



WEEKLY HANSARD

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51ST PARLIAMENT

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THURSDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2004

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

PRIVILEGE

Minister for Education

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (9.31 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. In order to ensure the accuracy of the records of this House, I table the attached exchange of correspondence between myself and the Minister for Education in relation to a complaint by a constituent about a school and the subsequent threat of litigation by the principal of that school. The Minister for Education in her statement to this House on the issue stated that it was normal practice to go to the source of the complaint to get their side of the situation. This correspondence shows that rather than carrying out her duty as minister to investigate a legitimate complaint, Ms Bligh merely facilitated the opportunity for the principal to prevent an impartial investigation of a legitimate complaint passed on by a member of parliament to the responsible minister.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to report that today I received from the Auditor-General a report titled *Audit report No. 6: results of audits performed for 2003-04* as at 30 September 2004.

WHITE RIBBON DAY

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, on your desks today is a white ribbon which I have distributed on behalf of Amnesty International for members who wish to participate in White Ribbon Day. White Ribbon Day, which is held on 25 November each year, was designated by the United Nations in the year 2000 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Additional white ribbons will be available at the front desk of the Parliamentary Annexe in exchange for a small donation.

PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

Admission of Barristers

Mr Fenlon from 110 petitioners requesting the House to take all necessary action to ensure that all current students-at-law enrolled to undertake assessment for admission as a barrister at law under the Rules Relating to the Admission of Barristers of the Supreme Court of Queensland 1975, be permitted to complete such assessment pursuant to the stages prescribed under those rules prior to amendment.

Heiner Road Bridge

Mr Livingstone from 165 petitioners requesting the House to overturn the decision to partially entomb the heritage listed sandstone abutments of the Heiner Road Bridge, Heiner Road, North Ipswich and allow the abutments to remain, be protected and valued as a significant piece of Australia's heritage.

Heiner Road Bridge; Wharf Branch Railway, North Ipswich

Mr Livingstone from 798 petitioners requesting the House to protect and allow the public display of the sandstone abutments of the Heiner Road overbridge, Heiner Road and the Wharf Branch Railway at North Ipswich as significant and unique pieces of Australia's heritage and incorporate and feature them in any new development in this precinct for future generations.

South-East Queensland State Forest Reserves

Mr Wellington from 1,831 petitioners requesting the House to make provision in the proposed new tenure for forest reserves in south-east Queensland state forests to have the already existing fire trails and tracks set aside as conservation park corridors.

PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas)—

- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Mr Johnson from 1113 petitioners regarding a request to widen the section of road between Charleville and Quilpie on the Diamantina Development Road toward the Ward River bridge

REPORT TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by The Clerk-

- Report pursuant to Standing Order 158 (Clerical errors or formal changes to any bill) detailing amendments to certain Bills, made by the Clerk, prior to assent by Her Excellency the Governor, viz—
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Amendment Bill 2004—

Clause 16—

Page 24, subsection 1—

'(1AA) This section applies if, for an application under section 100 or 101, the commissioner must decide whether or not there is an exceptional case as mentioned in section 102(4) or (7).

amended to read—

'(1AA) This section applies if, for an application under section 100 or 101, the commissioner must decide whether or not there is an exceptional case as mentioned in section 102(4) or (7).'

Page 24, subsection 2—

(a) stating the following-

- (i) the police information about the person that the commissioner is aware of;
- (ii) any disciplinary information about the person that the commissioner is aware of; and'

amended to read—

'(a) stating the following—

- (i) the police information about the person that the commissioner is aware of;
- (ii) any disciplinary information about the person that the commissioner is aware of; and'

Footnotes 17 and 45—

Pages 35 and 61,

'Section 126C (Lifetime ban order)'

amended to read—

'Section 126C (Disqualification order)'

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Freedom of Information; Smart State Strategy

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 a.m.): Queensland, as we know, is Australia's Smart State. I know that Bob Quinn agrees with me, but the Leader of the Opposition is unconvinced. On 19 November a freedom of information application from the Leader of the Opposition was transferred to my office from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. It requested briefing notes, reports, reviews and survey results on the Smart State slogan, strategy and vision. Today I want all Queenslanders to be aware of every one of the details sought by the Leader of the Opposition. I therefore table all of the relevant documents from my office—412 pages in fact—relating to Mr Springborg's FOI request.

I just draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to some very wise words from Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, and he said this—

Mr Seeney: Who's he?

Mr BEATTIE: He is a very wise man. But what was it that the popular scientist Dr Karl Kruszelnicki said about the Smart State strategy in June 2000? I think I like this one best. Dr Karl said—

What I'm trying to do is think about predicting the future with regard to Queensland's innovation.

In general the rest of Australia doesn't give a brass razoo about thinking about the future.

They're basically happy to sell vegetables, sell fruit, sell bits of dead tree, sell bits of stuff out of the ground.

Queensland is remarkable among Australian states for actually trying to encourage innovation.

This is not happening on a federal level. This is happening on a state level and I think this is absolutely fantastic because by adding value to things we're going to get money.

So I'm giving my ideas about where the future's going to go and those ideas are based on: number one—the genetic revolution; number two—the computer revolution.

Queensland's about the only place in Australia where they're actually trying to nurture our future directions of innovation.

That says it all. I seek leave to incorporate more details about the Smart State in *Hansard* because I want everyone to know about it, not just the Leader of the Opposition.

Leave granted.

In 1998 we started positioning Queensland for the economic, social, technological, cultural and global challenges that we faced.

We changed Queensland into an action state.

We made it known we were a can-do state.

And we announced we were adopting strategies and policies to make us the Smart State.

So what is the Smart State vision.

It's simple: The Queensland Government's vision is of a state where knowledge, creativity and innovation drive economic growth to improve prosperity and quality of life for all Queenslanders.

So, Smart State is not just a slogan.

The Smart State ethos has succeeded in every area of endeavour.

Earlier I tabled all of the relevant documents from my office, 412 pages in fact, relating to Mr Springborg's FOI request.

It's a request that would cost the taxpayers of Queensland more than \$1000.

But as we know, the real costs go much higher than the actual charges.

My view is that Queenslanders own the Smart State.

Queenslanders have made it their own and Queenslanders deserve to hear the results—free.

Here are just a few of the things that the Smart State has done for Queensland and Lawrence Springborg can read along in the documents because many of these results are included in the documents I am releasing today:

JOBS

Data in the Australian Bureau of Statistics publication Labour Force (Cat. No. 6202.0) released on 11 November identified that in October 1999 Queensland recorded a trend unemployment rate of 8.0% (6.7% nationally) and trend employment growth of 0.2% (0.2% nationally).

In October 2004 Queensland recorded a trend unemployment rate of 5.0% (5.5% nationally) and trend employment growth of 0.5% (0.2% nationally) in October 2004.

NEW INDUSTRIES

As part of the Smart State Strategy a new training centre for aviation excellence has been established and is attracting significant investment.

The Smart State aviation success has also seen a range of projects come to Queensland including:

- QANTAS 767 heavy maintenance facility;
- National Jet Systems maintenance hangar;
- Virgin Blue headquarters;
- Singapore Flying College, a subsidiary of Singapore Airlines advanced flight training operations; and
- Australian Airlines Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore operational hub

HEALTH

We would not be a Smart State if we could not use our strong economic position to address the key areas of health and education. In this regard too we are considered the Smart State.

The 2004 independent Productivity Commission report, Report on Government Services 2004, found Queensland had the shortest waiting times for elective surgery in the country.

But while there is one person waiting too long for an operation, we have to do more, and we are already delivering with a record health budget of \$5.1 billion—an increase of 11% on the previous years' figure—and a massive \$110 million over three and a half years to address surgery backlogs.

An initial allocation of \$20 million saw 4793 Queensland patients undergo surgery, on top of normal surgical workloads.

A further \$40 million will be spent this financial year to continue the elective surgery program around the State, including an additional 1000 eye operations and 300 joint replacement operations.

It is estimated more than 18,000 extra elective patients will be treated within the timeframe recommended by doctors as a result of the Beattie Government's elective surgery programme.

EDUCATION

A report prepared by Department of Education and the Arts on behalf of the National Fund for Education Research, Staying at school: Improving student retention, shows that Queensland now leads the nation in retention of students to completion of Year 12.

78.8% of Queensland students stayed on to Year 12 in 2002, and even with socioeconomic and population size adjustments made this is more than 3% (3.3%) above the national average of 75.4%.

These young people are the future of the Smart State.

The fact that they are staying on at school reflects the success of Queensland's Smart State Education and Training Reforms for the Future.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The heart of the Smart State has been the transformation of our economy to face the rising sun of science and technology industries.

In June 2002, Queensland had more than 60 research institutes, university research facilities and cooperative research centres led by: The Institute for Molecular Bioscience, including more than 800 research staff; and the Queensland Institute of Medical Research which will be the largest medical research institute in the southern hemisphere with 800 scientists.

There are now 2,040 people employed in bio-industry research and development in the Smart State with 815 new jobs being created by these industries in the past two years.

In 2001 an Ernst and Young Report found that:

- there had been 67% overall biotechnology industry growth in employment since 1999;
- 317% (\$151.9 million) increase in research and development spending since 1999 growing from \$47.9 million to \$199.8 million; and
- 248% (\$178.6 million) increase in funds raised since 1999 growing from \$72.2 million to \$250.8 million.

The corresponding independent Ernst and Young Report released in 2003 found that approximately 250 new products or services were under research or development with most expected to be commercialised within five years.

And what did industry think?

George Fidler, General Manager of the Australian arm of computer games developer Creative Assembly, said of the Smart State:

"We conducted extensive market research and found that there are two kinds of Australians, those that are Queenslanders and those that want to be Queenslanders. We are here because Queensland is the Smart place to be."

ECONOMY

In 2004 independent credit rating agency, Standard and Poors, affirmed Queensland's AAA rating—the highest you can get.

The statement from S&P said:

(Queensland's balance sheet) "is the strongest of all the Australian States, with very low net financial liabilities".

"The finances of the general government sector are exceedingly strong, with financial assets exceeding gross debt and superannuation liabilities combined; the only state where this is the case. The sector also regularly produces cash (after capital expenditure) surpluses. A large capital expenditure program will see the extent of the financial surplus decline a little in the next two years, but overall general government will remain extremely strong financially."

In 2003-04 we recorded 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

Mr Speaker, a Smart State is not smart if it is not underpinned by strong economic management.

Queensland, the Smart State, is in the smartest economic hands it has ever been in.

There is a sad contrast in this statement, Mr Speaker.

Here I stand giving just a flavour of the success that Queenslanders have made of the Smart State strategy, while the Leader of the Opposition, who stands on the other side, is using taxpayer funds to get this information through FOI.

Mr Speaker, I would make two points to the Leader of the Opposition:

Firstly, Smart State is working and we are not trying to hide the fact.

Second, it is very difficult for the opposition to convince Queenslanders that you can guarantee their future when they can't provide a strategy or a vision.

If you can't see what's plainly in front of you, how can you even lead an Opposition?

Mr BEATTIE: It is good reading, Lawrence.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

White Ribbon Day

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.37 a.m.): My government is proud to support the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. I am pleased to see so many members of the House today wearing white ribbons as a symbol of opposition to violence against women. Women in Queensland continue to be subjected to sexual abuse and domestic and family violence in significantly greater numbers than men. Current data in Queensland indicates that 82 per cent of sexual assaults are against women and 97 per cent of perpetrators are men. The majority of female sexual assault victims are aged between 10 and 19. Of the murder victims in Queensland who are women, 71 per cent were killed by members of their own family. Even more disturbing is that only around a third of sexual assaults are reported to police, significantly understating the crime statistics.

My government's stance towards violence against women is zero tolerance. Violence against women is never justified under any circumstances. Since coming to government in 1998, we have taken a number of steps aimed at putting a stop to it. In March 2003 my government amended the domestic violence act to extend the scope of the act to protect women in non-spousal relationships. We have also almost doubled spending on domestic and family violence prevention and support and are now spending more than \$25 million a year. My government has also passed legislation that will prevent the release of sex offenders judged to be a continuing serious danger to the community, and we have won that in the High Court. As a direct response to the recommendation of the Task Force on Women and the Criminal Code, my government also passed amendments to the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2000 with a view to making the legal service more responsive to the needs and rights of women.

Historic changes were made to the Criminal Code to outlaw the practice of female genital mutilation and to extend the offence of rape. The act also made key changes to the Evidence Act 1977 to provide further protection to complainant witnesses in cases involving sexual assault and violence.

Indigenous women are over 45 times more likely to experience domestic violence than non-indigenous women. Unfortunately, the underlying factor behind much of this violence is alcohol abuse. That is why my government has introduced the alcohol management plans into Aboriginal communities in partnership with the community justice groups. I hope all members take this issue very seriously.

I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Many of these community justice groups are led by brave female elders who have courageously spoken out against violence in their communities.

We have also set up the Safe Women Queensland website at www.safewomen.qld.gov.au with details of government and community agencies that can assist women experiencing domestic, family or sexual violence.

On 16 November the Smart State: Safe State Partnership for a Safer Queensland agreement between Queensland Government and CEO Challenge was launched by Ministers Pitt and Boyle.

The agreement will enable business, government and community to work together in partnership to eliminate domestic violence.

Mr Speaker, following question time today I will be going to the Speaker's Green to stamp my handprint on an Amnesty International banner entitled "Stop Violence Against Women".

I would like to invite members from all sides of the House to join me in making this important statement to Queenslanders.

Violence against women is abhorrent, and it is only through people in the community speaking out will we ever hope to put a stop to it.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ashes Test Cricket Series, Television Coverage

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 a.m.): I have received a reply from the Prime Minister in my seeking his help to have next year's Ashes test cricket series from England shown on free-to-air television. I wrote to him when I became aware that the commercial networks were not likely to cover it. The Prime Minister and I might disagree on many things, but we, like so many Australians, have a love of cricket. I initially told him that it would be wrong if Australians had to pay for the privilege of watching it, as it is the most important of all series. I suggested to the Prime Minister that, if the commercial networks cannot take it, the ABC might be approached to carry it.

The Prime Minister wrote back on 18 November saying that he wishes that the series be aired on free-to-air television. He then told me that the situation had not been resolved and that his office was discussing the situation with the relevant parties. I thank him for that. Then later yesterday I received replies from the CEOs of the Nine and Seven networks. The fog then began to clear. Mr David Leckie, Chief Executive Officer of Seven Network Limited, raised with me in his reply his serious concerns about the Ashes coverage. I thank him for that. But what I found most disturbing is that he fears other traditional free-to-air television events might also be at risk if a loophole in the Commonwealth's antisiphoning rules is not corrected.

I then immediately wrote again to the Prime Minister outlining that this is not an area where my government has jurisdiction. However, in the interests of all Queenslanders I urged him to correct this as soon as possible. In yesterday's letter to the Prime Minister I wrote that if we were forced to pay—and, worse, if there are other events to be lost from free-to-air television, as Mr Leckie raises—I fear an unwelcome erosion of one of our great unifying aspects of Australian life. We might have our differences, but when a team wearing a baggy green takes the field, or a Kangaroo, Wallaby, Opal, Socceroo, Olyroo or Hockeyroo pulls on a guernsey, we are united as one. It would be wrong if our ability to witness these great unifying national moments was eroded. This is not cricket. This must be resolved. The punters—the mums and dads, the young and the old—are entitled to have direct, free access to all major sporting and cultural events.

I table a letter from the Prime Minister to me dated 18 November and my letter to him dated 24 November. I also table a letter from David Leckie which actually points out that we have a major problem with a loophole. I thank David for his frankness. I also table a letter from David Gyngell of Channel 9. That letter states in part—

Secondly, it is important to note that Nine is unable to purchase the exclusive broadcast rights to events as it is our understanding the pay rights have been purchased by FoxSports.

Basically, this letter states that cable television has already purchased the rights. So there is an absolutely glaring loophole here, and the Prime Minister and the federal government need to fix that, otherwise we are going to lose more opportunities for free-to-air television to televise events. I am indebted to David Leckie for highlighting to the Australian people what is going on. This is not just a state issue; this is a national issue. It is important that we fix it up. I want to table other letters as well.

Mr Horan: The Australian Cricket Board, too. They would have sold the rights to pay TV.

Mr BEATTIE: The reality is that something happened. At the end of it all, we are not going to get a free-to-air broadcast of the cricket. This is a test series; this is not a kindergarten picnic. I would have thought at least an Australian test series would have been sacred. Sure, maybe the Australian Cricket Board sold the rights. They should sort out their behaviour as well. But if the law allows them to do that, then it should not. I ask members to recall the debate about pay TV when it started. It was made very clear to all Australians that they would be able to have free-to-air access if they wanted it. That was the whole basis of allowing cable TV. We have been betrayed. Australians have been sold out as mugs on this. I for one feel very strongly about it. I think it is about time we actually got back to what we were promised as a nation. The federal government should close the loophole. As I said, I am indebted to David Leckie for telling us the truth about this issue. I think that we should fix it up.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Crime and Misconduct Commission, Part-Time Commissioners

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 a.m.): In recent weeks cabinet has endorsed my recommendations for two new part-time Crime and Misconduct commissioners. On cabinet's recommendation, the Governor in Council appointed Julie Cork as a part-time commissioner on 11 November. Today, the Governor in Council will appoint Suzette Coates. Ms Coates and Ms Cork fill vacancies left by part-time commissioners whose terms expired earlier this year.

Ms Coates, of Atherton, is a practising lawyer with extensive experience in civil liberties issues, especially regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Ms Cork is an organisational management specialist.

Both are appointed for three year terms.

The honourable Bill Pincus has also been reappointed as a part-time commissioner.

Mr Pincus has served three years. Under the act commissioners can serve for no longer than five years, so he is reappointed for two years.

I am confident the part-time commissioners will make valuable contributions to Queensland's stringent accountability and integrity processes.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland's 150 Year Anniversary

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.44 a.m.): 6 June 2009 will mark 150 years since Queensland's birth as a British colony. It is a blink of an eye in terms of the human history of this land, and yet so much has transpired in the past 145 years. When Queen Victoria signed letters patent to establish the new colony of Queensland, the colony's population was said to be 23,520.

Mr Mackenroth: They didn't need a regional plan.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, that is right; they did not need a regional plan. They could have fitted into a pocket handkerchief. The same year saw the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, John Stuart Mills' *On Liberty* and Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. Also in 1859 work began on building the Suez Canal and Kaiser Wilhelm II was born. So it was a significant time for many reasons.

The government is determined that celebrations of Queensland's anniversary will be planned and executed properly in a style to befit the 21st century Smart State. This is both a government priority and my personal priority. I am open to innovative suggestions about how Queenslanders should plan for the milestone. It is important that the celebrations engage all Queenslanders, contribute to our economy, create jobs, and leave a legacy of which Queenslanders can be proud.

To get the ball rolling, I will appoint an advisory planning committee to work with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and advise me during 2004-05. In the next financial year I will be establishing a small secretariat to organise the 150 year celebrations and appoint an executive chair, which will be a part-time position, to coordinate all the activities. I want creative, sound suggestions from diverse Queenslanders. I am delighted that people have agreed to join this committee. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to incorporate their names and the terms of reference for all members of the House. I ask all members to put aside politics and work with us to celebrate Queensland's 150 year anniversary.

Leave granted.

Professor Peter Andrews, Queensland Chief Scientist

Mr Andrew Craig, Director, Australian Industry Group

Ms Eleanor Davidson, Group General Manager, Carlton Crest Group

Professor Glyn Davis, Vice Chancellor, Griffith University

Mr Tony Gould

Mr Tim Fairfax, Member of the University of Sunshine Coast Council and of the Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees

Professor John Hay, Vice Chancellor, University of Queensland

Dr Leo Keliher, Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet (Advisory Planning Committee Chair)

Mr David Liddy, Chief Executive Officer, Bank of Queensland

Ms Judith McLean, Chair, Major Brisbane Festivals Board

Ms Lindy Nelson-Carr, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Minister for Trade in North Queensland (representing the Premier)

Ms Leisl Packer, Young Queenslander of the Year

Terms of Reference

To advise the Premier of Queensland on celebrations of the sesquicentenary of Queensland in 2009. The advice will include, but not be limited to:

- the theme and name for the celebrations;
- the activities to be encompassed in the celebrations;
- strategies to raise community awareness of the sesquicentenary and to engage the community in sesquicentenary activities;
- links with pre-existing or emergent activities, processes and events (between 2004 and 2009) that could contribute to the celebrations;
- sponsorship and other business support for the celebrations;
- the geographical spread of activities;
- the legacy that the sesquicentenary could leave for Queensland; and
- ways in which the sesquicentenary can contribute to the future of Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Images of Queensland Photographic Awards

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.46 a.m.): On Friday night, 12 November, the parliamentary secretary for multicultural affairs, Karen Struthers, and I presented 10 Queensland photographers with more than \$25,000 in cash prizes and photographic equipment at the inaugural Images of Queensland Photographic Awards: Multiculturalism in focus. I congratulate the winners, highly commended entrants and all entrants from across the state for their interest in and images of multiculturalism. I assure them that these awards will now become an annual event.

I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

These awards have been a great success in raising the profile of multiculturalism and rewarding artists for their work.

The ceremony at the Queensland Museum was attended by more than 150 people.

The awards will now be an annual event.

I thank Karen Struthers for her sustained efforts this year in promoting the benefits of cultural diversity and delivering on our \$3 million multicultural election commitments and newly funded initiatives, including the Queensland Multicultural Festival at Roma Street Parkland, the Images of Queensland Photographic Awards and the forum with our university vice-chancellors.

The Smart State is the Diverse State and I want to thank multicultural organisations and their supporters for working with the government to enhance opportunities and equality for all Queenslanders.

2004 Images of Queensland Photographic Awards Award Recipients

Joint Winners Open Category:

\$15,000 prize money shared with \$7,500 to each winner:

- Ms Marie Patamise, Wavell Heights, "Shamina in the Sunshine State"
- Mr Ric Frearson, Chapel Hill, "Hills Hoist"

Joint Highly Commended Open Category:

\$5,000 prize money shared with \$2,500 to each highly commended entrant

- Mr Peter Rossi, Cairns, "Scott Street"
- Mr Richard Waugh, Fortitude Valley, "Workmates"

Winner Student Category:

\$3,000 prize money

- Brooke Heidke, Bundaberg, "All is One"

Joint Highly Commended Student Category:

\$2,000 prize money shared with \$1,000 to each recipient

- Vicky Chen, Middlemount, "The only race they know is the 100 metre"
- Tiffany Bridger, Everton Park, "Ready for Class"

Premier's Encouragement Award:

\$200 worth of photographic equipment

- David Casey, North Rockhampton, "Wiliek"

Winner People's Choice Award

\$1,000 worth of photographic equipment

- Fiona Muirhead, Wilston, "Friendship"

Highly Commended People's Choice Award

\$300 worth of photographic equipment

- Silvana van Dijk, Woolloongabba, "Sharman"

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Teen Challenge Student of the Year Awards

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.47 a.m.): On 29 November, the Teen Challenge Student of the Year awards will be announced in Brisbane, with 10 categories ranging from awards for community service and natural resources and mines stewardship to science and technology and vocational education. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

My government has provided \$45,000 sponsorship for the Awards, through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and Education Queensland.

The awards are open to all Queensland school students from years 5 to 12, and I congratulate all entrants.

It's always the right time to highlight the exceptional achievements of the Smart State's young people, but I make particular mention of the three short listed students in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet Multicultural Award.

They are:

EMMA YABSLEY, who is in Year 11 at Mountain Creek State High School. (Buderim—Kawana electorate)

LYALL GEESU, who is in Year 12 at Gilroy Santa Maria College, (Ingham—Charters Towers electorate)

SHAKIRA LEATHAM, Year 12, Clayfield College (Clayfield electorate)

The Multicultural Award honours students who promote cooperation and understanding among people of different cultures.

The winner will receive a \$1,000 cash prize and certificate and both runners up receive a \$250 cash prize and certificate.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Australian of the Year, Queensland Finalists

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.47 a.m.): Tonight I will be presenting certificates to the Queensland finalists of the Australian of the Year awards and trophies to the state winners of the various categories. I want to emphasise how important it is that we recognise great Queensland achievers and national achievers in all walks of life. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Sports people often become public heroes.

Their achievements uplift us and make us proud to belong to the same state or country they come from.

We can say the same thing about great performers across the whole spectrum of the arts.

But we also have people whose contributions to social welfare, education, health services and research are outstanding and they are just as deserving of that recognition.

In fact, there are people in business who are bringing tremendous benefits to our community directly and indirectly.

They are doing things like looking overseas to expand their markets so that they can increase the number of people they employ.

There are GPs who routinely go above and beyond the call of duty.

And there are teachers who are so dedicated that they literally change the lives of their students.

There are even some politicians who do so much to try to help people with their problems and improve conditions for everyone, that they deserve to be recognised.

We're not just rewarding great achievers, we're also highlighting their achievements.

And we want to demonstrate to all Queenslanders, especially young people, some of the ways in which they can make a difference in the Smart State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Events and Conference Industry

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.47 a.m.): Queensland is the home of big events and the meetings and conference industry. The meeting, conference and convention industry alone is worth \$1.8 billion annually and employs 15,000 people. This year Queenslanders have also been able to enjoy events like Riverfestival, Paniyiri and the Woodford Folk Festival. We were also delighted to be able to welcome home Queensland Olympians and Paralympians with the razzmatazz reserved for our sporting greats. I want to incorporate in *Hansard* a report that sets out some of the costs and what we are doing in this area.

Leave granted.

The Queensland Government takes great pride in being able to support events, meetings and conferences such as these that add to the quality of life Queenslanders have come to know so well and enjoy.

My Government supports a number of State-wide organisations that stage these activities through sponsorships—managed mainly through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Department of State Development and Innovation.

State Development and Innovation is my Government's core business development agency and the lion's share of its sponsorship funds are business-related.

This year we have spent approximately six-and-a-half million dollars on sponsorships relating to major events, awards, meetings and conferences.

We have spent one million dollars more than last year on the basis that well managed sponsorship investments provide social, economic and environmental advantages for Queenslanders.

These sponsorships have been spread across a number of industry sectors from the Arts to mining and biotechnology.

We consider this money well spent with sponsorship recipients under obligation to meet specific outcomes.

They must be for the good of Queensland communities and our quality of life.

All sponsorships are managed in accordance with the Queensland Government Sponsorship Policy to ensure good management and accountability in order to manage the risks and maximize the benefits that flow from sponsorships.

Depending on the kind of sponsorship activity, the Queensland Government may expect sponsorship recipients to assist in the wider promotion of Government services to specific communities.

Sponsorship activities must be aligned with Government priorities.

These priorities include building Queensland's regions, protecting the environment for a sustainable future and growing a diverse economy as well as spreading the Government's Smart State message.

This message is that Queensland is the smartest place to be for the new knowledge-intensive technologies like biotechnology and information communication technology—just as it is for traditional sectors like mining and agriculture.

In keeping with these values, we have supported a broad range of sponsorship activities this year.

For example, the Riverfoundation's Riversymposium was a vital forum for discussions regarding protecting and managing our valuable water resources.

We supported the staging of the annual Rock Eisteddfod which has become a beacon for anti-drug initiatives.

We also supported the Literary Awards which is the largest of its kind in Australia, and the Drama Awards.

This year the Queensland Premier's Drama Award went to Queensland playwright Adam Grossetti for his new drama *Mano Nera*.

We have for several years now supported the Annual Queensland Mining 2004 Conference and the AusBiotech Conference.

We also supported the E3 conference for games developers, only fitting since Queensland has the highest concentration of games developers in Australia.

The UDIA National Congress, the 4th International Crop Science Congress and the Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists' Pharmacology Congress are all examples of Queensland Government sponsorship recipients.

As you can see my Government is committed to supporting the gamut of Queensland communities and sectors in ways that support our quality of life, the strengthening of our communities and the furthering of our sustainable economic growth.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Office of the Governor

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.48 a.m.): Recently I announced the review of the Office of the Governor. I said that there was a 10-point summary implementation plan. I have had some requests for that information. In the interests of public accountability, I seek leave to incorporate that 10-point summary implementation plan in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

REVIEW OF THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

10-POINT SUMMARY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Strategic Management Framework

1. Increase client service responsiveness through updated role and organisational focus including integration of accountabilities owed to the Governor, and the Premier as accountable Minister.

2. Develop strategies to achieve the objectives of the Governor of the day through effective communication channels and quality annual strategic planning tailored to the Office's business and organisational needs, and including-
 - staff participation and consultation with key stakeholders;
 - agreed goals, priorities, key action plans, supporting strategies (e.g. communication strategy) and suitable performance indicators;
 - links with the budget development process; and
 - executive review and progress reports.
3. Ensure planning support to the Governor's program is-
 - guided by the Governor's objectives;
 - cognisant of and not inconsistent with the State's strategic priorities;
 - enhanced through a networking dialogue with relevant public sector agencies, as facilitated by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet;
 - furthered by the Office's Strategic Plan; and
 - integrated with active budget development, management and review.
4. Introduce quality performance management and reporting systems, including-
 - appropriate training and development needs analyses and personal development plans with annual staff performance plans;
 - regular performance reports by the Official Secretary to the Governor as well as a written annual performance report to the Governor, and the Premier as accountable Minister;
 - review of current performance measures and indicators in external reporting; and
 - review of the Office's Annual Report to improve quality and content.
5. Seek the Treasurer's review of exemptions from the Financial Management Standard 1997.

Transparent Budget Processes

6. Improve budget development, management and reporting processes by-
 - adopting an active financial management approach that responds to client service needs and objectives, from enhanced consultation to enhanced activity-based costing methods;
 - reintroducing monthly (and quarterly) expenditure reports to the Governor, together with trend analysis according to best practice executive level reporting;
 - providing a detailed annual briefing paper outlining key budget items, variations and implications for the consideration of the Governor and the Premier in advance of a scheduled annual meeting; and
 - including future Cabinet Budget Review Committee submissions for the Office in the Premier's Portfolio Budget Submission.

Accountable Capital Works and Maintenance Programming

7. Improve processes for development of capital works and maintenance programs by-
 - convening a Government House Estate Reference Committee to inform decision-making processes in the capital works and maintenance program;
 - submitting regular advice and progress reports to the Governor as custodian of the Government House estate; and
 - including proposed expenditure on capital works and maintenance by the Office, and the Department of Public Works, in the briefing material provided to the Premier and the Governor in advance of the scheduled annual budget meeting.

Revised Resourcing and Functional Requirements

8. Review resourcing and functional requirements regularly to respond to the client service needs and circumstances of the Governor of the day and to support a contemporary Office in a dynamic environment. A current assessment includes-
 - refocusing the Public Affairs Advisor role to a Senior Communications role, with responsibility for media management transferring to the Official Secretary and maintenance of the Governor's website transferring to the Executive Officer supported by the Aide-de-Camp or Aide and outsourced technical development and maintenance;
 - increasing the number and use of honorary Aides through additional recruitment processes and consideration of additional pools of potential applicants, implementing appropriate process for performance and availability review, clarifying expectations and resolving long working hours issues for two permanent roles, and supporting opportunities for career development within the Office as assisted by implementation of the performance management system including training and personal development plans;
 - seeking information technology support, service and strategic advice from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on a fee for service basis;
 - investigating an improved electronic platform for the Governor's program that provides a knowledge management capacity online to increase efficiency and effectiveness in staff operations in support of the daily program (key staff stakeholders must be included); and
 - investigating the feasibility of introducing an internship and/or work experience program for final year or graduate tertiary students in journalism, communication, public affairs or media studies in support of the Senior Communications Advisor.

