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WEEKLY HANSARD

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51ST PARLIAMENT

Subject **CONTENTS** Page

Tuesday, 8 March 2005

BY AUTHORITY
L.J. OSMOND, CHIEF HANSARD REPORTER—2004

TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 2005

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. RK Hollis, Redcliffe) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 am.

PRIVILEGE

Comments of Attorney-General; Information Commissioner

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.31 am): I rise on a matter of privilege following untrue comments reported on ABC Radio yesterday by the Attorney-General. In an interview on ABC Radio the Attorney-General was attempting to justify the questionable appointment of Cathi Taylor to the position of Information Commissioner. In the course of his justification the Attorney-General claimed that at the time he nominated Ms Taylor for appointment to cabinet he had no knowledge that there were still outstanding appeals relating to him with the office of the Information Commissioner. I table a transcript of that interview, attachment 1, in which he stated—

Well, let me take and make this clear. Point one, I wasn't aware whether there are any FOI documents or appeals outstanding in respect of me or my office or not, I don't know that. I haven't heard of anything in relation to those matters since well into last year.

The Attorney-General is wrong. He knows, and has firm knowledge, of at least two matters relating to him that are currently before the Information Commissioner on appeal. The first matter relates to a WorkCover payout for a person employed by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and allegations relating to the Attorney-General in relation to the payout. The second matter relates to documents pertaining to the alleged actions of the Attorney-General at a departmental Christmas function two years ago.

The Attorney-General is personally aware of these issues and personally aware that they are both before the Information Commissioner for two reasons. In answer to a question on notice, responded to by the Attorney-General in October last year which I now table—attachment 2—the Attorney-General confirmed that his department had already cost taxpayers $36,298.50 in crown law legal advice to deal with freedom of information applications specifically to do with the Christmas party. In addition, the Attorney-General is also aware that he has made a submission to the Information Commissioner objecting to the disclosure of material relating to the WorkCover complaint even though WorkCover Queensland has indicated it has no objection to the release. I table attachment 3 for the benefit of this House. It is a copy of the Information Commissioner's letter to my office dated 10 January 2005. In it he says—

... both the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary have objected to the disclosure to Mr Springborg of the matter in issue, and I have provided the attached (anonymised) submissions.

To make it absolutely clear that the Attorney-General was aware that matters relating to him were still being determined by the Information Commissioner, I now table for the first time attachment 4, the submission made by the Attorney-General to the Information Commissioner arguing why the information should not be released, including his claim that he has no recollection of the matters asserted to in the documents.

The Attorney-General is well aware that there are documents relating to at least two cases specifically involving him under appeal by him with the Information Commissioner. He is aware that these matters are still to be resolved. He is aware that these matters were still awaiting resolution at the time he recommended Cathi Taylor for the position of Information Commissioner. It is extremely regrettable that the first law officer of this state has been so flippant with the truth.

PRIVILEGE

Crime and Misconduct Commission Report

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (9.34 am): I rise on a matter of privilege. Last December I referred to the CMC the matter of the travel of a number of Aboriginal activists. The CMC brought down its report last Friday, 4 March—some four days ago—and that report was made available on the CMC's web site. To date I have had absolutely no communication from the CMC. No advice was given to me by the CMC regarding the release of that report.

Mr SPEAKER: This is not part of the proceedings of the House.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, I believe it is critically important that the CMC is seen to be—

Mr SPEAKER: But it is not part of the proceedings of the House. You cannot raise a point of privilege.

Mr SEENEY:—neutral.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, it may well suit the government's purpose for these reports to be released late on Friday afternoon.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member. I was informing you that this was not an issue that was raised in the House and that it is not a point of privilege.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, how is it not a point of privilege?

Mr SPEAKER: I have just told you. If you wish to write to me on that issue you may do so.

Mr SEENEY: It affects me as a member of parliament, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That argument would not stand anywhere. You said that it matters to you as a member of parliament. A member could walk in here and say, 'Well, somebody annoyed me in my electorate office.' Everything applies to a member of parliament, but this is not an issue that arose in this parliament and it is not a point of privilege. If you wish to write to me, dissent from my ruling and give me further information I will certainly consider it.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Appropriation (Parliament) Bill
Appropriation Bill

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that on Thursday, 3 March 2005, I presented to Her Excellency the Governor the Appropriation (Supplementary 2003-04) Bill and the Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2003-04) Bill for royal assent, and Her Excellency was pleased in my presence to subscribe her assent thereto in the name and on behalf of Her Majesty.

PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

Pedestrian and Cyclists Crossing, Toowong

Mr Fraser from 10 petitioners requesting the House to provide funding for a safe pedestrian and cyclists crossing at the Toowong roundabout in the forward capital works program.

Stewart Road Interchange

Ms Stuckey from 1,407 petitioners requesting the House to lengthen the merging lanes both north and south onto the M1 at the Stewart Road interchange.

Recreation and Tourism Zone, Bribie Island-Scarborough

Mrs Sullivan from 40 petitioners requesting the House to take action to rezone the area from the four wheel drive track on Bribie Island's Ocean Beach opposite 8th Avenue, Woorim including approximately 200 metres out from the low-tide mark to Castlereagh Point, Scarborough as a special managed area for recreation and tourism zone.

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

Police Officer Training

Ms Male from 139 petitioners requesting the House to improve on justice and legal rights in Queensland including, improving training to police officers.

PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

25 February 2005—

- National Environment Protection Council—Annual Report 2003-2004

28 February 2005—

- President of the Industrial Court of Queensland in respect of The Industrial Court of Queensland, The Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and The Queensland Industrial Registry—Annual Report 2003-04
- Review of the River Improvement Trust Act 1940 Discussion Paper—February 2005

1 March 2005—

- Errata to the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy Annual Report 2003-2004 tabled on 12 November 2004

7 March 2005—

- Queensland Treasury Corporation—Half Yearly Report July-December 2004

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Professional Standards Act 2004—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 16

Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 17

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety-Commercial Ships and Fishing Ships Miscellaneous Equipment) Interim Standard 2005, No. 18

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety-Designing and Building Commercial Ships and Fishing Ships) Interim Standard 2005, No. 19

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety-Recreational Marine Driver Licence Approvals) Interim Standard 2005, No. 20

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety-Recreational Ships Miscellaneous Equipment) Interim Standard 2005, No. 21

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety-Qualifications for Accreditation for Ship Designers, Ship Builders and Marine Surveyors) Interim Standard 2005, No. 22

Fisheries Act 1994—

- Fisheries Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 23

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994—

- Rural and Regional Adjustment Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 24

Public Service Act 1996—

- Public Service Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 25

Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 26

Fisheries Act 1994—

- Fisheries Management Plans Amendment Management Plan (No. 1) 2005, No. 27

MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr Welford)—

- Queensland Law Reform Commission—Report No. 59 titled The Abrogation of the Privilege against Self-incrimination December 2004

Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women (Ms Boyle)—

- Report on a decision by the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women (Ms Boyle) regarding the call in of a development application under the Integrated Planning Act 1997—development application for the Emerald Tower Development Proposal at 550 Queen Street Brisbane by Emerald Developments (Australia) Pty Ltd lodged with the Brisbane City Council

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—

Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2004

Amendment made to Bill

Short title, amended—

omit—

'Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2004'

insert—

'Appropriation (Supplementary 2003-4) Bill 2005'.

Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2004

Amendment made to Bill

Short title, amended—

omit—

'Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2004'

insert—

'Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2003-4) Bill 2005'.

Petroleum and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2004

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title, amended—

omit—

'Petroleum and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2004'

insert—

'Petroleum and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005'.

Clause 44—

At page 54, line 3, 'Bill'—

omit, insert—

'Act'.

Clause 99—

At page 79, line 3, 'Bill'—

omit, insert—

'Act'.

Schedule—

At page 84 to 93, heading, before line 1, '1'—

omit.

Schedule—

At page 83, after 'Safety'—

insert—

')'.

Summary Offences Bill 2004

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title, amended—

omit—

'Summary Offences Bill 2004'

insert—

'Summary Offences Bill 2005'.

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following Ministerial papers were tabled—

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr Welford)—

- Report on trade delegation to India from 27 November to 4 December 2004
- Queensland Law Reform Commission—Report No. 54, dated December 2004, titled The Abrogation of the Privilege Against Self-Incrimination

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Taxi Security

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): My government will boost safety in taxis with the calling of tenders to supply cameras for more than 2,700 cabs operating in the major urban areas. The state government expects the first cameras to be installed by mid-year, providing additional security for passengers and drivers.

All taxis operating in centres where the population is 40,000 or more will be required to have security cameras fitted. This will be phased in over two years. The centres are Brisbane, Redcliffe, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns. Taxi cameras may later be introduced in other areas of the state as well. Tenders will be called by the end of March.

The cameras are designed to operate in a wide range of lighting conditions, including quite low light. It means that anyone who enters a cab with a camera fitted at any time, day or night, will have their

image recorded. There is strong taxi industry and community support for this decision. This is about protecting the community.

Queensland Transport has established a special implementation team to work with industry. I thank the transport minister, Paul Lucas, for his initiative in this area. In front of the House later this morning, at 11.50, he and I will be formally presenting this to members who are interested. This will substantially reduce attacks on drivers. Increased safety also assists with retention of taxi drivers. Interstate experience—the example is Victoria—supports the introduction. It shows substantial decreases in robbery, down by 51 per cent; fare evasion, down by 42 per cent; and assaults, down by 12 per cent. It works. There have been similar results in New South Wales and Western Australia.

Today's announcement is part of an overall integrated crime prevention strategy for taxis. It will establish a reporting mechanism with the Queensland Police Service to record details of incidents and it will help to monitor effectiveness of security cameras in taxis.

Queensland is to adopt the New South Wales guidelines, including privacy and image download controls to be put in place and backed up by legislation and penalties for misuse. This is a very significant initiative by the government to protect not just taxi drivers but also the community at large.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public Safety, Brisbane CBD

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 am): My government's policy of being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime has resulted in the rates of many crimes decreasing over the past 6½ years.

It is especially pleasing to see that most of the 'fear-crimes' which give rise to older Queenslanders having safety concerns, have decreased. This has helped to keep Brisbane as one of the safest cities in the world. However, there is no denying that when people are leaving nightclubs in the early hours of the morning there is an unacceptable level of violent behaviour fuelled by alcohol and drugs.

My government will not tolerate this antisocial behaviour. We have held a summit with stakeholders which has resulted in a 17-point Brisbane City Action Plan designed to make Brisbane safer. I table a copy of the plan for all members of the House. I understand that a copy will be circulated to all members. This is an important initiative by the government and I seek leave to have further details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

We cannot do this alone.

We need mums and dads, families and peer pressure to stop binge drinking and amphetamines being acceptable in our society.

For our part, the night club lock-out strategy which has resulted in a reduction of violent incidents on the Gold Coast will be tested in Brisbane for 12 months from next month.

The plan includes major changes to licensing legislation, more police and new police strategies, better transport arrangements, creating a safer environment, and continuing to examine developments.

The lock out condition will be placed on all licensed premises that trade after 3am in the Brisbane City Local Government area to ensure all clubs are treated equally as well as to avoid the problem being shifted to other areas.

The Liquor Act will be amended to prevent patrons from entering a nightclub after 3am but will allow them to continue drinking within the club until it closes.

Queensland Police Service reported a substantial reduction in crime after the lock-out condition was imposed on the Gold Coast. Calls to ambulances and assault offences between 3am and 6am were down significantly.

In addition, the State Government will impose tougher licence conditions, which already apply to some venues, on all licensed premises that trade after 1 am.

These include:

- The licensee must employ crowd controllers in sufficient numbers who will also be required to maintain surveillance outside the premises for at least an hour after closing time;
- The installation of Closed Circuit Television at each public entrance and exit. If the video cameras are not operational and recording the premises must close at 1am.

These measures will become effective after September this year after consultation with the industry to try to avoid unintended consequences.

Advertising free or discounted liquor by pubs and clubs will be banned.

Extreme discounts, free drink promotions and other drink promotions targeting young people perpetuate a culture of binge drinking which greatly increases the risk and incidence of injury, assault, public disorder, and other problems.

The practice is usually driven by one or two licensees in a locality with others then being driven by competitive pressures to follow.

The Government will amend the Liquor Act 1992 to prohibit the advertisement of free drinks, multiple drinks and discounted liquor for consumption on premises (except where the advertising is inside the premises).

