ann Street, Brunswick Street Mall, Bowen Bridge Road, Lutwyche Road, Gympie Road and Rode Road into the hospital where Vince was greeted by current and former staff members, members of the public and supporters. We thank Vince and his family for their generosity in contributing to the celebrations of Prince Charles Hospital.

Today I was privileged to be at the hospital when the Health Minister, Gordon Nuttall, launched the celebrations before a group of more than 150 people which included present and past staff, former patients and supporters including the 100th heart transplant patient who spoke glowingly of the change the Prince Charles Hospital has made in her life.

I would like to table for the benefit of members a copy of the brief program of today's events, a short background history of the Prince Charles Hospital and a speech by Professor Col Brennan, past director of psychiatry at the hospital, who spoke about the great teamwork that has been the hallmark of Prince Charles for 50 years. In his speech he chose not to identify individually the many wonderful staff members who contributed but to recognise the results achieved by the teamwork across all clinical disciplines. The first 50 years have been noteworthy, and I am certain that the next 50 years will be as well.

The Prince Charles Hospital has its world reputation in cardiothoracic services, but it is also one of the great providers of respite care, mental health, community health and orthopaedic services. I congratulate the Prince Charles Hospital on its 50th anniversary.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.16 p.m.