Contemporary Human Resource Management

9. Improve human resource management practices and processes by-
- negotiating and implementing a revised set of Instructions for the Operations of the Office of the Governor to ensure an appropriate level of consistency with the principles and practices under the Public Service Act 1996;
 - engaging suitable external service providers to deliver training for all staff in contemporary public sector policies and practices including the code of conduct;
 - improving staff engagement and broadening decision-making influence within the Office, as well as adopting best practice meeting procedures;
 - ensuring that selection panels include independent expert or relevantly skilled members;
 - regularly reviewing position descriptions to ensure currency and relevance; and
 - ensuring that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is consulted for expert advice for salary reviews and any proposed establishment variations.

Implementation of 1993 Public Sector Management Commission Recommendations

10. Prepare an action plan to complete outstanding recommendations, including-
- developing and implementing a program of internal audit;
 - documenting, regularly reviewing and training in protocol procedures for key functions, and constitutional and ceremonial procedures; and
 - implementing a program of regular review and training for all documented policies of the Office,
 - with a six month (interim) and twelve month (final) report on completion to the Governor and the Premier.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is available for support and advice with respect to any of the above actions.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Economy

Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.48 a.m.): Queensland's balance sheet is the strongest of all the Australian states. These are not the words of a proud Treasurer but rather recent commentary by respected international ratings agency Standard and Poor's. In fact, Citigroup noted this year that 'it has often been said that if a quadruple A credit rating existed Queensland would get it'. We welcome the accolades but are not surprised.

In the past 15 years the Queensland economy has enjoyed one of its longest periods of sustained growth. The common denominator for success over this period has been Labor governments. It should come as no surprise that during this record period of growth members from this side of the House were in power for almost 13 of the 15 years.

Reform commenced with the election of the Goss government in 1989. It has blossomed under the leadership of Peter Beattie. I table for the benefit of the House a document called *Labor in power: prosperity and growth for Queenslanders*. It compiles data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Office of Economic and Statistical Research, budget papers as well as published research. It is a document based on facts and figures, and these facts and figures do not lie. Rather, they tell a powerful story about Queensland's remarkable economic performance over the past 15 years.

Some of the highlights include the following. Between 1988-89 and 2003-04, Queensland's real gross state product grew by more than 94 per cent, averaging around 4.5 per cent per annum over the entire period—well above the average annual national rate of 3.3 per cent. Public investment in Queensland over the period since 1989-90 has averaged 5.7 per cent of gross state product and has always been above that for the rest of Australia at 3.8 per cent. In dollar terms, overseas exports have doubled since 1988-89.

More recently, since the election of the Beattie government in 1998 the following has occurred. Queensland has averaged annual growth in gross state product of 5.1 per cent. A total of 323,400 jobs have been created, contributing to unemployment dropping from a high of 9.5 per cent under the Borbidge government to a record low of five per cent. Between 1998 and 2003, significant operations of 109 companies have been attracted to Queensland, generating over 21,000 direct and indirect jobs and about \$1 billion worth of investment. Labour productivity growth has averaged an extraordinary 2.8 per cent—well above the rest of Australia at 2.1 per cent.

The figures are amazing and the envy of every other jurisdiction in the country. I am sure that members opposite will be clamouring for a copy of this document so that they can try to discover the secrets of our success. To save them some time I will give them a few of the answers.

The first is disciplined fiscal management. For example, this year we achieved the highest operating surplus ever in Queensland and the highest of any state or territory in Australia since accrual accounting was introduced in 1998-99. The second is investment in infrastructure. For example, the state capital program as a percentage of gross state product has consistently been among the highest in

the country over the past 15 years, and this financial year we have a record capital infrastructure program of over \$6 billion.

The third answer is investment in services. For example, since I became Treasurer in 2001 recurrent funding for education has increased by more than 26 per cent, health by more than 27 per cent, disability services by 66 per cent, and public order and safety by 39 per cent. The fourth is investment in people. For example, our unique Breaking the Unemployment Cycle suite of programs and Education and Training Reforms for the Future initiative have lifted the skills and opportunities for children and adults throughout the state.

The fifth answer is investment in Smart State new industries. For example, recent research by the Monash University Centre of Policy Studies shows that growth in occupations that can be classified as 'Smart State'—IT, scientists, professionals, et cetera—was 14.7 per cent in Queensland from 1997-98 to 2001-02 compared with 14.1 per cent for the rest of Australia. The sixth is a low-tax structure. For example, other states' average collections on a per capita basis are 20 per cent higher than those of Queensland.

As members can see, the 'secrets' are not really secret at all. It is about prudent financial management and growing and diversifying our economy for the benefit of all. It is about providing a platform for building a better Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education and Training Reforms for the Future

Hon. A.M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (9.54 a.m.): Two years ago today the Queensland government released our blueprint to build a better education system from the ground up. Our white paper Queensland the Smart State: education and training reforms for the future covers all levels of schooling from the early years right through to the senior years and beyond. Queensland children will have a smarter start at school through our election commitment to offer a full-time preparatory year in 2007.

The 2003 prep year trial in 39 schools has been declared a success by independent evaluators. Released in July, the report found that teachers of year 1 students who attended prep in 2003 rated them as being more socially skilled and better adapted to school than students who attended a preschool. Another 27 schools joined the trial this January, and next year 25 more state and five more non-state schools will bring to 96 the number of schools with prep classes.

A major building program will ensure schools are ready to open their doors to our youngest learners. In fact, the daughter of the member for Inala will be one of those prep teachers joining the force next year. We look forward to her and others starting with those students next year.

Mr Lucas: He passed prep himself.

Ms BLIGH: I take the interjection from the Minister for Transport. So that parents are ready for the changes, last month I launched a campaign to increase understanding of the prep year.

Reforms in the middle phase of learning will help our students to reach their full potential in the Smart State. Our aim is to reduce class size targets in years 4 to 10 to one teacher for 28 students by 2007. These will be the smallest class size targets in Australia. An extra 80 teachers were appointed this year to medium and large primary schools and special schools to enable more effective curriculum planning in the middle years.

I think it timely, at this end of the year, to honour the words of one of my former colleagues in this House and to remind members that in Queensland there are 10,000 young people who are out of work, out of school and out of training. Our senior schooling reforms, however, are putting Queensland at the cutting edge of reform and working to ensure that we are giving those 10,000 young Queenslanders and their counterparts the best possible chance.

Students in year 10 in 2006 will be the first to benefit from new laws that all young Queenslanders will have to be in education, training or work until they are 17. Statewide learning or earning trials are laying the foundations for 2006, with grant funding of \$2.3 million for innovative local projects and more youth support coordinators, as recently announced by my colleague the Minister for Communities. These are just some of the ways we are helping to improve student retention and participation. Year 10 students will make a smoother transition to senior, with their senior education and training plans to help them formally map out their future.

The biggest shake-up in the 94-year history of the Queensland senior certificate is under way, and I encourage both members and those in the education sector to have their say on the make-up of the new Queensland certificate of education, which will set minimum standards and raise the bar on student achievement.

I am pleased today to announce a \$900,000 statewide mentoring program, delivering on a promise to give more support to young people typically aged between 14 and 17. Those young people who are at high risk of leaving school early will be matched with mentors from their local community who will work hand in hand with schools to help them reach their goals.

Under our landmark reforms we have also faced the challenge of technology, with large increases in funding for information and communication technologies in our classroom, the setting of clear targets for ICT use in schools and new programs to foster innovation in classroom technologies. We have already exceeded our targets on the number of computers per student, on replacing old computers and on the number of classrooms cabled for the Internet. Our education and training reforms are a key plank in our agenda to make Queensland the Smart State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education and Training Reforms for the Future

Hon. T.A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (9.58 p.m.): As my ministerial colleague Anna Bligh has just reported, it is exactly two years to the day since the government introduced its visionary Education and Training Reforms for the Future strategy, the partnership between Education Queensland and the Department of Employment and Training. That is two years during which we have launched a range of initiative for 15- to 17-year-olds, nurtured by the government, schools, training organisations, employers, unions and community groups around Queensland.

These innovative reforms demanded new training programs and products, not hand-me-downs. To enable this to happen, we committed more than \$150 million to these programs for the two financial years. Today we see several programs strongly under way—notably, Back to Learning, which is focused on young people who are out of the school system, and the new education and training reforms pathway program. Back to Learning helps young people to get back into education, training or employment with improved life skills. The pathway program is part of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative. It will create 300 extra places in the Get Set for Work employment program and also fund incentives to support 1,000 school based apprenticeships and traineeships through the Youth Training Incentives program.

I have been quoted numbers and funding costs, but the real value and measure of our reform achievements can be found in young people like Caleb Hall from Mossman State High. Caleb completed a certificate III in education through the Remote Area Teacher Education program during an education and training reforms trial involving senior high school students in Mossman and Mareeba. He became the first Queensland high school student to gain a qualification through an indigenous teacher education program.

We could also talk about the 40 young parents and parents-to-be in the Corinda-Ipswich area taking part in the pregnant and parents program introduced this year by the Bremer TAFE, or point to the year 12 students in Brisbane who will be able to relax this Christmas, secure in the knowledge that they already have a training placement for next year thanks to the new Direct Entry Awards program introduced by Brisbane North TAFE. This program enables senior students to apply for one of more than 35 TAFE courses and obtain a placement for next year before they receive their OP rank. Instead, their applications are assessed from information provided by school guidance officers and vocational education coordinators as well as academic indicators from QTAC.

These examples reflect how local community groups and employers are embracing these programs with enthusiasm and establishing local partnerships with training providers in schools. We all have a stake in the reforms. That is why we should all proudly celebrate this particular anniversary.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gold Coast, Cruise Ship Terminal

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) (10.02 a.m.): The Premier and I have made it clear that we are in favour of a Gold Coast cruise ship terminal going ahead. We have also made it clear that the proper assessment process has to be followed. In keeping with that commitment, I can announce that a computer simulation study will commence next month. I recently approved a contract for the Star Cruises ship simulation centre at Port Klang, Malaysia to undertake detailed computer simulation modelling of cruise ships entering and leaving the Gold Coast seaway.

The need for such a simulation was identified during the recent preliminary assessment process. It will help determine whether a cruise terminal on the Gold Coast is feasible from an engineering

perspective. Cruise ships are increasing in size. For this exercise, we are simulating ships measuring up to 290 metres long. The simulation will tell us if it is possible for these vessels to navigate the seaway and berth at a terminal located at the end of the spit. We are only simulating a terminal at the end of the spit, in accordance with our election commitment, but there will be no development on either Wavebreak Island or the western foreshores of the Broadwater.

The simulation itself will consist, firstly, of constructing a detailed computer model of the seaway, Wavebreak Island and a possible terminal facility. Three cruise vessels will then be piloted through the entrance channel, manoeuvred into position and berthed at the terminal. This will be repeated, with the simulator adding environmental factors including wind, tidal currents and wave action to test the accessibility of the terminal in a range of weather conditions.

There were several key reasons for choosing the Star Cruises facility to undertake this study, and they include their ability to construct a model of the port facilities, their existing library of models of cruise ships to use for the simulation, their proven experience of working with cruise ships, and the experience of their operators to interpret the results of the simulation runs to determine the working limits for the port and the maximum environmental conditions that the port will be able to operate in.

On Tuesday, Star Cruises' representatives visited the site to collect data and take digital photographs. The simulations will be run in the week commencing 13 December and the final results of the simulation will be available in January. These results will then be used to finalise the preliminary assessment for its consideration by the government. The value of the consultancy contract for the simulation is \$US89,800 or about \$A120,000. Local knowledge and expertise will be incorporated into the study, with pilots from Maritime Safety Queensland being used to pilot the ships during the simulations. This will not only ensure that the work is completed to the highest standard but also allow those pilots time to brief and train other pilots should the terminal be given the go-ahead. If a cruise ship terminal does go ahead, it will create up to 100 jobs during the construction phase.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Year of the Built Environment

Hon. R.E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.05 a.m.): The Year of the Built Environment 2004 has been a great success, generating Smart State ideas and projects to create a more sustainable Queensland. The state government committed \$500,000 to promote the year and increase community awareness and understanding of the importance of the built environment. It was money well spent. Driven by the Department of Public Works, the Year of the Built Environment has helped establish new networks across levels of government, with architects, engineers and developers as well as schools and academia.

All these sectors have put their heads together to address the major themes of the year, such as creating healthier environments, building regional and sustainable communities and smarter construction for the future. In total, 32 projects were funded throughout the state. Among the highlights was a commitment from 34 local councils to develop their own sustainable display homes across Queensland using the state government's smart housing design and principles. This project will ensure Queenslanders will be able to see first-hand sustainable features and designs which they can use in their own homes.

The Year of the Built Environment has also seen the establishment of the Centre of Excellence for Tropical Design at the James Cook University, with the cooperation of the Townsville and Thuringowa city councils and industry groups. I thank the member for Thuringowa and the member for Townsville for their ongoing support in that regard. The centre will be formally launched next week and will set the agenda on tropical design in Queensland for the future in communities north of Rockhampton.

The Year of the Built Environment has also achieved educational outcomes. A new web based interactive learning tool has been developed so Queenslanders can learn about sustainability online. It was developed with the help of Access Queensland using information gained from the Rockhampton Research House. School students have also been involved in the Year of the Built Environment through the Our Towns project. Students contributed key information about their home town on a website that showcases snapshots of all Queensland towns.

Queensland hosted the first ever meeting of government architects from all states to share knowledge and experience in developing public buildings and infrastructure. This Smart State initiative was such a success that the meeting will now be held annually. The successes of the year will not end with the close of 2005; rather, the Year of the Built Environment has been a catalyst for Queenslanders to have ongoing discussion and commitment to the development of a better built environment that is smarter and more sustainable. I would like to thank everyone who has helped deliver the Year of the Built Environment and all of the agencies across the government which have been involved.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Inner Northern Busway

Hon. P.T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.08 a.m.): I would like to update the House on the construction of two new busway stations on the Inner Northern Busway. In February, the \$135 million stages 1 and 2 of the Inner Northern Busway from Roma Street to Gilchrist Avenue near the Royal Children's Hospital opened. These stages were jointly funded by the state and Brisbane City Council. The Beattie government has allocated \$12.35 million towards building two new stations. I am pleased to announce that tenders have been called for the new station at Normanby and that tenders have closed for a new station at the Royal Children's Hospital, Herston. Both stations will be built next year and will provide high-quality transit facilities to cater for the growing demand for bus services in Brisbane's northern suburbs.

Since opening in February, the initial stages of the INB have proven an outstanding success. Bus patronage of inner northern suburban services from Chermide to the CBD has increased by three per cent. That is an extra 84,651 passengers. The TransLink 333 service—a new route that we introduced to the city via the QUT Kelvin Grove campus when the INB opened—carried more than 500,000 passengers in its first six months. The INB allows buses travelling from the northern suburbs to bypass inner city traffic congestion when travelling to the CBD.

When completed, the busway will form a 4.7 kilometre dedicated roadway for buses from the Queen Street bus station to the Royal Brisbane Hospital at Herston. The completed INB will cut average bus travel times between Herston and the CBD by up to nine minutes during normal traffic and by up to 20 minutes when there is heavy congestion. Contracts for the new stations are expected to be awarded by the end of December, with the new stations scheduled to open in August next year. I can reassure bus travellers that the INB will remain open while the new stations are being built.

The RCH Herston station will be directly opposite the Royal Children's Hospital. Public access will be from Herston Road via lifts and stairs, and from Gilchrist Avenue on a pedestrian and bicycle path. The Normanby station will be located directly under Brisbane Grammar School's sports centre between Kelvin Grove Road and the rail line. Access will be from an arrival plaza on Kelvin Grove Road. These new stations will have similar facilities to existing stations along the South East Busway and the INB station at the QUT Kelvin Grove campus, including modern undercover seating, electronic bulletin boards displaying service information, in-built passenger security measures such as video surveillance cameras, emergency help points and lighting.

The Beattie government is providing more than \$2.5 billion in recurrent funding over the next four years for the public transport network in south-east Queensland. This includes a further \$248 million capital investment on bus infrastructure and facilities such as the extension of the INB to Queen Street and bus priority improvements in Brisbane and on the Gold and Sunshine coasts.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Water Charges

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (10.11 a.m.): In a press release last week the member for Callide engaged in another bout of grossly irresponsible scaremongering—sad but true—over possible price rises for water users which clearly demonstrated the out-of-touch and out-of-date thinking and rank hypocrisy that are the hallmarks of the opposition in this state. While there are currently two discussion papers on water—

Mr Seeney: It's Christmas; don't be so nasty. I was going to send you a Christmas card, too.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will listen to the statement.

Mr Seeney: It was a nice card. I was going to send him a Christmas card.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will continue with the statement.

Mr ROBERTSON: Save the postage.

While there are currently two discussion papers on water—one on future water charging for unsupplemented users and one about SunWater schemes—the member for Callide has misleadingly tried to link the two. Contrary to his dishonest claims, neither of the current discussion papers foreshadows a 1,000 per cent increase in water charges. The water charging discussion paper notes that, on average, non-SunWater customers pay a total of \$2.4 million a year for their water, while the cost of managing the resource is \$69 million. Between \$23 million and \$37 million of that sum is estimated to be of direct benefit to users.

Even if the government intended to recover the highest estimate of direct benefit—which has not been foreshadowed—it would need to charge between \$7 and \$10 per megalitre. The charge for the

15 per cent of non-SunWater users who currently pay for their water is \$3 per megalitre. Even recovering all of the direct benefit costs would fall far short of the 1,000 per cent distortion being peddled by the Nationals. It is yet another display of the financial acumen of the opposition's self-styled alternative Treasurer.

This government is committed to ensuring that our precious water resources are sustainably managed and priced appropriately, because pricing reform is an essential element of safeguarding our future water supplies and rural industries. On water charging, we are doing exactly what we are required to do under the COAG water reform agreement, which is fully and enthusiastically supported by the Nationals in Canberra. In fact, the Deputy Prime Minister clearly supports it. Just last week he told the federal parliament—

One of the things that environmentalists, scientists, farmers, bankers and government leaders have come to recognise in recent times is that, for a resource to be properly used, you need to attach an appropriate value to it and those who use these resources will use them much more wisely.

I welcome the support of the Deputy Prime Minister on the issue of water charging because it highlights the fact that Queensland needs real, responsible strategies to ensure that our water is managed sustainably. It also highlights how isolated and out of touch the Queensland Nationals are and demonstrates exactly why 94 per cent of Queenslanders are not interested in what they have to say.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Protection

Hon. M.F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.14 a.m.): This has been an extremely important year for children in Queensland. The landmark reforms being made to the child protection system in Queensland are setting precedents for other governments around the country and the world, and we are extremely proud of this. The new Department of Child Safety has been working as quickly as humanly possible to implement the 110 recommendations of the CMC inquiry and has been following Peter Forster's blueprint to the letter.

2004 has truly been a new era in child protection. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every staff member of the Department of Child Safety for their commitment and dedication to child protection. This year has been particularly difficult for staff as they transition from the old department of families to the Department of Communities and the Department of Child Safety. I would also like to pay tribute to our partners in non-government organisations, community groups and, of course, our foster carers, who play such a vital role in the care of children in the child protection system. These men and women are true heroes in our communities, and their commitment and dedication should never be forgotten.

While this has been a groundbreaking year in achievements and improvements to the child protection system, we know that our reform program is constantly developing. Seventeen organisations throughout Queensland will share in more than \$2.9 million in funding over three years and one-off funds of more than \$278,000 for family reunification services. These services have long been recognised as having significant benefits to children and young people in alternative care, as well as their families and carers. Our priority in 2004-05 is to work with children and their families within the first 12 months of entry into care and to implement processes that engage family members and significant members of the child's cultural community in decision making. According to research, the majority of children in care return to their families with protective placement only a temporary experience.

The aim of this initiative is to promote the safe reunification of children and young people in alternative care with their family and their community. The successful organisations will provide a range of intervention and support services that promote safe reunifications for children in care with their family where it is in the best interests of the child to do so. Services targeted at specifically supporting the family reunification process for indigenous children in protective care would also benefit from the funding.

There remains, as I have said before, significant overrepresentation of indigenous children and young people in the alternative care system. In response to this we have allocated 19 per cent of the total available funding to indigenous family reunification services. This funding pool is part of \$3.12 million of new money committed to family reunification services in 2004-05. A second new funding instalment of \$1.56 million will be available in the next financial year with total funding for the family reunification initiative rising to \$6.24 million in the 2006-07 financial year.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tourism Industry

Hon. M.M. KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (10.18 a.m.): 2004 has been a watershed year for Queensland's tourism industry. Earlier this year Premier Peter Beattie declared 2004 Queensland's Year of the International Tourist. We are now reaping the dividends of the Premier's wise decision as visitors fly into Queensland from around the world. We have arrested the decline in international numbers since September 11 and the SARS outbreak, and our domestic market remains strong. The government's aviation strategy is producing sensational results. Queensland is on track to welcome more than two million international visitors this calendar year.

International capacity into this state is up more than 20 per cent on 12 months ago. Domestic capacity between October this year and last year has risen by a massive 31 per cent. Queensland has never been so accessible, and low domestic fares have convinced thousands of Australians to spend their holidays here.

For this reason Queensland's leading tourist destinations are predicting a bumper Christmas holiday season. The Beattie government's commitment to the industry is unquestioned. The government has been working in a Smart State partnership with industry associations and participants. Tourism Queensland has a new whole-of-state emphasis on marketing and development of priority niche market segments such as ecotourism, indigenous tourism, drive and marine tourism, education and business tourism, backpacker and adventure tourism, and food, wine, arts, culture and events tourism. We are also planning a new push into China, the sleeping giant of Asian tourism.

For Queensland tourism is big business. It is our second biggest export industry and employs more than 150,000 Queenslanders. Visitors to Queensland spend an estimated \$18.3 billion each year, which means jobs, jobs and more jobs, in particular in our regions. We have the best tourism product and the best operators. Recently at a nationwide competition run by the *Australian*, Queensland received five wins in 10 categories: Hayman Island won best resort accommodation, Palazzo Versace won best luxury accommodation, Novotel Twin Waters won the value accommodation category, Sea World won the award for family-focused tourism and Silky Oak Lodge's Healing Waters Spa won the destination spa experience award. All Queenslanders can be very proud.

The industry is brimming with confidence and enthusiasm. Certainly this mood will be evident at the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre tomorrow night when the industry celebrates its night of nights, the 2004 Queensland Tourism Awards. On behalf of the Beattie government I commend tourism operators for their contribution to our magnificent industry and to the economy of Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ergon Energy, Indigenous Employment Strategy

Hon. R.J. MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for Energy) (10.21 a.m.): This government is creating job opportunities and economic growth in indigenous communities, particularly in rural and remote areas. I am pleased to report that our government owned corporations are also taking a lead role, with Ergon Energy establishing an indigenous employment strategy which I launched in Townsville last week. The strategy will create meaningful jobs for indigenous people and strengthen their communities. In many cases, it will create opportunities for people who have never had a job. The strategy focuses on two main areas—recruitment and selection, and ongoing support and development.

By 2006, Ergon Energy aims to increase the overall proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in its work force to 2.4 per cent in line with the Queensland government target. To achieve that, Ergon Energy will need to employ an additional 23 indigenous staff, bringing the total number of indigenous employees to 82. Employment opportunities will be offered in the form of cadetships, traineeships and apprenticeships and with other positions such as customer care representatives, administrative staff and power workers.

Ergon Energy is considering a mentoring program to ensure it provides a positive and supportive workplace for its new recruits. Importantly, people will be able to take their skills back to their communities, allowing them to continue living with their families. By working with communities to create jobs, Ergon Energy is helping to break the cycle of social problems and crippling unemployment experienced by too many indigenous people. This strategy will deliver long-term career prospects for indigenous people while improving customer service in rural and remote areas.

Indigenous people bring a range of diverse skills, talents and knowledge to the workforce which will benefit Ergon Energy. Once recruited and trained, there will be a strong emphasis upon continued retention and career development of indigenous employees, including issues particular to employees

located in remote and isolated areas. Ergon Energy advises me that the strategy will be used next year for the annual traineeship intake while Ergon Energy will also strive to attract indigenous applicants in its quarterly intake of staff for the national contact centre.

I congratulate Ergon Energy on demonstrating its commitment to indigenous Queenslanders through its indigenous employment strategy. It will build on the wider recruitment strategy which will see Ergon Energy employ additional apprentices across Queensland early next year. This is a real contribution to creating a Smart State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

Hon. E.A. CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (10.26 a.m.): I would like to reflect on 2004 and the many people who have made this a year of learning and have made a huge contribution to this state as a whole. It has been my great privilege to meet many extraordinary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders this year.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in some of the most challenging environments in Australia. They face isolation, they face ill-health, they face issues which impact on education, justice, housing, child safety, good governance, family violence, the management of resources, and economic development. These challenges are not isolated to those communities. People in urban, regional, rural and remote areas face many of these problems. They are living a legacy of past government policies that separated them from their families, their culture and sometimes even the dignity that is their right. But that is not the end of the story. Around the state and around the country, there are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are actively working towards the repair of their families and their culture. The Queensland government is working with them. We have heard stories from remote communities where the state government has taken the tough step of implementing alcohol restrictions in 17 communities in partnership with each community.

The repair goes far beyond the carriage limit of alcohol. There is progress being made in all of the areas of challenge—in health, in education, in child safety. And there are the good stories we do not hear too much about—the small, hard-won businesses like the Walker family tours in Wujal Wujal and the crabbing and fishing business in Mapoon.

My travels this year have also taken me to meet many Queenslanders who live in urban and regional areas and to hear about the excellent work being done in Toowoomba, Inala, Cairns, the Gold Coast and in Townsville. I have had the privilege to witness historic occasions such as the Wik native title determination in October and the centenary celebrations at Cherbourg. I have been invited to be part of Mabo Day, Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

I thank the many people I have met for their spirit of cooperation and for their willingness to work so passionately towards a time when all Australians will have an equal start in life.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Centenary, Queensland Women's Right to Vote

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

That this House recognises the exceptional contribution and achievements of women in public life since Queensland women were afforded the right to vote in state elections in 1905 and notes the government's intention to celebrate the centenary of this milestone in 2005 with a range of activities throughout Queensland under the theme 'Celebrate the Past—Claim the Future: 100 years of the vote for Queensland Women'.

Further, that in celebrating the centenary the House acknowledges that the right to vote was not afforded to all women, with indigenous women in Queensland only gaining the right to vote in state elections in 1965.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Mr W. Ludwig

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.28 a.m.): We have seen the Labor Party's factional heavyweight and master puppeteer, Bill Ludwig, again flex his muscles today. Fresh from arranging himself a job with the Board of Thoroughbred Racing in Queensland, he is now warning the government about their approach to hardwood timber communities.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We have a point of order.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. What the honourable member said is untrue and offensive.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will listen to the point of order.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Could I make my point, please?

Mr SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The honourable member stated that Mr Ludwig arranged himself a position on the board. That is not true. The honourable member is misleading the parliament. That is offensive and it needs to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: I cannot accept that point of order in that respect because it was not directed to the minister.

Mr SPRINGBORG: As I said, Mr Ludwig is the Labor Party's master puppeteer. Every time Mr Ludwig moves his right arm the Premier moves his right arm, every time he moves his left leg, the Premier moves his left leg. Mr Ludwig has said today in the press that this government must avoid making the same mistakes that Mark Latham made at the last federal election and that this government must avoid making the same mistakes with regard to selling out communities. What Mr Ludwig said today in his caution to the Premier is, 'Don't sell out those communities and those workers in the hardwood regions of Queensland.' We have had enough of this government selling out those people, sacrificing them to an extreme environmental agenda.'

We saw what happened at the last federal election. Mr Latham was repudiated by the people of Australia for those policies in Tasmania. The Howard-Anderson government won with a resounding majority. The Howard-Anderson government does not support your opposition to tree clearing in this state.

Time expired.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Energex; Mr G. Maddock

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.30 a.m.): My question without notice is to the Treasurer. I refer to the Auditor-General's report No. 6 tabled this morning and, in particular, the findings relating to Energex, and I ask: is the minister aware of any other expenditure incurred by Greg Maddock that is still being pursued by Energex? Has there been any communication between the minister's office and the board of Energex in this regard and, if so, what?

Mr MACKENROTH: I am unaware of any other expenditure by Greg Maddock that is being pursued by the board of Energex. However, I am aware of two issues of attempted payments of money by Don Nissen to Greg Maddock which were rejected by the HR section. Those matters are being further investigated by the board. The Auditor-General has been made aware of those. I have also discussed this with the Auditor-General. I have expressed my view to the Auditor-General that when those matters are relayed to him they should also be made available to the parliament through one of his reports. I would hope that that happens.

Electricity Supply

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy. I refer to the action plan released by the government in August this year in response to the Somerville report into the state's electricity crisis and system. As the minister has now had four months to work it out, can he guarantee the House that, excluding power failures caused by summer storms, there will be no blackouts over the coming summer?

Mr MICKEL: The Leader of the Opposition is asking me to do something that those opposite could never do in government. I will give him this commitment. In the document that was released by, I think, the Premier there was an attachment. I can give the House this assurance. The attachment said that the last time there were power cuts in this state was in 1998. Who was in government? Them. We had four days of power cuts. I can give the House this assurance, that this summer—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MICKEL: I wish those opposite would stop that infernal din and allow me to answer this question. Unlike the National Party, this government will not deliver four days of power cuts. The point about a guarantee is this. Can I guarantee that we have a first class system? Of course we have. It was not so long ago that the member for Callide was saying to people to go and get a candle. The next week the media reported an increase in people flocking to get airconditioning. We can do many things with a

candle, but we cannot light up the airconditioning. The sales of airconditioning are a vote of confidence by householders in the strength of our electricity system.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MICKEL: Again we have the infernal din from the opposition. I want to thank the workers in Ergon Energy and Energex for delivering on a record maintenance and capital works project—\$1.1 billion worth. Those opposite were here the other night praising the workers of Ergon Energy and Energex. Today, of course, is a new day and they have a new policy. They are out there bagging the workers for the job they do; backs to the wall because they have no policy. What they have is a room temperature IQ and a beer strength popularity. It has been a great year for government and an appalling year for the opposition.

Smart State Exports

Mr ENGLISH: My question is directed to the Premier. I know that members will take no offence when I refer to dinosaurs in this place. Can the Premier detail how successful the Smart State has been in highlighting the Jurassic period, especially to the people of Japan?

Mr BEATTIE: I have to say after the Leader of the Opposition's questions that I thought the reindeers had come early. Using Smart State strategies to transform traditional industries is clever enough. Using the Smart State to bring dinosaurs to life is absolutely brilliant—and even better when it promises to yield exports and jobs. That is exactly what is happening with the Wollemi pine. It was obvious to me during my trade and investment mission in September that our friends in Japan love the Wollemi pine. A tree on display at Pacific Flora 2004—an international gardening and horticulture exhibition—was a great attraction. More than five million people flocked to see it, and there was considerable Japanese media interest when I visited the exhibition to present a Wollemi pine to the people of Shizuoka Prefecture. Japanese people are intrigued by the story of the pine, which was believed to be extinct until 1994—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The good thing is that Queensland technology has turned a New South Wales tree into an export commodity. We are smart enough to use it.