It is proposed that this amendment will become effective next month. If necessary, authorisation for this action will be sought from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

We will immediately fund four additional compliance and enforcement officers in the Brisbane region and the provision of further officers throughout Queensland will be considered as part of the 2005-06 Budget.

The officers will ensure that licensees are meeting obligations under the Liquor Act, including the provision of a safe environment for patrons and staff, ensuring liquor is not supplied to minors and people who are unduly intoxicated or disorderly and ensuring liquor is served responsibly.

As part of a comprehensive review of the Liquor Act, an investigation will be conducted into whether licensees should pay more for late night trading permits. The additional cost of providing police officers, public transport services and liquor licensing officers late on Friday and Saturday nights is significant.

Legislative amendments from this review will be operational by the second half of 2006.

An additional Tactical Crime Squad, consisting of 14 officers, will double the number of Tactical Crime Squad officers already operating from Brisbane Central District.

Two extra positions of Sergeant will be created, one in the City and one in Fortitude Valley, to identify ways of improving collaboration between police and security service providers. The effectiveness of this initiative will be reviewed after 12 months.

A new paddy wagon capable of holding six people will be added to the current group of such vehicles, enabling police to transport up to 15 intoxicated people at any time.

The Police Minister will investigate the feasibility of dogs being used to detect amphetamines in nightclubs and other hot spots.

The liquor enforcement and pro-active strategies project involves the Queensland Police Service systematically identifying and gathering intelligence on hotspots where assaults and other disturbances occur in the Brisbane CBD.

A Brisbane Central District Liquor Unit will adopt this initiative by the end of May.

Queensland Police Service will establish a senior link with Brisbane City Council for CBD crime and safety issues and also to help the council in researching and preparing applications to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services for move on powers in appropriate areas.

Areas that the Police believe would be appropriate include the entire CBD, including King George Square and Brisbane Botanic Gardens and also areas such as Kurilpa Point.

We will review both the Bail Act and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act by the end of this year and update them as needed to support contemporary policing methods.

The State Government and the Brisbane City Council will explore with bus operators and Queensland Rail how late night public transport services can be improved after midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

The council provided money to hire marshals and security guards at seven locations in the CBD and Fortitude Valley in a successful trial due to end on 24 March.

The council has advised Queensland Transport it will examine safety and security at cab ranks, as well as location and amenity.

There may be a need for customers to pay extra if they use a rank safeguarded by a marshal.

The Security Improvement Program is an initiative of the Queensland Government under the Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy.

The Program predominantly focuses on situational approaches such as improved street and security lighting, and physical surveillance of public areas.

Since the start of the program in 1998-99, the Government has provided $2,662,875 to the city council, including $236,789 for CCTV in the central business district, $100,000 for lighting and surveillance in King George Square and $112,850 for CCTV in Fortitude Valley.

The next round of funding opens in April 2005 and closes on 31 August 2005.

The Queensland Government will fund an examination of the CBD to work out where additional lighting and redesign would help to minimise crime.

We will establish a taskforce with industry and non-Government organisations to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan and to help in the consultation process during the review of the Liquor Act.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

North-South Bypass Tunnel Proposal

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 am): On 28 February I was delighted to team up with the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Councillor Campbell Newman, to announce the state government's support for the business case for the North-South Bypass Tunnel. I had given the Lord Mayor an undertaking to get back to him about the North-South Bypass Tunnel by the end of February with our approval and we did just that. We did more than that.

The government has also committed to work with the council to accelerate the feasibility study for stage 2 of the tunnel proposal, the airport link. I table a copy of my letter to the Lord Mayor agreeing to the proposal and the necessary approval to charge a toll. I seek leave to have further details incorporated in *Hansard.*

Leave granted.

The Government believes that stage 1 of the tunnel will have important benefits for the Brisbane area.

However our examination of the network benefits of stage 2 give a very compelling case for State and Council to get together to advance it further.

While stage 1 will connect with the Inner City Bypass at Bowen Hills stage 2 extends the tunnel in a "T" with one end connecting to the East West Arterial Road near Toombul Shopping Town and the other connecting to Gympie Rd north of the Emergency Services Kedron Park complex.

We support this from a strategic roads perspective.

It means, for example, traffic from Mt Gravatt could flow along a less congested South East Freeway, through the tunnel and onto the Airport Link, then arrive at the airport or head along the Gateway Motorway towards the Sunshine Coast—with very few traffic lights.

All of this will take pressure off roads in the CBD and elsewhere—such as Sandgate Road or Kingsford Smith Drive.

Because of these advantages, the Airport Link will feature in the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan, and—if it stacks up—we will make a substantial economic contribution.

The collaboration between the State Government and the Brisbane City Council is a victory for public interest over politics.

Contrast our relationship with the council to the Commonwealth's stand-over tactics.

Canberra says it won't fund crucial road projects unless we follow its industrial relations rules.

In Queensland, we don't believe in "Labor traffic", or "Liberal traffic", or "union traffic", or "non-union traffic".

Even Councillor Newman's pleas for Commonwealth assistance for his tunnel project have fallen on deaf ears.

This is what Campbell Newman said last Monday: "We're talking about Airport Link and northern link and we've demonstrated to the Federal Government they are clearly part of the Auslink national network."

He also said: "And I'll be side by side with the Premier, in terms of pushing Canberra to fund to the tune of $400M, that joint project, and they should also put money into the Gateway because it's the national highway as well."

That's Campbell Newman talking.

He and I signed a Memorandum of Understanding providing for the Government to make legislative changes including tolling powers, traffic management, and powers to acquire land (including underground land).

The government gave detailed consideration to the council's business case for a 5km four-lane tunnel linking the Inner City Bypass at Bowen Hills with Shaftson Ave at Kangaroo Point and the Pacific Motorway/Ipswich Rd at Woolloongabba.

Provided assumptions in the business case do not change in any way that would jeopardise state taxpayers' dollars, Queensland Treasury Corporation will lend the council up $450 million.

The tunnel will be built, owned and operated by the private sector and transferred back to the council at the end of the franchise period.

Approval is based on an approximate toll of $3.30 (including GST) in 2002 money, CPI indexed for 30 years.

The council has agreed to meet the government's requirement that there be no adverse effect on existing toll-free routes such as Story Bridge and the Riverside Expressway.

Cr Newman and I also agree that the state's rigorous Environmental Impact Statement process will apply not only to stage 1, but also to any consideration of the feasibility of stage 2.

Everyone with a view should have their say through this EIS process.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Apprentices and Trainees; International Women's Day

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.42 am): On 28 February we received yet more independent proof that Queensland is leading the nation in combating the skills shortage. Numbers released by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research show that Queensland continues to break records for apprenticeships and traineeships. According to the centre, 73,000 Queensland apprentices and trainees were in training at the end of September 2004. This compares with 70,600 in September 2003—an increase of 2,400. By contrast, the national numbers of apprentices and trainees in training slid backwards by 12,700, to 393,800 in that period. Importantly, 44.4 per cent of our apprentices and trainees are in the traditional trades that industry is crying out for. That is well above the national average of 37.7 per cent.

We are on the right track with our Smart State reforms to education and training. Programs such as Education and Training Reforms for the Future, Breaking the Unemployment Cycle and the SmartVET skilling strategy are working.

On International Women's Day it is worth considering that, despite improvements, too few women are apprentices and trainees in areas of high demand. The number of female apprentices in non-traditional trades in Queensland is at an all-time high, with a 36.3 per cent increase in the past five years. As at 1 July 2004, 1,712 women were training in non-traditional areas, up from 1,256 as at 1 July 1999. Although the most popular vocational education and training courses undertaken by women in 2004 were in community services, retail and tourism, there are signs that more women are choosing careers in industries that are traditionally male dominated. For instance, at the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE this year 19 female students are enrolled in architectural drafting and diploma of building programs, bettering last year's enrolment of 16 and up from just three in 2002. At the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE electrical trades are appealing to local women, with six currently in apprenticeships.

I urge more young women to think very seriously about a trade, because I would like to see them taking full advantage of the demand in industries such as construction, automotive, aviation and engineering. They will gain bankable skills, and employers will benefit from a more diverse work force. Because of its importance, I seek leave to have the rest of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The government has been working with industry to encourage cultural change, where necessary, and we have also invested strongly in making non-traditional careers more attractive for women.

We will keep working to improve recruitment, retention and career paths for women.

At my request, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet has compiled some examples of what a variety of agencies are doing to encourage women into non-traditional areas, and this is the advice they received:

- Since 1998, at least 13 female apprentices and trainees have commenced training in non-traditional roles with the Department of Public Works including electrical mechanics, carpenters, sign writing, wood machining and horticulture. Of these, six are currently in training, three have completed their training, but four have withdrawn.
- ENERGEX and Ergon Energy have increased their intake of female apprentices. In 2005, five female apprentices were appointed to Ergon, and there was one in 2004. ENERGEX had no female apprentices in 2002, in 2003 there was one, and now there are two.
- 11.5% of Department of Main Roads civil engineers (25 out of 217) and 5% of structural engineers (1 out of 18) are women.
- A component of the Department of Main Roads' strategic workforce management plan will be about encouraging women into non-traditional trades.
- A number of women are in leadership roles in construction related projects such as Roma Street Parkland, Suncorp Stadium and North Bank.
- 46 women are employed in the Public Sector Apprenticeship Scheme—4.7% of the total.
- In 2003/04, the Office for Women contributed $5,000 to the Queensland Branch of the National Association of Women in Construction's annual awards, which are designed to recognise achievements by women in construction, design and business.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Pharmaceutical Industry Plan

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 am): I was pleased last week to launch the first major report on Queensland's growing pharmaceutical industry, entitled *Springboard for opportunities*. The report was researched and written by PricewaterhouseCoopers in association with the Department of State Development and Innovation. I thank the minister for that. The document gives us a clear picture of our pharmaceutical industry and provides a blueprint for taking advantage of the opportunities for expansion. I table three documents, which will be circulated to members, as part of this plan. I seek leave to have more details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The report provides the industry and the government with direction so that we can focus our energies where they will generate the biggest returns and make the most of our competitive advantages.

Queensland's pharmaceutical industry currently employs more than 19 thousand people and contributes significantly to the $8.2 billion a year that pharmaceuticals provide to the national economy.

The sector covers areas including the manufacture of prescription, non-prescription and generic pharmaceuticals, complementary and alternative medicines.

Pharmaceuticals is a smart industry for the Smart State—it's global, it's knowledge intensive, it's high tech, it requires highly-skilled workers and it's going to help diversify our economy and create new export opportunities.

The report identified a number of opportunities particularly in the manufacture of generic pharmaceuticals.

The generic market is set to grow with a significant number of major drugs coming off patent in the next five years.

Queensland is also a leader in the manufacture of complementary medicines, or alternative treatments like herbal and homeopathic medicines and vitamin and nutritional supplements.

This is another area in which we could develop further given that this sector alone is worth more than $1.6 billion a year to the Australian economy and it's increasing.

The report identified skills shortages as an impediment to industry growth.

We will be developing stronger links between our universities and industry to make sure graduates have the right skills to meet the needs of the industry.

The Plan will help ensure that we:

- create more jobs, mainly in research and development, and manufacturing,
- attract more pharmaceutical firms to Queensland; and,
- increase Queensland's share of pharmaceutical exports.

We have established a dedicated unit in the Department of State Development and Innovation to work closely with the pharmaceuticals industry.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Homelessness

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 am): Yesterday the housing minister, Robert Schwarten, and I announced a package worth $40 million to ease and prevent inner-city homelessness. I congratulate the minister on this initiative.

The Prime Minister and federal Treasurer might be able to suggest other ways of spending Queenslanders' GST money—they want us to give some of it to a big business port corporation—but our cabinet cares about the plight of homeless people. We know that homelessness impacts on the safety and enjoyment of our communities.

If members want to know where we are spending some of the GST, I can tell them that we are spending it on the homeless. We are putting $30 million over four years into the Lady Bowen Complex at Spring Hill to give shelter and low-cost housing to 100 people. We are creating another 100 low-cost homes by delivering $7.6 million from the sale of prime land at Teneriffe to the Brisbane Housing Co. We are also creating new information and referral services for homeless people in inner Brisbane to help them make use of the services that suit their needs. I seek leave to have all of those details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Lady Bowen Centre in Wickham Terrace, Spring Hill, will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to give accommodation and support to up to 100 people.

The historic landmark—named in honour of the wife of Queensland's first Governor, Sir George Bowen—began life as the city's first maternity hospital.

Redevelopment will be in three stages.

Stage 1 will upgrade and convert the former nurses' quarters into a short-term shelter for up to 50 people who would otherwise be sleeping rough.