As I was saying, Japanese people are intrigued by the story of the pine, which was believed to be extinct until 1994, when it was stumbled upon in the Wollemi National Park in New South Wales.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: With a bit of hope and based on this technology we can even help those dinosaurs. The species is a living fossil that dates from the Jurassic period.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: What is wrong with them this morning, Mr Speaker? Japanese people call it the Jurassic tree, and it is being propagated at a real life Jurassic park—the world's only Wollemi pine propagation site, right here in the Smart State. The work is done by Wollemi Australia, a joint venture between Birkdale Nurseries and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries—hence the question from the local member.

Now involved in an important development for promotion of the tree, Wollemi Australia has appointed Flower Auction Japan as its sole agent in Japan. Wollemi Australia and Flower Auction Japan are negotiating a licence agreement for the commercialisation of the Wollemi pine for the Japanese market. Flower Auction Japan is leading a mission of Japanese plant growers to Brisbane next month to meet Wollemi Australia and to inspect the nursery.

This will prepare the ground for export sales of the Jurassic tree in Japan which are due to begin at the end of 2005 or early in 2006. The anticipated enthusiastic response from Japanese consumers will translate into exports that are projected to quickly reach the million dollar mark. Pacific Flora was an important launching pad for marketing the Jurassic tree in Japan. Barbara McGeoch of Birkdale Nurseries has solidly promoted it there. She was with me at the launch in Japan. The Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, Henry Palaszczuk, followed up by attending a pine handover ceremony. I table more details of this for the House. Smart State technology is very good.

Queensland Health, Doctors

Mr COPELAND: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, the health crisis in Queensland is deepening as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has confirmed that Queensland has one of the fastest growth rates but the lowest ratio of doctors to patients and that the situation is getting worse. Why will the minister not ensure that Queensland Health employs sufficient doctors to provide the public health system that all Queenslanders deserve?

Mr NUTTALL: Earlier this week I outlined the fact that Queensland Health had, through its lobbying with the federal government, arranged to have an additional 100 places in our universities—at both the Griffith University and the Bond University—so we could actually train more doctors in this state.

Mr Copeland: The ratio is the worst in the country.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You have asked the question, member for Cunningham; now listen to the answer.

Mr NUTTALL: Mr Speaker, the point the honourable member raises is valid, and that is why we have been lobbying the government. The problem we have with doctors is that the planning in the eighties was very poor.

Mr Copeland interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr NUTTALL: It was very poor. If the member is prepared to read the report, the report indicates that doctors are choosing to work fewer hours in terms of having a better quality of life. No-one begrudges doctors doing that, but what it does point out is that we do need more doctors. One of the things doctors are choosing to do is to move out of general GP work into the area of specialist work. I acknowledge—

Mr Copeland interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Cunningham, you will cease interjecting! This is my final warning.

Mr NUTTALL: I acknowledge that doctors are choosing other careers, such as the honourable member for Moggill, to leave working as a GP. I have stood in this parliament on a number of occasions and have indicated my concern about the shortage of doctors in this state, and that is why we have lobbied very hard with the federal government. That is why we have an additional 100 places given to us in our universities. That is why we are the first government in this country to reach an agreement with the Australasian College of Surgeons and the Commonwealth government to start training our specialists in private hospitals. That is a first in the country. I say to all honourable members: this is not something that we have not been working very hard at in terms of trying to increase the numbers of doctors in this state. The 100 places that we have are warmly welcomed, but we need to do more. We need to train more. We need to train them in the public sector. We need to train them in the private sector. If doctors choose to work fewer hours, as I say, I understand that. I do not think anyone in today's society expects our doctors to work those extensive hours.

National and Liberal Parties

Mrs CROFT: My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's frequent statements that a strong opposition is essential to the good government of Queensland. I ask: what effect will the present disunity between the Liberals and the Nationals have on the future of Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: I have been shattered by the lack of harmony on the other side. One of the most distressing things that I saw this week was a suggestion by leading columnist in the *Courier-Mail* Matthew Franklin that in fact if Lawrence Springborg does not get his way he may even retire from politics. Lawrence—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: He has gone already! Jeff Seeney, the Leader of the Opposition! Jeff, it did not take you long! I want to make this point. I just say to Lawrence: don't do it! Lawrence, we want you. We need you. We like you. Not only that, we support Lawrence because he is one of the best things going for us. I want him to know that we do not want him to leave.

I have to say this to the member for Gregory, because I read the *Longreach Leader* like he does. It is a great newspaper. I note an article in the *Longreach Leader* on 19 November—the day after my birthday—headed 'Try the Power of One Party, Johnson'. He is a very distinguished member, by the way. The article states, and it is very important—

The National Party Member for Gregory said unless something was done 'Peter Beattie and Labor will control the Treasury Benches in Queensland for at least the next three elections while irresponsible conservative leaders thresh in the sewer of failure'.

That is very intelligent. I agree with Vaughan. He is very sharp. The article continued—

He pointed to the rapidly changing demographics of south east Queensland where the massive influx of new residents from Victoria, New South Wales and elsewhere 'do not identify with The Nationals, only the Liberals and Labor'.

This is what Vaughan says—

'We must admit that The Nationals will never make inroads back there,' ...

That is what Vaughan said. But what did Lawrence say yesterday? What did Lawrence say yesterday? Yesterday Lawrence said that if the Liberal Party does not toe the line the Nationals are going to run in every seat in the city. Listen to this—

A clearly frustrated Mr Springborg said yesterday if the Liberals wanted to go it alone, then the Nationals would take them on in the 35 prized seats of Brisbane.

Only one of them can be right. Do you know who is right, Vaughan? You are! Mr Springborg is not right. But I will tell members what I do agree with Lawrence on, and it is important that I get this on the record. An article in the *Australian* on 4 January 2003 stated—

The Queensland National Party frontbencher regarded as a likely leadership contender yesterday said polls showing 9 per cent support for the Opposition and a similarly low rating for leader Mike Horan were 'not good enough going into an election year'.

What he said was that anyone who did not understand it was in denial. He is sitting on six per cent, yet he says that nine is not good enough!

Reading Recovery Program

Mr MESSENGER: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, the Education Queensland web site proudly proclaims the Reading Recovery Program as a remarkable international success. It is a view supported by the minister's deputy director-general, who states that this program is a valued early literacy and prevention strategy. Given that, why did the minister go behind parents' backs and sacrifice the Reading Recovery Program in a grubby deal with the Queensland Teachers Union in a half-baked measure to reduce class sizes? Why can't we have both—a fully funded Reading Recovery Program and smaller class sizes? How can the minister call the slashing of this valuable program the redistribution—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr MESSENGER: Maybe I should take the program!

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We need to hear the question. Order! Please continue.

Mr MESSENGER:—of available resources—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MESSENGER:—the redistribution of available resources when really it is only the Smart State—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am willing to wait. Order! Member for Burnett.

Mr MESSENGER: —when really, Mr Speaker, it is only the Smart State selling out its kids?

Mr SPEAKER: I thank you for your private member's statement. Is that what it was? Was that a private member's statement?

Mr Messenger interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Where is the question?

Mr Messenger interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: It sounded like a private member's statement. There was no question at the end of it.

Mr Messenger interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: You are only allowed one, but I will ask the minister. I call the Minister for Education.

Ms BLIGH: Mr Speaker, do you think that it might be possible for me to ask the member to repeat the question? Those members who were present in the House on Tuesday will know that this question was asked on Tuesday and it was answered on Tuesday, so I am not entirely sure the point of asking it again and I would refer those members who have an interest to the *Hansard* of that day.

I do not think that anyone in this House is very surprised that the member might be asking the same question twice. I think it is fair to say that I am personally very disappointed with this member's performance as the shadow minister.

Mr Messenger interjected.

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

Mr Hobbs interjected.

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

Ms BLIGH: If we had to do an end of year report card on the member's performance, we would have to rate it a very disappointing D. There was so much early promise from the member for Burnett. I have had a quick look at the member's performance and, with the exception of a repeat question—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego!

Mr Messenger interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Burnett! That is my final warning to you.

Ms BLIGH: With the exception of the repeat question today, the member for Burnett asked five questions on education in this House in his first year.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

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

Ms BLIGH: I would have to say that that is a very low standard, even by National Party standards. Everybody in this country knows that the members of the Queensland National Party are the two-toed sloths of Australian politics. They are the laziest opposition in the country. The member for Beaudesert, hardly the standard-bearer for hard work, asked nine questions during his last year as the shadow minister for education.

It is not just about quantity; it is about quality. People will know that earlier this week I had to come in here and correct 'facts'. I have had to do that in the past. Any suggestion that this side of politics does not care about education is nonsense. Santa's reindeers care more about education than the members opposite.

Mr Messenger interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Burnett! I now warn you under standing order 253.

Aviation Industry

Mr O'BRIEN: I direct a question to the Minister for State Development and Innovation. The Smart State strategy clearly flew ahead in 2004. Could the minister provide the House with an example of how the Smart Start aviation initiative has taken off internationally?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for Cook for the question. Indeed, last night I had the pleasure to present graduate certificates to 18 aviation students. They were the first round of international graduates to successfully complete Aviation Australia's aircraft maintenance engineering licence program. These students from Hong Kong based Cathay Pacific and Dragonair hail from countries such as Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, Vietnam and, of course, China. They are the living, breathing proof that the Smart State is quickly becoming an aviation hub in the Asia-Pacific region.

Aviation Australia is emerging as a leading player in the international high-tech training arena. This is a great achievement for a company that this Beattie government established only three years ago. Even better news is that Aviation Australia is attracting not only international students to Queensland but also significant investment to our Smart State.

One of the main reasons behind Qantas's decision to establish its 767 heavy maintenance facility at Brisbane Airport was the world-class training facilities that the Smart State has to offer. This is a decision that means 500 more aviation jobs for Queenslanders. Likewise, earlier this month I was in Cairns, which is very close to the electorate of the member for Cook, to inspect the construction site of a \$7.6 million Hawker Pacific aircraft maintenance facility. Hawker Pacific maintenance cited the proximity of the Cairns Aviation Skills Centre and the highly trained workers that it produces as a clincher for their decision. They chose Cairns over Singapore, Sydney and Perth. Once again, this means 64 new, highly skilled aviation jobs in the Cairns area.

It is clear that this government's aggressive approach to establishing a world-class aviation industry in Queensland is creating excellent results. Companies such as Boeing, Virgin and Smith Aerospace are all choosing to come and set up in the Smart State. On top of this, our local aviation firms are winning a steady stream of lucrative Defence contracts. This has resulted in 5,000 new aviation jobs since our government came to power in 1998.

I assure this House that I will be putting my shoulder to the wheel in the coming year to ensure that our aviation industry continues to thrive. This is a Smart State industry that creates smart jobs for smart Queenslanders in the Smart State.

Cardiac Services, Prince Charles Hospital

Dr FLEGG: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. On 19 October the minister challenged me to give him details of a number of preventable deaths on the waiting list at the Prince Charles Hospital. Given that I passed that information to the minister's office the following day, including dates, places and times, and given that I understand that there has been an additional death on the waiting list of a Sunshine Coast man, I ask: why has this House had no response from the minister? What is it that the minister has to hide? How does the minister intend to restore confidence in the public cardiac system by simply ducking the questions?

Mr NUTTALL: At the outset, can I say in relation to the material that was supplied to me by the honourable member that each and every one of those matters was investigated. Some of them had been investigated in the past. The member would be very well aware that a number of people who have heart conditions also have a number of other complications. The member would also be well aware that I am not in a position to talk about individual cases and nor do I intend to do that. But I can say that a number of those people who were on the waiting list passed away for a range of reasons other than their prevailing heart condition. As a doctor, the member would be well aware that that happens. The member would also be well aware that a number of those people were not young people by any stretch of the imagination. One could kindly say that a number of them were senior citizens.

We are not infallible and, unfortunately, people pass away. But that is the reality of life. I have said it in this House in the past and I will say it again: I am not ducking my responsibility in this regard. I looked at every one of those issues that the member brought to me. My department looked at them.

Dr Flegg: You made no response.

Mr NUTTALL: I do not need to respond to the member. The member gave me a list of people who had passed away while on the waiting list. I had my department look at those people who had passed away while on the waiting list. As the minister, I am satisfied with the response that I received in terms of the reasons for those people passing away while they were on the waiting list. None of those people passed away while on the waiting list as a result of not having the best possible care in our hospital system.

Drug Court Trial

Mr WALLACE: I refer the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to the significant outcomes of the drug court to help people overcome serious drug addictions. The south-east Queensland drug court has been a great success. I ask the Attorney-General: what progress is being made with the trial of the drug court in north Queensland?

Mr Seeney: Mine would have been better. I've got some good ones.

Mr WELFORD: I bet the member has.

Mr Seeney: You know I have.

Mr WELFORD: It is Christmas. I thank the honourable member for his question. This month we are celebrating the second anniversary of the commencement of the drug court in north Queensland. Its first session was held in Townsville on 15 November 2002 and a session in Cairns followed three weeks later on 6 December.

Like our program in south-east Queensland, the north Queensland drug court has been dealing with serious drug addicts—those hooked on drugs such as heroin, cocaine and amphetamines. Many of the people who have come before the court are ordinary people caught in the spiral of drug abuse who have turned to crime primarily to pay for their heroin, cocaine and speed. It is a sad indictment on the powerful addictive force of these drugs, and many of these people would never have tried to kick their habits without the stark choice offered by the drug court. Even then, and with the best of help, it takes between 12 and 18 months for a person to overcome their addiction. Given that lengthy time frame, we are only now starting to see graduations from the north Queensland drug court. I am pleased, however, to advise that there have been 18 graduations so far. The most recent graduate came from the Cairns drug court—a 33-year-old man addicted to amphetamines who had been undergoing rehabilitation for some 15 months.

The drug court trial in north Queensland is an important initiative aimed at targeting the causes of crime. It is using the experience gained from our drug court program here in south-east Queensland. Of course, the model being used in north Queensland is slightly different from the south-east Queensland drug court model and will provide a good point of comparison in terms of the performance of each approach. An evaluation of the north Queensland model will be undertaken by the independent Australian Institute of Criminology early next year.

The drug court can make a significant contribution, I believe, to our communities because so much crime—about three in every four offences—is drug related. I am pleased to advise the House that the total number of graduations from our drug courts, in both south-east Queensland and north

Queensland, is now 120 people. This is a great result, because every successful rehabilitation means that there are fewer housebreakings, car thefts and other crimes committed by drug addicts who are trying to support their habit.

Gladstone Turf Club

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: My question is addressed to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. Over a year ago Mr Bob Bentley gave an undertaking to the committee of the Gladstone Turf Club for the relocation of the Gladstone track to ash pond 7. Mr Bentley now appears to have reneged on his commitment to this hardworking group. Will this government take action to honour the commitment to relocate Gladstone Turf Club to ensure a sound future for racing in the Gladstone region?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for the question.

Mr Hopper: Bob's an honest bloke.

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

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I would like to pay it the dignity it deserves, without inane interjections from the other side of the House.

The truth of the matter is that the Gladstone race track, Ferguson Park, as we all know is probably more popular as a reindeer race track than as a horse race track. It is a sand track. Trainers tell me that they are not real happy about the surface and so on and that they have struggled with workplace health and safety issues.

The proposal from Bentley and QR last year, as I understand it—bear in mind that I was not the minister at the time—was that, as the land is in state control under the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, the land would be gifted to Queensland Racing by DNR and, as a result of that, QR would dispose of it and the money left over would go into the QR tin and a new race track would be built. That submission, however, has never come forward from the race club to me and to government, so that has not actually been considered. What has been considered, however, is the QR proposal to do it—that any money left over from that transaction would find its way back into QR. That, as I understand it, has been ruled out.

I am meeting with them in the next couple of weeks. My advice to the Gladstone race club is to just hold fire and we will talk about it. The truth of the matter is that the club has a problem on its hands. It cannot expect the taxpayer to bail it out. To do so would be, I think, a huge issue for us elsewhere. But I am prepared to give the club a fair go and try to work through the issues with it.

Public Housing

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. One of the priorities of the Beattie government has been to improve the quality of public housing and to ensure our stock meets future demand. We have also worked hard to remove the stigma which was once attached to suburbs that had a high concentration of public housing. Can the minister please advise the House of the latest initiative of the Department of Housing that will be trialled in Brisbane shortly?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Over the sky at Stafford is soon to appear Rudolph, Dancer, Blitzen and all the other reindeer dragging the lovely red jolly man over there into the public housing redevelopment known as the Brisbane suburbs improvement strategy. The best Christmas present we can give to people in public housing in that area is to provide—

An opposition member: A Christmas tree?

Mr SCHWARTEN: That is the sort of embarrassing, unintelligent, inane, stupid argument that comes from that infernal din over there. That really underscores their view on public housing. It is embarrassing. The member for Stafford cares a lot about his suburb. The 237 public housing—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Darling Downs!

Mr Hopper: I didn't say it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have warned you before about continually interjecting.

Mr SCHWARTEN: This is a very important issue. The strategy involves—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: This is an important issue. I know that those opposite are not interested in it, but the honourable member for Stafford has asked a very good question about the redevelopment of public housing in his electorate. Twenty-seven per cent of the residents in his electorate are in fact public housing tenants. Something like 90 per cent of those live in three-bedroom, 50-year-old homes

that cost us \$2,500 a year to maintain. What we are planning to do is capitalise on the strengths that we have—the land that we have there—create some alternatives and increase the density accordingly. Part of that deal, of course, is the parcel of land. I hope that the mayor comes good with the \$4.7 million, because that will go into this redevelopment. This is about creating alternatives, because there is an average density of 1.6 in that area. That means there is underutilisation, but what we do not have is options for those people to move into it.

Mr Terry Sullivan: They don't want to move out of the area.

Mr SCHWARTEN: And I do not want them to move out of the area, either. We want to keep those communities together. We want to increase density. We want to ensure that those people who live in that part of the world stay in that part of the world in a different housing option, if it suits them. The information that we have indicates that a lot of people who live in those houses—they have lived in them for a long period of time—find that it is getting beyond them to look after yards and so on. We will provide a quality alternative. It will not be forcing people to make decisions. We will take them down a path of alternatives and make sure that we keep public housing in the area, as the honourable member wants, and actually increase the density in that area. As I say, Christmas is on its way. Look out for the reindeers, because we are intending to proceed with this.

Open Learning Centres

Mr ROWELL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. I note the statement the minister made this morning about going back to learning and Breaking the Unemployment Cycle. Will the minister confirm the imminent closure of a number of open learning centres strategically placed around Queensland and detail which centres are to close and when? As these open learning centres provide an important service to all Queenslanders, why is the Smart State going to deny many Queenslanders the opportunity to access education and the resources to upgrade their skills?

Mr BARTON: Mr Speaker—

Mr Seeney: Watch out for the trap.

Mr BARTON: Normally they do set traps, but normally after setting those traps they end up with faces as red as the nose on the face of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. When they are embarrassed like that they should just slip home and hide. Hopefully, in the spirit of Christmas, there will be some mistletoe over the door. A whole range of people are making their normal infernal din as they are wont to do at this point.

I was present for the anniversary of the old technical correspondence school, which is the open learning centre for Queensland. I am very proud to have been a student of that school, as I was when I was an apprentice. That is how I did my study for my apprenticeship, through open learning, through doing papers from the old technical correspondence school. It very proudly had its 60th anniversary the other day, and I was very proud to have been a speaker.

I know there has been some conjecture about these open learning centres closing. My advice is that that is not the intent. I know that at times when people are assessing where programs go they put forward proposals. I can say that it is my intention to make sure that we get training in this state up as boldly as we can. If, in fact, the shadow minister has specific indications, if people have brought specific information to him, I would ask him to give that to me and I will get back to him. Very clearly, my commitment is a very solid one. That is why we have a very significantly improved budget for training in this state. Despite the errors in the *Courier-Mail* this morning that we did not appear to be too interested in skills shortages—in fact, we gave that particular journalist a mountain of material to write that article with; apparently he did not take too much notice of it—we are absolutely determined to ensure that we address the skills shortages. We did that very thoroughly last term but we have certainly enhanced it this year as a result of election commitments that I was a part of drafting. Both the Minister for State Development and I have increased funding to address skills shortage issues that we are running into. I know that open learning is a key part of ensuring that we get those skills. So, if the member would like to give me the information that he has, I will check it out. But at this point in time it is my intention to make sure that we keep every available training option open for the public of Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Greenslopes, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Seville Road State School in the electorate of Greenslopes.

Cardiac Services

Mr FENLON: My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and I ask: can the minister advise what progress has been made to enhance cardiac services in Queensland?

Mr NUTTALL: I thank the honourable member for his question and his ongoing support for the welfare and wellbeing of people in this state. In responding to this question, I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of thousands of clinical, administrative and support staff who do

work daily to promote a healthier Queensland, who assist people to healthier choices and who provide health services across this state.

Earlier this year the government made a commitment to healthier heart services as part of our promise to the people of Queensland. In previous comments in this House, I have referred to the additional funding directed to cardiac services and the increases in cardiac services that these funds have delivered. This government has already taken major steps in preventing cardiac disease, with the introduction of legislation aimed at reducing smoking and with the programs Queensland Health has initiated to promote physical activity and healthier eating in schoolchildren. I have also mentioned the development of a statewide cardiac service plan which will provide a framework for this government and for Queensland Health to address the real needs of all Queenslanders.

I can inform the House that the development of the statewide cardiac service plan is progressing well and that this plan will deliver a real strategy for cardiac disease prevention, health promotion and cardiac service delivery—and Santa's reindeers may well choose to have a look at this plan. The cardiac service plan will describe the causes of cardiac disease in Queensland, highlighting risk factors and any inequity in these factors. It will determine appropriate models of care for cardiac disease, including appropriate service networks, placement of professional services, referral strategies and flexible models of service delivery. It will determine new service delivery models, including innovative ways of using capital and human resources. It will determine appropriate criteria for referral for treatment to secondary and tertiary services based on priorities for care and service availability. It will identify current blocks to accessing appropriate cardiac services. It will determine appropriate funding and/or resourcing models to ensure equity of access to services, appropriateness of services and the need and capacity to introduce new technologies, and it will determine appropriate quality assurance models to be used by all Queensland Health cardiac services and access the benefits of current models such as cardiac collaboration.

As members can see, our approach is comprehensive and is directed at engaging the community and all health service personnel to prevent cardiac disease and to manage it effectively where it exists. Our strategy is in stark contrast to those who have directly attacked our services and who have proposed simplistic increases in funding to one service because of their own vested interests. I have informed members of this House that I am committed to real reform and to continuing improvement in our health system.

South Bank Education and Training Precinct

Mr McARDLE: My question is directed to the Minister for State Development. I refer the minister to the government's landmark PPP, namely, the South Bank education and training precinct, and to his media release of 2 June this year in which he stated—

They—

being the bids from the two remaining bidding consortia—

are worthy bids and they will be evaluated with the aim of finalising a contract with a preferred developer by the end of the year ...

Given that the end of the year is now only five weeks away, will the minister now advise whether the speculation within Queensland's construction sector is correct and whether the government no longer intends to proceed with this project as a PPP?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question. As he rightly said, I made a statement that a decision would be made towards the end of the year, and I stand by that commitment.

White Ribbon Day

Mr WELLS: My question is directed to the honourable Minister for Communities and Disability Services. I note that White Ribbon Day is being recognised by this parliament and that Amnesty International will be on the Speaker's Green after question time with a banner on which all honourable members are invited to place their hand print as a symbol of their opposition to violence against women. I ask the honourable gentleman: how is community awareness being raised about the impact of domestic violence in Queensland?

Mr PITT: I acknowledge the keen interest that the member for Murrumba has in issues regarding violence against women and the good work that he does through Amnesty International. It is a wonderful organisation. I, too, belong to Amnesty International, and I would encourage all members to take part in the hand-printing event on the Speaker's Green today. I thank both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition for showing the leadership that is required in this House by being in attendance as well.

It is a sad fact that domestic and family violence continue to have a significant impact on Queenslanders in our communities. In 2002-03 there were an estimated 408,100 victims of domestic and family violence nationwide, with 80 per cent of the victims being women. Just as disturbing is the

fact that 260,000 children were living with those women and they, too, are victims. That is a terrible human cost and the economic cost is almost as destructive.

A current nationwide survey by Access Economics shows the annual cost of domestic and family violence to the Australian community last financial year as about \$8.1 billion. Since the Beattie government amended the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act in March last year, the number of applications for domestic violence orders has increased by more than 50 per cent. An increased awareness of the legislation and Queenslanders' rights through campaigns such as Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month have contributed to that increase. In Queensland we are fortunate to have a strong, willing and capable community sector which works tirelessly to respond to those affected by violence. These services provide support, counselling and court support to men, women and children affected by domestic and family violence.

In 1999 the United Nations formally recognised the work of community agencies and all those who work to eliminate violence against women by declaring 25 November each year to be International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, otherwise known as White Ribbon Day. Last week I joined my colleague the Hon. Desley Boyle, the Minister for Women, to sign a partnership agreement with CEO Challenge and launched the White Ribbon Day poster, which encourages men to say no to violence against women. Today I am pleased to be wearing and to see many of my colleagues also wearing a white ribbon, which is our pledge to never commit, to never condone and to never remain silent about violence against women. Real men treat women with respect. We must all take that pledge, symbolised by the wearing of a white ribbon, very seriously.

Bruce Highway

Miss ELISA ROBERTS: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to the revelations to come out of investigations carried out by the RACQ that the Yandina-Gympie section of the Bruce Highway has been identified as the most dangerous section of highway in the whole of Australia. In light of this devastating assessment, will the minister advise of the amount of AusLink funding which has been allocated to the Bruce Highway north of Brisbane and what steps the minister plans to take, from a state perspective, to rectify this appalling situation so that my constituents and their portion of the highway is not ignored, as it has been for far too long?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for her interest in road issues on behalf of the constituents in her electorate. The AUSRAP report was released yesterday by the Australian Automobile Association and its local constituent body, the RACQ. It again confirms our serious concerns in Queensland with respect to us not getting our fair share of Commonwealth road funding. The report, which looks at federal roads in regional/rural areas, shows that our national highways are being seriously underfunded. We are Australia's most decentralised mainland state. We actually have people working outside the south-east corner, and it is a very great cause of concern for us in relation to the National Highway. That is especially the case with the Bruce Highway because, according to the report, it contains Queensland's arguably most dangerous section from Yandina to Gympie. Obviously the honourable member has a great concern about that.

We have about 20 per cent of the population of Australia, but we have 27 per cent of the National Highway journeys and 30 per cent of the Australian road freight task. That is what happens in a decentralised state, and that is why it is even more an issue for us than it is for the people down south in much smaller states with less decentralisation.

During the federal election campaign, by positioning Queensland appropriately we were able to get a number of commitments from the federal government to improve funding to Queensland roads. Every time it rains in far-north Queensland Tully gets cut off. That is a major issue. I know it is dear, but \$80 million has been allocated to do this very important project. We got that commitment out of the federal government and got the commitment prior to that out of Ferguson and the Latham opposition. By positioning Queensland appropriately we got that sort of commitment.

Last year the Beattie government submitted funding requests totalling \$3.2 billion over five years to the federal government to address this shortfall. Regrettably, AusLink is \$1.59 billion over five years. The problem is that most of the funds are not flowing till later on. I have met and spoken with Minister Anderson and the new roads minister Lloyd on a number of occasions. I do not dispute at all their bona fides or their interest in improving roads, but the fact is that Mr Howard and his Treasurer, Mr Costello, have to allocate more money to roads in this state. They need to understand that Australia exists outside its capital cities.

Putting aside the Tully money—and this answers the honourable member's question—there are 1,650 kilometres of road north from Caboolture to Cairns, which is the Bruce Highway. Under AusLink all we get in five years is \$210 million with \$10 million this year and \$5 million next year. Some work is being undertaken in the Yandina to Gympie area. That, of course, is welcome. There is \$4.3 million for a planning study for a Cooroy-Gympie bypass, and there is \$35 million over three years for four-laning through Gympie. That shows how much less money is being spent, and that is simply not good enough. Contrast that \$210 million with the \$120 million on loan that we are putting, as a state, into the Ripley

Road extension. Indeed, under the RIP in the member's electorate we have \$9.8 million being expended there as well.

I will continue to raise this issue. I will be seeing the roads minister tomorrow. I will again pass on the member's concerns to him. I appreciate her wish to fight for the constituents in her electorate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Ipswich, could I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Ballandean State School in the electorate of Southern Downs.

Emergency Services

Ms NOLAN: My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Does the minister have a dollar figure on how much property the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service saved last year?

Mr CUMMINS: Yes. It was \$25.7 billion. I thank the member for the question. My department's annual report for 2003-04 shows that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service saved property worth an estimated \$25.7 billion last financial year. In contrast, the amount of property lost in incidents attended by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Services amounted to just \$108.8 million. Both these figures are slightly lower than for the previous year. This suggests that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has been effective in educating Queenslanders about home fire safety and property protection, proving fire education is extremely important.

I am also very proud to say that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has almost achieved a perfect satisfaction level. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service recorded a magnificent satisfaction rating of 98 per cent in 2003-04. We thought the previous year's satisfaction level of 96.7 per cent would be pretty hard to beat, but they have done it. This satisfaction rating is the percentage of residents whose homes have been involved in a fire incident who have been satisfied with the services provided by our brave fire and rescue crews.

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service crews attended an average of 165 incidents each day during the last financial year. This equates to the fire service's busiest year on record. Despite this increased workload, 98 per cent of people who called them out to their homes were happy with their efforts. The fire service recorded an increase of about 58,000 call-outs in the previous financial year to more than 60,000 in 2003-04. This is the first time in Queensland's history that the 60,000 call mark has been surpassed, yet our fires still improved their response time. The previous year our full-time fire crews recorded a 97.2 per cent response rate within the recognised time frame of 14 minutes, and for 2003-04 they recorded 97.5 per cent. Our composite full-time and auxiliary crews improved response times from 94.9 per cent to 97.1 per cent, while our auxiliary crews improved from 90.3 per cent to 91.3 per cent.

These figures are a great credit to the selfless action, commitment and energy of all hard working fire crews and volunteers throughout Queensland. If people add these figures to the high numbers of hours spent carrying out community safety activities such as fire safety inspections and community education, it is no surprise that the Queensland community continues to hold its firefighters in such high standing.

Another telling statistic is that 93 per cent of homes visited by fire crews under the Operation Safe Home scheme have increased their fire safety practices. This figure is up from 80 per cent in the previous year.

Queensland Rail, Refrigerated Wagons

Mr HOBBS: I have a question for the Minister for Transport. Will the minister confirm to the people of regional Queensland who rely upon Queensland Rail to supply their foodstuffs that Queensland Rail, which has been promising to upgrade its refrigerated wagons and bins for some years, has now been banned, without notice, from transporting meat including packaged meats? Will the minister ensure that funds from the \$115 million dividend paid by Queensland Rail is provided to restore this essential service so that regional Queenslanders are able to access basic essential foodstuffs like everybody else?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. He indicated that Queensland Rail has been banned from refrigerated—

Mr HOBBS: Yes.

Mr LUCAS: Banned by whom?

Mr HOBBS: By food safety.

Mr LUCAS: I will have to seek some information in relation to that. I will say this in relation to Queensland Rail and its regional freight business: we now work in a competitive environment when it comes to freight business. I would rather not have a situation where we had competition on our rail line because I think QR actually do an excellent job. I have had some discussions with the member for

Hinchinbrook about fruit issues before. The fact is that national competition policy is there now and there are competitors that Queensland Rail has in the rail freight market.

I know the member has asked a question in good faith, but I say to the honourable member that one of the things that we have to ensure is that where there is a competitive market for freight services then any government's support for those services needs to be seen to be not subsidising one competitor against another in terms of national competition policy. I will have to have a look at that particular issue.

The state government spends a considerable amount of money in relation to regional freight subsidies. It is very interesting how much is going back in the form of subsidies. I think I may have mentioned in here the other day—I have not got the exact figures—how much we subsidise the train to go into Dirranbandi. At the present time it carries about nine tonnes of freight back from Dirranbandi to Goondiwindi. That amount could fit on the back of a truck. I am happy to continue to support people in that community there, but we need to engage communities—

Mr Johnson: Charleville to Quilpie to Cunnamulla.

Mr LUCAS: That is different.

Mr Johnson: That's what we are talking about.

Mr LUCAS: No, no, no. We need to engage communities more when it comes to the support that we provide for them. I am very much a keen supporter of that. I am proud of our decentralised nature in this state. I am proud that we have rural communities that contribute to the wealth of this state, and I want to do everything that I can to support them.

I will have a look into the issue raised by the honourable member. I will see what can be done consistent with national competition policy, but it is a bit rich if people cannot get meat in Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: The time for questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. A.M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.30 a.m.): I move—

That orders of the day Nos 1 and 2 be postponed.

Motion agreed to.

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 28 September (see p. 2392)

Hon. K.R. LINGARD (Beauesert—NPA) (11.30 a.m): The op

position will support the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2004 which is essentially an omnibus bill that makes amendments to 51 acts. I have read the bill and I believe that the amendments are concise, of a minor nature and certainly non-controversial. Most of the amendments have arisen through changes to legislative drafting practice, updating cross-references, providing greater clarity, correcting minor errors and making other minor amendments.

The opposition supports the concept of and the need for a SLUMP bill especially when it is designed to enable legislation to be corrected and updated in circumstances where the preparation of a separate bill is not justified. Obviously this allows for timely and efficient operation of the parliament by amending a large number of acts via one bill. It also provides for quality, up-to-date legislation that is consistent across the statute book. But, of course, we also rely on the fact that the government will be true to its statement that they are amendments that are concise, minor in nature and non-controversial.

Honourable members may note that the explanatory notes to the bill are contained within the bill itself. This is very unusual but when reading them through I find no difficulty with it and certainly I support that.

There is one reference in the bill to work experience within the education act. I remind the minister that a long time ago I asked her about school based apprenticeship training. I have never received an answer but I would like a comment from the minister about whether the school based training finances and the payments to the schools have now been finalised, whether they have been allocated to the schools and whether that program will continue.

With those comments about the omnibus bill, the SLUMP bill, I indicate that the opposition will support it.

Hon. A.M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (11.32 a.m.), in reply: I thank the member for Beauesert for his contribution and his confirmation that the opposition will

be supporting the bill. As outlined in my second reading speech and again by the honourable member, this is basically a technical bill that amends 51 pieces of legislation to ensure that minor errors are corrected and, by their nature, bills of this kind are not controversial and do not contain any policy shifts.

I am very pleased that the member for Beaudesert has read the bill; it means that he has shared my pain. In relation to his question regarding the funding for school based apprenticeships, the minor amendment to the work experience provisions in this miscellaneous bill do not relate in any way to that question. I confirm that the funding in relation to that has been finalised and all schools have been notified. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AMENDMENT BILL

Resumption of Consideration in Detail

Resumed from 24 November (see p. 3787)

Clause 5—

Mr McARDLE (11.37 a.m.): My comments should not be seen as casting aspersions upon the current investigation or employees of QR. Going to section 217(9C) in regard to the phrase 'civil or criminal proceeding' and taking into account the full section (9B) and (9C)(b), I understand the argument regarding the police and the two-hour rule. The minister would agree that there may well be circumstances that exist when police do not take samples or they may take samples at a time when they cannot be used given the nature of the incident. My point at this juncture is that the definition section of the bill defines civil or criminal proceeding as including an administrative proceeding for the discipline of an individual. That is expanding what would probably be the understanding of the person on the street of the phrase 'civil or criminal proceeding'. What is the basis for excluding that evidence from other proceedings, including a proceeding for discipline?

The second question relates to section 217(9C). Taking into account the full terms of (9B) and (9C), it is quite possible that the police, while controlling the scene of the investigation, may in fact delegate parts of the investigation or the total investigation to other officers. It is quite feasible that the police may not start their investigation per se until some hours or even days after the arrival of ambulance officers, fire officers and other rail safety officers. The effect of the wording of excluding the evidence in any—in any—civil or criminal proceeding may well be to rule out the evidence gathered by the rail safety officer in civil proceedings by way of a claim by a person who is injured as a consequence of the accident or potentially by what used to be termed the old Lord Campbell's action. I am concerned that by limiting or removing that evidence it is potentially restricting the right of a claimant to a civil action.

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. I do not know if there are going to be any Lord Campbell actions because fortunately no-one has died. I am not sure how there would be a dependency claim. Having said that, the member is correct when he indicates that the evidence that would be provided by a witness is not admissible in, for example, disciplinary proceedings. But that is because they are compelled to give it. If they are giving evidence under compulsion wherein they could normally refuse to give it, if you make them give evidence under severe penalty, as this does, to take away their ability to protect themselves, that is understandable.

Having said that, for example in this instance the data logger is not protected. Were that to be of relevance in civil proceedings or, indeed, in disciplinary proceedings that material would be available. The way that these matters proceed is that the police secure the primary site. There are a range of reasons why they do that: the practical one, for starters, is that they are usually there first. Ambulance officers and fire brigade officers may be there as well but they are not investigators. We do not have rail safety investigators in every town because there is not a need to do that. They are often there later. The primary role of police is to investigate whether there has been a breach of the criminal law. The police do that in accordance with their own powers. The investigatory material that is available to the police in doing that is material that would be available in accordance with any other ordinary rules that might apply in relation to disciplinary proceedings. Indeed, QR is entitled to take what action it sees fit based

on its own investigations in relation to disciplinary proceedings, were it appropriate. I make no comment whatsoever in that regard.

As I said last night, this provision is about the protection of evidence secured by the investigation. It is not about the protection of evidence that might be given to the investigation where that evidence was collated or in existence in some other way. That still stands out wherever it is and is dealt with in accordance with the rules that apply.

Last night the member for Burnett raised the issue of torches. I am advised that every member of the train's crew is issued with a torch. Every member of the train's staff carries a minitorch or Maglite. There is a large Maglite and radio box in car A. There is an emergency lighting kit containing multiple light sticks, which people snap and then they light up. There is a large Dolphin torch in car A. There is an emergency lighting system but its power source is underneath the train. This was knocked out by the bogies when they were separated from the carriages. This was all in place at the time of the derailment.

QR is investigating the need for emergency torches in passenger carriages. I point out to the shadow minister that if they were knocked out during the accident then that would be an issue that one would investigate to determine whether there are more robust methods for installing this. For the sake of completeness, I add that to the record.

Mr McARDLE: The minister made the comment that section 217 (9C) has been inserted because people were compelled to give evidence or at least provide samples. Under the current act that already exists. Under the 1994 legislation that requirement to comply with the section already exists. What has changed between 1994 and now to require a change to the bill along the lines the minister has indicated?

Mr LUCAS: The intent of the bill is to mirror, as far as possible, Commonwealth air safety investigations. We have to make sure that we establish the cause of accidents. Earlier the honourable member expressed concern in relation to victims. I share that concern. We should make sure that victims' rights come first. There is no intention in this bill to stop victims from taking civil proceedings using information that is appropriately available to them.

As the member would know from his legal experience, frequently an answer to a question that may expose a person to criminal liability is exactly the same as an answer to a question that might expose a person to work dismissal. If a person breaches the criminal law then that would be highly relevant to an employer. Under the previous legislation, a person could decline to answer a question. They could say, 'I'm not going to answer this question on the grounds that it might incriminate me; see you later.' That does not help victims, because there is no evidence at all because they have declined to answer, and it does not help find out the cause of what happened.

Not only am I very much concerned about the victims of this incident; I want to make sure that there are not victims in the future. That is why I want to make sure that this investigation, as far as possible, discovers everything about the incident—from causative factors, to human factors, to the evacuation from the train and how the train stood up. That is the idea of safety investigations. I am not for a minute suggesting that where appropriate there should not be other investigations—whether they be on criminal, disciplinary or occupational health and safety grounds. They should proceed in accordance with the legislation.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I hear what the minister is saying and I understand the principles behind what he is saying, but the amendments to clause 5 are stated in the explanatory notes to infringe fundamental legislative principles by providing immunity from criminal, civil and administrative proceedings. I heard the minister say that without the immunity the ability to determine all the factors that led to the rail safety incident may not be uncovered. However, it appears to me, not only in relation to this incident but also future incidents, if there is cause to take internal disciplinary action against people who have acted inappropriately, including removing them from high income positions and putting them into a position of lesser responsibility, that is impeded because of the protection of information and evidence.

I heard the minister's comment about the black box. I do not think the community would like to see somebody who has acted in an irresponsible manner—in the future as well—remain in a position where that could occur again. I express concern about the reach of this amendment in terms of the protection of information for appropriate proceedings not only within the workplace but also within the community.

Mr LUCAS: I note what the member has said. I think I answered that earlier. I will provide members with some information that I have been provided on blood tests. Under the Transport Infrastructure Act, a rail safety officer has the power to require an employee of a railway to take an alcohol test, drug test or medical examination after an incident. This is only where they reasonably suspect the employee caused or was directly involved in the incident and the result of the test or examination may help them decide the circumstances and probable causes of the incident.

However, such an alcohol or drug test must take place within two hours after the incident and, for practical purposes, a rail safety officer would generally seek assistance from the police in this regard.

Police have the power to require a blood test for the purposes of their investigation and it is likely the results will be provided by police to rail safety officers or a board of inquiry.

Whilst the results would become restricted information in the hands of the RSO, the results would still be available to the police for the purposes of their investigation. They are entitled to do these tests. As members know, it is the norm for police when there is an accident and injury to take a specimen. I do not know what they did in this circumstance. It was not my responsibility.

Under Commonwealth legislation, the ATSB does not currently have the power to require a blood test, although an amendment to include such a power is being considered. Regardless, the Commonwealth legislation allows the executive director to require a person to produce specified evidential material for the purposes of an investigation. This would include any police testing following an incident. The Commonwealth would achieve it the same way. It makes police provide that information.

There is nothing here intended to stop disciplinary proceedings. The most important focus I have is not wanting to get the phone call that Vaughan talked about again—that is, saying that there has been a serious incident. We do not know what the outcomes of the inquiry will be. We will implement the recommendations. We do not know what we have prevented because it never happens. We hope that there is a learning process that will make a difference.

Miss SIMPSON: In responding to the minister's explanation, we know that it is in the existing act that people can be compelled to undergo alcohol and drug tests and medical examinations. It is of concern that under this provision the minister is now putting forward—and compulsion previously existed—evidence will now become restricted information. There will be new requirements that apply to that so that people are indemnified if that evidence shows that someone was under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It was already an existing provision of the act that people could be compelled to undergo those tests. The minister has reaffirmed that compulsion in this legislation but then provided an indemnity for that. That is why I have grave concerns about this provision and cannot support it.

Mr LUCAS: I invite the member to turn to the existing act at section 217 (9). It says that a person must comply with the requirement under this section unless the person has a reasonable excuse. I am told that would give people the power to refuse to do that if they thought it might incriminate them. That is what I have been told. I would have to check that out myself.

I indicated to the honourable member before that those blood tests are typically taken by police officers in the course of their police investigation. There is nothing here that makes a practical difference. A railway safety officer is not authorised to take a blood test for the purposes of the traffic act and it cannot be used in a traffic act prosecution because they are not authorised, any more than I am, under the provisions of the traffic act.

After scrutinising this in some detail, I have indicated to the member what the current legislation is and what I am advised its effect is. I have indicated that this does not take the place of the police enforcing the criminal law. I am advised that the rail safety officers were at this incident four hours after the accident. I do not know if they took blood tests or not. I do not know if the police took blood tests or not. That is a matter for the police. What I am saying is that it would appear to me that the concern that the member has is really not real.

Question—That clause 5, as read, stand part of the bill—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 55—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E.Clark, L.Clark, Croft, Cummins, N.Cunningham, English, Finn, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Pearce, Poole, Purcell, Reilly, Reynolds, N.Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, C.Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T.Sullivan, Reeves

NOES, 23—Copeland, E.Cunningham, Flegg, Foley, Hobbs, Johnson, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Messenger, Pratt, Quinn, Rickuss, E.Roberts, Rowell, Seene, Simpson, Springborg, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Malone, Menkens

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clauses 6 and 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

Mr JOHNSON (11.58 a.m.): As I said in my contribution to the second reading debate, clause 8 relates to the protection of particular information. Proposed division 5 within clause 8 relating to relevant persons indicates that they are the chief executive, a rail safety officer and other people who may be valuable to the inquiry or key witnesses. Proposed section 239AA states—

(1) A person who is or has been a relevant person must not make a record of restricted information.

...

(2) A person who is or has been a relevant person must not disclose restricted information to any person or to a court.

I find this somewhat contradictory. We would hope that inquiries of the magnitude of this exercise would not have difficulties, but let us say that they do. Even though there were no fatalities or serious injuries, down the track there could be the need for a reopening of an inquiry or a court case. As a

lawyer himself, the minister would understand where I am coming from. If I were the person in the box seat, I would certainly be documenting my data so that I had a record of it. I ask the minister to clarify 'restricted information' and also clarify the statement 'restricted information to any person or to a court'. I will be honest and say that I find that difficult to understand or comprehend. It needs clarification. There is also the issue of key witnesses. In most cases there are key witnesses. I ask the minister to clarify that.

Mr LUCAS: The easiest way to deal with it is to not talk about witnesses making records of things. Proposed section 239AE(c) states—

... another person made available to help a board of inquiry in any capacity.

That refers to someone helping to investigate it—that is, an ATSB person in this instance. Proposed section 239AE(c) does not mean a witness in the sense that they help the inquiry in that they assist it because they provided a statement—they help its purposes. That is not the intention. Therefore, in terms of taking a record, of course people are entitled to have their own statement. Proposed section 239AA is about people who are on staff making private records of things—that is, investigators and those sorts of people—and then taking that away.

If the relevant person—the investigator—could do that, then that would breach the principles of the investigation. Of course there are official records, and they are kept in the custody of the chief executive after the investigation has concluded. In order to allay the member's fears, proposed section 239AE is about someone who assists the investigation in the capacity of inquiring into things that the investigation has requested them to do, not someone who is a witness who then comes and talks to the investigation. A witness is entitled to give a statement to the police. They can give a statement to the *Courier-Mail*. They can give a statement to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. They can give a statement to *crikey.com*. They can give a statement to whomever they like, and that is entirely a matter for them.

Mr JOHNSON: I thank the minister for that, but I draw his attention to page 13 of the bill, new division 5, 239AE(c), which states—

... another person made available to help a board of inquiry in any capacity.

The minister has mentioned that that person could be a rail safety officer or anybody at all within Queensland Rail or Queensland Transport. It could be a rank outsider—somebody just like us who happened to be on the spot.

Mr Lawlor: You are not a rank outsider, Vaughan.

Mr Lucas: He's an odds-on favourite.

Mr JOHNSON: I thank the minister for that. The point that I am making is that I think we have to canvass this matter in this House so as to eliminate any uncertainty. That is why I raised it. If people find themselves in this predicament, or if they read about this or hear about it, they could feel that they are in violation of the law. I think that needs clarification. That is why I have raised it.

Mr LUCAS: That is fine. I just say again that it could be an administrative person. This could be someone who types the report. They could call on a video crew to come to help them video the scene of the accident. That information in those people's hands, if it is done at the request of the inquiry, is part of the records and evidence for the inquiry. I think that I have dealt with that.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to the new section 239AA(7), which states—

If the court is satisfied that any adverse domestic and international impact that the disclosure of the information might have on any current or future investigations or inquiries is outweighed by the public interest in the administration of justice, the court may order the disclosure.

I seek the minister's clarification as to what is meant by 'adverse domestic and international impacts', which is a fairly broad phrase. I seek the minister's advice as to what it is intended to capture.

Mr LUCAS: New section 239AA(7) replicates a provision in the Commonwealth act which applies to air incidents also. The Commonwealth explanatory notes state—

A public interest order will mean that the court will have to perform a balancing act by weighing up the potential domestic and international safety impact on current or future investigations against the proper administration of justice. In conducting that balancing act, the court will also need to take into account whether the evidence can be obtained by other means. If the court considers it is likely that the free flow of safety information will be affected in future because of the disclosure and use of the ... information, and that this impact outweighs the administration of justice, then the court may rule against disclosure (and conversely). This is consistent with international practice.

This is about restricted information; this is not about information that is otherwise available. I make that point first. We do not live in a very nice world at the moment. There might be certain information that relates to matters that might be of interest to people who do not have the same good intentions that we have. That might be a reason why that information may not be something that would be in the public domain. I do not think that I need to go any further than that.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Miss SIMPSON (12.06 p.m.): This clause covers the transitional provisions for the Transport Infrastructure Amendment Bill. It deals with the main retrospectivity aspects of this legislation, which have been of concern to the opposition and non-government members, particularly in regard to information that has already been collected. The stated intention of this legislation was for the government to have powers to coerce people to provide information and that, in those circumstances, they should have accompanying indemnities if that information is self-incriminating. But by making this legislation retrospective, it also provides indemnity and coverage to information that has already been collected. So one would have to question whether that is, in fact, in conflict with the stated intentions of the legislation. In short, the retrospectivity provides protection for information already gathered in this way and backdates the legislation. That is of great concern.

Mr LUCAS: The whole point of having the legislation dated from the day of the accident is to actually conduct the investigation consistently throughout its course. That is how it is intended that the investigation operates. It is intended to operate in line with the Commonwealth provisions.

I am not aware of whether there has been any compulsion in relation to the investigation. The newspaper says that one of the drivers is still in hospital. I do not know about the other one. I have no idea whether those drivers have been interviewed by anyone. I do not know whether other people have been interviewed. It is not appropriate for me to involve myself in the investigation. But it seems to me to be a bit odd to conduct an investigation half under one rule and half under the other rule.

This clause is intended to make sure that there is a consistent carriage of the investigation for the entirety of its conduct. I reiterate the point that this clause does not stop evidence that is otherwise able to be obtained or otherwise in existence other than for the purpose of the inquiry to be used.

Mr CHRIS FOLEY: I draw the minister's attention to clause 9, which inserts a new section 531(6), which talks specifically about the actual derailment of the tilt train. For the information of the House, I just wanted to say that the term 'tilt train' can really be used only loosely, because they were, in fact, tilt carriages, whereas the locomotive was actually a diesel hydraulic with no tilting mechanism. This week I received a call from a gentleman who has had 50 years in the railways in Maryborough and who is quite an expert on the tilt train. He has some concerns about a diesel hydraulic pulling tilt carriages, especially as this accident happened on a bend and speed may have been a contributing factor. Most people would realise that the tilting mechanism of a tilt train is set to undo the centrifugal force, whereas the locomotive that is carrying them has no opportunity to undo that centrifugal force.

Under the application of speed and braking at the same time, that could have been a major contributor to the derailment. I put on the public record that this was a diesel hydraulic locomotive pulling tilt carriages. Obviously the outcome in terms of human life was magnificent and a testimony to the strength of the carriages that were built by EDI Rail in Maryborough. I do state that it was a diesel hydraulic locomotive.

Mr LUCAS: I hear what the member says. It is just meant to describe the train in the sense that no-one can have any doubt about what it is. If the member knows someone who has some views on what was a causative factor in the accident, I invite him to invite them to make their views known to the board of inquiry.

I make the observation that I have stood on the track there. The curve is marked with a speed limit of 60 kilometres an hour for tilt trains and 50 kilometres an hour for non tilt trains. I presume that those speed markers are there to give some indication of the speed that any sort of train would go around that curve.

Dr FLEGG: I have some real concerns about retrospectivity at any time. Occasionally if there is a public interest it has to be entertained, but in general there have to be pretty good grounds for retrospectivity. On this occasion the grounds are 'for consistency'. Quite frankly, I do not think consistency is a strong enough ground on which to create retrospective legislation.

If documents have come into being under a regime and on the understanding that those documents are open to normal legal access and normal legal process, it is a fairly severe step to then legislate retrospectively to change the legal status of that investigation, that evidence or those documents. I do not believe that consistency is necessarily a strong public interest issue.

Retrospectivity does not add to the willingness of people to give evidence to the safety investigation from this point forward. It raises a very strong suspicion for me, and I am sure many other people, that there are aspects that the government would prefer would not come to light in other forums. I think most people in the community when they hear the word 'retrospectivity' would come to the same conclusion as I do—that there is something to hide. I cannot see that the government has established any public benefit that would justify the severe measure of making this sort of change of legal status retrospective.

Mr LUCAS: I take exception to that. If this government had something to hide, why would we involve the Commonwealth not only in the investigation but also in chairing the investigation? The Commonwealth chairs this investigation. Not only does the member want to slur the state government;

he is also slurring his mates in the Commonwealth. There is nothing to hide here. This is about conducting the investigation in the appropriate way.

This legislation essentially adopts the Commonwealth procedure. We actually have Commonwealth investigators as part of this—not only as part of it but also chairing it. These amendments in toto have very significant compulsory powers in relation to people, and if they are exercised they have effects on their civil liberties. Therefore there are protections involved as well.

I do not know how many times I have to say this, but it does not stop evidence in existence prior to the inquiry or in existence other than as a result of the inquiry from being accessed according to the principles for access to that information.

Mr JOHNSON: Proposed new section 531(2) states—

The statement (the primary evidence) and any information, or document or other thing obtained as a direct or indirect result of the statement (the derived evidence) is not admissible in evidence against the employee in any civil or criminal proceeding.

It is a little difficult to comprehend. Proposed new section 531(3) states—

Subsection (2) does not prevent the primary evidence or derived evidence being admitted as evidence in criminal proceedings about the falsity or misleading nature of the primary evidence.

I would hope that in any inquiry at all, especially one the magnitude of this one, we would not get falsified evidence. I hope that would never happen. We have just debated clause 8, which refers to relevant persons. In relation to this clause the relevant persons are employees. Is there a differentiation between relevant persons the employees and relevant persons the senior executives?

Mr LUCAS: I am not sure if I understand.

Mr JOHNSON: Clause 9 states—

relevant employee means an individual involved in the derailment who at the time of the derailment was an employee of a railway operator for the rolling stock involved in the derailment.

Clause 8 also mentions relevant persons. Is the same applicable to them with that information in relation to clause 8?

Mr LUCAS: I see. A relevant person is an investigator. They are not subject to investigation. They are investigating. The reason subsection (3) contains the provisions it does is that if you give someone protection and they tell you a lie then they have to be dealt with. The Crime and Misconduct Act has a similar provision. Proposed section 531 deals with relevant employees who provide a statement, but if that statement is false then all bets are off and they can be prosecuted for the falsity of the statement.

Let us just get the situation clear, then. These provisions allow for a person in this circumstance who refuses to give a statement to be dealt with; they did not before if the person had an excuse. Under this provision there is no excuse on the basis that the statement could be used against them. They must answer it. That is the first thing. Under the previous legislation a person could refuse to answer a question on the grounds that the answer might tend to incriminate them. I told the member about that provision earlier. But if a person does answer, they should tell the truth. If they do not tell the truth the statement can be used in evidence against them, because to prove that someone lied you actually have to lead the false evidence as well as the true state of affairs.

Miss SIMPSON: The ministers's answer has raised other concerns. These powers compel people to provide evidence, and if they do not provide evidence they are subject to more weighty fines or reprimands under the legislation. If, in effect, the rail safety officers had requested information of people and they had refused to provide that, is the minister saying that they would be subject to the force of the law for failing to provide that evidence? In other words, this legislation is retrospective.

Mr Lucas: You can't prosecute someone for a requirement you did not lawfully have the authority to do until you have issued it.

Miss SIMPSON: That is my concern. By making this retrospective, you are also going to have a retrospective ability to go after people who have failed to provide information.

Mr LUCAS: You issue the requirement under the law as it exists. This law will give the power to issue a requirement. I am told that clause 9 applies whether the information was provided under compulsion or not. People must tell the truth regardless of whether they are compelled to answer or not, and we think that is the case. But it would be a bit hard to prosecute someone for a failure to comply with a compulsion that did not exist at law. It is nonsensical.

Miss SIMPSON: I appreciate the minister's reassurance because that was not the original issue of concern that I raised with this clause, but in the course of his previous explanation I was concerned that there was a new power that could be brought to bear for those who had failed to answer the requests of rail safety officers previously.

Mr Lucas: You would have to rely on the old law insofar as that was the case, but I am not sure if that has been—

Miss SIMPSON: I raise that because there are two concerns I have with retrospectivity in this section. The first one that I expressed when I rose to my feet to speak to this clause concerned evidence that may have already been collected which now is caught by these provisions, providing indemnity that you already have. So the argument that you require this legislation as a whole to get information out of people is contradicted by the retrospectivity of the section. The second concern I have arose from the minister's initial explanation that these powers are retrospective.

Mr Lucas: Compulsion is not in this section, by the way.

Miss SIMPSON: I take it that the minister is giving an assurance to the House that if someone refused to provide information upon request they would not suffer additional penalties.

Mr LUCAS: If someone in accordance with the law at the time refused to provide it, then of course that would be their lawful entitlement. It is one thing to retrospectively provide for procedural issues, but it is another thing to do the other. So that is not the intention.

Mr JOHNSON: I know we have debated clause 8, but clause 8 mentions—and that is why I am raising it again—relevant persons. Proposed new section 239AG(2) states—

A relevant person is not compellable to give an expert opinion in any civil or criminal proceeding in relation to safety of transport by rail.

I know that is applicable to a senior officer, a chief executive officer or a key witness, but is that also applicable in clause 9 to a relevant employee?

Mr LUCAS: Putting aside the issue of their participation in the inquiry or the investigation, I am advised that they can still be independently called to provide evidence. A theoretical situation might be where an investigation called before it to give evidence the head of maintenance of QR, or someone like that, and that person provided information, then that information is part of the inquiry. But that would not stop someone subpoenaing them in a civil case or a criminal case. They would have to answer questions in the witness box on oath, and the normal civil procedures would apply.

Question—That clause 9, as read, be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 56—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Briskey, Choi, E.Clark, L.Clark, Croft, Cummins, N.Cunningham, English, Finn, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Reeves, Reilly, Reynolds, N.Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Smith, Spence, Stone, C.Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T.Sullivan, Nolan

NOES, 22—Copeland, E.Cunningham, Flegg, Foley, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Messenger, Pratt, Quinn, Rickuss, Rowell, Seeneey, Simpson, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Menkens, Malone

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clauses 10 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—

Miss SIMPSON (12.31 p.m.): Clause 14 relates to the amendments to the Freedom of Information Act. Clause 14 in this bill also allows for retrospectivity in the application of freedom of information. The new part 9 section 112 states—

Application for access to particular documents

(1) This section applies to any document obtained, received, or brought into existence, by a rail safety officer in relation to the derailment before the commencement of this section, whether or not the rail safety officer was carrying out an investigation at any relevant time.

It is interesting drafting because it says 'whether or not the rail safety officer was carrying out an investigation at any relevant time' but it is also before the commencement of the section. Retrospectivity in regard to freedom of information and how it is—

Mr Johnson: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a bit noisy.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine): Order! Keep the level of noise down, please.

Miss SIMPSON: The National Party opposition has grave concerns about another move to wind back freedom of information, in this case to bring about retrospectivity for this provision. Again it is contrary to the stated intentions of this legislation, which was about having people provide information to the inquiry and not fear incrimination. This is information which is already in existence and already potentially is in the possession of rail safety officers. That is why I have grave concerns as to the necessity to roll back freedom of information.

There would have to be some pretty strong tests when it comes to retrospectivity. In this case it is a very broad requirement that is being applied through this amendment. Potentially there is a range of documents that we do not know about, and the minister says that he does not know the details of the investigation because that is up to the rail safety officers. The potential coverage of this particular amendment concerns me. It is retrospective. It is a windback of the freedom of information provisions, and it is of concern.

Mr LUCAS: The provision reads—

... whether or not the rail safety officer was carrying out an investigation at any relevant time.

I am instructed that the reason that the provision is there is that the appointment of the rail safety officer—the ATSB, et cetera—was signed at approximately 10 a.m. on 16 November. We heard before that rail safety officers were on site at about 6 a.m. They were examining things; collating evidence. The appointment of the rail safety officer did not take place until approximately 10 a.m., when the document was signed by the relevant public servants. That is the reason for the provision in the bill.

The freedom of information provision that is sought to be inserted is no different from a number of other provisions that are in that schedule, or the Freedom of Information Act. It is a public interest provision. It is not an absolute exemption. There is a provision for it to be disclosed in the public interest. That final decision on the public interest is a decision that rests with the Information Commissioner, not with my department.

Miss SIMPSON: I ask about the public interest test. Basically this is about exempting information from access under freedom of information unless people appeal and they are able to prove, through the Information Commissioner, that there was a public interest for that information to be received. I ask the minister: does the public interest, as it is applied to freedom of information, also apply to personal interests where somebody is wanting to proceed with a civil action?

Mr LUCAS: Evidence, I would have thought, that is relevant to a civil action would be evidence that is in existence prior to the accident. I have no idea what the cause of this accident is; that is why we are having it investigated. Evidence could extend from the data logger, which is specifically allowed to be available, to witness statements, to rostering records and to maintenance records. All of those sorts of things are available separately if required in the inquiry.

The documents that someone will use in a civil claim would not be obtained from the inquiry. People would get them from their primary source. It is not difficult to secure those documents from their primary source in accordance with the current law—I make that clear—whatever the current law is in relation to those.

I am told that these are the provisions. A person applies direct to Queensland Transport for access to documents. QT must decide if access is to be granted. QT can refuse to provide access if it is an exempt matter. Exempt matters are set out in sections 36 to 50. In particular, section 41 protects the advices, opinions or recommendations by railway safety officers if they are in the public interest. Section 42 relates to law enforcement, public safety, the prejudice of an investigation or prejudice to the effectiveness of an investigation. Section 48 protects information where its disclosure is prohibited by another act. The matter is exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act unless there is a compelling reason in the public interest.

That is something the Information Commissioner applies. As I said to the member, a lot of the information here is information that is not as a result of the investigation, it is information that exists independently of the investigation. Indeed, it might have existed as a result of the police investigation. It will be available in accordance with how one normally gets access, if at all, to police material. I do not know what the rules are relating to that.