Stage 2 will upgrade and convert the main building to include bed-sit style accommodation and office space for housing organisations.

Stage 3 will establish a new housing complex with longer-term accommodation.

Separately, we will fund about 100 new affordable home units through the sale of prime inner-city land.

The government freed up $7.6 million by selling surplus land in Teneriffe and this will go to the Brisbane Housing Company for affordable housing.

We've also announced that Queensland firm McNab Construction has secured the tender to start building the first Brisbane Housing Company project at the Kelvin Grove Urban Village.

That means another 32 affordable units in the inner-suburbs—and they are expected to be completed in November.

Our onslaught on homelessness continued yesterday as we doubled a commitment to a new service for Brisbane homeless people.

Last winter I spent some time on the streets with homeless people, and promised a new "one stop shop" in Brisbane for homeless people needing information and referrals.

We will fund two new services—a centre at South Brisbane and another service operating throughout inner Brisbane.

The Queensland Government will provide almost $3 million in capital and recurrent funds over three years to establish and operate the services.

Community housing groups will be our partners in this venture, which will make it easier for homeless people to access services in the CBD, Fortitude Valley and South Brisbane areas.

If it succeeds, we will roll out a similar service in regions of high need.

The departments of Housing, Public Works, and Communities are behind these initiatives, and I thank the Minister for Communities as well as the Housing Minister for their hard work in this area—which requires them to continually butt heads with a Federal Government that is too mean and myopic to give priority to homelessness.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Armarium Currency Management Centre

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.46 am): Queensland today becomes the first state in Australia to have a state-of-the-art, purpose-built currency distribution centre. I will be opening it at lunchtime today. I seek leave to have details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The $20 million Armarium Currency Management Centre at Murarrie replaces smaller centres at West End, Darra and Virginia.

The amalgamation of the 3 centres into one has been achieved with excellent cooperation from the employees and their unions.

The design of the centre reflects world's best practice. Systems used in 60 countries were looked at in developing this centre.

Features include state-of-the-art security, and track and trace systems, the latest high-speed coin/cash processors and mechanised handling equipment.

Banking habits have changed and more people today are getting their cash from Automatic Teller Machines rather than banks. But that means the ATMs need to be serviced regularly.

That's where Linfox Armaguard comes in. They collect money from businesses and distribute cash to about 800 ATMs in Brisbane.

In between collecting and distributing the cash, the Armarium also counts and cleans the notes. They also spot possible counterfeit notes.

The Australian Federal Police and the Reserve Bank of Australia gave us an assurance yesterday that Queensland does not have a significant problem with counterfeit currency.

In fact, the Reserve Bank said this new centre will reduce the problem even further by helping to remove older notes from circulation.

There are about 780 million bank notes currently in circulation in Australia and the rate of counterfeits in the system is 4-5 notes per million.

The Reserve Bank advises that there are fewer counterfeit notes in circulation in Queensland than in either New South Wales or Victoria.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tropical Cyclone Warnings

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.47 am): I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* details of the latest tropical cyclone warning. This is a matter of concern for the state. We will do everything we can to support people if it impacts on Queensland.

Leave granted.

A Tropical Cyclone WARNING has been declared by the Bureau of Meteorology for coastal and island communities between Lockhart River and Port Douglas.

A Tropical Cyclone Watch extends from Port Douglas to Cairns.

At 7:00 am, SEVERE TROPICAL CYCLONE Ingrid, category 5, was centred about 320 km east northeast of Cooktown. The cyclone was moving west-northwest at 8 km/h.

Severe Tropical Cyclone Ingrid is expected to continue to move slowly west towards the north Queensland coast over the next 24 hours.

Winds are expected to increase along the north Queensland coast, and gales are expected to develop between Lockhart River and Port Douglas during Wednesday morning.

The cyclone has maximum wind gusts of 290 kilometres per hour.

People between Lockhart River and Port Douglas are being advised to immediately commence or continue preparations, especially protecting boats and property using available daylight hours.

Local Disaster Management Groups have met in Cooktown, Hope Vale and Wujal Wujal in the past week.

Another meeting will be held in Cooktown this afternoon involving representatives from Police, Emergency Services, Local Government, Queensland Health and Department of Communities.

The Department of Emergency Services is prepared to deploy an Urban Search and Rescue team on short notice if required.

The Disaster District Management Groups (DDMG) in Cairns and Innisfail will meet at 10am today.

People between Port Douglas and Cairns should consider action they will need to take if the cyclone threat increases and listen for the next advice, which will be issued at 11 a.m.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Resignation of Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.47 am): On 1 March I accepted with regret the resignation of Liddy Clark, member for Clayfield as the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. She informed me in her letter of resignation that a Crime and Misconduct Commission report had concluded that a press release issued in her name was misleading. In her letter she informed me—

While I am gratified with the finding that there had been no criminal conduct and no official misconduct, it is in keeping with the traditional high standards of ministerial responsibility (which I fully support) that I do resign.

I thank Liddy for the achievements she has made in her year as minister. She was responsible for working closely with Indigenous communities to oversee the introduction and management of alcohol management plans, which are reducing alcohol-fuelled violence and injuries. In particular she deserves recognition for her role in the progress that has been made on a wide range of issues at Cherbourg.

On 3 March I appointed John Mickel as the new Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. I needed someone who is able to work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and I know that John will take on this role with enthusiasm. In addition, I appointed Linda Lavarch to be Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Energy and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy.

I want to send a very strong signal to Indigenous communities that we want to work with them and for them and that we are committed as a government to making a difference to their lives. I table a copy of the CMC report for the information of the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Information Commissioner; Taylor, Ms C

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.48 am): Under the FOI Act 1992, the Information Commissioner has the broad role of investigating and reviewing decisions of agencies and ministers regarding access to documents and has powers to compel the disclosure of information. The FOI Act 1992 states that the Ombudsman is to be the Information Commissioner unless another person is appointed Information Commissioner by the Governor in Council on an address from parliament.

The all-party Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee held an inquiry into freedom of information. Its recommendations included the separation of the role of Information Commissioner from that of Ombudsman. The government announced in September last year that the position of Information Commissioner would be separated from the role of Ombudsman.

The Information Commissioner is an independent statutory officer who reports to the Queensland parliament through the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee. The Information Commissioner is not appointed by the government. The government has no powers over the Information Commissioner. Under the FOI Act there is no requirement to have a full public service merit selection process. However, the government decided to initiate a full public service merit selection process because it wanted to attract the best candidate.

I informed parliament on 23 November last year that the appointment process would be facilitated by the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The position was advertised in the *Courier-Mail* and *Weekend Australian* newspapers on 27 November and 4 December 2004, with applications closing on 13 December. Before any applications were received, a panel was convened.

The Attorney-General appointed his director-general, Rachel Hunter, a former Public Service Commissioner, to head the selection process. Ms Hunter appointed the chair of the parliamentary committee, Dr Lesley Clark; the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Dr Leo Keliher; the Acting Public Service Commissioner, Mr David Douglas; and a partner in Clayton Utz and former Crown Solicitor, Barry Dunphy.

There were 14 applications from around Australia, including the application from Ms Taylor. Ms Taylor says in a letter to the chair of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee that she had no knowledge at that time of who would be on the selection panel. Her three-page curriculum vitae included three referees, including Premier's department Director-General, Dr Leo Keliher, who in this position was her former employer. That is standard practice in any CV.

The selection panel met on 17 December to select a short list. Dr Keliher advised the panel that he disqualified himself from acting as a referee for Ms Taylor. The short-listed applicants, four in number, were interviewed on 6 January. The referees of Ms Taylor and another applicant were then consulted. Dr Keliher was not approached or consulted in any way as a referee. Ms Taylor was selected as the best candidate by the panel.

Mr Seeney: He was on the panel. What was he supposed to do? Consult himself?

Mr SPEAKER: Order, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition! We will listen to this statement.

Mr BEATTIE: Those opposite can object all they like, but the truth will come out on this and that is exactly what I am doing. Ms Taylor was selected as the best candidate by the panel. Let me make the point that the use of referees, I am advised, is exactly the same as what happens in the federal Public Service. So if there is a problem with this process here, then there is a problem with what John Howard and John Anderson do. Let us not have any dishonesty about it.

Ms Hunter provided this recommendation to the Attorney, who reported to cabinet which, in turn, endorsed the appointment for consideration by parliament. On 22 February I, along with the Attorney-General, met the full committee of the parliamentary committee to brief them on the selection process and the outcome. Later that day a motion was put to parliament—

That an address in the following terms be presented to Her Excellency the Governor in Council—

> Your Excellency, the Legislative Assembly humbly requests that, pursuant to the provisions of section 61 of the Freedom of Information Act 1992, Your Excellency in Council approve the appointment of Ms Cathi Taylor as the Information Commissioner.

Parliament debated the appointment and unanimously recommended Ms Taylor. If the Nationals and Liberals were serious about objecting to this appointment they could have voted against it on 22 February. They did not vote against it. It was a unanimous recommendation that she should be

appointed. On Thursday, 24 February the Governor formally appointed her. If opposition members wanted to they should have voted against that motion. Does their vote mean nothing? They voted for her and we support their support of her.

The *Courier-Mail* and the opposition have raised a number of issues. I will go through every one of them. The first one is the alleged sacking of Greg Sorensen. The *Courier-Mail* alleged that Cathi Taylor sacked Greg Sorensen. Mr Sorensen is the Deputy Ombudsman. The whole point of the process was to separate the role of the Information Commissioner from that of the Ombudsman. When the Governor appointed Ms Taylor as the new, separate Information Commissioner, Mr Sorensen's FOI role ended. Greg Sorensen was, and still is, the Deputy Ombudsman. He was never sacked.

The *Courier-Mail* also seems to be making an issue of the fact that Mr Sorensen was referred to as the Deputy Information Commissioner. This was the informal title he used under the old arrangements. It was also an informal title referred to by the Ombudsman in reports. Before Ms Taylor's appointment the staffing in this office amounted to a total of 14 people. If Mr Sorensen had remained there would have been a total of 15 people. This was not an exercise to increase the staffing of the Information Commissioner's office. With Mr Sorensen returning to his job as Deputy Ombudsman, the staffing remains at 14 people. No-one was sacked. The *Courier-Mail* is absolutely wrong on this matter.

The second issue is the allegation that the most senior bureaucrat on the panel was also the leading referee. The *Courier-Mail* alleges that Leo Keliher, the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, was Ms Taylor's leading referee. Dr Keliher in fact disqualified himself from being Ms Taylor's referee.

Mr Seeney: He didn't read his own reference?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will now cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: There is no written reference here. That is not the way referees operate. While Dr Keliher was nominated as a referee by Ms Taylor, she would have had no idea who was going to be on the selection panel when she applied for the position. Dr Keliher told the panel it would be inappropriate for him to provide a referee's report, and his comments as a referee were not sought. The *Courier-Mail* is again wrong.

I will deal with the issue of powerful referees. The Leader of the Opposition has questioned what motivation Ms Taylor would have had in nominating bosses and former bosses as referees. The answer is simple. If any panel anywhere in the world interviews an applicant for a job and the applicant does not nominate his or her boss and former bosses as referees, the panel is going to wonder what is wrong with the applicant. It would be odd if a candidate did not nominate their boss as a referee. The same thing happens with the federal government. So the Leader of the Opposition is wrong.

Let us move on to the next allegation, which is Rachel Hunter's alleged friendship with Cathi Taylor. The *Courier-Mail* asserts that Rachel Hunter was a personal friend of Ms Taylor. In her letter to the chair of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee Ms Taylor explains that the essence of her relationship with Ms Hunter is professional and not personal. In the letter she says that she met Ms Hunter after she, Ms Taylor, was appointed by Santo Santoro as a member of the Southbank TAFE Council in 1996 and Ms Hunter was appointed as the institute director.

Rachel Hunter is one of the most respected public servants n Australia. She is the former Queensland Public Service Commissioner and in that role she came into contact with most senior public servants, including Cathi Taylor. Rachel Hunter advises that there is no personal friendship with Cathi Taylor; she did know her, but her association is a professional one, not a personal one. She declared this association at the outset of the interview process, saying that she had a working relationship with Ms Taylor that dated back to her time as the Director of Southbank Institute of TAFE. Again, the *Courier-Mail* is wrong.