The simple fact of the matter is that if the member opposite is talking about information that is compelled—and people are entitled to refuse to answer it on the basis of non-compulsion—then people will not get it at all if this legislation is not brought in. This is about ensuring that, by FOI, people do not circumvent the intents of the act. I do not know if I can take it any further.

Miss SIMPSON: We do not know potentially what documents this may capture, but there is a principle that is involved.

Mr Lucas: Yes, you do. It is documents created for the purpose of the investigation.

Miss SIMPSON: But we do not know specifically the documents that are in existence that this may be applying to. The point I am making is, whether or not it applies to a civil action, there is a principle that applies here with freedom of information. This government is moving to bring these provisions to bear retrospectively.

There are quite a number of definitions with regard to what constitutes public interest and it is possible that the public interest test will not open up information for those who have a particular and specific interest in information that pertains to their own circumstances. I have concern that even with a public interest appeal mechanism through the Freedom of Information Commissioner this legislation is not wide enough to allow people with an individual issue that pertains to their circumstance to pursue information through freedom of information.

I am concerned about the principles that are being applied here to retrospectively wind back freedom of information and to wind up information and make it difficult to access, if not impossible to access, if it fails that test.

Mr LUCAS: I refer you to proposed section 239AA which refers to a further avenue for the chief executive to issue a certificate in relation to restricted information saying that the disclosure of the

information is not likely to interfere with any current or future inquiry. That is a further method for getting access to it. It is only their copies of documents that they receive or documents they create. I cannot take the matter any further.

Question—That clause 14, as read, be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 55—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Briskey, Choi, E.Clark, L.Clark, Croft, Cummins, N.Cunningham, English, Finn, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Poole, Purcell, Reeves, Reilly, Reynolds, N.Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Smith, Spence, Stone, C.Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Nolan, T.Sullivan

NOES, 21—E.Cunningham, Flegg, Foley, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Messenger, Pratt, Quinn, Rickuss, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Malone, Menkens

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clause 15, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AMENDMENT BILL

Referral to Scrutiny of Legislation Committee

Hon. A.M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (12.48 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the Transport Infrastructure Amendment Bill be referred to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee for it to consider the application of fundamental legislative principles to the bill and report to the House, despite that bill having been passed by this House or receiving royal assent.

Motion agreed to.

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

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed from 19 October (see p. 2928)

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.49 p.m.): I rise to make a contribution to the consideration of these two appropriation bills before the House today. Both of these bills appropriate additional amounts of money from Treasury to various departments for what is always referred to as unforeseen or unpredicted expenditure. Both bills deal with significant amounts of money but the second bill, the Appropriation Bill (No.2), rather than the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill deals with quite a significant amount of money. If members look at the schedule contained in the bill they will see that it is an amount of \$2.375 billion that is being appropriated for a range of departments, and those departments are listed in the bill.

The opposition does not have any problem with the process of appropriation bills such as this to appropriate money for unforeseen expenditure. However, there needs to be a note of caution sounded that the amounts of money that are involved in such appropriation bills do not make significant impacts on the state budget. There is a whole budget process which allows the appropriation of funds for the year and the House considers that bill at budget time. There is a whole process built around that appropriation bill at that stage to allow for the detailed examination of the amounts of money that are being appropriated and the reasons for them being appropriated. That is right and proper. It is part of the processes of this place that the government puts forward its proposition for the spending of public money and then the appropriation bill makes that money available to the various departments if this parliament accepts the government's program and the government's suggestions for the expenditure of that public money.

The government always has the numbers in the parliament so it will always be able to control the appropriation of that money. That is not really the point. The point is that the processes that are part and parcel of this parliament allow for the examination of that expenditure. Those processes serve as safeguards for the control of that expenditure. They ensure that the government can justify and is accountable for the expenditure of public money and that every nobody knows about it. They are the processes of this place. This parliament spends quite a period of time on that process. Members will no doubt agree that the process is somewhat exhaustive by the time we go through the second reading

stage of debate on the appropriation bills in this parliament and then the consideration in detail stage in the estimate committees. There is a process in place.

The thing about the amounts of money that are appropriated by these bills is that they are not subject to the same scrutiny process. I am not suggesting that they should be. That is probably quite a relief to most members in this parliament. If those amounts are not subject to that scrutiny process we should always be careful to keep those amounts of money that are appropriated halfway through the financial year to the barest minimum. If the amounts appropriated by these special appropriation bills ever reached a level of being a significant percentage of the budget then they would not be subject to proper scrutiny.

The amount contained in the bill that seeks to appropriate money for government departments is just over \$2.3 billion. That is approaching 10 per cent of the amount appropriated by the government's original appropriation bill where it sought from Treasury money for this financial year's expenditure. We are talking about an additional amount of expenditure that is about 10 per cent over and above what the government expected.

There is always going to be unplanned and unforeseen expenditure. What we see today is that the level of unforeseen expenditure is reaching something in the order of 10 per cent of the amount that the government originally appropriated for its programs. While the figure of 10 per cent is probably not exorbitant and is probably not something that should trigger any concern, I do not think I would like to see it get too much higher. I would not like to see a situation where the amount of money appropriated in the special appropriation bills halfway through the financial year, which is for so-called unforeseen expenditure, reaches a level much more than 10 per cent of the original figure. We are dealing today with about as much as would be considered appropriate before concerns start to be raised not just about the lack of scrutiny because of a lack of exposure to the processes of this parliament, which I spoke about before, but about the rigour of the budgetary discipline that is in place within the various government departments that come up with the figures for the original appropriation bills.

I sound a note of warning today. The National Party opposition will certainly be lending support to the passage of these appropriation bills. We understand that there is always unforeseen expenditure. But we do so with a note of caution that the level of unforeseen expenditure should, at all times, be kept at a level that does not cause concern about accountability issues and does not call into question the budgetary discipline processes within the departments.

Having said that, I note that there is a long list of speakers seeking to make a contribution to the consideration of these appropriation bills. I think that is understandable. Every member has within their electorate a range of issues for which they are continually seeking government funding and which they are continually seeking to have included in the government's spending programs. This is an opportunity for members to raise those issues.

The way this parliament is being run means that there are fewer opportunities for members, especially those on the non-government side, to raise electorate issues in the parliament. When I first became a member of this parliament there was quite a deal more opportunity to do that, especially immediately before question time. There was an opportunity for members to raise issues such as this in private members' statements. Members could raise those issues before the whole cabinet. That was a valuable part of the processes of this parliament.

Unfortunately, the Beattie Labor government has chosen to remove that from the processes of this parliament. It has taken away the opportunity for elected members to stand up before the whole cabinet and bring forward issues that are important to their electorate. It certainly indicates to me that there is a real problem within the government about treating this place with proper respect. This government has a real problem with allowing members who are elected by their constituencies to come here and do the job that they are elected to do. Those opportunities are a very valuable part of the range of tools that elected members have.

The government has sought to deny non-government members the opportunity to do that. I think there is an opportunity in consideration of these appropriation bills for members to address a lot of the issues that they would have in previous parliaments raised in private members' statements.

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

Mr SEENEY: There is no doubt that the government can afford the money that is being appropriated by these appropriation bills before the House today, because the government finds itself in the happy position of having quite a deal of disposable income available to it. The government finds itself in a position that all governments would like to be in, that all organisations would like to be in and, presumably, all individuals would like to be in where they have access to a pool of money that has been created by the fact that the cash inflows that the government has received have been consistently greater than what was predicted for some time, because for some time now those cash inflows have exceeded expectations.

It is natural that the government should seek to take credit for that, and that is politics. So it should not be surprising—indeed, it does not surprise me—to see the Treasurer and the Premier trying to take

credit for the sound financial position that Queensland finds itself in. But in reality if one looks past the politics and looks past the credit claiming, the likes of which we saw in the House here this morning, they can see the underlying factors that make the Queensland economy strong. The underlying factors that have created that cash surplus that is available to the government to be appropriated in these appropriation bills really do not have much, if anything at all, to do with the policy settings of the Queensland Beattie Labor government.

If we look at the underlying economic factors that have brought that about, they are almost without exception the product of a number of years of sound government at a federal level. They are the product and the responsibility of the federal government—of John Howard and Peter Costello and John Anderson and people who have been able to take the hard decisions at a federal level which have made the Australian economy strong and put in place those economic essentials which have allowed the Queensland economy to benefit. These are things like low interest rates and the fact that we have had consistently low interest rates for a protracted period of time, almost to the point now where consumers are beginning to expect that low interest rates are the norm. We have had historically low interest rates. I do not think that even the most eager government backbencher would seek to claim credit for the fact that Australia's interest rates have been consistently low for that long. We have also had a consistently low inflation rate which has also been a major factor in a sound domestic economy which has contributed to the stability of not just the Queensland economy but the Australian economy generally.

Those two issues taken together have been the major reason for the boom in the property market not just in Queensland but right across Australia. But the property boom in Queensland has been a major contributor to the cash surplus which the government now finds at its disposal. One of the major taxes that the state government has at any particular time is stamp duty, and the stamp duty receipts that this government has enjoyed have been considerably more than what it could have reasonably expected. The figures are there for all to see if they look at the budget forecasts for the last couple of years and the actuals when those are totalled. While that property market continues to be strong, not just in terms of price but in terms of turnover—because they are the two factors that dictate the amount of money that is available to a state government; it is not just a matter of having high property prices but it is the actual turnover in the property market which contributes to the large stamp duty receipts—that is a major factor for the Queensland government.

There are, as I am sure all members are aware, an increasing number of people who predict that the surging property market cannot continue in the way that it has. It would be overoptimistic of anybody to expect that the growth in prices that we have seen over the last two or three years and indeed the turnover in property we have seen in the last two years will continue indefinitely. Sometimes overenthusiastic real estate agents have a tendency to suggest that this type of property boom is somehow the norm and will not only continue but increase. I would not like to see the state government adopt such an overenthusiastic approach or such an overenthusiastic assumption with regard to the cash receipts that it receives from stamp duty that is produced by that property boom. I will certainly be watching in next year's budget to see what figure the Treasurer uses in terms of his projections for stamp duty receipts and the extent to which that budget is dependent on that property market boom continuing.

There is also a factor that members of the government seek consistently to deny or ignore that has been a major contributor to the sound financial position that the Queensland government finds itself in, and that is the tax reform that has been put in place at a federal level. It is the tax reform package that was put in place—not without some pain and certainly with a great degree of criticism—by John Howard, Peter Costello and John Anderson at a federal level. That has really been of great benefit not just to the state but to all Australians and indeed all Queenslanders.

The major part of that of course was the introduction of the GST. I well remember the criticism in this parliament that the GST received. I well remember sitting in this parliament and having government members telling us very gleefully day after day that they were going to fight the state election on the GST and they were opposing the GST and we were supporting our federal compatriots in the introduction of the GST as part of an overall tax reform package. I well remember the vigour with which members of that Beattie Labor government opposed the GST and the tax reform package at that time. We have never heard an acknowledgment here of the extent to which that tax reform process has been a success. We have never heard an acknowledgment of the contribution that the GST has played in ensuring that there is a sound financial position for the government to appropriate amounts of money such as the ones that we are considering today.

But it cannot be denied and it should not be denied and it should be recognised that that tax reform package and the essential part of it—the goods and services tax—has been of major benefit to all state governments but especially so for Queensland, because all of the receipts from the goods and services tax flow directly to state governments. That has replaced the process that was in place before where state governments went cap in hand to the federal government for allocations each year. All of that GST money flows to the state governments. It is a growth tax, and it has far exceeded the expectations that accompanied its introduction. In so doing, it has produced the types of surpluses that

we see in the Queensland economy and has produced the opportunity to appropriate the amounts of money that these bills seek to do.

There has also been a resources boom world wide, which once again I am sure even the most overenthusiastic government backbencher would not suggest that the Labor government here in Queensland can take any credit for, and yet it makes a major contribution to the strength and the success of the Queensland economy because the Queensland economy is based on the export of resources. I listened with some interest this morning to the Treasurer's statement. He was enthusiastically supported by the Premier who sat there with his trademark grin, sticking out his chest, and taking the credit for the figures that Treasurer went through in regard to the Queensland economy. But those figures are possible simply because Queensland's economy is a resources exporting based economy and we are in the middle of a worldwide resources boom. It would be quite extraordinary indeed if an economy such as Queensland's, which is based on exporting resources to a resource-hungry world, was not in a sound financial position in the middle of a resources boom, the likes of which we have today. All Queenslanders should take heart and all members of this parliament should take heart from the fact that those figures indicate a very secure and sound financial position. But it is as well to look beyond the politics, to look beyond the cheap credit claiming, the likes of which we saw this morning, and understand fully just why we are in such an enviable position. It is great to be in such a position, but we need to understand why we are in that position so that we can realise that the good times are not going to last forever.

As I said when I went through each one of those factors, no-one should expect that each one of those factors will remain as they are today. We are in a particularly good position because those factors have all come together at the same time, but the extent to which each one will continue to provide the magnificent contribution that it does to the state Treasury is something that none of us can predict. Just as they have all come together as positives at the same time, it is not impossible that at some time in the future they will all be negative at the same time and the Queensland economy will suffer just as much from that as it is benefiting from those factors at the moment.

What concerns me is not the fact that the Premier, the Treasurer and the other members of the government seek to take cheap political credit for the financial situation that the state finds itself in and for those underlining economic factors that I have outlined to the House. That is natural. It is part of the political game, and it will always be so, that politicians like to stand up and try to take credit and try to suggest that they have finally achieved things like their five per cent unemployment rate because of their own efforts rather than acknowledge those underlying economic factors and those worldwide factors that have happily come together to make that possible.

Mr O'Brien: But you must acknowledge that the Smart State is diversifying the economy as well. You must acknowledge that.

Mr SEENEY: It is well to acknowledge that and in so doing it should be acknowledged that the things that the state could do something about to have achieved that five per cent unemployment rate much earlier—in something like the time frame in which it was promised—were not done. We had to rely on the federal government, we had to rely on the worldwide factors to come together so that the promise that was made to the people of Queensland could be achieved.

It is as well to recognise why that unemployment rate was achieved so that the people of Queensland can understand that the promise that was made by the Beattie Labor government was not achieved because it was not able to make decisions in areas where they could have made decisions. That is something that the backbenchers opposite should understand. Even if it would be too much to expect that they should acknowledge it publicly, at least in their own minds they should understand that that is the case and be honest with themselves. I accept that politics will always have it that the members opposite will go out there and publicly try to claim the credit for these things, but I think that in their own minds and in their own hearts and consciences they need to be honest with themselves.

As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, what concerns me is the fact that the current Queensland government is squandering the great opportunity that this happy set of circumstances presents to us as a state and presents to every Queenslander. We are looking at an almost once-in-a-lifetime opportunity when so many economic factors have come together to produce circumstances in this state that should allow us to build some solid opportunities for the future and to put in place some mechanisms to ensure that we can cope with the inevitable downturn in any one of those economic fundamentals that I went through before. Unfortunately, we are not seeing that. Unfortunately, we are seeing that opportunity being ignored and lost as the years pass.

We have raised that issue in this parliament over a period. Over the last two budgets we have raised the issue of investment in Queensland's future in things such as infrastructure spending and capital works and the way in which the percentage of the state budget that is allocated to those areas is continually falling. If ever there was a time when a state should be investing in infrastructure, should be investing in capital works and should be investing in future opportunities, it is now when the money is available, when the incomes are exceeding what was reasonably expected and when the economic

fundamentals are coming together to produce a pool of money that is available to the government to allow it to invest in that. But that opportunity is consistently being squandered.

We need to look at a whole range of areas. I know that some of my colleagues who will speak after me in this debate will go through some of those examples in their own electorates and indicate the extent to which the government is failing to invest money in those areas. But I want to look at it on a broad basis and reinforce some of the arguments that we have put over the last couple of years and certainly during the debate that surrounded the main appropriation bill after the budget was introduced. At that time we pointed out the extent to which the expenditure on hard, physical structure had fallen and the extent to which this government had failed to build for Queensland that type of hard infrastructure.

A Labor government has been in power now for 12 out of the last 14 years. The Beattie Labor government is now in its third term—almost seven years, give or take a month or two. But where are the signature infrastructure projects? Most people can remember a stadium and a footbridge, because both of those things were surrounded by controversy and both of those things far exceeded the budgets that were allocated to them and failed to meet expectations.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. The stadium did not exceed its guaranteed lump sum.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Croft): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr SEENEY: I note the choice of words from the member for Rockhampton. He talked about the guaranteed lump sum. We will not get into a debate about the stadium, because it has been debated before. I do not see the member's name on the speakers' list. He can make a contribution later if he wants to. The important thing to note is that the stadium and the footbridge are the only things that this government has built in the past seven years.

I ask members to cast their minds back to the two and a half years when the coalition was in government.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr SEENEY: It is not hard to run through a list of things that the coalition built, such as the motorway that extends from here to the Gold Coast on which the member opposite travels. Where is an equivalent project such as that that this government has built over the past seven years? It does not exist. Instead there is a footbridge by which to walk across the river. I ask members to think about the \$2.4 billion that the former health minister Mike Horan spent on renewing Queensland's hospitals. The members opposite have stood at the official opening ceremonies of most of those projects and enjoyed the kudos.

Where is the hospital building program that has been put in place by this government? The reality is quite the reverse. This government has set out to restrict Queensland's health system and set out to regionalise it in the areas I and my colleagues represent. People do not have the access they used to have. They do not have the comfort of knowing that they have access to a local hospital service. The failings of the health system, certainly in the more urban areas, have been well and truly illustrated in debate after debate in this parliament. That is the record of those opposite, because they have not been prepared to invest money in infrastructure.

One small example in my electorate is the hospital in Wondai which those opposite want to close down. It used to be a 33-bed hospital. Now the government is saying that the people of Wondai have to go to Kingaroy Hospital, Cherbourg Hospital or somewhere else. It is telling the community, which is used to having its own hospital—it has had its own hospital for years and years—and which has contributed an enormous amount in voluntary contributions to the hospital, that it cannot have the hospital that it believes it should have. That is the difference in attitude.

This government is not prepared to invest the money that it has, not through any efforts of its own but through good fortune in most cases, into that sort of community infrastructure—not just the big projects but also the smaller community infrastructure projects such as the Wondai Hospital in my electorate. We cannot even get the government to invest the relatively small amount of money that would be required there. These appropriation bills seek to appropriate \$2.3 billion. Just a tiny fraction of that would ensure that a community such as Wondai has its own hospital. There are many examples such as that across the state, some of which will be illustrated in this debate.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr SEENEY: I take the interjection of the member about Queensland schools. I welcome the opportunity to illustrate just how nonsensical and stupid it is. Here in the parliament this morning we heard about how the Reading Recovery program for Queensland students is being cut back. Something as basic and much-needed as the Reading Recovery program is not going to be funded by a government that has a huge budget surplus—a huge amount of money available to it. It is not just physical infrastructure that is being denied funding; it is also the capacity of Queenslanders to get a decent education and to make a contribution in the future. The government has cut the money that is needed to maintain the Reading Recovery program.

On Wednesday night we had a debate about disability funding. The government is not even prepared to spend money on that sort of thing. If the socialist philosophy that permeates this government will not let it spend money on hard physical infrastructure, then why on earth can that money not be spent on things such as disability funding, which was clearly indicated here on Wednesday night to be grossly inadequate? Yet there is no money for those most vulnerable Queenslanders. There is no money for kids who are having reading difficulty. That is the reality that was demonstrated in the parliament this week. Government backbenchers should be reminded about that as we consider these bills that appropriate some \$2.3 billion for further expenditure. Those opposite do not like it, but that is the reality of six and a half years of Beattie Labor government.

Let us look at some other areas of infrastructure spending. Let us look at the issue of roads.

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Croft): Order! There is too much noise in the chamber.

Mr SEENEY: Too right there is.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to reduce the tone and to address the bills.

Mr SEENEY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that the government backbenchers do not like the message, but they are going to hear it anyway.

When politicians say 'infrastructure', most Queenslanders first think of roads. That is understandable given the geography of the state in which we live. Roads are critically important. They are an essential part of the infrastructure that is needed for the communities across our widespread state. Without a road network, nothing much else works. It is in the area of road funding and road spending that there is another glaring example of the failure of this government to invest the money that is available to it into infrastructure which will guarantee a future for Queensland communities and guarantee that the Queensland economy will be able to weather the downturns that will inevitably come in the future.

I remember that when I was in local government, before I was elected to this parliament, every local council was able each year to depend on a state-funded capital works project. Indeed, the budgets of all of those councils were built around receiving a capital works project from the state department each year. That ensured that all of the major arterial roads that ran through those shires were improved over time as those projects were completed each year. That is unfortunately a thing of the past. One of the most constant complaints I hear when I visit each of the 12 local authorities in my electorate is about the extent to which funding for the roads network has been continually cut back by the state government. It is cut back at every opportunity, not just for capital works but also for essential maintenance, for routine maintenance and for the projects that are so badly needed.

Councils say to me on a regular basis, 'How on earth can the government so proudly boast about its budget surplus at a time when that essential infrastructure—the backbone of the state's economy, the regional road network—is falling apart so drastically?' It would be well for some of the government backbenchers to spend a small portion of the time between now and when parliament next sits, in February, to get out into regional Queensland and drive on some of those state-funded roads—roads for which this government is responsible—and appreciate the extent to which they have deteriorated. This government has failed to make the necessary funds available to keep those roads in anything like a reasonable state of repair.

I speak about the big projects. Anyone who likes to drive from here north on the Bruce Highway—

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr SEENEY: I know that it is a federally funded highway, but the state government has a role in identifying these things as a priority. It has a role in working with the Commonwealth government to ensure that the Bruce Highway is improved. The stretch of road from Cooroy to Gympie has been identified by the RACQ as the state's worst black spot. One does not have to drive it too many times to understand why that is so. I have to drive it every time I travel home from parliament and back again. I regularly see the traffic volume that road carries. It is an absolute disgrace for any state to suggest that that is the main road artery along which the state's commerce has to flow.

Go further north; drive between Townsville and Cairns. Where are all the members from north Queensland? Why is it that they, as members who represent that area, have not been able to get the road between Townsville and Cairns built to a reasonable standard in the seven years that their government has been in power? If they drive from Townsville to Cairns on any given day, they will understand that that road is grossly overloaded with traffic.

Government members interjected.

Mr SEENEY: The success of those opposite, as members of this parliament, will be in delivering infrastructure projects like that, not coming in here, sitting up the back and shouting, yelling and carrying on. That does not constitute success in terms of performance as members of parliament. When they are able to deliver major infrastructure projects to the people that they represent and to the regions that they

represent, then they can feel as if they have achieved something in the seven and a half years they have been in government. But until now, as I have said, it is a lost opportunity.

Here in the south-east corner there are a couple of other road issues that have to rate a mention in any consideration of infrastructure spending in this state. There is the Ipswich Motorway, which we have seen continual political debate about. It is time the political argy-bargy stopped, not just with the Ipswich Motorway but also with the Bruce Highway. They should not be issues which present an opportunity to the state government to attack the federal government and the federal government to attack the state government. They are issues which should be addressed.

For this government to come into this parliament after seven and a half years and not be able to show any indication that they have been successful in addressing such major infrastructure issues is an indication of the extent to which they have failed. It is not good enough to say that they are federally funded. The state has a critical role to play in delivering infrastructure projects such as the Ipswich Motorway, the Bruce Highway and the Tugun bypass. How long ago was it that the Tugun bypass was a major issue in state electorates? It has been almost 12 months. We have completed the first parliamentary year of the new government, and this government was elected at a time when the Tugun bypass was a major issue. How many cubic metres of earth have been moved to build the Tugun bypass? Maybe some of the government backbenchers can tell me because I think the answer is zero, nought, nothing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will address his comments through the chair.

Mr SEENEY: Not one shovelful, Mr Deputy Speaker, of earthworks has commenced. Not one step of progress has been carried out to build the infamous Tugun bypass, even though another year has passed.

There is also the issue of the second crossing on the Toowoomba range—another infamous section of road that restricts the flow of commerce in this state and will continue to restrict the flow of commerce in this state. The transport corridors that enable so much export income to flow from the western parts of this state to the Port of Brisbane are undeniably clogged and are restricting trade. In the current circumstances, where the government has access to a budget surplus, that type of infrastructure should be built to a point where it can provide for the future prosperity of the state. The government should be putting money into that type of infrastructure so that in years ahead, when the budget surplus may not be quite as good, the economy of the state can take advantage of that sort of infrastructure.

It used to be in the days when the National Party government ran this state that infrastructure spending ran ahead of the needs. Infrastructure was provided so that industry could take advantage of the opportunities. That approach was responsible for the development of the coal industry in central Queensland. The government invested money in railway lines and rolling stock. It invested money in coal loaders at Gladstone, Mackay, Abbot Point and places like that. The government was prepared to put the money into that sort of infrastructure so the industry could develop. That industry did develop, it has developed and it is producing the financial rewards that are available to this government today.

Unless that sort of infrastructure is provided now, those opportunities will not be there in the future and that will be a great opportunity lost. That is the great failing of this Labor government. It has not been prepared to provide that sort of infrastructure. It has been prepared to take advantage of that infrastructure and of the rewards that flow from that infrastructure being provided years ago, but it has not been prepared and it is not prepared to invest the current surplus that it has into the infrastructure that will ensure there are such opportunities in the future.

The other area where a failure to invest in infrastructure is fast becoming a problem which the government cannot ignore is the provision of water storage infrastructure and water supply to developing urban areas, especially in south-east Queensland. When I was first elected as a member of this parliament, I sought to raise the issue of water infrastructure and the provision of water infrastructure. At that time it was an issue specifically for rural Queenslanders, irrigators and landholders. Water infrastructure was an issue that only they had to worry about. Water infrastructure was an issue for irrigation farmers. However, in the last six or seven years water infrastructure has become an issue for every Queenslander. Not only has there been no water infrastructure provided for the development of new irrigation areas or the development of new agricultural industries; there has been no water infrastructure provided for growing urban areas. So the supply of water has become a very pressing problem for every Queenslander, and it has become a very big problem especially in the south-east corner.

The supply of water has become a huge problem on the Gold Coast. In the last 12 months we have had a number of debates in this parliament about the water supply situation on the Gold Coast. One of the things that best symbolised that issue, given what the Gold Coast is and what it represents, was when the showers on Gold Coast beaches had to be removed. There was not enough water to provide international tourists with an opportunity to shower as they left the beach. Just think about the image that that must send to people abroad. It is one symbol, one indicator, of the extent of the problem.

The real extent of the problem, of course, is felt by everyone who lives in that area and who has to suffer the water restrictions imposed on people on the Gold Coast, in Brisbane and the new Brisbane areas because the infrastructure has not been provided. This government's solution is to continually build pipelines to the Wivenhoe Dam—the one that was built by the Bjelke-Petersen government. Where is the equivalent which this government has built in the last seven years? Where is the equivalent of the Wivenhoe Dam, the Fairbairn Dam at Emerald, the Burdekin Dam or the Borumba Dam? Where is the equivalent?

Mr Johnson: There's none.

Mr SEENEY: That's not quite true, member for Gregory. I am pleased that the member for Bundaberg is in the chamber because it is not quite true.

Mr Johnson: Oh, yes, the Paradise Dam.

Mr SEENEY: There is the Paradise Dam; the one infrastructure project that this government—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I again request that the member for Callide address the chair.

Mr SEENEY: That is the one infrastructure project which this government can claim not to have completed—because it is not yet completed—but to have built. The only reason that the Paradise Dam is as it is today, in a half-completed state, is that the Premier was politically trapped into promising it. He was politically trapped into matching a promise given by the coalition when in government and the Premier was in opposition. I well remember the day in Bundaberg when he was trapped by the local media because the coalition government at that stage was making a major commitment to the Paradise Dam. He was asked by the local media what he would do if he won government. Remember that he was the Opposition Leader at that stage.

He had no choice, of course—if he hoped to win the three or four seats around that general area where the water supply situation was very serious—but to say that he would match that promise. He was politically trapped into building the Paradise Dam, but it took him a while. In fact, almost seven years down the track it is still not completed. During its first term the Labor government tried every trick in the book to wriggle out of it. It was my efforts and the efforts of the other local members in that area which ensured that they were not able to do that. A former member in that area, Doug Slack, and other members who represented that area were determined that the Beattie government was not going to wriggle out of that commitment.

That is why, seven years later, we have a half completed dam at Paradise on the Burnett River. That is the peak of this government's infrastructure delivery—a half completed dam which it was trapped into committing to and which it tried like blazes to wriggle out of for five or six years before it eventually got around to building it. It will be a great project, but it would have been an even greater project if it had been completed four years ago, which it would have been had the Borbidge government been re-elected in 1998. It would have been finished by now. It would have been finished four years ago.

What we need is a commitment from the Beattie Labor government to spend some of the budget surplus that it has on a whole range of projects across the state, like the Paradise Dam, to ensure that that sort of infrastructure is available to a lot of other regions and a lot of other communities. What we need is to somehow set the same political trap for the Premier that was sprung on him that day in Bundaberg so that other communities and other regions can get the same benefits that the Bundaberg and Lower Burnett regions are going to get from the Paradise Dam.

Of course, any consideration of the expenditure of this government on new infrastructure would not be complete without a mention of the electricity industry. There is no issue that has dominated debate more in this parliament over the last year than the electricity industry and the government's failure to invest in the electricity distribution network at a level which would ensure that Queenslanders were provided with a reliable electricity supply. That debate has been had enough times in this parliament for Queenslanders to well understand the extent to which the Beattie Labor government has failed them and has failed the electricity industry. Not only did it not make that investment in capital expenditure and not only did it not invest the money in that industry that it should have done; it took the absolute opposite tack and sought to milk money out of the government owned corporations that make up the electricity industry to boost its own budget bottom line.

Back in the days before the economic essentials came together because of the policies of the federal government, when the Treasurer ran three budget deficits in a row, he was desperate to get as much cash as he could and the government owned corporations were stripped of their available funds. The government owned corporations—not just in the electricity industry but in the ports corporations and a range of others, right done to Golden Casket—were stripped of the money that was available to them in an effort to prop up the government's budget bottom line.

Now that those underlying economic elements have come together and provided the government with a budget surplus, it has a huge responsibility not just to put back the money that it milked out of those government owned corporations and ensure that the infrastructure can be brought up to the standard that it should be but to invest money in those areas for the future. As I have said throughout

this contribution, there certainly will not be a guarantee that the underlying economic indicators will remain as positive for Queensland as they are at the moment. In fact, it is certain that that will not happen; that there will be changes in those economic circumstances that will mean that the money is not available.

Now is the time that that investment has to be made in that infrastructure. It is going to be a huge task to catch up and to invest for the future, just as it was a huge task to catch up on the investment in the electricity industry when the Borbidge government came to power. In this parliament this morning, and over the last couple of days, I heard the Minister for Energy talking about the blackouts that occurred when the Borbidge government was in power, somehow using that as some sort of a defence for the shameful situation that the current government finds itself in. Of course, the minister completely ignores the time frames over which this investment in infrastructure has to happen. For the benefit of the young members in the current government, I would like to put the record straight in regard to that issue. As I said earlier, we are denied the opportunity to do that in the processes of the parliament in the morning because we are not allowed to make private members' statements; we have to sit and listen to the rubbish that the ministers continually present to this parliament.