I turn now to the removal of Ms Cathi Taylor. The *Courier-Mail* has called on the government to remove Ms Taylor. The Attorney-General has no powers to remove the Information Commissioner. Section 67(4) of the FOI Act states that the Information Commissioner can only be removed on the ground of 'incapacity, incompetence or misconduct'. The Attorney-General has no powers under the act. Again, the *Courier-Mail* is wrong.

Let us talk about Cathi Taylor's independence. Cathi Taylor has a wealth of experience in the public sector over the past 25 years in New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland. She is one of the most powerful women in the Public Service and we should respect her for that. She has held many senior Public Service positions under both the coalition and Labor governments in Queensland. At the time of her appointment to this position she was the Executive Director, Policy Division with the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency.

The Borbidge coalition government demonstrated its confidence in Ms Taylor. She served as a principal policy advisor with Queensland Treasury between 1996 and 1998. Those opposite do not have to tell me who the Premier was. It was Mr Borbidge. In 1996 Ms Taylor was appointed by Minister Santo

Santoro to the community board of the Southbank Institute of TAFE. Ms Taylor was the Liberal minister's personal appointee.

I thank the opposition leader for his assessment on 22 February in this place when he said—

Cathi Taylor has a fairly long and distinguished career in the Public Service—no-one is going to argue against that ...

Nor are we. In her letter Ms Taylor declared that she had never been a member of the Australian Labor Party in Queensland. She advised that she had been a member of the Labor Party in New South Wales and Tasmania for a very short time more than 15 years ago. It is interesting to note that Dr Brendon Nelson was also a member of the Labor Party in Tasmania in the late 1980s. Maybe that says something about the Labor Party in Tasmania. That has not disqualified him from his present role. We do not disqualify people from merit selection processes because of past or present associations and memberships. The Nationals and Liberals had a witch-hunt when they were in power to weed out people solely on the basis of their democratic right to belong to a political party. My government is proud of bipartisan appointments.

Mike Ahern, the former National Party Premier, and Sallyanne Atkinson, the former Liberal Lord Mayor of Brisbane, are helping to increase our exports as trade commissioners. I appointed both of them. Former Liberal Party leader Terry White has been reappointed as Deputy Chair of the WorkCover Board because of his ability and experience. Former Liberal Party leader David Watson was asked to become a member of the racing minister's racing industry integrity review. Former National Party minister and member for Tablelands, Tom Gilmore, is the Queensland government's representative on the Wet Tropics Management Authority. Doug McTaggart, a key appointment of former Liberal Treasurer Joan Sheldon in 1996, is now CEO of the Queensland Investment Corporation and a member of the Council of the Queensland University of Technology. We value the role played by such former National Party people as Craig Sherrin, who was a National Party minister, in the running of our TAFE system—promoted under my government. There will be no interference in merit selection, where people of all political persuasions are treated equally and they have some contribution to make.

I want to deal with Cathi Taylor's spouse and any other perceived conflict of interest. The selection committee was aware that Ms Taylor's spouse is a director-general in the government but was of the view that the applicant should not be disadvantaged because of that relationship. I point out that this is the 21st century. I also point out that women have brains too, just in case the other side missed out. This approach was confirmed by legal advice that, had the marriage of the proposed applicant been relied upon to avoid the nomination of the person who was otherwise the most meritorious applicant, that decision would have amounted to unlawful discrimination. When it comes to dealing with FOI decisions involving her husband, the Freedom of Information Act 1992 allows Ms Taylor to delegate her functions. It is open to the Information Commissioner to seek crown law advice on a case-by-case basis where the commissioner feels there is a potential for a perception of bias.

I turn now to the next allegation—that is, that the state's most experienced FOI officer did not get the job. There was nothing wrong particularly with the qualifications or ability of Mr Sorensen. He fulfilled the role of Acting Information Commissioner for a number of years on a delegation from the Ombudsman. Mr Sorensen effectively acted in the function of FOI Commissioner as long as the Ombudsman's office had that role. There were a number of applicants for the new FOI commissioner's role. Mr Sorensen was one of those, and he competed with a number of other people to win the post. The independent panel judged all applicants on the same criteria, and Mr Sorensen was judged on merit not to be the best applicant. He was, in fact, placed fourth in the order of merit. He did not come second; he came fourth. I regret having to inform the community of that, but I want the truth of this to come out. He came fourth. If Cathi Taylor had not been successful, he would still not have been the Information Commissioner, and I have not seen that in the *Courier-Mail*.

I now turn to the process for selecting an officer who answers to parliament. The opposition has criticised us for not involving the Nationals and Liberals in the selection process. It is worth looking at the process used by the Borbidge government in selecting the previous Auditor-General. This is a role as highly sensitive as that of the Information Commissioner, perhaps even more so. Did the Borbidge government involve the Labor opposition in this selection process or is the opposition being hypocritical? I was not told about it. I was never consulted—never asked—and I was opposition leader, and nor was the parliament. The selection committee for that position consisted of the Director-General of the Department of the Premier, the Commissioner of the Office of the Public Service, a retired Victorian Auditor-General, nominees of the Australian Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants, and the Liberal member for Springwood, who was chair of the Public Accounts Committee. So do not be hypocritical about it.

With regard to the independence of the selection panel, the suggestion by the opposition that this is a case of a panel ignoring merit and letting party politics influence its decision is an appalling and defamatory slur on the integrity and independence of the panel. Ms Hunter was involved in the TAFE system under the Bjelke-Petersen government and was a TAFE director when Santo Santoro was minister. Mr Dunphy was a public servant in the Bjelke-Petersen government and was appointed Crown Solicitor by the Borbidge government. Dr Keliher was also employed in the Bjelke-Petersen

government. Mr Douglas worked for federal governments from McMahon through to Hawke, and was appointed to the Queensland government when Mr Cooper was Premier and also worked for the Borbidge government. These are professional people who are now being dragged through the mud because of some cheap political exercise by the opposition.

I turn now to the *Courier-Mail*'s allegation that Ms Taylor had the endorsement of the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General appointed his director-general, Rachel Hunter, to head the selection process. Ms Hunter in turn provided the recommendation of the selection panel to the Attorney, who reported to cabinet. It was cabinet which endorsed the appointment for consideration by parliament. That was the sole input of the Attorney-General until he moved that parliament should ask the Governor in Council to approve the appointment of Ms Taylor as Information Commissioner. Of course, he briefed the parliamentary committee with me. During the speech to parliament he said that he was pleased to endorse the appointment of one of our most experienced senior public servants. The Crown Solicitor has advised that it would be open to Ms Taylor to seek crown law advice on a case-by-case basis in circumstances where she felt that there was a potential for a perception of bias.

The next point is the allegation by the *Courier-Mail* that Ms Taylor helped a government member win a very marginal seat. The public might believe that this allegation must have involved a vast amount of time and effort during the election campaign. I have not spoken to Ms Taylor but, as I understand it, she lives in Clayfield and happened to attend a public function locally which raised funds for the campaign of the Labor candidate for Clayfield—a public function. The member for Gregory has attended a community cabinet meeting, and I admire him for doing so. That does not make him a Labor Party supporter. It was a public occasion. Ms Taylor's attendance at a public function did not—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: They do not like the truth, Mr Speaker. They do not like the truth.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order! I remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that he is already on my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: Ms Taylor's attendance at a public function did not turn her into a Labor campaign worker or supporter. If this is all the allegation involves, it is not only wrong but also outrageous for the *Courier-Mail* to report that Ms Taylor helped a government member win a very marginal seat.

With regard to our record on FOI, we operate a similar system to the federal government, and our record on FOI is one I am happy to stand by. It is second to none. If there is something wrong with the federal government system, then those opposite should campaign to the federal government about it. Those opposite cannot have it both ways. They attack our FOI system, yet John Howard runs the same system. So why aren't those opposite down there trying to change it? I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* an assessment of what the National Party did when it was in office. I am not going to bore the House with it, but I seek leave to incorporate it.

Leave granted.

When the Nationals and Liberals were in Opposition between 1990 and 1996 they complained about FOI.

They promised to change the FOI legislation if ever they regained power.

Well, they were in power from February 1996 to June 1998.

The Australian reported on March 1, 1996, that the Borbidge Government had taken four Ministers' briefing documents which were the subject of an FOI request from the newspaper to its first Cabinet meeting in order to hide them from scrutiny.

They twice promised to review the FOI legislation.

But they decided the legislation which they had criticised in Opposition was fine as it was.

As soon as they were back in Opposition they changed their minds for a second time.

Not only that, Mr Springborg was a Minister in a Government which abused FOI legislation.

We have this on the authority of former Premier Borbidge who admitted to The Courier-Mail on August 2, 2000, that his Government had abused FOI laws and on the authority of one of Mr Springborg's former colleagues, Di McAuley, who said in her book that documents had deliberately been taken to Cabinet to hide them from public scrutiny.

I do not allow documents to be brought to Cabinet unless they are needed as part of the Cabinet process.

The attack on the selection process and on the person who was appointed as Information Commissioner on merit has been based on distortions by a hypocritical Opposition and The Courier-Mail.

Mr BEATTIE: None of the allegations of the *Courier-Mail* stand up to scrutiny and logic. On 22 February the opposition leader stood in this House and voted for the appointment of Ms Taylor. Since then he has tried to jump on the *Courier-Mail*'s bandwagon, which I have just exposed—

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, order! You will cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Mr BEATTIE: I have just exposed that as being constructed of shonky and unsound arguments. I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* the following: a letter dated—

Mr SPRINGBORG: I rise to a point of order. The Premier is deliberately misleading this House. He knows it. He knows that in that debate we raised a number of concerns, and we said that we would be adopting a wait-and-see approach—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. Leader of the Opposition, resume your seat.

Mr BEATTIE: But he voted for her, and now he wants to deny it. His vote is not worth a cracker. Let me ask you, Mr Speaker: how would you love him to be riding shotgun for you? Suddenly there is a bit of heat and he would say, 'Don't talk to me. I didn't mean to vote that way.' What Mr Springborg means is, 'Just because I vote for you does not mean I love you.' What he says is, 'Just because I vote for you does not mean I mean it.' That is what he says. He is a fraud.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I rise to a point of order. Certainly the actors from *The Bill* got some real tips off the Premier yesterday. The Premier is misleading the House. He knows we raised concerns and he knows our reluctance with regard to that position. He is—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is the same point of order. Resume your seat.

Mr BEATTIE: The fact of the matter is this: he voted for her. He comes in here at the drop of a hat and divides on any silly option possible. He divides on any tiny little thing. But did he do it on this matter? He had the option to vote against her, and he did not vote against her. He did not come in here and divide. Over the next year they will come in here and divide over all sorts of nonsense. Here was a chance when those opposite could have divided, but they voted for her. They go with the breeze.

I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* a letter dated 7 March 2005 from the Public Service Commissioner to me.

Leave granted.

7 March 2005

The Honourable Peter Beattie MP
Premier and Minister for Trade
Executive Building
100 George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Premier

I am concerned that the recent publicity surrounding the appointment of Ms Cathi Taylor as the Queensland Information Commissioner has raised a number of concerns about the proper processes to be followed in selecting people for appointment. The treatment of senior officers by the media is also of concern.

It is worth noting that the Information Commissioner is appointed under the Freedom of Information Act 1992 which expressly excludes that office from coverage under the Public Service Act 1996. There is, therefore, no requirement for any of the rules governing senior appointments in the public service to be applied to the appointment of an Information Commissioner. In this case, it was determined that an identical process to that which would apply to a senior appointment in the public service would be followed. I understand you have already been briefed on that process, so I will not restate it.

For the record, I was asked to sit on that selection panel but, as I was on leave, David Douglas, who was Acting Public Service Commissioner at the time, did so. I have sought Mr Douglas' advice and he has assured me that he is satisfied the process followed was of the highest standard. I accept his assurance.

Three points seem to me to be worth making:

1. The suggestion that there was something untoward about a process in which a person was both a member of a selection panel and a referee misrepresents the role of a referee. It assumes that a referee actively campaigns for the candidate, which they do not. Indeed, it is quite likely that a person (who is also a panel member) may be asked to provide references for more than one applicant. Such circumstances occur frequently and are reasonable, provided that other members of the selection panel are aware of them.

   An impropriety would occur only if the panel member and the applicant failed to disclose any relationship, and it is very hard to see how that can occur when an applicant openly lists a person as a referee.

   Further, references are always sought from more than one referee, so there is no likelihood of a panel member who is also a referee being the sole point of external input.

2. Similarly the notion that, somehow, public servants should abstain from being friendly with their colleagues cannot withstand sensible scrutiny. The allegation that an applicant had once dined at a panel member's house is no ground for concern unless it can somehow be shown that any relationship between them was concealed from other members of the panel and that the panel member unreasonably used their position on the panel to advance the applicant's claim for the position at the expense of others.