The Minister for Energy made much of the blackouts that occurred at that time. Those blackouts were a direct result of the lack of investment in infrastructure by the Goss government in the electricity generation sector. Just as this government is refusing to invest money in infrastructure, the Goss government—driven by the same socialist philosophy—refused to invest money in the electricity generating sector and ran the generating sector down in the same way that this government ran the distribution sector down. Just as this government has sucked the money out of Energex, so the Goss government sucked the money out of the generators—CS Energy, Stanwell and Tarong—the government owned corporations that generated the electricity. I well remember that at that stage maintenance at the power stations was not being done. New investment in generating capacity was not made because the socialists in the Goss government had this woolly-headed idea that somehow or other they were going to concentrate on demand side management. In other words, they were going to stop people from using electricity.

It is alarmingly familiar to the approach that is being taken by the current government to the water infrastructure situation. Every time the Minister for Natural Resources stands up and talks about providing water infrastructure it is more about this demand side management—stopping people from using the essential service—rather than focusing on what is the government's core responsibility of ensuring that it invests in the infrastructure to make sure that the essential service is available to people. That is what Wayne Goss and his government did to the electricity generating sector back in the early nineties. Eventually the electricity generating sector reached the point that it simply could not cope with the increasing demand, and it could not cope because the generators had not been maintained. That is exactly what this government did to the distribution system.

Back in the early nineties Goss and his government, driven by the same woolly-headed philosophy, did the same thing to the generating side of the industry. When the coalition came to power the situation had to be fixed. It was on the point of meltdown when the coalition came to power. Of course, we did that with things like the construction of the gas-fired peak loading power stations and the commissioning of the huge base loader at Callide C, which today provides a significant proportion of Queensland's electricity.

One of the first things that I had to deal with when I was elected to this parliament following the re-election of a Labor government under Peter Beattie was moves to stop the Callide C project. I well remember the arguments I had with the then Minister for Energy about his efforts to try to stop the Callide C project. Not only was the government not prepared to invest the money in infrastructure itself; it was going to reverse the investment decisions that the Borbidge government had made.

Queenslanders can thank their lucky stars that it was too late, that the Callide C project had reached a point where it could not be stopped, could not be reversed. Today, that electricity generator provides a major component of Queensland's electricity. As this House considers the appropriation of some \$2.3 billion that is listed in these appropriation bills, every member of this House should reflect on how this government spends the money—not just this \$2.3 billion but the \$23 billion or \$24 billion which is available to it this year and which will be available next year. There is a once in a lifetime opportunity in the Queensland economy to invest in Queensland's future. So far, that opportunity has been squandered by a government that is hell-bent on socialist philosophies rather than on putting in place the backbones to ensure that the Queensland economy can be strong in the future. This government has failed to invest in infrastructure. Infrastructure spending should be high on the agenda of every member of parliament.

Time expired.

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (2.50 p.m.): In relation to the Darling Downs electorate, there are a few things I wish to touch on regarding Education Queensland. Education Queensland recorded an operating deficit in the 2003-04 financial year of more than \$25 million, this on top of an

operating deficit of \$61 million in the 2002-03 financial year, and a \$20 million deficit in the year before that. Three deficits in a row.

Minister Bligh has presided over ruthless cost cutting in an attempt to prop up her tragic budget position—for example, recent cuts to the Reading Recovery program. These cuts will be felt hardest in rural and remote regions, such as the Darling Downs electorate. At a time when the federal Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson, is talking about Australia's literacy crisis, Queensland is downsizing our literacy response. Cuts are to the detriment of every Queensland child and their future.

The cutting of this program is only the tip of the iceberg. Queensland parents will see many more vital programs slashed under Minister Bligh. A prime example of the minister's cost cutting in the Darling Downs electorate is the closure of the Acland school. In the past five years, the Beattie government has closed in excess of 20 schools and has amalgamated another. There has been a record sell-off of Education Queensland's land in the past couple of years in a desperate attempt to prop up the minister's poor budget position. Another school in my electorate that closed was the Cooranga North State School, which, more or less, had to happen. It simply ran out of students. When that happens, both sides of government have to agree that steps must be taken, simply because not enough students and not enough children are coming on. It got down to four children and the parents met and decided to pull the children out of the school. In fairness, the minister mothballed that school for a further six months to see if any other people moved into the district. A family with three children has moved into the district. It was very sad to see that school close because my children were the fourth generation of my family to attend that school.

The Acland school is a different story. The Education Department held a public meeting at Acland a few months ago and not very many people attended. They also sought some information and I believe that they were misled with that information. They looked up one web site which listed the student attendance at two schools and the figures looked very grim for Acland. However, there has been another public meeting and there was a mass of interest. Nearly the whole town turned up to a meeting held on Monday night.

Next year, there will be 12 students at Acland, which is a bit different to three or four. In the future year, the same amount of students will attend. In 2007, the enrolments will pick up, and pick up fairly strongly. Apparently there are a lot of young families living in Acland now, with young children who will be coming on to that school. Acland is surrounded by the mine and a lot of the mine's staff members live in and near Acland. I think it is very unfair that the Acland school should close at this stage.

When this first arose, I was of the opinion that perhaps there were not very many children there. However, when I spoke to Michelle Gesler, the P&C president, she informed me about exactly what was happening and about the misinformation and misunderstandings that have occurred. I have also spoken with Jan Boyse, the district director of Darling Downs education. Jan has always been simply brilliant to get along with. I hope she seriously considers the ramifications. Minister Bligh must understand that this school must go on; that it simply cannot be closed. There is a little group of farming people there who really want to push this matter, so there will be a big push to keep that school open.

Another part of my shadow portfolio is the Department of Housing. In 2003-04, unforeseen expenditure for the Department of Housing has totalled \$84,110,000. The bill does not outline what more than \$84 million was expended on. The explanatory notes do not provide any enlightenment either. Perhaps the Treasurer could enlighten this parliament as to how the department incurred such an overrun? Further, as the appropriation bill provides supplementary appropriation for approximately \$2.4 billion, perhaps the Treasurer could provide more detail?

There is no way that this parliament can assess whether the government is overspending money on worthy initiatives or whether the government is simply wasting valuable funds. Until this government adopts and mandates performance auditing and becomes truly accountable to the parliament, instead of engaging in its empty rhetoric and propaganda, the parliament and the community will be left in the dark on whether we are getting value for money.

With regard to the \$84 million worth of unforeseen expenditure for the Department of Housing, it is interesting to note that during the 2003-04 financial year, the department, under the hand of the 'fire sale' minister, managed to dispose of some \$138 million worth of assets. Where did that money go? We know that there are some 4,999 applicants on the minister's ever growing public housing list who have been waiting for more than three years. The minister's ever growing list for public housing has more than 33,000 applicants. On what was the \$84 million expended? It certainly was not on initiatives to address the waiting list.

Another part of my shadow portfolio is the racing industry. I now wish to raise some matters in relation to the expenditure by this government on the Daubney-Rafter inquiry into, yet again, further integrity issues involving the Queensland racing industry. I have already raised in this House the way in which Minister Schwarten has facilitated the appointment of 'Big Bill' Ludwig—the controller of the AWU and the person who really runs the ALP in Queensland despite Premier Beattie's delusions to the contrary—to the Board of Queensland Racing. This occurred after disgraced Minister Merri Rose refused to appoint him and subsequently lost her seat as a result of the policies announced at the last

minute by Premier Beattie during the last election. However, perhaps members might wonder why 'Big Bill' is throwing his weight around and why the Beattie government is turning cartwheels to facilitate this appointment. After all, it is not as though 'Big Bill' does not have enough to do, given all the boards he serves on, the slush funds he controls and the issues that he has his finger in—both in Queensland and nationally. The real reason 'Big Bill' is being appointed to the board of Queensland Racing and the taxpayer funded Daubney-Rafter inquiry has been set up is to shaft Minister Schwarten's little mate Bob Bentley. 'Big Bill' wants to take control as chairman of Queensland Racing and of the racing industry and unionise the work force of over 30,000 people who work in the Queensland industry as part of the AWU that he controls.

I hear the minister laughing, as he laughed when I said that Bill Ludwig would be appointed to the board. We heard exactly the same rhetoric in this House when I stated, six months ago, that Ludwig would be appointed to the board. I state now that Bentley will go and Ludwig will be the chair of Queensland Racing. That is exactly what will happen. Wait and see if my words are not proved to be right. As the chairman of Queensland Racing, the racing industry will then be unionised with a work force of over 30,000 people working in the Queensland industry as part of the AWU, which he controls. He will use these increased numbers to strengthen his hand both in the trade union movement and in the ranks of the ALP. The socialist left and the centre unity factions must be quaking in their boots as they contemplate the enhanced power that 'Big Bill' will achieve through this strategic play to increase the numbers he controls. Minister Schwarten knows that if he does not deliver control of Queensland Racing to 'Big Bill' then the member for Mackay will be enjoying the ministerial leather by July 2005 in his place. That is why Minister Schwarten has initiated the Daubney-Rafter inquiry—to ensure the downfall of chairman Bentley. That is why Minister Schwarten has facilitated the appointment of Labor apparatchik, Ross McSwain, down at Queensland Racing to ensure that Daubney-Rafter will get the material to justify Bentley going and being replaced by 'Big Bill'. It is a taxpayer funded inquiry.

I predict that by June 2005, Bentley will be gone and 'Big Bill' will reign supreme in racing, as he does in the ALP. The Daubney-Rafter inquiry will only achieve success in cleaning up Queensland Racing if it is prepared to go beyond the limited terms of reference given to it and look at the broader issues of integrity which have never been the subject of independent investigation. Any fair dinkum inquiry will not limit its investigations to an arbitrary time limit but will follow issues, no matter where and how long ago they lead.

This will be a test for the independence of the commissioners. The CMC, and the CJC before it, has proved itself supine every time matters relating to the racing industry have been referred to it in the past. The CJC was unable to consider the allegations of abuse of office at the Toowoomba Turf Club in the mid-1990s as the race club was not a unit of public administration subject to its jurisdiction. Remember it took the CMC 12 months to investigate allegations about the winter racing carnival only to find that its recommendations for prosecution fell apart when the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions finally considered the matter.

Minister Schwarten insists that this has already been investigated by the CMC and it found no case to answer. But what was the case that the CMC was investigating? It was the process when Bentley was appointed chair of Queensland Racing by disgraced minister Merri Rose. Did the CMC examine the role of then minister Rose and her ministerial and departmental staff, such as Bob Mason, in placing pressure on Nerolie Withnall who was recommended as the inaugural chair of Queensland Racing to withdraw her application? What were the alleged conflicts of interest involved? How do they compare with the conflicts of interests of other prominent members of the racing industry who are supporters of this government?

What role was played by then minister Rose in establishing the selection committee that recommended Bentley? What consultation occurred with the racing industry about the composition of that committee? How did prominent ALP supporters such as Cyril Vains and public servants answerable to Merri Rose end up on that committee? What checks were done into the character and reputation of Bentley and his relationships with political and racing industry figures prior to his appointment? What role did 'Hollywood Bob' Gibbs, the previous Minister for Racing, play in getting Bentley up to again continue his class warfare with Brisbane racing interests? Remember it was Gibbs who conspired with Bentley and chairman Neville Stewart of the Toowoomba Turf Club and other provincial race clubs to roll, in the early 1990s, the then chair of the Queensland Principal Club who Gibbs hated.

What role did Bentley play in sacking the staff of the QPC who were actively pursuing allegations against Neville Stewart of misuse of his position as chairman of the Toowoomba Turf Club? Was this a case of Bentley being put in to protect Stewart, who was a close personal friend of Merri Rose, about which relationship allegations were swirling in the racing industry?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! The member will refer this remarks to the bill before the House.

Mr HOPPER: This a taxpayer funded inquiry that this government is paying for. My comments relate to that inquiry which goes back to Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2004.

It is a taxpayer-funded inquiry. How many staff separating from Queensland Racing have been required to sign confidentiality clauses in order to obtain access to their lawful separation payments? Why has this policy been adopted by Queensland Racing? Was it an attempt to shut former employees up about what was really happening in Queensland Racing? Will the commissioners ensure that any employees or former employees who provide advice or evidence to the commissioners are protected from the application of such clauses by Queensland Racing? Will whistleblowers from within the ranks of Queensland Racing be given real protection or will they be hung out to dry and punished as has been the policy pursued by this government in other cases? Now we have a taxpayer funded inquiry coming up and people are being gagged.

In relation to the implementation of policies by Queensland Racing in relation to sexual harassment and discrimination, what action has Queensland Racing taken to ensure that policies against sexual harassment and discrimination are applied in practice? What action was taken by Queensland Racing when allegations were made in relation to former employee John Lingard? Did any executive or board member of Queensland Racing threaten or intimidate any complainant raising issues of sexual harassment as has been reported in the media? Has any employee received money not to pursue allegations of sexual harassment or intimidation?

Who were the consultants and others employed for projects such as the supertrack proposal and the track relocation to Deagon? What were they paid? What was their relationship with members of the Queensland Racing board? Have all consultancies and payments been properly reported? Has there been any relationship between members of the board of Queensland Racing or any family member or close associate and the promoters of the supertrack proposal?

Why has the QTC been consistently punished by Queensland Racing by the transfer of traditional race meeting dates to other clubs? Is this a continuation of the class warfare of Bentley and his mentor Gibbs? Why have country race meeting numbers been reduced? Is it so that money can be redirected to Bentley's and Labor's mates in certain provincial race clubs? Why is it that the QTC, which consistently delivers more in prize money to owners than it receives from the product fee from UNITAB, has been discriminated against when clubs such as the Gold Coast club, which have been in the pocket of the ALP for years, consistently return as prize money approximately 75 per cent of the product fee it receives? Why has the Gold Coast not been the subject of the same degree of pressure as country race clubs—the pressure that has been put on our country race clubs has not been put on these major clubs—to raise from their own resources the level of prize money returned to owners? Why are all clubs not being treated equitably by Bentley and Queensland Racing? Is it only those who support Bentley and his purges that are supported?

Again I ask the commissioners: are they going to investigate the blatant discrimination against country racing and its clubs that Bentley and Queensland Racing have pursued or are they more concerned about their future career prospects? After all, there are notorious examples of people who look after the interests of Labor and its mates being rewarded with high office and appointments in due course. Hopefully, these commissioners will display the degree of independence that would have been exhibited if this commission were given to a sitting or retired Supreme Court judge. It will be interesting to observe whether the real story about Queensland Racing will unfold during the Daubney-Rafter inquiry or whether it will, like all previous attempts, merely achieve its real political objective and then be quietly wound up so that the current rulers of Queensland can continue to exploit this once great industry.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (3.06 p.m.): I have just listened to two exceptionally negative, carping and whingeing contributions from the members for Callide and Darling Downs. No wonder the vote of confidence they have received from the Queensland public is six per cent. I want to pick up on a couple of the points made by the member for Callide. He made a particular point about the \$2.4 billion hospital capital works program under the coalition government. The facts of the matter are that a \$10 billion capital works program of hospital renewal was commenced under the Goss government before the coalition came into power. The big capital works decision of the coalition in 1996-97 was to continue with a \$10 billion decision of a Labor government.

The other issue I want to pick up on is that related to Suncorp Stadium. The member spent a fair bit of time criticising that particular stadium as though it was a waste of time. It is interesting to go back to the contribution the member for Gregory made concerning Suncorp Stadium in October last year. The member for Gregory went to the Rugby Union World Cup and told us about it on that evening. I will quote his words to show the difference of opinion on Suncorp Stadium between members of the National Party. The member for Gregory stated—

My colleague the honourable member for Toowoomba South and I had the pleasure of watching one of the most enjoyable games of football anybody has ever witnessed in this state when the USA played Fiji in the World Cup at Lang Park this evening.

He went on to state—

I have to say to the government today that that stadium is absolutely magnificent.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS: That is fine. It highlights again the contradictory messages that the National Party is sending out to the people of Queensland. That is one of the fundamental reasons its vote is stuck at six per cent and heading down.

The other issue I want to touch on relates to dividends from the electricity industry, and again the member for Callide totally misrepresented the facts of this matter. The government has a very clear policy of extracting dividends after the electricity authorities have made decisions about maintenance, capital works programs, et cetera. The difference between what we do and what the coalition did is exemplified by what it did in the two years it was in power—that is, not have a measured program of dividend extraction but rather rip \$850 million out of the electricity industry in a two-year period. Once again, the National Party position on this issue just shows the hypocrisy of the position it has adopted.

In my contribution today I want to highlight the strong economic credentials of the Beattie Labor government—economic credentials which are founded upon the Smart State agenda which is driven by a Premier who is passionate about creating an environment for sustainable economic growth for future generations of Queenslanders and also a Treasurer who has delivered sound financial management and control for this state. Some of the key highlights of our current economic performance include a record budget surplus of \$3.34 billion and also a AAA credit rating, a far cry from the dismal performance of the National and Liberal Party coalition when it was in government just a few short years ago. Just to recall one of the key indicators, under the coalition in 1996-97 unemployment topped 9.5 per cent and it is now almost half that level.

The Smart State agenda is the foundation of Queensland's current economic performance. Whereas the Smart State agenda is many things, in essence it is about one thing, and that is the creation of jobs, and the Premier made that point very well earlier in the week. The recent unemployment figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics underpin the success of the Smart State agenda in addressing the issue of employment growth. Our trend unemployment rate is now five per cent—the best in the country and the lowest for 26 years. Of all of the full-time jobs created in Australia over the past year, 55 per cent of them were created in Queensland. Additionally, our businesses and our industries have also helped create 44 per cent of all jobs created in the nation. Our annual jobs growth rate is at 5.1 per cent, which is more than double the national average of 2.2 per cent.

The Queensland economy has never been healthier and the Queensland government's budget position has never been healthier, and it has all been achieved under the discipline and policy initiatives of a state Labor government which is now recognised as the natural party of good economic management. The last budget forecast under the Borbidge-Sheldon government in 1997 predicted that unemployment, then at record levels of 9.5 per cent, would rise to 9.7 per cent and employment growth would slow to 1.25 per cent. They were tired and negative assumptions from a tired and negative government. It took the enthusiasm and positive outlook of an incoming Labor government to inject some energy back into the economy. Before we were elected the now Premier set an ambitious target of a five per cent unemployment rate, which has now been achieved, and also set about encouraging and supporting the creation and establishment of new industries in Queensland.

There are two areas where there has been significant success, and they are in biotechnology and aviation. In aviation alone, around 8,000 new jobs have been created, and that is quite a remarkable performance—a remarkable performance that has been achieved in partnership with the private sector. As well as focusing on the economic fundamentals, the government has ensured that service delivery has been improved. Again, I want to highlight some significant achievements and advances across some major portfolio areas. Since the current Treasurer was appointed in 2001, spending has increased in Education by 26 per cent, Health by 27 per cent, Disability Services by 66 per cent and public order and safety by 39 per cent—all in a period where inflation was a little over 10 per cent.

Mr Wallace: That says it all.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS: It says it all. As I said, inflation was a little over 10 per cent and some of these increases were double and in some cases six times the previous amount. Good economic management is now recognised as going hand in hand with a state Labor government, and in Queensland that is largely the result of our Smart State agenda which is helping to deliver strong and sustainable jobs growth across the state. These appropriation bills provide a bit more money to enable the good work to continue. Accordingly, I commend the bills to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (3.14 p.m.): In rising to speak to the appropriation bills this afternoon, I want to canvass a series of issues that are contentious but important to the whole of Queensland. First and foremost, I want to touch on the flying medical services in western Queensland. These services are paramount to the ongoing delivery of health services to the people who not only live in those areas but also visit those areas. The Flying Doctor service has provided a mantle of safety over the past 80-odd years, but more importantly flying medical services such as the Flying Surgeon, gynaecologists, obstetricians, paediatricians and gastroenterologists are very important services that must be continued.

Over recent years we have witnessed the upgrade and the rehabilitation of many medical centres in the west. Therefore, it is paramount that the delivery of those services continues. The member for Warrego and I had recent meetings with people from the Department of Health with regard to the southern region, but the same is also applicable to the central and northern regions in relation to the future of the Flying Surgeon. The Flying Surgeon service used to be based in Longreach but is now based in Mount Isa because of the death of one of the surgeons and the resignation of an anaesthetist. As a result, that service is very much depleted in resources. The future of that service is in question. That service should be relocated back to Longreach or Emerald or a more central area so that doctors will want to provide that service. That presents an anomaly in terms of where people want to live.

The minister has answered questions in the House about doctors going to country areas and doctors providing services in country areas. Many doctors can earn more money by living on the coast or in Brisbane with their families and their client base around them. I want to make mention of the work that Dr Bill Glasson, the President of the AMA, provides with his ophthalmology services to western Queensland. Even though the man is so busy at the moment, he still provides that service to the isolated regions of western Queensland. This is the commitment, professionalism and dedication displayed by these professionals who give us that service. I call on the government and the Health Minister to address this issue. I have had numerous conversations with the minister about this. I respect his stewardship of the portfolio, because he has always been very accessible and very understanding of the issues. It is paramount that he continues meeting with his health personnel on a three-monthly basis, because that is working very well as it lets members of parliament know what is going on and enables the passing on of other issues that may be relevant to them in their area.

Another matter I want to touch on very quickly today—and I raised it in an MPI in the House recently—is the investigation into Keith Walker as a district officer with the EPA in Charleville. This investigation is ongoing. I have spoken with James Purtill, the Director-General of the EPA. While this investigation has to be conducted according to procedures—that is, reports going back to the department that have come from Charleville—this is a very depressing scenario and one that is not only applicable to Charleville. I have not even spoken with Mr Walker in recent times, but I have had phone calls from people within the department in Brisbane. They tell me that they face a culture of fear within that department.

I have to say that, if there is a culture of fear, I just hope that the minister is aware of this culture of fear and that something can be done about it. Bullying is totally unacceptable in modern society. There are people out there who are endeavouring to do their jobs. I know that we all slip up from time to time in the workplace, but if we are all going to be investigated for that it will be a pretty tough old workplace. I have to say also that we need flexibility in the environment in which these people work. A set of rules for the south-east corner might differ from a set of rules for the west, the north, or wherever. We have to have flexibility so that we can manage the policy that is implemented by the government appropriately and fairly. But at the same time, if we are going to have these investigations, I find it totally unacceptable that people have to take sick leave so that they can answer their superior. I call on Alan Feely, if he is responsible for the administration of this section of the department, and Loretta Thomas, the district manager in Roma, to make absolutely certain that fairness is exercised and that this matter is resolved before Christmas so that not only this family but all other families who are affected can get on with their lives.

As far as I am concerned, all the issues involved are petty. I have a whole series of them—overloaded trucks going to fight fires, taking away equipment. All of these sorts of things erode the ability of these officers to be able to carry out their duties as national parks and wildlife officers to their total professional capacity. The timber router has been taken from Charleville and sent to the coast so that the officers cannot make any more signs in the workshop at Charleville. The blame goes on continually. I have to say that, with all of these petty issues that are being raised, I just think that it is ridiculous. Staff have been asked to sign their performance planning review documents under budgetary constraints that cannot be met without going into deficit. They are then expected to achieve unachievable financial targets by working smarter. This places senior rangers and other rangers in charge of parks in the dubious position that if they sign their PPR, they are required to meet the budget criteria. If they cannot do that, then they are liable for disciplinary action. If those officers do not sign their PPR, they are liable for disciplinary action, anyway. This situation now applies to officers who are members of the Australian Workers Union and salaried officers who are members of the Queensland Public Sector Union. I have to say to those unions responsible to show some leadership and stand up for their members and make certain that this harassment is discontinued.

How many public servants have put themselves and their families under this enormous stress to highlight their positions and the frustrations of the communities that they work for. They fight constantly with bureaucrats, who are far from the communities, to achieve outcomes for our children and our children's children in regional and remote Queensland. I have to say that this is totally unacceptable. I say now, and I said it during the last sittings in the matters of public interest debate, I have not finished with the matter yet. Some bureaucrats are not listening to the communities or to the public servants who work at the coalface and who interact daily with our communities. When local public servants attempt to

introduce government initiatives, they are threatened with disciplinary action. This has to stop. It must stop. Queensland has some great public servants who are committed to their communities and who are committed to the implementation of the government's policy and programs. It is about time that these park rangers and the other people who work in these operations were allowed to do their job without getting into strife for it and having to write pages and pages and pages of ludicrous reports at expense to themselves to justify the action of some superior who has implemented the direction in the first place.

Another issue that I want to touch on today is the outbreak of citrus canker in the eastern end of my electorate at Emerald. As members are well aware, on 30 June this year a disease was identified and later confirmed to be citrus canker on the Evergreen farm in Emerald in central Queensland. The rolling quarantine response ultimately saw the destruction of 100 per cent of that large citrus farm at Emerald—some 375 hectares. However, on 5 October a further detection was found some seven kilometres away on a neighbouring citrus property, the 2PH farm, by the owners themselves who immediately reported the outbreak. This was the first indication that the disease had escaped from the initially infected property and that the response program implemented in June, July, August and September had not been successful. During the initial citrus canker response program, 2PH was intensively surveyed and was found to be free of disease. The characteristics of the disease symptoms suggest that this newly discovered infection is fairly recent. But it cannot be a fairly recent infection. There is no doubt in the world that there has to be a source to this infection. The one thing that I question today is how good were the AQIS officials three years ago when there was a cloud over the Evergreen orchard? My diary notes of that time are full of a report that I received at that time from a producer at Emerald. I call on Warren Truss, the federal Minister for Agriculture, to show some leadership on this matter. At the end of the day, if there is a breakdown in the AQIS operation, what are we going to witness if we see an outbreak in this country of foot-and-mouth disease? That would totally eliminate our livestock industry—pork, cattle, sheep, goats; the whole bit.

This is a very serious situation today. John Pressler came up with a plan to eradicate every tree on his 2PH orchard to isolate the disease on the Central Highlands. He had the backing of every grower on the Central Highlands for that. Some 300,000 trees were to be eliminated at a cost of about \$19.80 per tree. But, no, the Queensland state government is still arguing the toss. It thinks that it is too much money to pay. I call on Henry Palaszczuk to show leadership on this issue, too, because I believe that he has dragged his feet. If we are going to protect the citrus industry in Queensland and the citrus industry in Australia, we have to see the Pressler plan implemented now. I do not mean tomorrow; I mean now. If this infection gets down into Mundubbera and Gayndah, we will see the citrus industry in Queensland wiped out totally.

The point that I make here today, and it is a very, very serious point, is that at the moment not one citrus grower in this state—or in this country for that matter—can borrow a bent razoo against his operation because the financial institutions will not lend to citrus growers. I refer to a press release issued yesterday, 24 November 2004, by the Australian Citrus Growers. It states—

ACG was further disappointed by the Queensland Government who was quoted in the media before the resolutions of the meeting were distributed, despite the agreement of confidentiality by all governments and industry.

The press release states further—

Australian Citrus Growers... expressed disappointment in the decision made yesterday by the pest incursion decision-making group, the National Management Group, to reject the immediate pre-emptive eradication of citrus canker in Emerald.

The press release states further—

Peter Davidson, ACG President said, 'It is disheartening to learn that the current "cookie-cutter" approach of removing all infected trees within 600 metres of a confirmed detection will continue at its current slow pace.'

I have to say that, if this current slow pace continues, we will see the total eradication of the citrus industry not only in Queensland but also in Australia. It will go right across Australia. Those farmers at Emerald gave their consent to John Pressler's plan to eliminate every tree not only on his farm but also on the adjoining farms. One thousand jobs in peak season will go out of Emerald and 200 jobs year in, year out, will go out of Emerald. I ask members to think of the impact that that will have on that regional centre. But \$201 million a year in export earnings by the Australian citrus industry will be lost if this disease spreads right across the continent.

It is a grave situation. I say to Warren Truss and Henry Palaszczuk: you are the political leaders of these industries. If you cannot handle the job—if it is too big for you—you should relinquish the job and give it to someone who can handle it. They might be hard words, but procrastination will destroy this great industry in this great state in our great country. Years and years of hard, labour-intensive work has gone into this. 2PH orchard is worth in the vicinity of probably \$120 million or \$150 million. It is an absolutely magnificent property and operation. The proof will be in the pudding as to whether there has been insider trading or a virus has crept into this country because it has got past AQIS. We will await the DNA test results from the Florida research laboratories, which will determine whether the plant initially found at Evergreen did come from Asia.

Members might think these are hard words, but I am a firm believer that charity starts at home. If it will cost \$16 million to arrest this disease and eliminate this problem then so be it. We have to do it in

the interests of growers. The areas represented by the members for Bundaberg, Callide and Burnett will all be grossly affected by citrus canker. It will destroy a lot of the smaller towns in close proximity. Today I say to Henry Palaszczuk and Warren Truss: put your heads together and come up with the dollars to let John Pressler implement his plan so that the citrus industry in Queensland and Australia can survive the terrible ordeal it is currently facing.

I will raise a couple of other issues that concern me. One gives me no pleasure at all. A couple of days ago I received a phone call that concerned my shadow portfolio responsibility of police and corrective services. I was informed that antiabortion campaigner Graham Preston is currently in jail because he was removed from an abortion clinic site. It disturbs me greatly to think that somebody out there campaigning on a human rights issue can be put in jail. His case will not be heard until 22 February 2005. What sort of justice system do we have in Queensland? Today members are wearing white ribbons to highlight the issue of violence against women and children in society. This bloke has his own personal view. I have my own views and others have their own views on this issue.

I call on the Attorney-General and the Police Minister to follow this issue through and have Graham Preston immediately released from jail. Where is the justice if he is in jail because he will not sign an order to say that he will not go back to that clinic? Where are his rights? Where is the freedom for people to object? Yesterday people were protesting outside the parliament because they were being kept out of horse trails in south-east Queensland. I would say that there is no difference between that situation and someone objecting to something else. I believe that is a right that this man has. I call on this government to immediately seek his release from prison.

Another issue I raise is the plight of the Tambo State School in my electorate. Education Queensland wants to change the boundaries of the central, south-east and north-west regions. Tambo is aligned with the south-west, with Toowoomba and Brisbane. It wants to stay in the south-west region, under the jurisdiction of the Roma office. I call on the Minister for Education, the Hon. Anna Bligh, to observe its request and see that that happens.

This is the last speech I will be making in this House before Christmas, so I wish each and every member a very happy and holy Christmas. I trust that their families will enjoy the same. I trust that 2005 will be a great year for everyone.

I put on the record my sincere thanks and gratitude to all of the staff here at Parliament House for their support during the year. I especially mention the security staff. They are a champion lot of blokes. I thank them for their friendship and their support and cooperation at all times.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (3.35 p.m.): I rise to speak to the appropriation bills. I take this opportunity to point out two specific areas of need in my electorate. The government has not recognised funding needs in these particular areas. The bills as they currently stand do not provide funding for a project that should be a high priority item for the Beattie Labor government. This project would provide much-needed relief to a vast number of industries in the Bowen River basin. It would provide security to the community of Collinsville. It would allow for the expansion of mining interests in the Bowen Basin coalfields. It would provide a lifeline to graziers and agriculturalists paying large amounts of money to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines for a service that is currently not being provided.

The project I speak of is the Urannah dam proposal and the lifeblood I refer to is of course water. As sure as there is a need for the state government to provide long-term sustainable water infrastructure to this part of Queensland, it is fact that the Bowen Basin coalfields and the community supported by it within the Bowen River basin are facing a serious water supply crisis and something has to be done.