   Any such claim would be to cast doubt on the integrity of other members of the panel and their ability to make an independent judgement about the merits of the applicants.

3. Finally, underlying the speculation about this appointment is an argument that a person who happens to have worked in a particular role and who is the partner of a senior public servant must be excluded from appointment for those reasons in spite of the fact that they are the strongest candidate for the role. That is a source of great concern in an environment where we seek the best person for the job and where we seek to be equitable to all people.

   If a properly constituted and conducted selection process forms the view that an applicant is the best person for this position it would have been discriminatory not to recommend them for appointment simply because he or she is the partner of a Director-General and the former subordinate of a member of the panel.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)
George O'Farrell
Public Service Commissioner

Mr BEATTIE: I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* a letter dated 7 March 2005 from the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, which was CCed to me.

Leave granted.

07 MAR 2005

Mr George O'Farrell
Public Service Commissioner
PO Box 190
BRISBANE ALBERT STREET QLD 4002

Dear George

I am writing in relation to the selection process for the appointment of the Queensland Information Commissioner, which I chaired.

The position was advertised in the Courier Mail and Weekend Australian on Saturday 27 November 2004 and Saturday 4 December 2004. Applications closed on Monday 13 December 2004. The selection panel determined process, shortlisted, interviewed and deliberated findings on 17 December 2005, 6 January 2005 and 17 January 2005. The recommendation of the panel was finalised shortly thereafter.

On 21 February 2005 Cabinet considered the proposed appointment and endorsed that a motion be moved to appoint Ms Taylor to the position of Information Commissioner. On 22 February 2005 Parliament moved a motion to appoint Ms Cathi Taylor and the Governor-in-Council gave approval for her appointment on 24 February 2005.

Subsequently, reports in the Courier Mail and other media have suggested that there were serious problems with the selection process, not the least being my alleged personal friendship with the successful appointee, Ms Cathi Taylor. I have found the inaccurate reporting of the process by the Courier Mail most disappointing and distressing.

The panel was established in accordance with public service standards which are prescribed by the Public Service Commissioner's Directive No 1/04—Recruitment and Selection. Membership included: myself as Chair, Dr Lesley Clark, Member for Barron River and Chair of the Legal Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee; Dr Leo Keliher, Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Mr David Douglas, A/Public Service Commissioner; and Mr Barry Dunphy, Partner, Clayton Utz and former Crown Solicitor from 1996—1999.

I wish to place on the record that I declared to the panel during the shortlisting meeting that I had a working relationship with Ms Taylor which dated back to my time as the Director of Southbank Institute of TAFE.

The other issue raised in the media is that Dr Keliher had a role as both a referee for Ms Taylor and as a member of the selection panel. In respect of Ms Taylor, Dr Keliher disqualified himself, advising the panel that it would not be appropriate for him to provide a referee report given his membership on the panel. Consequently, a referee report was not sought from him.

I am confident that the panel upheld the highest standards of procedure for a merit based selection process and seek your assurance that your representative on the panel found this to be the case.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Rachel Hunter
Director-General

cc The Premier and Minister for Trade
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

Mr BEATTIE: I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* a letter dated 7 March 2005 from the Information Commissioner to the chair of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee, which was also copied to me.

Leave granted.

Dr Lesley Clark
Chair
Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Q 4000

7 March 2005

Dear Dr Clark,

Information Commissioner appointment

I refer to a number of issues raised in the media in recent days regarding my appointment as Information Commissioner. I do so to correct the record and to assure your committee of my commitment to the independence of the Office of the Information Commissioner.

Dr Leo Keliher as my referee

The CV that I submitted as an attachment to my application for the Information Commissioner position was my standard CV. Dr Keliher was listed on my CV as one of three referees whom I felt could properly report on my past performance. At that time, I was not aware of the composition of the selection panel. It was the responsibility of the panel to determine which referees should be contacted.

Association with Ms Hunter

Ms Hunter is a professional colleague of mine that I have known through various work roles as a Queensland public servant since the late 1990s. In 1996, I was appointed by the then Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to the South Bank Institute of TAFE Council. I subsequently met Ms Hunter when she was appointed as the Director of the Institute. The essence of my relationship with Ms Hunter is professional, not personal.

Perceived conflict of interest

I have no political ties with the state government. I am not and have never been a member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) at any time since moving to Queensland in 1990. I was a member of the ALP for a very short period of time in Tasmania and before

that in NSW. This membership ceased more than 15 years ago. Throughout my career, I have been an impartial professional public servant who has been appointed to a range of senior positions under both Labor and Coalition Ministers in both Queensland and NSW. I intend to fulfil my responsibilities as Information Commissioner with fierce independence and integrity.

The *Freedom of Information Act 1992* allows for mechanisms to avoid any perceived conflict of interest or bias. Where appropriate I will delegate the necessary powers accordingly. I will adopt the same organisational arrangements that were adopted when Mr David Bevan was both the Ombudsman and the Information Commissioner as the Ombudsman is subject to the FOI Act.

I intend to serve as the Information Commissioner with distinction, integrity and fierce independence. I look forward to working with you and your committee in advancing the spirit of the FOI Act.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Cathi Taylor
Information Commissioner

cc. Ms Simpson, Deputy Chair of LCARC
cc. Mr Beattie, Premier of Queensland
cc. Mr Springborg, Leader of the Parliamentary Opposition
cc. Mr Quinn, Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party

Mr BEATTIE: I conclude my remarks by saying this: Cathi Taylor is a very good woman. She will be an excellent Information Commissioner.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: We just see this from the sort of nonsense that we have had from the Leader of the Opposition today. Those opposite will seek to character-assassinate anyone for a cheap political point. They have no hesitation in destroying individuals. I would hope that we could actually rise above this and support people on the basis of merit.

Our case has not been put in the *Courier-Mail*. I would urge the *Courier-Mail* to for once actually publish our side of the story. I wrote a letter. That letter has not been published in the *Courier-Mail*. I have given a detailed rebuttal of all the nonsense that has been written. In the interests of fairness, I say to the *Courier-Mail*: give us a go.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Economic Reforms

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (10.11 am): The federal Treasurer is in trouble. I know this because he has started attacking the states and territories again. This is what he does when the spotlight on his own performance gets too bright. It is his very own eight-card trick. In recent weeks he has been in overdrive because the economic credentials of the Howard government are looking very shaky. Interest rates are climbing. The current account deficit has skyrocketed. National accounts figures are among the worst since the recession of the early 1990s.

Times have changed. Mr Costello was lucky enough to inherit the benefit of reforms introduced by the Keating government and could sit back and watch the economy grow. However, he has sat on his hands for too long. He has not undertaken any major economic reforms to keep pace with changes to national and international affairs. He has done nothing to address skills shortages. He has halved real Commonwealth funding of infrastructure. Now his apathy and inaction are starting to be exposed.

Whereas he was the first to take credit when everything was rolling along smoothly, now he is ducking for cover. His latest diversion is to attack the states on GST and other taxes. He and his Canberra colleagues now want to tell the states how to spend the GST and want us to get rid of all our other sources of revenue to boot. A quick check of the facts shows the fallacy of this argument.

The intergovernmental agreement on GST that was signed by the Commonwealth government and the states clearly stated in part 2, section 7 that GST revenue grants would be freely available for use by the states and territories for any purpose. In Queensland, for instance, the money has been used to contribute to, among other things, a 27 per cent rise in Education spending, a 28 per cent rise in Health spending and a 27 per cent rise in social services spending.

Yet every federal minister seems to now have an opinion on how we should spend the money. If we add up the cost of all their ideas we find that it comes to at least 10 times the amount of money they actually give us. That is why I have announced that, from this financial year forward, I will put a table in our budget papers that shows exactly what percentage of GST the Beattie government spends on different services such as health, education and disability services. Then, if Mr Costello and federal ministers still want to tell us how to spend the money they can also tell us which of these vital services they intend to cut.

The states are receiving only what they are entitled to. The introduction of the GST called for the reforms to state based taxation in exchange for a growth tax. The states have already abolished all the taxes that we agreed to abolish as part of the intergovernmental agreement.

Let us look at the facts. Appendix A of the agreement spells out in black and white each and every one of the taxes to be abolished or reviewed. The first one is wholesale sales tax—a Commonwealth government tax not imposed by the states. The second is bed taxes. These were never imposed in Queensland. The third is financial institutions duty—once again, never imposed in Queensland. The fourth is stamp duty on marketable securities. In accordance with the time frame set out in the agreement, the Beattie government abolished it from 1 July 2001. The fifth is debits tax. The Beattie government announced last year that it will be abolished from 1 July this year, in accordance with the time frame set out in the agreement, saving taxpayers approximately $190 million per annum. This is five taxes—three we did not have and the other two we have abolished or committed to abolish in accordance with the agreement.

In addition, while also increasing spending on infrastructure and services, off our own bat we have reduced payroll taxes, increased land tax exemption thresholds to offset rising land values, cut the insurance duty rate, extended transfer and mortgage concession for first and other home buyers, and abolished credit card duty.

In aggregate, the tax changes included in the 2004-05 budget alone will save Queenslanders $300 million a year. As per the agreement, and I refer again to appendix A, the Ministerial Council of Treasurers will this month review the need for the retention of a raft of other taxes. These are stamp duty on non-residential conveyances; stamp duty on non-quotable marketable securities; stamp duty on leases; stamp duty on mortgages, bonds, debentures and other loan securities; stamp duty on credit arrangements, instalment purchase agreements and rental arrangements; and stamp duty on cheques, bills of exchange and promissory notes.

I can tell the House today that, as far as Queensland is concerned, the duty on cheques, bills of exchange and promissory notes and the duty on bonds, debentures and other loan securities will not be abolished by Queensland because we do not have them in Queensland. However, we will not be abolishing stamp duty on residential conveyances or payroll tax, as Mr Costello and his Canberra colleagues have now suggested. That was never part of the agreement. We have kept our end of the bargain. The Beattie government leads the nation in tax reform and has introduced changes that have benefited thousands of Queenslanders.

What have Mr Costello and the Howard government done? There is no doubt that GST is a growth tax. Since the 2001-02 financial year, the first full year of the changes involved in their tax reform, payments to the states, including budget balancing assistance, have increased by 15 per cent. However, I table for the benefit of members a table that shows an interesting comparison. It shows that over the same period Commonwealth income tax on companies has increased by a whopping 51 per cent and that Commonwealth income tax on individuals has increased by 22 per cent. Overall, total Commonwealth tax, excluding the GST, has increased by a massive 25 per cent. This is despite the Howard government promising that the introduction of the GST would ease the burden of other taxes on Australians.

Peter Costello is in trouble with massive tax hikes, climbing interest rates, a skyrocketing current account deficit and the worst growth figures since the recession. Is it any wonder he is looking for smokescreens? It will not work. We do not buy it and neither will Australian taxpayers. Peter Costello needs to stop throwing pebbles at the states and turn around and face the boulder of the national economy that is rapidly rolling down the hill behind him.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Building Services Authority, Consumer Complaints

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.19 am): Last Saturday the *Courier-Mail* outlined a tale of woe by referring to three cases of consumer complaint about the Building Services Authority. The first involved Mr and Mrs Phillips, who the BSA advises me are registered on their books as Mr Doug Phillips and Ms Fiona Harden. According to the reporter, Mr Tuck Thompson, this family has been rendered virtually homeless by the BSA. This ignores what I am advised, and that is that the same family which Mr Thompson portrays as living in non-ideal circumstances actually owns three houses—one at Corinda, one at Mount Gravatt and one at Holland Park.

With regard to the house about which they complained, Mr Phillips and Ms Harden contacted the BSA on 16 May 2002 to advise that they cancelled their building contract with Mr Phillip Duncombe, whom they had engaged to provide a $175,000 renovation to the home. The couple had paid $139,293 to the builder. The house was at lock-up stage—about 70 per cent complete. On 17 June 2002 the BSA inspected the site and began processing a claim for $95,729. This was completed on 31 October 2002.

In December 2002 the couple again approached the BSA, complaining that the building work was defective. The BSA then hired an engineer at no cost to the couple who concluded that the footings and the original slab which was being used to hold the weight of the extension was not strong enough to do

so. Why Mr Thompson would write that this couple is still renting after 3½ years when they own three houses is beyond me, but perhaps in tomorrow's edition of the *Courier-Mail* Mr Thompson can provide a breakdown of the $800,000 that he claims they are out of pocket.

The couple were given two options with the engineer's report, and that was to entirely demolish or partially demolish and rebuild. Mr Phillips and Ms Harden chose to totally demolish the structure. In return they claimed $139,293, the sum which they paid the builder—so they were not out of pocket there—plus $16,980 for demolition costs. In total, $156,273 was paid out by the BSA insurance scheme, which meant that the couple were not out of pocket one cent. Mr Phillips and Ms Harden also claimed rental assistance of $5,000 from the BSA to cover rental expenses while rectification was undertaken. However, this was denied when it was found that they were renting one of their own houses and were unable to provide sufficient documentation.

According to Mr Thompson's research, this family is out of pocket by $800,000, yet he makes no explanation of that figure. A little bit of inquiry would have revealed that Mr Phillips and Ms Harden have taken action, which is their right, against their engineer, architect and builder through the consumer complaints tribunal for $627,957—the sum for which they claim they are out of pocket. Quite clearly, this figure is at odds with Mr Thompson's reported $800,000.

It would also seem that the couple are certainly not out of pocket with regard to the site, as they purchased it for $210,000, I am advised, in 1997 and sold it on 15 December 2004 for $430,000. That tells me that they doubled their money, so I do not know how they are out of pocket there. Again, I hope tomorrow in the *Courier-Mail* we will read as to where the $800,000 comes from. As Mr Thompson did not contact my office for details of the other side of the story, one can only wonder about his research skills.

The case of Mr and Mrs Earley was again not checked with my office. Had Mr Thompson done so, he would know that most of the complaints are completely outside the powers rendered upon the BSA by this parliament. In September 2004 the BSA site-inspected the pool and found that the levels were within acceptable tolerances under Australian standards. The only defective building work was the fence, which had been damaged, and the BSA asked the builder to rectify the damage. While Mr and Mrs Earley were dissatisfied with the end product and understandably angry at the damage to their driveway, these matters do not fall within the jurisdiction of the BSA but, rather, under the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal, which comes under the department of fair trading.

I understand that at this stage Mr and Mrs Earley have not filed a claim before the CCT, which I must say I find remarkable as this is the only body which can help them. I cannot understand why reporter Thompson has not reported this and chose to leave out the fact that the Earleys are asking the BSA to do something that it has no power to do. Why did he not report on the reasons why the Earleys refused to approach the CCT? Perhaps it is the case that Mr Thompson, who is new to Queensland, does not know about the CCT. Certainly in his reported case about Mr Cooke's $32,000 tennis court, Mr Thompson ignores the fact that the CCT mediated an agreement between Mr Cooke and the contractor, Trevor Buchanen, on 6 June 2004. I feel sure that, had reporter Thompson done a little digging around or contacted my office, he would have been able to report that as a result of the CCT mediation the contractor was required to install new bitumen and line markings. Mr Thompson would also know that as part of that agreement Mr Cooke took responsibility for ensuring that the necessary earthworks were completed.

Mr Cooke entered into a $32,000 contract on September 2003 with Tennis Court Constructions of Queensland to build a tennis court. Some 10 months later the BSA received a complaint about cracking in the tennis court. On 15 October 2003, just three weeks after receiving the complaint, the BSA inspected the site and deemed the contractor responsible for rectifying the problem. The contractor agreed and advised that work would be done in February 2004. On 16 February 2004 the contractor complained to the BSA that he had been thrown off the site by the owner, Mr Cooke. Mr Cooke subsequently declared to the BSA that he had done so because he believed the contractor had not followed the engineering advice. On 27 May 2004 the contractor was issued with an infringement notice, which carried a $600 fine. The contractor has appealed the notice, which is his right, and the BSA is awaiting a hearing date in the Magistrates Court.

On 26 April the contractor lodged a review of the BSA decision with the CCT. Mr Cooke also filed a contractual application with the tribunal seeking to sue the contractor. On 16 June 2004 a mediated settlement took place between Mr Cooke and the contractor which stated that the agreement between the parties was full and final satisfaction of the application. A monetary payment was involved and the owner, as I stated earlier, became responsible for the earthworks and the contractor responsible for the surface. I am informed that Mr Cooke's claim in the CCT failed yesterday afternoon.

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

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, as you can see the Courier Mail's investigative journalist has left quite a bit out of this story so as to paint the BSA in an unfavourable picture.

The fact is the BSA is responsible for attending to non-completed and defective building work. It is not responsible for contractual matters so Mr Thompson's articles—and I notice he is at it again today—are entirely off beam.

As for the Opposition's and the Liberal Party's statement today all I can say is that we have the best regulated system in Australia.

The Consumer Associations magazine ‘Choice' has branded our Insurance scheme as the best in Australia but of course we do not see Mr Thompson using that reference.

We now have more than doubled our compliance officers compared to the days when the Liberal Party staffer who worked for the BSA—and perhaps the Leader of the Liberal Party needs to consult him about how effective the BSA is because he used to furnish me with media releases telling me how good the organisation was.

No sensible or reasonable observer could brand the BSA toothless as it is currently excluding shoddy builders at the rate of one a week.

No other jurisdiction in Australia has building laws as tough as ours no other state has the power to ban a builder let alone ban one for life as we have as a result of legislation I enacted which everyone in the chamber supported.

Mr Speaker, I will update the House at some later point regarding today's Courier Mail efforts as time does not permit me to do so now.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Resignation as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

Ms CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (10.27 am): I would like to acknowledge the presence of my staff and my good friend Charles in the gallery. Last Tuesday I received a draft report of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. That report concluded that no conduct on my part, nor on the part of my ministerial staff, constituted any form of criminal conduct nor official misconduct. In the circumstances, I felt that it was in the interests of the people of Queensland, the government and most particularly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Queensland that I resign.

While I am gratified with the finding that there has been no criminal conduct and no official misconduct, it was in keeping with the traditional high standards of ministerial responsibility, which I fully support, that I resigned. However, I am gratified and wish to place on record, in respect of the substantive issues that preceded the reference to the CMC, the draft report stated—

There was no impropriety in the Minister's decision to have Mr Foster and Mr Yanner accompany her to Palm Island, nor in the use of public funds to meet their travel costs.

The draft report also stated—

The considerable irony in this matter is that much of what occurred carries no suggestion or suspicion of impropriety. The decision to use public monies to pay for Mr Foster and Mr Yanner to accompany the Minister was justifiable and lawful. So too was the intervention by the Premier (through his ministerial staff) in directing that the travel should not occur at public expense. Equally, the notion that Mr Yanner and Mr Foster might be encouraged to reimburse the cost of their air travel was legitimate.

While I feel that the focus of the reporting in respect of these matters during my time as minister has not always been balanced, I also know that it is the territory in which we work and must continue to work and do our best.

I wish to thank the people of Queensland for the opportunity I have had to serve them in this important role. In particular, I want to thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Queensland for the warmth they have shown me and the wonderful lessons I have received from them. I believe that the government, with their support, has overseen a raft of policies that have the potential to lead to a profound improvement in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to overcome the considerable challenges that exist and prevent many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from enjoying the safety, security and opportunities which all Queenslanders aspire to and deserve. I am both proud and humble to have had a role in contributing to that progress.

My concern for the Indigenous people was not a jacket slipped on for convenience and now removed and abandoned. Ultimately, in the future, when the history of our Indigenous community is chartered to a position of equity, representation and true reconciliation, then it will not matter who was minister when, because it is the lasting effects of our positive contributions that are our true measure, our true purpose.

While I am disappointed that I will not continue to serve in the role of Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, I am looking forward to devoting my full attention to working in an even more concentrated way with and for the people of Clayfield for many years to come.

This work has been very rewarding during all of my parliamentary experience, and I wish to thank all of my constituents who have been particularly supportive over the last week and the last 12 months.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.30 am): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 2 of 2005*.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Appointment of Freedom of Information Commissioner

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (10.31 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House calls upon the government to amend the Freedom of Information Act 1992 insofar as to require a selection panel to be established and used to select and recommend a suitable appointee for the role of Information Commissioner, and that all future selection panels include not only the chairperson but also the deputy chairperson of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee so as to avoid any perceived bias and political interference in the selection process.

Mr SPEAKER: Before question time, I welcome to the public gallery a very special group of students from Gindie State School in the electorate of Gregory. I note that it is two minutes over time, so I will give you two minutes at the end.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Information Commissioner; Taylor, Ms C

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.32 am): My question without notice is to the Attorney-General. I refer to the appointment of Labor crony Cathi Taylor to the position of Information Commissioner. As Ms Taylor has already ruled out ruling on matters before her office dealing with the Attorney-General's behaviour, has ruled out dealing with matters to do with Education, where her husband is director-general, has ruled out matters dealing with the Premier's department, where the director-general was a referee for her and sat on her appointment panel, and will have to rule out matters involving departments where she has also been a senior officer, including equity and fair trading, Treasury, environment, natural resources, family services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, can the Attorney tell us just what matters the Information Commissioner will be ruling on and whether she will be on half pay?

Mr WELFORD: The Leader of the Opposition does himself no credit by trivialising this issue in the way that he has and making allegations this morning which are totally false. The Premier has quite clearly outlined the process that was undertaken for the appointment of the Information Commissioner. That process, involving as it did an independent selection panel assessing candidates according to established criteria, none of which were set by me or the Premier or this government, led to the nomination of Cathi Taylor as the preferred candidate. When the opposition leader last spoke on this matter in the House—

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. My point of order is that the Premier was involved and aware of the process of selection because I asked the Premier, prior to the selection panel—

Mr SPEAKER: No, that is not a point of order.

Miss SIMPSON: It is a point of order. The Attorney-General is misleading the House. The Premier was involved in the way that the panel was convened. He chose not to have bipartisan support on the selection panel, and he is aware of that.

Mr SPEAKER: The Attorney.

Mr WELFORD: Thank you very much. As I said, the independent selection panel assessed the candidates according to criteria which were already established and in regard to which the government did not have direct input. Those criteria are the standard criteria for the selection of someone in that role.

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. The Attorney-General is again misleading the House. It is not the process that was followed with the previous appointment of the Ombudsman and the Freedom of Information Commissioner. It was a divergence from the previous practice.

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

Mr WELFORD: Thank you. May I say again that the opposition leader, when he last spoke on this matter in the House, indicated that while he had a number of concerns, essentially centring on whether the opposition should be involved in the selection process, he said, 'We will adopt a wait and see attitude with regard to Cathi Taylor. If she can follow in the footsteps of the former Information Commissioner, then we will be very pleased to stand in this place or anywhere else and say that she has filled those very big shoes and has filled them aptly, and she may be able to do that.'

What has happened, of course, is that since the opposition leader—in my view quite reasonably at that time—expressed those views and joined with the government in allowing that nomination to go to the Governor, he has been triggered into action by a number of false assertions in the *Courier-Mail*. The Leader of the Opposition takes his lead from the *Courier-Mail*. The Leader of the Opposition is a co-conspirator with the *Courier-Mail*. The Leader of the Opposition ought to stand by his original comments because they were reasonable then; are they unreasonable now?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I thank the honourable Attorney-General for his question. We adopted a wait and see attitude, and we do not like what we have seen since them.

Information Commissioner; Taylor, Ms C

Mr SPRINGBORG: My second question is to the Attorney. I refer to a copy of correspondence received this morning from the Information Commissioner in which she states—

I will adopt the same organisational arrangements that were adopted when Mr David Bevan was both the Ombudsman and the Information Commissioner.

Now that Greg Sorensen, the previous deputy Information Commissioner and senior legal adviser to the commission, has been removed from that office, is it not true that the same organisational arrangements that applied under Mr Bevan cannot possibly apply now and that the Information Commissioner has misled the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee?

Mr WELFORD: I am happy to explain the situation to the Leader of the Opposition, who clearly either does not understand or wants to misrepresent what is happening. In the letter that the Information Commissioner has written to the parliamentary committee—I know of a letter; I have not actually seen the letter because it is not addressed to me, but I understand a copy has gone to the Premier—I understand that the Information Commissioner has simply made clear in regard to Mr Bevan, the Ombudsman, when he was the Information Commissioner, that should a situation arise where he considered there was a conflict of interest, he referred to other officers in his office the role of determining a matter. Similarly, the new Information Commissioner is making clear that should a situation arise, where in determining a freedom of information appeal, she considers herself to be in a conflict of interest, she will refer it to another officer within the office of the Information Commissioner for determination.