Earlier this year I spoke about this matter and I spoke about the need for the government to address water concerns in the Bowen River basin. At that time I indicated that the Eungella Dam, which supplies the area, including its mining interests, was at an appalling 24 per cent capacity. It was indicated at that time that without a substantial wet season the dam's supplies were not expected to last another 12 months. Unfortunately, I now have to inform the House that recent estimates place Eungella at only 12 per cent capacity, representing a paltry 13,488 megalitres. It is heartbreaking to see the Bowen Basin coal industry and other potential industry developments under serious threat.

I wish to indicate to all members of the House that the Urannah dam is a project which has bipartisan support in the Bowen River area, with Bowen Collinsville Enterprise, the Bowen Shire Council and the federal member, De-Anne Kelly, joining me in support of this project to provide sustainable water infrastructure to the Bowen River basin. This in turn would provide security for the coalmines in the northern Bowen Basin, which produced over 87 million tonnes in 2003—over 87 million tonnes of coal in one year. That generated wealth in excess of \$6 billion for Queensland. This has increased from 49.9 million tonnes in 1996. That represents a 75 per cent increase in seven years, with the sky being the limit on future expansion if water is made more available. Probably one of the limiting factors on this has been the water supply.

The Eungella Dam supplies coal developments that currently generate in excess of \$3 billion annually, specifically from the Eungella Dam. It also supplies the Collinsville Power Station and an urban population in the towns of Collinsville, Moranbah and the surrounding areas of nearly 15,000 people.

The development of the Urannah dam would enable Eungella to provide primary water delivery to households in the Collinsville and Moranbah areas, with the water currently allocated to mining interests sourced from Urannah. Further, it would enable environmental flows back into the Bowen River below the Collinsville weir, where many noted waterholes containing bird life and crocodiles are drying up and forcing great hardship on the wildlife. There has been no environmental flow below the Collinsville weir for most of this year. The impact on the environment in that area is enormous.

In recent editions of the *Bowen Independent*, it has been reported that the government is in negotiation with mining companies to build a pipeline from the Burdekin Falls Dam at a cost of \$170 million. This will service the needs of the mining companies that are struggling without water. After further consultation and estimation by Bowen Collinsville Enterprise, I understand that the cost agreed upon by the department was closer to \$250 million, given that the current proposal is a pipeline to Eungella and does not take into the equation the upgrades to Moranbah, where much of the water is needed in guaranteed supply, and the fact that these costs do not include the fees to pump from the Burdekin irrigation scheme areas.

Further, the pipeline does not address future needs and is only a factor under current provisions. This is only under the current water provisions of the Burdekin dam. This pipeline can deliver only 20,000 megalitres and does nothing to address the needs of the many other stakeholders who are in desperate need. When the true assessment and costs are considered, would it not be more pertinent for the state government to contribute to the funding required for a more long-term answer in the Urannah dam? I cite the recent example of what extra costs can become reality when a bandaid solution is put in place. While I am really happy for the Collinsville community that some recognition of its water plight is being recognised with SunWater's current construction of a ring tank water storage facility, the fact that its original expense of \$7 million has blown out to \$22 million shows what can really happen.

The Urannah proposal has been definitely costed at \$150 million and represents an answer to communities, an answer to mining interests and an answer to land-holders in the area who require water. In the *Bowen Independent* just yesterday the federal member for Dawson, De-Anne Kelly, responded to the member for Whitsunday's call for the pipeline proposal by saying, 'While a pipeline from the Burdekin Falls Dam may have some merit as a short-term solution for some Bowen Basin coalmines, I am amazed that the state member for Whitsunday would attempt to undermine what is the real, long-term solution—the Urannah dam. I will be doing all I can to move the process forward.'

With the support of Mrs Kelly, the Bowen Shire Council and Bowen Collinsville Enterprise through their project team Water for Bowen, I appeal to the state government to commit to Urannah. If the federal government is so supportive, I ask that the state government swallow its pride and commit to this proposal. Water is essential for the mining process and for the generation of power. The availability and reliability of water is an important component of any investment decision to establish or reinvest in a mining operation. Surely the government is not willing to risk the economic potential of expanded mining interests in this area. The answer is simple: put the infrastructure in place and watch your investment grow.

There was a cult American eighties movie starring Kevin Costner about a small-time corn farmer who developed an international standard baseball diamond in one of his paddocks. He heeded spiritual advice from historically great baseball players long passed away including Babe Ruth and 'Shoeless' Joe Jackson, who were whispering to him, 'If you build it, he will come,' which they subsequently did. I say to Mr Beattie: in representing the mining interests, who are keen to develop and expand their operations in the Bowen River basin, I express the same message—if he builds it, they will come. However, unlike the 'Bambino' and 'Shoeless' Joe, I can assure him that the mining companies will be there.

I would also like to bring to the attention of the government a road which has a long crash history over many years and which has caused the loss of lives. It will continue to do so unless it is urgently addressed. I am referring to the Wilmington crossing, which is located 30 kilometres north of Bowen on the Bruce Highway. This is where on 12 November this year a truck driver lost his life on what Bowen mayor, Mike Brunner, described as 'a mongrel of a crossing'. At this particular section of road—a combination of a sharp bend and railway crossings—it is an extremely dangerous situation. Despite signs reducing the speed limit on the National Highway to 80 on this particular corner, to once again steal the words of Mr Brunner, it is literally 'a death trap'. In fact, the *Townsville Bulletin* reported that a truck driver had contacted them regarding this particular section of road and claimed that he and other drivers had made at least 10 complaints to Queensland Transport and police about the safety of this corner in the six weeks leading up to the fatality. This is historically a long-term problem on the Bruce Highway and it must be addressed.

The driver in question who sent in these complaints to the *Townsville Bulletin* indicated that there had been several near misses because the railway warning lights had not been working despite checks from Queensland Rail. I would also like to inform the House that this corner has been notorious for decades, with road users like me—because I drive on that road regularly—and thousands of others regularly travelling the Bruce Highway between Burdekin and Bowen, and we are all fully aware of the

danger of the corner. I have witnessed accidents there years ago. Even today one of my staff members made the comment that a number of tennis players from Home Hill remember going off the road at this particular corner in a charter coach to Bowen, when the driver in question lost control. It is a dangerous corner. There is a local Home Hill businessman who lives with permanent back injuries as a result of another very serious accident there. The reasons for the accident that caused this fatality earlier this month I believe are still unclear, but, given that the road accident was compounded by a train smash as well, it was a really serious situation. It means that something must be done to provide safety to the general public who use this road.

I understand from media reports and from speaking with them that Main Roads have recognised the danger of this corner. It also undertook a safety upgrade in 2002. Following the latest incident, I believe the government needs to go back to the drawing board. Having read the comments of a spokesman from Main Roads, I would be very very surprised if Minister Lucas has not already been briefed on the dangers of the Wilmington crossing. However, I really do encourage him to push the case in cabinet for further investigation, future funding and then ultimately its alteration because it is, in the words of the mayor, a death trap.

I have limited my requests for future funding and planning from the state government to just two requests at this stage because I feel these are two extremely serious areas. Naturally, there are many, many more that are worthy of consideration, but I emphasise the dangerous situation at these two particular areas that I have spoken about. I would like to take this opportunity as the last day of the parliament to wish everyone in the House and the staff a very happy Christmas.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (3.47 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to speak to this appropriation debate. This morning, like all other members on this side of the House, I was very pleased to listen to a ministerial statement from our Treasurer. The Treasurer spoke about Queensland's remarkable economic performance over the last 15 years. Some of the highlights mentioned by the Treasurer include between 1988-89 and 2003-04 Queensland's real gross state product averaging around four and a half per cent per annum—well above the average annual national rate of 3.3 per cent. Public investment in Queensland over the same period has averaged 5.7 per cent of gross state product compared with the rest of Australia at 3.8 per cent.

The Treasurer went on to speak about more recent facts and figures that have occurred since the election of the Beattie government in 1998. Since that time, Queensland has averaged an annual growth in gross state product of 5.1 per cent. Some 323,400 jobs have been created, contributing to unemployment dropping from a high of 9.5 per cent under the Borbidge government to a record low five per cent. Remember when Mr Beattie suggested that should be a goal how he was ridiculed by many members of the media and certainly by those opposite. Labour productivity during the Beattie government has averaged an extraordinary 2.8 per cent, well above the rest of Australia at 2.1 per cent. As the Treasurer said this morning, these figures are truly amazing and the envy of other jurisdictions in this country.

I would now like to make some comments about the Howard government's economic performance. A government's real role in the economy is to develop the sources of future growth. In this regard the record of the Howard government has been most patchy. Economists endlessly debate what drives growth. There is broad agreement, however, that investment in child care, education, research and infrastructure all lift our future capacity to produce. Unfortunately, the Howard government has squandered the fruits of 14 years of positive economic growth by electorally bribing sections of the community rather than investing in our future, investing in education, research and infrastructure.

Australia's productivity—measured by GDP per hour worked—is still well below other comparable nations, and there is good evidence that the Australian economy is now running out of puff. Of 23 industrialised nations, Australia has the 16th lowest productivity. People would not have known that if they were listening to the debate during the elections. Howard has been feasting on Keating's 1995 reform program. According to the Productivity Commission's estimates, the economy would be about 2.5 per cent, or about \$9 billion per annum, worse off if the 1995 reforms had not been introduced.

The Howard government committed about \$45 billion in new spending and tax cuts in the last budget and another \$14 billion in the campaign. The Howard government clearly is not on the path of fiscal rectitude. Australia has withstood the Asian and global downturns during the Howard government's watch by heavy borrowing. It has also been a heavy-spending and heavy-taxing government.

During 2003-04 Australians spent a net \$50 billion on overseas borrowings. This great economic dream of ours is being realised by our consuming overseas money to the tune of \$50 billion last year. Australia's export growth has shrunk alarmingly over a sustained period. Australia now supplies less than one per cent of global exports compared to 1.8 per cent when Howard took office. I would like to take the figures out about the contribution that Queensland makes, because I know that we have doubled our exports in the last 10 years or so in monetary terms. It would look very poor without the economic engine of Queensland driving this economy.

Exports may not be a vote-winning issue, but they are the underpinning of any economy's strength. To turn around our miserable trade performance requires new policy settings that encourage exports and a whole-of-government focus on making Australia competitive and focused on world markets. Australia's economy is not the success story claimed by Howard. It has been driven by consumer spending based on borrowings. We are spending money that we do not have, and we cannot do that forever.

Whilst the CPI is under the Reserve Bank's target of less than three per cent, in the year to June the chain price index for domestic production rose by 4.5 per cent—its highest rise since the 1980s. That is a dangerous signal. The producer price index for domestic production also rose 4.4 per cent, and even consumer prices for non-traded goods and services rose 4.1 per cent. The Reserve Bank is allowing this to happen; it has not raised interest rates. I must confess that it is difficult to accept the fact that to a large extent the Howard government, which does not control interest rates, won re-election on the basis of pleading to keep them low.

With Australian households servicing \$710 billion in debts from disposable incomes of \$520 billion a year, the Reserve Bank's freedom to move on interest rates has been limited. There is no doubt about that. People are just so highly leveraged that even a small interest rate increase will be very dangerous, yet we have an economy that in terms of efficiency of costs—costs of production—is getting into dangerous territory. John Howard won the 2004 election on the basis that Australians trusted him as a good economic manager. A policy of relying on ever-increasing debt to finance growth is not safe. It is not really the policy of a good economic manager. It should not be a policy that Australians should have trusted this man with.

Global markets have the capacity to punish economies that go off the rails. The financial markets have not yet asked questions about rises in producer price indices and an economy based on a current account deficit of six per cent of GDP—the highest in the developed world. That means, of course, that we are actually living on other people's money, as I said earlier. On top of that, global markets will be looking at increases in GDP based on consumption, and that consumption is based on unsustainable borrowings.

I hope my prognosis is wrong, but I fear that the Howard government is steering Australia's economy towards an iceberg. That is why I thought it was important, when the Treasurer spoke this morning, that he actually asked, 'What do other economies need to do to sustain this wonderful economic growth?' I think Howard could take a leaf out of the Queensland economics management book, particularly our fiscal management. This morning the Treasurer said that we have the highest operating surplus ever in Queensland and the highest of any state or territory since accrual accounting was introduced in 1998-99. Of course, this was by investing in infrastructure, not buying votes and not doing the electorally popular things like looking after certain sectoral groups in the community. This year in Queensland we have a record capital infrastructure program of over \$6 billion.

I think that we should invest in services. I have said many times in this place that service delivery is important not just for those who get the service; it is a necessary aspect of economic growth. During the debate last night on the Endeavour Foundation, the shadow Treasurer demanded that we spend more on disability services. If he had been listening this morning he would have heard the Treasurer say that, since he became Treasurer in 2001, disability services funding has increased by 66 per cent; recurrent funding for education by more than 26 per cent; health by more than 27 per cent; and public water and safety by 39 per cent.

While we are growing this economy we are also making sure that the service delivery goes with it. Of course there has to be investment in people. More than one million Australians are either unemployed or underemployed. We need more than just the current job network processes. We need programs such as Queensland's unique Breaking the Unemployment Cycle. We need initiatives to get unemployed adults back into the work force and we need to provide people with the skills and opportunities to enable them to do that. Queensland, of course, has a low-tax structure. We hear members opposite saying that taxation should be lower, but at the same time they want more services. We have provided both.

With Howard we have had a government that has taxed Australians more heavily than ever, and it uses and wastes that money on getting up a kitty to go out and bribe the electors every three years. Yet our tax rate, on a per capita basis, is 20 per cent lower than it is in the rest of Australia. They are the ingredients to a good economy.

I am afraid that John Howard has just been relying on getting through the Asian crisis and the global downturn on borrowings. As I said earlier, last year we spent \$50 billion of overseas money. That is what is pushing up our GDP. People think it is great, but it is all done on borrowings. Unfortunately, the day will come when the global markets will say, 'Hey, this is a false economy', because people cannot keep on spending. We do not want to reach the stage where people in the community owe much more than they are earning in disposable income. It is a frightening situation, and I worry.

Queensland has to ensure that it remains the Smart State, that it maintains its tax base, that it invests in infrastructure and in people by providing job training, and that it continues its great service

delivery. I commend these appropriation bills to the House. There really is a stark difference between what is happening with Howard and what we are doing.

Debate, on motion of Mr Fouras, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Land Tax Assessments

Hon. T.M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (3.58 p.m.), by leave: Last month, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines issued valuations for properties in nine local government areas. Ordinarily, the department issues valuations by 31 March each year to take effect on 30 June. This allows landowners time to lodge valuation objections and resolve valuation issues with the department prior to the valuations being used for land tax purposes.

However, industrial action has impacted on the issue of valuations, resulting in a scaled down program and the late issue of valuations. Land tax assessments for the 2004-05 year are now being issued by the Office of State Revenue and, in many cases, will be payable before objections against 2004 valuations have been decided by the department. To ensure that these taxpayers are not disadvantaged, I approved the payment of interest at 4.49 per cent per annum on any land tax refunds payable because of a successful objection against a 2004 valuation if the taxpayer paid the assessment by the due date but before the objection was decided. Full details are set out in practice direction 14, which is published on the web site of the Office of State Revenue.

Despite the interest arrangement, I have received representations from the Property Council this week expressing concerns about cases where valuations have increased significantly. While the interest arrangement compensates taxpayers if their objection is successful, in these cases there may be initial difficulty in paying the tax in the meantime given the extent of the valuation increase. Therefore, some additional relief is appropriate. I have approved today an additional arrangement which will allow these taxpayers to defer payment of part of their 2004 land tax assessment until 14 days after their objection is decided by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. I table a copy of this administrative arrangement, which will be published today on the website of the Office of State Revenue.

This part-payment arrangement will be available to a taxpayer who has validly objected against a 2004 valuation of the unimproved value of a parcel of land included in their 2004 land tax assessment and the valuation is at least 50 per cent greater than the 2003 valuation for the parcel. To simplify the process for taxpayers, a simple calculation will be used for working out the part payment to be made to the Office of State Revenue. The part payment will be the greater of 80 per cent of the total land tax payable under the 2004 assessment or the total land tax payable under the taxpayer's 2003 land tax assessment.

A taxpayer wishing to do a more tailored calculation of the part payment can elect to use an alternative formula, which is explained in the administrative arrangement. Under this alternative method, the taxpayer will effectively be deferring payment of tax on 50 per cent of the increase on the averaged land tax value of the land to which the objection relates.

No interest will be payable by taxpayers on the tax deferred under this arrangement, regardless of the outcome of their valuation objection. However, the deferral does not affect the taxpayer's liability to pay the tax. Payment is simply being deferred, pending the determination of the valuation objection. The unpaid tax will be payable 14 days after the Department of Natural Resources and Mines issues a notice of its decision on the taxpayer's objection. Of course, if the objection is successful, the Office of State Revenue will issue an amended assessment.

To take advantage of this arrangement, the taxpayer will need to complete a form and send it to the Office of State Revenue with their part payment by 10 December 2004 or, if later, the due date for payment of the taxpayer's assessment. The form is being developed and will be available on the website of the Office of State Revenue as soon as possible. Taxpayers who have paid the full amount of their land tax assessment will not be able to take advantage of this new arrangement. However, they may still be entitled to interest if their valuation objection is allowed in due course.

PARLIAMENTARY AMNESTY GROUP

White Ribbon Day

Hon. D.M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (4.03 p.m.), by leave: 25 November is White Ribbon Day; it is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Amnesty International has campaigned vigorously against violence against women. This parliament supported a particular Amnesty campaign, passing a motion in 2002 condemning the intended stoning to death of a Nigerian

woman for having a child out of wedlock. Perhaps as a result of that campaign, of which this parliament was a part, the stoning of Amina Lawal did not go ahead. The commitment that honourable members of this House make to the work of Amnesty International is significant and effective. Accordingly, today I propose that this House associates itself with the current campaign of Amnesty International and I move—

That this House on United Nation's International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women—

- (a) Condemns violence against women and girls in all forms.
- (b) Recognises the levels and risk of violence women and girls live under in conflict and post-conflict areas within the Asia Pacific.
- (c) Highlights the findings contained in Amnesty International's recent report Solomon Islands, Women confronting violence, including that:
 - (i) gender-based violence against women and girls was an entrenched feature in the Solomon Island's five year armed conflict between 1998 and 2003;
 - (ii) 85% of Solomon Islanders interviewed in a March 2004 study reported that their families were directly affected by the conflict;
 - (iii) 75% of women suffered direct personal trauma, including rape, death of family members, threats of violence and intimidation and being held at gunpoint; and that
 - (iv) Solomon Island women have reported an increased rate of domestic violence within their homes as a result of the conflict.
- (d) Encourages the Solomon Islands Government to further pursue its plans to combat violence against women, specifically the development of a National Policy on Violence against Women and proposed legislation for the protection of women and children against violence and other abuses.

I commend the motion to the House.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (4.07 p.m.): I rise to second this motion and to acknowledge that International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is an important day. This is an important motion. I recognise that this is an issue that has the support, obviously, of both men and women in this parliament. I recognise that this is a basic issue of safety in communities. Often the most vulnerable people in our communities can be women and, unfortunately, the power issues have meant that there has been a history of domestic violence in many countries. When it comes to countries where there has been war, that power imbalance is even more extreme. Certainly, we are also recognising the particular situation in the Solomon Islands. This parliament is bringing some focus to bear upon that particular issue, as we want to support those people who have suffered through that conflict. We realise that women, in particular, have suffered direct personal traumas, including rape, violence, intimidation and torture associated particularly with the unrest in that country.

Of the 55 women and girls who lived on the western Weathercoast during the conflict, 19 were allegedly raped by occupying forces. One girl was only 11 years old at the time. When the conflict was over, nearly 200 rapes were reported in the first six months of 2004. It goes beyond one's imagination. We can read the figures, but they represent an incredible world of heartache, which does not stop with the incidents that have occurred to these women. As people who have dealt with people who have been sexually assaulted in our own country would know, the impact of this kind of violence can go on for generations and breaking that generational cycle of social and mental distress and fragmentation in communities takes a particular focus and takes a lot of support of the communities.

We understand that no country is exempt from these issues but there have been particular hot spots. The conflict that we have seen in the Solomons has highlighted this issue. One of the explanations for violence against women in the Solomons is the tradition of a 'bride price'. The wife is expected to be subordinate and obey her husband. There are certain expectations concerning women. I do not like to use the word object because I am aware that, from our cultural perspective, it is easy to judge other countries. There is a very different approach to the status of women in some of our neighbouring countries.

I do hesitate bringing only a western perspective to this issue because understanding cultures requires us to go far deeper. We have much to learn from these countries in supporting them through this. No matter what culture we are talking about, violence against men and women is unacceptable.

The support that we can provide to those who are trying to break this cycle of violence is absolutely essential. The Solomon Islands is one of six Pacific Island nations without a female member of parliament. There are not a lot of prominent powerful women within their official structure. Education is neither free nor compulsory. As a result, it is estimated that two-thirds of the female population is illiterate.

The Solomon Islands has recognised this issue. In 2003 it announced that it would formulate a national policy on violence against women and establish counselling services for victims of torture or rape. I understand that to date neither of these have been achieved. I would certainly urge members of this parliament to look for ways to build those support networks in our neighbouring countries. Once again, it is not about coming in as western parliamentarians and telling people how they should order and structure their lives. But there is a need for us to focus on the worrying issues. We need to look

honestly at how these issues also affect and impact upon women in our own communities. We need to share with those who are trying to make a difference in the Solomon Islands that violence is never acceptable regardless of culture, regardless of history. Breaking that cycle takes a tremendous amount of understanding the cultural values that underpin it.

We need to try to support those who are the champions of change. It is often the champions of change who live in communities who face the greatest threat of all. For them to be effective they need to be surrounded by people who can be with them in the long term. As members of Queensland parliament we need to look better at how we, and hopefully others in other parliaments, can provide that network to them. It is the champions of change who live within communities who most of all need the support of many people to make a difference in the long term. I support the motion before the House and urge the support of all members.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (4.13 p.m.): I rise to support Amnesty International's stop violence against women campaign. I am very proud to be part of a parliament that has formed its own Amnesty International group. I was very proud to stamp my handprint on the stop violence against women banner today. Like other speakers, I cannot stress enough how important this campaign is for women around the world. Violence against women is the greatest human rights scandal of our time. Unfortunately, violence against women escalates during war periods, as we have seen in the war in Iraq and closer to home in the Solomon Islands, as former speakers have said.

During the conflict years in the Solomon Islands, women were the target of widespread gender based violence. Today, despite the end of a five-year conflict, women and girls remain at risk of violence, including domestic violence. As recently as 19 August 2004, an armed group of around 50 men harassed and reportedly tried to rape women in raids on villages along the Metapona River.

In very few of the cases of violence against women has the perpetrator been prosecuted. Why would a woman press charges when prison sentences for rape are reportedly rarely longer than two years to five years. During the conflicts violence against men was openly discussed but violence against women was marginalised and/or ignored. Women victims of violence have been outside the focus of attention during and after the conflict and today the Solomon Islands has no women members of parliament, no women ministers and only one woman as head of a government department.

Protection against violence towards women cannot be expected to succeed when such a discrimination against women exists. As we know, the Solomon Islands are not alone. In Australia, one in four women experience violence in their intimate relationships. One in eight women are subjected to violence from their partner while pregnant. Some 35 per cent of women in Australia experience violence from their partner after separation.

In north Queensland, under 14s are the highest risk sex victims. Who are the predators? It is men aged between 30 and 49. Some 81 per cent of these offenders are known to the victim. In the north and Mount Isa there were 158 rapes and 396 other sexual offences last year. One hundred and fifty-nine of these people were girls under 14. Guess what? More than 240 of these offenders were men.

These alarming figures represent only one-third of reported abuse cases. We need to show that women's self-organisation, together with the unity and support of the human rights movement, is the most effective way to overcome violence against women. Everyone—individuals, communities, governments and international bodies—has a responsibility to put a stop to violence and to redress the suffering it causes. To stop violence to women belongs to us—it is in our hands.

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (4.16 p.m.): I am honoured to have the opportunity today to be able to provide my support to the much respected Amnesty International in its quest to put a stop to violence against women. Whilst it is sad to admit that violence against women still occurs in unacceptable numbers in many Third World countries, we in first world countries at least have the protection of laws and legislation as well as the support of the community at large and, most importantly, our family and friends should any of us be subject to violent acts.

However, this type of support and protection is not as strong in many Third World countries. Much of this can be attributed to cultural differences and the lower rank women hold amongst their respective communities. Many women in these countries are regarded as mere chattels to be used and abused at the discretion of men.

One example of such behaviour can be seen amongst the communities within the Solomon Islands. Recent internal conflict has meant villages of women have been raped and pillaged, with no perpetrators being forced to be accountable for their appalling acts against women. Much of this is due to a lack of internal political or legal mechanisms for the protection of women or their recognition as victims.

Whilst I am proud of fact that Australia has been instrumental in bringing about a sense of security and relative freedom to the Solomon Islands, there is so much to be done to ensure that women are no longer targeted and exposed to discriminatory and violent practices. As I said previously, women in countries such as Australia have a much better support mechanism in place to deal with issues such as domestic violence and we have strict sentencing laws for atrocities such as rape.

One of the saddest aspects of the scenario facing many women in places such as the Solomons is that women do not necessarily have the support of their families, particularly the male members of their family and community. I am sure that most female members in this chamber can recall a time in their past when a trusted male relative or friend, or in my case my father, has made it clear that if any man ever abused any of us then there would be hell to pay. We have at least had that feeling of protection whereas in the Solomon Islands the trend appears to be just to let certain instances go. Women are actively encouraged not to make a fuss. This is not okay.

Whilst I personally respect the various and individual customs of different nations, the custom of protecting perpetrators of violence against women or anyone for that matter is something that I cannot and will not condone. Once again, I commend Amnesty International and wish it and, most importantly, the women it is trying to help every success for the future.

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (4.18 p.m.): I rise today, White Ribbon Day, to support the motion moved by the member for Murrumba drawing to the attention of the House the violence experienced by women in the Solomon Islands and the current Amnesty International campaign to support women in that country. To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Premier, Peter Beattie, today reiterated our government's position of absolute zero tolerance. Violence against women is never justified under any circumstances.

Sadly this stands in stark contrast to the prevailing attitudes towards women in the Solomon Islands as evidenced in the Amnesty International report released this month which graphically documents the appalling violence experienced by women during the five years of internal conflict and lawlessness in that country, often at the hands of the police, many of whom were closely associated with the radical militia groups which have terrorised and killed villagers there. Amnesty International identified widespread and entrenched discrimination against women deeply rooted in traditional customs and its British colonial legacy as the most significant underlying cause of violence against women in the Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands is but one of six Pacific Island countries without a single woman member of parliament—not that women in that country have not tried, and I commend the courage of women such as activist Aft Billy who lost by two votes in the 2001 election. She was one of 14 women who stood at that election and who were threatened and intimidated by men, as were many of the voters, rendering the results of that election invalid.

In 2003 the Solomon Islands government actually recognised White Ribbon Day and announced its intention to formulate a national policy on violence against women during this year, to draft new legislation to implement the policy and to submit its report to the UN committee overseeing this issue. Despite persistent lobbying by women's organisations, work has not even begun on these urgently needed reforms. The largely Australian funded and controlled Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands has helped to restore peace, but the work is not over yet because women still live in fear and 200 rapes were reported to police in the first six months of this year. In June 2004 the Australian government provided \$3.4 million to Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga and PNG to develop programs to address violence against women in those countries. Inexplicably, the Solomon Islands missed out on a share of these funds, and this must be rectified as a matter of urgency by the Australian government.

But the men who hold positions of power in the Solomon Islands government must also act decisively and implement the recommendations in the Amnesty International report beginning with the development of its national policy on violence against women, including strong laws to protect women and programs to change the attitudes of men about violence towards women. Lack of awareness about women's rights, relevant domestic laws and human rights standards were common concerns amongst women interviewed by Amnesty International. Many women considered this lack of information amongst both women and men a major obstacle to seeking justice and improving protection for women against violence. The action which Solomon Islander women and many male community leaders most frequently wished Amnesty International to support was the conduct of awareness workshops on human rights and law and legal procedures to be held in rural centres. The government must also take action to ensure that women are elected to parliament and hold senior positions in the public sector and police force so that they can contribute their perspectives, knowledge and skills to improve the quality of life for women and end the cycle of violence. I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (4.22 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the honourable member for Murrumba to stop violence against women and to refer in particular to the Solomon Islands. *Solomon Islands: women confronting violence* was a report compiled by Amnesty International in November 2004. This report both shocked and disturbed me at once. It is a well documented series of events during the five-year armed conflict on the main islands of Guadalcanal and Malaita between 1998 and 2003. Whilst the Solomon Islands has taken a major step towards leaving armed conflict and violence behind, women victims of violence have clearly been outside the focus of attention despite comments of hope from the honourable members for Maroochydore and Barron River.

For generations women have been a target of widespread gender based violence which continues to rage unchecked. The Solomon Islands has a long tradition of women's inequality. This is clearly demonstrated in the practice of 'bride price' which is given to the parents of the bride at her

wedding by the parents of the groom. While customs associated with 'bride price' vary according to provinces, the practice appears to encourage an attitude in husbands to treat wives like property and can lead to violence against wives from men who wish to show their ability to control. Reports to Amnesty International list atrocity after atrocity towards women, men and children to the degree that one finds it difficult to turn the next page of the document. Emerging from this information one senses a great culturally rooted reluctance among their people to acknowledge direct physical violence against women in particular.

Adding to the silence on these unwarranted assaults are overwhelmingly strong cultural taboos that prevent women from freely discussing incidents of physical violence and especially sexual assault. Only a handful of women have been willing to report these incidences and none will admit to being raped, mostly due to a fear of reprisals. While International human rights and humanitarian law provide comprehensive guarantees of the rights of women and girls to be protected from sexual violence and abuse, these need to be implemented in Third World countries such as the Solomon Islands. I urge all honourable members of this parliament to add their voice to the global campaign to make human rights protection more accessible to women and girls and help to eliminate violence against women.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (4.25 p.m.): It is important to me to be able to speak today to the Amnesty motion. I thank the member for Murrumba for the wonderful work that he does to keep the Parliamentary Amnesty Group going and for giving me the opportunity to speak to this motion today. It is tremendously important that we as a state parliament call for an end to violence against women in the Solomon Islands. In the Solomon Islands, unlike here, sexual violence tragically continues to be a weapon in war. The concept of wiping out communities and raping and pillaging the women in those communities continues to happen in many parts of the world as a weapon of war. I have to say that as I stand here as a middle-class white woman in the Queensland parliament it does seem very distant from my own experience, but I think that it is something that all of us as women leaders and female leaders in our community need to be very attuned to.

Domestic violence, however, is tragically not at all something that is foreign to Australian women. The most recent statistics suggest that in Australia one out of five women will be sexually assaulted at some time in their lives. That applies to one in five women in any crowd, regardless of their cultural background. It is also the case that, in the recent statewide consultation the Queensland government undertook about our policy paper 'A Direction for Women for the Next Five Years', domestic violence was absolutely one of the leading issues for women in Queensland. I do not think that we should kid ourselves that violence against women does not occur to women just like us and women in our community every day of the week and every week of the year.