Government Taxes

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: My question is directed to the Premier and Minister for Trade. When the federal Treasurer and the Prime Minister try to demonise the Queensland government's taxes, how out of touch are they with modern government in Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: It is a very good question, because they are operating off numbers and figures from another century. They must be the numbers supplied to them by the National and Liberal parties opposite—at least when they were last in government—because we have been axing taxes ever since. We abolished credit card duty on 1 August 2004. The Prime Minister says that the states ought to do that. Well, I tell the Prime Minister that we have already done it. We made an election commitment to save first home buyers $98 million over three years, and it is happening. We introduced new stamp duty and mortgage concessions for first home buyers on 1 May 2004 so that they pay no stamp or mortgage duty on a home worth up to $250,000.

There was another tax cut on 1 August 2004 when we reduced the rate on general insurance and increased transfer duty concessions for home buyers. There is more. On 1 July this year we will abolish the bank accounts debit tax, worth approximately $190 million. In total this will save Queenslanders about $300 million in taxes each year from 1 July 2005. I say to the Prime Minister and the Treasurer: we are delivering. They can call Treasurer Mackenroth the 'tax axe', because that is what he has been doing.

We are certainly keeping our side of the GST bargain. The abolition of the bank accounts debit tax was part of our deal with Mr Costello and the Prime Minister, as was the removal of stamp duty on marketable securities, which we have done. We have taken unilateral action, totally independent of the GST deal, to axe other taxes. For instance, we have also hacked into payroll taxes. We have Australia's lowest payroll tax rate of 4.5 per cent, with the first $850,000 exempt, and increased land tax exemption thresholds to offset rising land values. I table a copy of the interstate comparison for the information of the House.

Members should not forget the tax breaks for first home buyers and the reduction in insurance duty which we have also done off our own bat. Among the states we have the highest effective land tax exemption threshold for persons and the second highest for companies. Queensland's transfer duty rates for transactions over $250,000 are the lowest in Australia. Transfer duty on non-first home purchases is significantly lower than in other states. Our transfer duty on a medium priced capital city first home is amongst the lowest in Australia. Our motor vehicle duty rate is the nation's lowest, and our general insurance duty rate of 7.5 per cent is the second lowest in Australia.

The latest data from the Commonwealth Grants Commission for 2003-04 on revenue raising effort ratios shows that our tax policy was 13 per cent less onerous than the average of other states and territories. That is not bad. As a measure of gross state product our 4.7 per cent is below the five per cent average of other states and territories. However we look at it, we have the runs on the board as a low-tax government and a tax reformer.

Information Commissioner; Taylor, Ms C

Mr SEENEY: My question is addressed to the Premier. The Premier has said a number of times that when he found out that Aboriginal activists were travelling to Palm Island at public expense he gave very firm instructions that that position be reversed. Indeed, that has been confirmed this morning in a statement to the House by the former minister. When the Premier saw Liddy Clark's press release claiming that it was never intended that the government pay, he could not help but realise the dishonesty of the former minister's claim, given his very firm instructions to reverse it. Yet the Premier continued to criticise me for referring the matter to the CMC. Can the Premier tell the parliament why he personally tried so hard to cover up this dishonesty?

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. Those comments are untrue, they are offensive and I seek for them to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier seeks a withdrawal.

Mr SEENEY: Of what?

Mr SPEAKER: Of the comments.

Mr SEENEY: The question I asked was: why did the Premier try so hard to cover up that dishonesty? It is a legitimate question.

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier has asked for a withdrawal. Under standing orders you have to withdraw. He finds the words offensive.

Mr SEENEY: So if the Premier does not like the question he can ask me—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It does not mean that the standing orders of this place are varied for that reason. You will withdraw. It is quite simple.

Mr SEENEY: I did not say anything about the Premier that I need to withdraw. I asked why the Premier sought to cover up the dishonesty of the former minister.

Mr SPEAKER: There was an imputation of dishonesty. I am sorry. The Premier is entitled to ask for a withdrawal. He has done and you will withdraw. The member for Callide will now withdraw without further argument.

Mr SEENEY: I asked: can the Premier tell the parliament why he personally tried to cover up the dishonesty of the former minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You are repeating—

Mr SEENEY: I never said that he was dishonest. I asked why he tried to personally cover up the dishonesty of the former minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has asked for a withdrawal. It is as simple as that. You will withdraw. I will read the standing order to you. Standing order 234 states at paragraph (1)—

Imputations of improper motives and all personal reflections on members shall be considered highly disorderly and the member shall not use unbecoming or offensive words in reference to another member of the House.

Under that standing order I now ask you to withdraw. That is my final request.

Mr Seeney: I asked the Premier a legitimate question—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That was my final request. I now warn you under standing order 254. Now you will withdraw.

Mr Seeney: I believe question time is a place where I can legitimately ask—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have asked a simple thing—for you to withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: I think my question to the Premier was a legitimate question and I did not—

Interruption.

NAMING OF MEMBER

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I name the member for Callide under standing order 254. I call the honourable Leader of the House.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.46 am): I move—

That in accordance with standing order 254 the member for Callide be suspended from the service of the House for 48 hours.

Question put; and the House divided—

AYES, 67—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E Clark, L Clark, Croft, Cummins, E Cunningham, N Cunningham, English, Fenlon, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Langbroek, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Mackenroth, Male, McArdle, McGrady, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Quinn, Reeves, Reilly, Reynolds, E Roberts, N Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Shine, Smith, Spence, Struthers, Stuckey, C Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T Sullivan, Nolan

NOES, 18—Copeland, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Lee Long, Lingard, Menkens, Messenger, Pratt, Rickuss, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Wellington. Tellers: Hopper, Malone

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Whereupon the honourable member for Callide withdrew from the chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Sugar Industry

Mr MULHERIN: My question without notice is directed to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Is it true that National Party MPs are stating that the $444 million sugar industry rescue package is being frittered away, not being passed on or being misused?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member for Mackay for his question. Like the cabinet, he is concerned about the future of this very important industry. It is true that there is real confusion. Members might recall that my government, in agreement with the Commonwealth, set about a must-do process of reform for the state's then ailing sugar industry. I know that prices have improved a bit since then, but reform is important.

We put up more than $30 million in a bipartisan way to get the best long-term position for producers. At the same time, the Commonwealth had a $444 million reform package. Sadly, this has all now gone wrong. On Saturday, veterans' affairs minister De-Anne Kelly—who we know is the National Party member for Dawson—was reported in the *Australian* as saying that the federal government's $444 million assistance package was a dismal failure. She did not believe the industry was serious about reforming the sugar mill owners and had been greedy in its attempts to 'exploit the cash handout'—they were her words. She said that money earmarked for diversifying the industry had been frittered away on normal mill maintenance.

Bearing in mind that there have been three industry assistance packages since 1998, I was stunned—apart from this not being her portfolio area, Mrs Kelly is clearly identified by the National Party as being in partnership with her husband, Roger, who, I understand, owns a cane farm. There might be a slight bit of self-interest in this. It is reported that Mrs Kelly got very angry the other day at the National Party's Central Council Meeting on the Sunshine Coast when state national MPs asked why as much as $146 million had not been passed on to Queensland producers.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Well might that question have been asked by the member for Gregory. I ask: what is happening here? Why are we talking about hundreds of millions of dollars not going to the industry? Why is this not being passed on to the industry and, more importantly, to those communities needing support for the promised reforms? It is tragic that the central element of the package, $75 million for regional and community projects aimed at getting the industry to diversify into new products such as ethanol, has, according to De-Anne Kelly, been misused.

This is going to impact on all of our communities, including Mackay. That is why we want this fixed up. I am confused by her comments as the information available to me is that none of the $75 million sugar industry and regional community project funding has been expended and, in fact, there are no projects that have official approval. What is going on? Why does the federal government not sort this out?

Last month, federal primary industry minister Warren Truss froze payments of about $10,000 to individual farmers because of the industry's failure to produce regional reform programs saying that he was also disappointed with the lack of industry action. Two central parts of the package—$23 million for intergenerational transfers of farms and—

Miss Simpson: Mr Speaker—

Mr BEATTIE: I table the rest of this statement for the information of the House. I want the sugar industry supported, not handicapped.

Information Commissioner; Attorney-General

Miss SIMPSON: My question is to the Attorney-General. I refer to taxpayer funds that have been expended by the Attorney's department in fighting the release of information by the previous Information Commissioner relating to his behaviour. Will the minister please tell this House what the latest total is? Can he confirm that he has spent more than $50,000 fighting this release, including a current application before the new Information Commissioner objecting to the release of the documents?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for her question. The fact is that I have not spent a single cent fighting these applications. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has been responding to various submissions and correspondence from the Information Commissioner, as I understand it, in relation to other parties to these matters. That has been a matter for the department to deal with. I do not know what the current accumulative total of expenditure for the department is for the Crown Solicitor representing other parties. The department has not spent that money representing me. They are matters that have been generated and costs generated entirely because of the ridiculous and fruitless pursuit of this matter for political purposes by the Leader of the Opposition.

Treasurers' Meeting

Mr REEVES: My question is to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Can the Treasurer advise the parliament what message he will be taking to the Treasurers' meeting in Canberra later this month?

Mr MACKENROTH: The message will be very clear to Costello and Howard,: 'Hands off the states'. The electorate will not be fooled by the stupid games that Costello and Howard are playing now and were playing yesterday. Yesterday we saw Costello in the federal parliament talking about the fact that he was too embarrassed to speak about the GST money coming to Queensland.

I am not embarrassed to talk about the GST. The table that I tabled in the parliament this morning shows that the increase in GST and balanced budgeting payments to the states since the introduction of GST up to 2004-05 is 15 per cent. At the same time, company tax going to the Commonwealth government has increased by 51 per cent. Is it any wonder he is embarrassed to talk about taxes? In relation to individuals' taxes it is 22 per cent. Compare that to 15 per cent.

He talks about being embarrassed. Of course he is embarrassed, because he knows that when we go there on 23 March my message will be very clear. If Peter Costello wants to know what taxes we will be cutting with our 15 per cent increase, I will want to know, on behalf of Queenslanders, what taxes he will be cutting. What is he going to do about the 51 per cent increase in company tax at the same time as GST and budget balancing the system has increased by 15 per cent?

That is what we need to look at. We also need to look at a couple of other things that the federal government has talked about in the last week. Let us take wage growth. It accused the state government of ballooning out wages. Since the introduction of the GST in allowing for staff growth, the average wage increase for Commonwealth public servants has been 4.4 per cent. In Queensland it has been 3.8 per cent, yet Commonwealth ministers are attacking us. With regard to infrastructure funding, as a percentage of GDP, in 1993-94 the Commonwealth spent 2.1 per cent of GDP on infrastructure funding, the states spent 2.1 per cent and Queensland spent 2.3 per cent. In 2003-04 the Commonwealth spent 0.9 per cent, the states spent two per cent and Queensland spent 2.5 per cent. With the increase that we have put into infrastructure funding this financial year, we will be spending 3.8 per cent. The Commonwealth government needs to start to answer to the people of Australia about what it is doing about infrastructure funding in that it has, as I have spelt out, cut it by over 50 per cent in the last 10 years.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the Leader of the Liberal Party, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from the Southport State School in the electorate of Surfers Paradise.

Information Commissioner; Taylor, Ms C

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the appointment of the new Information Commissioner and to the fact that one of her referees was on the selection panel, and I ask: why was one of her referees allowed to sit on the selection panel for this important position when this practice is deemed undesirable when appointing even the most junior of public servants?

Mr BEATTIE: My understanding of this position is that it is a common practice in the Public Service and one that is followed in the federal government. That is my understanding. I just repeat—

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: That is my advice, and I want to make this point: somebody applying for a position would nominate a referee. This is not someone giving a reference. I heard some inane interjection this morning about a reference. This is not a reference. This is somebody saying, 'Here is a referee.' Imagine what it would be like—

Mr Springborg: That would be a reference.

Mr BEATTIE: Listen, Mr Nasty, this is not—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, order!

Mr BEATTIE: Can I just make the point that this is not even the Leader of the Opposition's question. I ask him to have some courtesy. I actually want to answer the Leader of the Liberal Party's question. He can leave his nastiness to later. I want to answer his question, because it is a point that I referred to this morning. I have given the House an example of my understanding. Let me make this point: if, say, the Leader of the Liberal Party was sitting on a panel trying to determine who would get a job, who would he ask? This is not a written reference; this is a referee. They would actually ring the person they previously worked for and ring the person they currently work for. She currently works for the EPA. She did not work for the Premier's department.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Let me answer the question. It defies logic that people on a panel would not ask the person's current employer—that is, the head of the EPA—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Members cannot talk at me. I cannot hear them when trying to answer the question. If they give me the courtesy, I will answer their question and then I will try to take the interjection. I do not know what members find at home, but I find that if two people talk at one another there is no communication. One has to listen and then respond. It is very fundamental, but I do not want to give any marriage guidance counselling here. But I have to tell you: it does not work. Even I have learnt to listen, and mostly I do as I am told. But I have learnt to listen, too.