In the parliament we actively campaign to stop domestic violence and to achieve the social change that brings true equality—that is, self-respect among women and genuine respect from men. Feminism I think continues to be a wonderful goal that we should all strive for, because feminism gives women an opportunity to fulfil their own opportunities in life. It also gives the men in our community the opportunity to work with and have relationships with women who are truly realised people, and I think that that is a privilege for them as well. As Australian MPs and Australian women leaders, we call very loudly today for sexual violence in the context of war against women in the Solomon Islands to stop. We call for the Australian government to do more to stop it, and we hope that we, through Amnesty International, can genuinely bring human rights to women in that part of the world. I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (4.28 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Murrumba in relation to White Ribbon Day. Many of the speakers have highlighted violence against women in the Solomon Islands and the campaign to make not only the women aware of their rights but also the men aware of their responsibilities and their roles. It was only a few weeks ago that we saw the trial of men on Pitcairn Island and the sentencing of some of these men. The young women grew up in a culture where they were expected to accept what was dished out to them, which was effectively violence and abuse. They did not know any other culture. It is very difficult in the society in which we live to accept that there are people still bound in that sort of a societal structure who accept that sort of treatment as the norm. There have been campaigns in terms of domestic violence and violence against women with slogans such as 'Expect Respect'. It is very catchy and very appropriate wording that women across the world—not just in Australia but women across the world—should expect respect.

In an ideal world, we would not have to warn our daughters or our sisters, but particularly our daughters, about going out at night alone or going into places at risk alone, because they would have an element of safety that would allow them the true freedom of a democracy. The reality is that even here in Australia—and I think the member for Mundingburra cited some statistics on violence against women in north Queensland—women and girls do not have the luxury of no violence being perpetrated against them.

Another slogan that went through the system a few years ago was 'Real men don't hit'. It was actually a campaign by men in Australia to highlight the fact that it is not masculine to hit women; it is not

masculine and strong to hit defenceless people and children, male or female. It was a very successful campaign because a great many men responded to the campaign by saying that there are other ways of having a disagreement; there are other ways of making a point without using physical superiority.

So I commend the member for Murrumba and I commend Amnesty for this motion. I think that the hope of every single member of this House would be that in all countries, women and girls would be able to know that no matter what path they journey, that path can be achieved and enjoyed with safety and without the threat of violence. We still have a way to go, but motions such as this and making public the concerns of the community and the support of members of parliament to the campaign world wide that women and girls should be able to exist and enjoy life without violence will go a long way towards improving the lot of women.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (4.31 p.m.): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 22 February 2005.

VALEDICTORY

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (4.31 p.m.): On behalf of the government I wish all members and their families a very happy and relaxed Christmas and a healthy and memorable 2005. Parliament sat for more than 415 hours spread over 40 days during this election year, which is more than in 1998 but not quite as many as in 2001. Only twice did we sit beyond midnight, but if the member for Ipswich insists, we can sit past every midnight in future. But only twice did we sit beyond midnight, which is a lot more family friendly than the sittings have been in the past. This translates to five per cent of sitting days for the year. Five per cent has been a very important figure this year. This is in contrast to previous years when, for example, in 1991, 21 days extended past midnight—40 per cent of the sittings—and last year when there were 13 days where the House sat beyond midnight.

The government introduced 66 bills and 53 government bills were passed. Eight private member's bills were introduced. One hundred and thirty-three paper petitions, signed by 102,760 Queenslanders, were tabled. Eighteen closed e-petitions, signed by 5,641 petitioners, were tabled and there are nine e-petitions still open.

As promised during the election campaign, the first bill introduced into the new parliament dealt with our commitment to stop the broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation. I thank a number of people for their support for that.

I want to thank Mr Speaker, Ray Hollis, for doing his best to keep order in the parliament. We all know how difficult that is. Mr Speaker, we thank you for maintaining order in this parliament; robust debate that it is, exhilarating debate that it is. I also thank the Chairman of Committees, Jim Fouras, the temporary chairs and the parliamentary committees for all their hard, dedicated and committed work. I also want to thank the whips on both sides of the House—on our side, Terry Sullivan, and deputy whips Phil Reeves and Rachel Nolan; the whips for the opposition, Ray Hopper and Ted Malone; and Liberal Party whip, Mark McArdle. Their efforts have contributed greatly to the efficient running of the House. I thank my Deputy Premier and Treasurer and Minister for Sport, Terry Mackenroth, for his enormous support and his valued advice during the year, which I greatly appreciate. I also thank him for his work in producing such a wonderful plan for south-east Queensland that guarantees us all a decent lifestyle in the future, not to mention the wonderful figures that we have. But I will not dwell on that, because this is a valedictory. But do we have a lovely set of numbers!

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: We listen to the member's speech and give it the great courtesy it deserves.

I also thank the Leader of the House, Minister for Education and the Arts, Anna Bligh, for her work in ensuring that this place runs smoothly and for the excellent job that she has done. All the members here are now happy that this is such a family-friendly place. She will get Christmas cards that others will not receive.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Listen you lot; we will call the police and have you removed in a minute. I will get to them in a minute. All I can say is that they should stay tuned. I shall come to them. I also thank the Leader of the House's counterpart in the opposition, the member for Beaudesert.

The enormous progress Queensland has made this year under our Smart State strategies, such as unemployment at trend five per cent, record low waiting times at public hospitals, massive

improvements to our child protection system, education reforms, and the stopping of broadscale remnant tree clearing—and I draw members' attention to the achievements document that I released yesterday for a full list—is due to the hard work of all my ministerial colleagues and parliamentary secretaries. I want to thank my team. I want to thank my ministers for their hard work, dedication, loyalty, and their support. I have the honour of leading a great team. My ministers work very hard for the people of Queensland. They are very responsive to the needs of the community and they give me personal loyalty. I thank every single one of them: the whole 18 ministers in my team. I thank all of them also for the way in which they have worked together for the benefit of Queensland. I want to thank the parliamentary secretaries who have also worked very hard. I want to thank every government member who is here.

As parliament knows—and I do not say this with any sense of bravado—we have had two record parliamentary numerical results for the Labor Party in 2001 and 2004 that have been unprecedented for the party. Many people thought that the result in 2001 would never be repeated. We went close to repeating it in 2004 with 63 seats. That would not have happened if it was not for the hard work of the backbenchers. They actually went out and worked very hard in their communities. While the government has steered a very steady course, if it was not for the hard work of people on the back bench and government members, we would not be here. I congratulate every one of them and thank them for their support.

One of the great things about living in a democracy is that we recognise the importance of opposition, which plays a crucial role in examining the activities of the government and advancing alternative policies. I thank the Opposition Leader for the way in which he has performed his role this year. I also thank the Liberal Party Leader, Bob Quinn. I was pleased to see both of them re-elected to their positions after the election. I congratulate them both on that. Although I know they have their moments between one another, they both have endearing qualities. However, time does not allow me to detail them.

The Queensland parliament functions well because of the hard work of support staff. I thank the Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie, and all his staff. I want to thank the Chief Reporter, Lucinda Osmond, and her hardworking Hansard staff. They are enormously talented. I have said this on a number of occasions, but I have to say that they are the most talented group in this parliament—notwithstanding the charm in this parliament itself. Anybody who can turn the words said in this parliament into English on a day-to-day basis in the way in which they do deserves a commendation of some kind. So to Lucinda and her team: you are absolutely fantastic. From my office in particular, I want to thank Hansard especially. Obviously, I work very closely with Hansard because of the volume of work that the Premier of the day has. They get it right every time and I thank them for their accuracy. They manage to transcribe what is said on the floor of the parliament when sometimes there are many MPs giving gratuitous advice all at the same time, so that everything we say is in immaculate grammar by the time *Hansard* is printed. Thank you for your patience, mind reading and understanding.

Ms Nolan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: As the member for Ipswich says, it is remarkable that hers in particular ends up in English. I give my thanks to you all.

The Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel has been working miracles in producing meticulously crafted legislation, particularly in the last few weeks. I extend special thanks to Peter Drew, the Parliamentary Counsel, and his team. I want to underline that, because the government does from time to time request bills to be drafted at short notice, and they do a very good job. I also want to thank Ian Thompson and his team in the Table Office for the calm and efficient way in which they manage the reams of paper and the megabytes of electronic information.

We are all looked after by extremely attentive attendants and security staff, who have adapted to the new demands placed on them by developments on the world stage without making this place a formidable fortress. Those attendants who run guided or escorted tours of the parliament here, which you have pursued as you opened up this place, Mr Speaker, really do a great job. I thank them. I am really pleased to see an increase in the number of schools going through here and the fact that more and more people from the community are coming to this parliament than at any time in its history. I think that is a tribute to you, Mr Speaker, a tribute to the staff of this parliament and a tribute to the attendants and the security.

To operations coordinator Kevin Jones and his team I say thank you. I thank Mary Seefried and all of her library staff for their help and research over the year.

During the long hours here executive chef Sucil De Silva and his team in the kitchens keep us all well fed. Thanks to all of them. Some of us are better fed than others, but it is fantastic work that they do. Thousands of Queenslanders attend functions in the people's house and they go away happy after being catered for by Jaakko Ponsi and his team. Thanks to them as well.

I thank the Director of Corporate and House Services, Michael Hickey; the Manager of Property Services, John McDonough; the Manager of Human Resources, Peter Morris; the Manager of Financial

and Administrative Services, Craig Atkinson; the Manager of IT Services, Mike Coburn; and all their staff.

In addition, there are many more people we could not do without, such as the switchboard operators, gardeners and all sorts of back-up staff. I thank them all. I think the gardens around here are superb and have been for a long time, so I make a special mention of the gardeners.

All members rely on their electorate staff to help and advise constituents with their problems while they are busy in parliament. I thank each and every one of them for being on the front line of services to Queenslanders. I make a special mention of course of Marlene Dunning in Brisbane Central, who has been my electorate secretary for some time.

A government member: Long-suffering woman.

Mr BEATTIE: She is a long-suffering woman. During the year the irrepressible Col Schneider left us, and I have to say that the place is not the same without his measured wit and good nature. Col, if you are in any position where you could possibly hear or read this—heaven knows why you would be—

Mr SPEAKER: He will be here tonight, Premier.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, would you give him our regards, because I unfortunately will not be at the drinks tonight. He is a very decent person and I would be grateful if you would pass on my best wishes.

We are about to lose another valued officer, Hansard editor Jim Hinds, who starts preretirement leave at the beginning of December. Jim, we wish you well for the future. He started work in this building in 1968 as a clerk in the payroll section and at the same time trained as a reporter. He has given 24 years of service to the Queensland parliament and has actually worked for the Public Service for 36 years. To his colleagues Jim is affectionately known as 'Mr Hansard'. Jim intends to pursue his passion of opal mining on an opal lease near Winton. Not only that, I am told that Jim has a strong personal regard for John Mickel, which shows that he is a man of enormous tolerance as well.

I would like to thank all of my personal staff for their help and dedication through the year and all the other ministerial staff who work long hours on behalf of their ministers. I do want to make special mention of ministerial staff, who do a fantastic job and work very hard. In particular I want to thank my own staff. I am blessed to have a very dedicated and hardworking personal staff.

Mr Mickel: You have always had that!

Mr BEATTIE: Things have improved since my days in Health, I have to say! My staff are so self-effacing that when they assisted me with my notes they refused to put their names in. To heck with all of that. I do want to thank Rob Whiddon, Steve Bishop, Fiona Kennedy, Steve Rous and Steve Keating, who work incredibly hard. They are not the only ones. My staff are very dedicated. I am pleased to have people like Leon Allen and others who have come to join my staff in recent times. They all work really hard. They are great people and I thank each of them. James Lye, I have not forgotten you, either.

The push to change Queensland into the Smart State relies very heavily on having a smart public service for high-quality advice and putting our policies into practice. I thank my director-general, Leo Keliher, all the other directors-general and all public servants for their hard work. I also thank them for working very closely with officers of my staff such as Damian McGreevy and others.

I make a special mention of Chief Pilot Miles Currington and his team at the Government Air Wing for all their professionalism. They not only serve Queensland well in terms of organ transplants; they also ensure that the government gets out to all sections of the community.

Relaying all the important decisions we have made to the Queensland public we have the fourth estate. I thank the members of the parliamentary media gallery for their work in passing on to the public the work of the parliament and the government. While often I read, see and experience the interpretation of my news conferences in a way that was never intended nor understood, I nevertheless know that they are working very hard serving the people of Queensland. It is always a very educational experience to see what I have said after cabinet and to learn what cabinet has really decided. Frankly, I think sometimes it is actually better than what cabinet decided. Sometimes it is actually worse. I have to say, the gallery here do serve the community well. Quite genuinely I thank them all. They have a job to do. We do not always like what they say or do, but they do it professionally. They are a very key part of the democratic process and I thank them genuinely for what they have done throughout the year.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the families of members. They put up with our long absences in parliament, in our electorate offices, at meetings and while we are sorting out problems. They often work as unpaid secretaries and caterers. I do want to thank them. We all know that without the support of our partners and our families it would be impossible to be members in this parliament. I do want to thank them very genuinely.

I want to thank my wife, Heather, and my three children—my daughter, Larissa, and my sons, Matthew and Denis. They have actually had an interesting year in some respects. I do want to thank them. I look forward to them having a lower profile next year. I do love them very much.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Just leave Rusty out of it. He is a bit like me—low to the ground and furry but nice to get on with. I do want to thank my family, because they are very special. It is not easy being the children of the Premier. It is not easy being the children of a member of this parliament. My children have handled that very well over the years. If you consider that my daughter is 20 and the twins are nearly 19, they have carried the fact that I have been Premier for most of their teenage years—in fact all of them in one case. They have handled that very maturely and I am very grateful for that. I mention Heather, my wife, whom I love very much. She has put up with me for 30 years come next January.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr BEATTIE: We haven't got there yet! It is 30 years on 4 January. I actually said to her a few weeks ago that we would go on a holiday to a place of her choosing. I am not quite sure where I am going to end up and I am not quite sure how I am going to afford it, either. I should have been more restrained in what I said. I thank Terry for looking after the ship while I am away. It is great to have someone I can rely on and trust in that role.

I wish everyone a happy Christmas. Drive safely. Whatever may happen in this place—we have our tense moments—one of the great things is that we live in a wonderful democracy. I want to say to everyone here, regardless of who you are: we should cherish our democracy. We should cherish this place. If we look at what is happening in the world, whether it is in Iraq or somewhere else, we see that when people disagree often someone gets shot or the government of the day takes you out and shoots you or you disappear.

The great thing about being Australian is that you can have a difference, you can have an argument, but when you walk out of this chamber you can be reasonable to one another and you can be Australians together. That is a really much-cherished culture that has taken a long time to develop. We owe a lot of it to the British; I understand that. But it is a cherished culture that we should never lose and we should never give up. While we should be robust and strong in here, we should never forget that at the end of the day we are all Australians. Merry Christmas.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (4.49 p.m.): I join with the Premier in this valedictory debate. I will follow the conventions of valedictories and I will not talk about the political achievements of the government or the lack thereof or the achievements of the opposition throughout the year. There are plenty of deficiencies in the government. However, this is the time of the year when we reflect upon those people who have supported us during the year and the great times that we have been able to have together. It is also a time to wish our families and our colleagues all the very best for the future.

I think it is appropriate at the outset to pause to reflect on those who have achieved and contributed so much who are not with us—Sir Walter Campbell, the former Governor of Queensland; Alex Wilson, the former member for Townsville South; Charles Porter, the former member for Toowong; and, from my personal perspective and that of many of my friends and colleagues, my very dear friend Greg Jackson.

Mr Speaker, I thank you and your staff and the deputy speakers for the job that they have done throughout the course of this year. We have not always necessarily agreed, but I do agree with the Premier that being Speaker is a challenging job and maintaining order in this parliament can be challenging. Having to be the balanced hand and the way that that is perceived no doubt is something that has troubled not only you but also many former speakers. Your support staff also perform an extremely important role.

To the Leader of the House and the Leader of Opposition Business, I acknowledge the very good working relationship that you have. You ensure that the parliament is able to work well and having that cooperation is extremely important. I thank the Premier and all of his ministers. While people see our very robust debate, with barbs thrown across the chamber and what always appears to be us disagreeing, there are many times that we do agree and there are many meetings which we have privately and confidentially where much good work is done. We also take people to see ministers and much good work is done.

I will make the point, as I did last year in this place, that many people do not realise that seven or eight out of 10 pieces of legislation that come before the parliament have bipartisan support. That is extremely important. However, in the nature of the adversarial times in which we live, and considering the thirst which those people who report from this place have for portraying that adversarial nature and the way that that feeds a particular stereotype, I think we have to accept that we will always be seen as arguing and never as agreeing. I had a journalist ring me one day and ask, 'What do you think of what the government is doing?' I said, 'I agree.' He said, 'You won't be of much use to us. Do you know anyone who does not agree?' I said, 'You will have to go and find them.' That is not to say that some things on which we agree are not reported from time to time.

I would like to thank my deputy, Jeff Seeney, who has done a wonderful job in supporting me throughout the year and also from time to time for performing my role in my absence. I also thank my

shadow ministers, who work very hard. We should not devalue in any way whatsoever the contribution and the work that ministers or shadow ministers do. I wish I had a full complement of shadow ministers. There are 19 ministerial positions and we have 15 shadow ministers, including me. The point that I make is simply this: what comes around goes around. It is only a matter of time. The dual roles and responsibilities of members of parliament who hold shadow ministerial positions can be challenging from time to time. Whilst ministers have an extremely important job to do, they have a large number of support staff. They have a lot of things that they need to know. Shadow ministers, particularly those who hold a number of portfolios, have a lot of things to know and do as well.

I acknowledge the role of the opposition whips. They have done a fantastic job for us during the year. I acknowledge the work of Ray, Ted, the government whips, the Liberal whip and Liz Cunningham, the Independents' whip. To the Leader of the Liberal Party, his deputy, Bruce Flegg, members of the Liberal Party, the Independents and the One Nation member, I say that it has been good to work with you throughout the course of the year.

I thank the parliamentary committees and their support staff. The committee process is an important part of this parliament. It has been for a long time and it will continue to be for a long time. I do not think we value enough the role that committees play. They are extremely bipartisan in their approach and they look after a number of extremely important issues. They are doubly important in a parliament which is unicameral in its nature.

To the Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie, to his deputies and to his staff, thank you very much for providing fearless advice in this place and also great support to members, whether they be in opposition, government, minor parties or Independents. I thank the Chief Reporter, Lucinda Osmond, and staff. I agree with the Premier when he said that sometimes the things that you thought you heard said in this place do not necessarily read the same; they read much better the next day. I would agree with that. They certainly take the spoken word and enhance it greatly. In the case of some members of parliament, that can be a great attribute.

I thank the Parliamentary Librarian, Mary Seefried, and all of her staff, who provide very timely support to members of parliament and great research backup as well. I thank the parliamentary staff in general but especially the Sergeant-at-Arms, Ian Thompson. To all of those in the Bills and Papers Office, people on whom we place extraordinary demands from time to time, I say thank you very much. To those in the corporate and finance sections, to the catering and kitchen staff for looking after us, thank you again. We greatly appreciate the work that you do. I say to the catering and kitchen staff: when we are away from home so much, we need to have that little bit of home here. They do their very best to ensure that we have good meals, that we are looked after and that we feel like we are a part of a big family when we are away. To Property Services staff, Human Resource Management staff, our security staff, who do a great job in keeping this place safe and secure, the parliamentary attendants, who are always there with a smile and who provide an enormous service to us not only in this place but also in other areas around parliament, thank you very much for looking after us. I thank the cleaners, who have to pick up after us, and the gardeners, who keep this place looking very well. We have some of the best gardens around the place, so thank you very much.

The Parliamentary Counsel and his staff, from the opposition's point of view, provide timely responses to requests for private members' bills and amendments. Thank you for your work and for the accuracy of that work. Our electorate staff do a fantastic job. In many cases, the more senior the position you hold, the less time you are able to spend in your electorate office. So your electorate office and your electorate officers become even more the front in looking after your area. I know that my electorate staff do an absolutely exemplary job when I am away. They have to field all the phone calls and have the correspondence prepared. Basically they are as good as a member of parliament in many of the things that they do. I thank the electorate staff on our side and the electorate staff of all members of parliament.

To my personal staff in the opposition office, thank you for looking after me and for looking after the team. You have done an absolutely great job. I will not run through all the names; they know who they are and they know the work that they have done.

I would also like to acknowledge the media, or some would refer to them as the fourth estate. The Premier mentioned a moment ago that he does not necessarily always agree with their interpretation or the way that they put forward a story. I can assure the Premier that from time to time I feel exactly the same thing myself. However, we cannot undervalue in any way whatsoever the role that a free press plays in a democracy. It has been an important part of the Westminster tradition, of a democratic system, for centuries and should continue to be so. People say to me, 'How do the media get away with that?' or 'Why do they do things like this?' or 'Why do they do things like that?' Keeping in mind that we have a particular interest in putting something out in a particular way, if they see something a different way and wish to report it a different way then that is a matter for them. The community, by and large, is capable of seeing through that and making its own interpretations, which it does.

I say to the people who argue against a free press, what is the alternative? A free press is an important part of the government process as well, because often it exposes things that sometimes

oppositions do not expose. How would the government and the opposition get their message out if it was not for a free press? It performs a very, very important role and should be recognised and supported in that.

In conclusion, I also agree with the Premier that there is no better system of government than what we have. What is the alternative to a democracy? There is no alternative to a democracy. Unfortunately, many people take our democratic processes for granted because it is the only thing that they know. When it is the only thing somebody knows the high bar goes up higher. For people who may have lived under a system with far fewer freedoms than what we experience today, this is the absolute pinnacle of utopia in freedom of expression and freedom of participation. However, we always have to strive to ensure that people have a good understanding of our democracy and the way that it works. There is no better expression of that than this place.

I say thank you to all members, all staff, their families and my wife in particular, Linda, and to my children, Megan, Jens, Laura and Thomas. They are primary school age. They are always asking me on the telephone if I am going to be home for their speech night, if I am going to be home for their sports day or if I am going to be home to see them play soccer. My young bloke is always on the phone saying, 'Dad, when are you going to be home?' I say, 'Well, Saturday. Not Saturday but Saturday week.' He says, 'Oh, how many days is that?' I say, 'Like eight days.' Then the next day he gets on the phone and says, 'It's only seven days now.' It does impact on them. It affects them very, very much. I think sometimes they probably wish that we were not here and we were actually at home with them. If we were not in this place they probably would not be as sorry as we are.

Mr Beattie: That's true.

Mr SPRINGBORG: To my own family, to the spouses and the families of other members and our staff, I say merry Christmas, have a happy new year and we look forward to seeing everyone back here next year.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (5.02 p.m.): On behalf of the Liberal Party I extend the very best wishes for 2005 to all members of the House and I hope that everyone has a happy and holy Christmas.

As I have said before on these occasions, we should take the next couple of months very seriously. It is a time for us to go home to our families and friends, and repair and flourish those relationships which, due to the work pressures that we are sometimes under, come under stress throughout the preceding 12 months.

All of us have had a very busy year this year with three election campaigns. At some stage we would have liked to have been home in the arms of our family rather than being on the campaign trail or supporting candidates at whatever level of election was being held. From my perspective I am certainly going to take that time to do that.

I echo some of the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition in terms of the impact upon young families. As everyone knows, I have a very young family as well. The only thing that I think we can do to raise responsible and good citizens for the future is to spend time with them. From my perspective there is no such thing as quality time—half an hour here or an hour there. Members' families want their time. It does not matter whether they are watching TV or mucking round the backyard with their young friends and you are having a beer beside the pool. They know you are home. That is where they want you whenever they need you. That is the most important thing. It is the time we spend, not quality time. I am going to take the opportunity over the Christmas break to spend as much of that time as I can with my family, and I wish everyone else the same prospects for the future.

I thank my fellow Liberal members of parliament who were elected at the last election campaign. Most people would know the history that I have had over the past three years. There have been some very interesting times in politics. Now is not the time to go through the diary of events that led us to this point in time. Suffice to say, I am very pleased to have four members with me to enjoy the next couple of years.

At that time last year members might remember me making the rather brash comment that I would not get an argument from them because of their inexperience over their first 12 months. I overstepped the mark somewhat and already I am starting to have some arguments in the party room.

Mr Beattie: They do look difficult.

Mr QUINN: No, no, there is not another Santo coming up again, I can honestly guarantee you that. I am not casting aspersions on anyone in particular. I am simply making the comment that we do not have another Santo.

I make special mention of my deputy, Bruce Flegg. As everyone knows, people need a loyal and hardworking deputy, and I certainly have one in Bruce. He has spent a lot of time and energy over the past couple of months supporting me. I think, from Bruce's perspective, that it was the culmination of an ambition he has had for quite some time. As many people would know, he has tried to enter parliament several times before, and for him to make it this time is a credit to his perseverance and great commitment to the position that he holds to date.

Mr Beattie: They didn't make it easy for him.

Mr QUINN: No, that is exactly right, and I think he appreciates that in the longer term.

I pass on to the Clerk and his staff my thanks for all the work that they have done over the past 12 months; to Property Services who keep this precinct and the inside of the House and our offices clean and presentable; to the catering staff who keep us well nourished and content; to security staff; to the attendants who keep us safe and secure; to the Hansard staff and library staff who keep us informed; and to all the other staff in the parliamentary precinct.

I also pass on to my electorate staff my thanks for that period of time. As other members have mentioned here, members cannot do this job alone. Members depend upon a team behind them. If members do not have a good team members cannot perform to the maximum of their ability. To my electorate staff, who keep the home fires well attended back in the electorate of Robina, I pass on my thanks for their effort.

I also thank the parliamentary House staff for their efforts over the past 12 months. I again thank the Premier for the opportunity to provide some staff to me. As people would know, after the last election there was some conjecture as to whether or not we would be awarded staff. I thank the Premier for his generosity in terms of recognising the Liberal Party.

Finally I say, as other members have said, whilst we do have our disagreements from time to time over the course of events and across the table, there is nowhere in the world like Australia. When people travel overseas we see forms of democracy or other forms of government that do not match up to what we have here today. It is a tribute to all members of this House and, in fact, to all people in Australia that we have managed over a long period of time to nourish our democracy. We have strengthened it rather than weakened it over the last hundred or so years to such an extent that we are, without a doubt in my view, a shining light for other people around the world. Whenever people come to this country from whatever part of the world they arrive from, they always mention they come here because it is stable, it is safe and it has a future—they want to share the optimism and the opportunities.

When people look at our history over the past 200 years, very few people know that we are one of the few countries in the world that has had a substantial migration program over the last 200 years, probably second only to the United States. We have taken people from over 100 different countries around the world. We have brought them here. We have settled them here, and they have participated in all forms of our government and respected our institutions to such an extent that what we have, as I said before, is respected and envied around the world.

Whatever we do in this chamber and wherever we go as members of parliament, we always should look at reinforcing that fact and supporting our institutions because at the end of the day there is nothing that stands between us and anarchy, except our institutions.

That is why they are so important. Every member of this House should nourish and support these institutions. We should not take a short-term political view to try to win a few easy votes when, at the end of the day, we do damage to ourselves, our state and our country. We must always maintain the principles of supporting the institutions which underline this democracy.

I wish all members of the House the very best. As I said, we have had some testing times, but it is now time to go home and enjoy ourselves with our families.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (5.10 p.m.): I would like to thank the ministers, the shadow ministers and their staff for assisting backbench and crossbench members during the sitting year. The leaders have already thanked all the parliamentary staff who have served every member of parliament during the year, and the backbenchers also support that.

On behalf of the whips, I thank all members from around the chamber whose cooperation has helped the parliament to operate very smoothly. In particular, I acknowledge the sacrifice of many government backbenchers who have given up numerous speaking spots to allow for such reasonable sitting hours. Without their generosity, all MPs would have been sitting for many more hours in this chamber.

A special word of commendation is due to the government deputy whips. As government members have seen, Phil Reeves and Rachel Nolan have taken on more responsibilities this year for the workings of this chamber. They have done a great job and have brought fresh ideas and new energy to their expanded responsibilities.

In conclusion, I thank all parliamentary, ministerial and shadow ministerial staff for helping all backbenchers carry out our legislative duties this year.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.11 p.m.): On behalf of each of the Independent representatives and the One Nation representative, I add our thanks to all the staff of the parliamentary precinct—and the categories have been named. To every single one of them we say thank you for your good nature, your humour and the great help that you provide which makes our time here more enjoyable. I pass on our thanks to our partners and families for their support and care throughout the

year, to our electorate staff for their hard work and loyalty, and to all members in this chamber for their courtesy.

Christmas is a time for families, and other members have spoken about the amount of time that we should reinvest in family ties this Christmas. Not everyone will enjoy the Christmas season, so we pass on our thoughts and prayers to those who are facing sadness, loss, loneliness or stress during this time and we wish them a brighter and happier new year. On behalf of all members in this corner, we wish everybody a safe, happy and holy Christmas and every joy for the year to come.

Mr SPEAKER: At the end of another busy year in the Queensland Parliament, I thank all members for their support and efforts during 2004. In particular, I express my appreciation to the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, their whips, the Leader of the House and, of course, to the leader of the Liberal Party and all the other wonderful people up in that corner.

I take this opportunity to praise the great work of the temporary chairs. I note that this time the team has included both long-term members and some of parliament's newest members. I particularly thank my deputy, Jim Fouras, for his leadership and support of that hardworking team.

The Premier has mentioned the visitors to parliament and the number of events that we hold here. They have been considerable. I thank all of the staff who have facilitated these events and visits because they have been very, very important.

Of course, the parliament has continued to move forward this year. In the House we have seen the adoption of the new standing orders and I thank the Standing Orders Committee for its perseverance and hard work in finalising those. They are a great step forward for our parliament. We have also stepped forward in the modernisation of the annexe, where we have the Undumbi and Dandair rooms, which are consistently booked out. We will continue to do things like that. I was fortunate enough to visit both the new Welsh parliament and the Scottish parliament this year, which provided a very useful comparison between a very modern parliament and a very old cultural parliament, such as we have. They have lots of smart ideas—and they use that word, too. I look forward to discussing plans for a smart parliament with my parliamentary colleagues in the 2005 year.

On behalf of all members, I express our appreciation to our electorate officers and assistant electorate officers. As we all know, their shopfront role is vital to the image of members and the parliament. Of course, the leaders have already commented on the excellent parliamentary staff who serve members very well. I concur with their praise. The extent and quality of the services provided to the parliament deserves no less.

I also thank my personal staff in the Speaker's office, Staice, Lynelle, Merle and Keith, and my staff at Redcliffe, Val and Linda. Thank you.

As members appreciate, our spouses are just as vital to our working lives as they are to our personal lives. As Speaker, my wife Diane is an essential part of my work on behalf of the parliament. Thank you, Di.

My best Christmas and new year wishes to all members, their staff, Parliament House staff and, as always, to our friends in the media. In the interim, I invite all members and staff, media and other persons who are regularly and closely associated with the parliament to join me at the end of session function in function rooms A and B. Refreshments will be served from 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. Happy Christmas everybody.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.15 p.m.