The point I am trying to make is: why would someone not give their current boss and their previous boss as the person to contact? Even if they did not, they are the persons that a panel should contact. What happened in this case was that when Leo Keliher was appointed to the panel he disqualified himself as a referee—not someone who had given a written reference—and they then went to the previous director-general of the department. It just defies logic to argue otherwise.

I also want to correct a slip of the tongue I made earlier. I said that the *Courier-Mail* had not reported that Greg Sorensen had come fourth. It actually did report that he had come last. It reported my comments that Mr Sorensen had finished last in the order of four short-listed candidates. What I meant to say was that it had not highlighted it, but it had reported it.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I make this point: everything I have said to the House is accurate. I made one slip of the tongue and I corrected it. Now that I have corrected the record, I look forward to the *Courier-Mail* doing exactly the same thing.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr LIVINGSTONE: My question is addressed to the Minister for State Development and Innovation. Manufacturing is an important industry for Queensland. Could the minister please provide the House with an update on its recent performances?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question. In fact, it is an excellent question, because Queensland's manufacturing sector is currently going from strength to strength. Indeed, it created more than 20,000 new jobs in the last financial year. To be precise, it created 20,225 new jobs, which represented an 11.3 per cent rise in employment in just 12 months. This accounted for more than one in five of all of the jobs created in Queensland over this period of time. The good news does not stop there. In the December quarter of 2004, the total number of Queenslanders employed in this sector exceeded 200,000. This was the industry's highest ever figure.

The member for Ipswich West is certainly right in saying that the manufacturing sector is very important to our state. It is the state's second largest employer and a significant export earner. The biggest job increase for the manufacturing sector has been concentrated in the medium- to high-technology industries. These are industries I like to call our innovation industries. Overall, they increased by 44 per cent from June 1998 to June 2004. For example, individual industries like motor vehicle part manufacturing recorded a 25 per cent increase, while the electronic equipment manufacturing industry increased by more than 200 per cent.

These innovation industries also increased their exports by 46 per cent between 1998 and 2004. The state government's Advanced Manufacturing Strategy has played a crucial role in creating the biggest jobs boom for the state since 1998. The strategy is focused on creating jobs and helping companies to become more innovative and more internationally competitive. These figures also prove that much of this growth can be attributed to innovation. Indeed, they are further proof that the Beattie government's Smart State Strategy is working and is creating more jobs and more opportunities for Queenslanders. That is why Queensland's trend unemployment rate has fallen to 4.7 per cent. We all remember some years back when the Premier set a target of five per cent unemployment. What did those people over there do? They scoffed. They laughed. They thought it was a joke. Well, today the figure is not five per cent but 4.7 per cent.

Noosa Trail Network

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the minister for environment. Last week at the horse riding meeting that the member for Gympie and I attended with the minister she gave a number of assurances. For the benefit of all members in this chamber, will the minister please repeat the assurances that she gave in relation to when she will be introducing the proposed legislation into parliament which will identify new national parks and, accordingly, impact on existing horse riding trails?

Ms BOYLE: I thank the member for Nicklin for the question. It was a vibrant meeting last week, but I must say it was a better meeting that I, departmental representatives and the consultant who has been engaged to develop the Noosa Trail Network for horse riders had thanks to the presence of Peter Wellington, the member for Nicklin, and also the member for Gympie. Both of those members, who have a concern for horse riding and its future in the area, contributed well to the meeting. We affirmed at the meeting—and I was assisted by them—that the Premier and I had made a commitment at the end of last year to work as fast and as hard as we can on developing a permanent network of horse riding trails for south-east Queensland.

In the meantime we have hired a consultant, who is a specialist—he has previous expertise in the development of recreational trails, in particular for horse riders—and he has been hard at work internally, in the first instance, that is, in identifying all the possible trails there are under state government agency control, so not only the areas that we know about through the Environmental Protection Agency in national parks and conservation areas and state controlled land but also areas such as rail and road corridors, stock routes, powerlines, water supply easements, and other state and local government reserves. Having done that work for the Noosa area, the meeting last week was to meet with representatives from horse riding groups. That is where I was joined by those local members to discuss alternatives on the ground.

We are really keen that the horse riding groups give us their best expertise. I have to say that I was a little bit disappointed in that regard. There are those horse riders who do not want change, who do not accept the government's position about national parks and horse riding and who, while they want us to find the trails, are not cooperating as fulsomely as they might. In the interests of the broader numbers of horse riders in south-east Queensland, I ask them to reconsider that position. We will be holding further meetings on the ground next week to look at some of the alternatives, but their expertise, their practice in their local area, is really needed to make this a great project and to make it proceed as fast as possible.

With regard to the question of the actual transfers and when they will take place, those four South-East Queensland Forest Agreement transfers to national parks will take place in batches over this year. I am told that those relative to the Sunshine Coast hinterland will not be ready for parliament until later this year, 2005.

Public Hospitals, Waiting Lists

Mr FINN: My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister outline the outstanding success of the government's strategy to cut public hospital waiting lists?

Mr NUTTALL: As a state, we continue to benefit from our successful campaign to actually tackle elective surgery waiting lists. In just five months last year, 32 hospitals around the state provided surgery for nearly 5,000 additional patients on top of their normal surgical workloads. An additional 8,000 patients will receive their surgery in the current $40 million second stage of this government's $110 million commitment to cut waiting lists over the next three years. On top of that, another $20 million was committed last month by the Premier and I to deliver further elective surgery. This is very effective patient care.

To imply that the government is not tackling waiting lists responsibly, as the Australian Medical Association of Queensland has, is not only incorrect but is also offensive. Queensland Health's raw data is collated and analysed by the independent Productivity Commission, which has again shown this year that Queensland continues to have the shortest waiting lists of any state in this country. To equate admissions to elective surgery waiting lists is simply incorrect. There is no direct correlation between hospital admissions and elective surgery waiting lists. Elective surgery is only about 15 per cent of all hospital admissions.

I should also point out that not an insignificant number of cases last year—nearly 1,000 surgical procedures—were carried out in the private sector. Perhaps those who doubt the success of this program should ask the nearly 5,000 additional patients who received surgery as part of our surgery blitz last year how they feel to have had their surgery fast-tracked. I am sure they feel that this is money well spent. I also confirm yet again that an independent audit of Queensland hospital waiting lists will be completed before the end of this year.

Gold Coast Hospital, Emergency Department

Mr COPELAND: My question is also directed to the Minister for Health. In October last year the *Gold Coast Bulletin* and other media outlets ran a campaign highlighting the inadequacies of the Gold Coast Hospital's emergency department. The minister responded by announcing an expansion of the fast-tracking of the lower risk patients program to 24 hours a day and renouncing the establishment of an emergency department at Robina to be completed in 2006. I ask: if those announcements have been successful, why was a leukaemia patient with a serious bowel infection and associated bleeding forced to wait four hours in the emergency department and why was a young patient suffering the agony of an abscess on the spine forced to lie on the waiting room floor for some eight hours? Why does the minister continually fail to address the serious problems of the emergency department of the major hospital on the Gold Coast?

Mr NUTTALL: In relation to the two individual cases that the honourable member referred to on the Gold Coast, I am unaware of the particulars. But can I just say that when people attend an emergency department at any of our public hospitals in Queensland they are triaged by medical professionals. It is not a matter for me as the Minister for Health to determine what priority a person's case care is.

Mr Copeland interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: Having said that, those people who present at our emergency departments are categorised in categories 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. Those in most urgent need are seen to immediately.

Mr Copeland interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: The member does not know the medical condition of that person at that time. That is a matter for medical specialists, not a matter for a politician. It is a matter for a medical specialist.

In relation to matters regarding our emergency departments, I refer the honourable member to the annual report, to the Ministerial Portfolio Statement and to a number of statements I have made in this House regarding the extensive commitment this government has made to the expansion of facilities at our emergency departments. We are very mindful of the fact that the Gold Coast area is a growth area. I say to the honourable member that proper planning is put in place to deal with that growth. It is not easy to manage growth. This state, for the very first time, will have over four million residents by the end of this year. We have had a growth of some 80,000 to 90,000 people per year over the last four to five years. We manage that growth as best we possibly can. We have managed that growth by also partnering with the private sector in terms of our elective surgery. I have outlined the program to improve facilities at our emergency departments in the Gold Coast region. We are on track to honour those commitments.

Springfield, Infrastructure

Ms NOLAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Can the minister inform the House about the important road infrastructure under way in Ipswich, particularly at Springfield?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for her question. She is profoundly interested in road issues in her area. In fact, it is a pleasure to deal with the three members who represent the Ipswich area: the member for Ipswich, the member for Ipswich West and the member for Bundamba. The electorate of the minister for primary industries also takes in the area. It is a pleasure to deal with him.

The other day I joined the member for Bundamba at the commencement of work on the Springfield interchange. That project has funding of $13 million from the Queensland government and $2.5 million from the Ipswich council. It is the first stage of the $120 million expansion of the Centenary Highway to the Ripley Valley—something that in my opinion is a key commitment of the Beattie Labor government and part of the economic development of a very important part of south-east Queensland. That key transport infrastructure will provide for the growth areas such as Springfield and Ripley.

The draft south-east Queensland plan identified Springfield to Ripley as a major growth centre. Of course, I am delighted with the work that my colleagues are doing in terms of the industrial and social development of that area: the minister for state development with the Ebenezer industrial estate and the like, and the training opportunities from the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations.

The Ripley link will be complete by 2007. The interchanges should be completed by late this year, providing access to the new shopping centre currently under construction. The interchange will include single-lane on and off ramps as well as a three-span bridge over the future Springfield-Ripley Road. This government will continue to meet its responsibilities in the greater Ipswich area. We expect the federal government to meet its responsibilities as well. We are not shrinking from those infrastructure responsibilities.

I also make the observation that it was wonderful to be there with the Mayor of Ipswich, who was very positive and happy to work with the state government. The Premier and I have a constructive working relationship with the Brisbane City Council. It is a bit strange that there are two levels of

government that can work together in this state—the state government and councils—on important road infrastructure projects but it is the federal government that has an ideological blind spot in front of it. I did not say to Mayor Pisasale when we were opening this project, 'We want you to subscribe to this particular view of industrial relations when it is built.' We did not say that to the mayor. We had road issues that we wanted to raise with the mayor, and they are issues that the government is working out.

It is about time the government got serious about building roads instead of ridiculous claptrap from people like Minister Macfarlane, who has said in the federal parliament that we should give some of our coal royalties away to pay for economic, wealth-generating infrastructure. These royalties go towards our hospitals, our police and our schools. These coal mineralisations are the property of the people of Queensland. The federal government has the hide to put not one cent into our coal rail infrastructure in Queensland. It has the hide to put not one cent into our port infrastructure in Queensland, in stark contrast to the state government. When it comes to road funding, the federal government collects $14 billion a year and returns 18 per cent of it to motorists. How dare the federal government criticise others when it comes to infrastructure.

Gold Coast Hospital, Multidisciplinary Chronic Pain Team

Dr FLEGG: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. I refer to a letter sent to local GPs from the multidisciplinary pain clinic at the Gold Coast Hospital—I now table the letter—which reveals that the clinic has no medical officer, is recruiting GPs to help where, in its own words, 'expertise in chronic pain management' is optional and claims it is unable to deal with patient medication or to review a patient's painful condition. Is this the government's idea of a pain clinic? Why does a supposed first-class health system offer only third-rate treatment to chronic pain sufferers on the Gold Coast?

Mr NUTTALL: I have not seen the letter that has been tabled. Could I have a look at that? You are a classic, you are. I have said in this parliament on a couple of occasions that the member for Moggill is a person who is loose with the truth. If he aspires to be the Leader of the Liberal Party, which he does, he needs to establish some credibility, and he does not do that. Time after time after time he stands up in this place and fudges around the edges.

This program at the Gold Coast Hospital is an allied health outpatient program designed for people to address self-management of chronic pain. The letter states—

We are interested in obtaining a list of general practitioners with an interest or expertise in chronic pain management. This list would be provided to patients requiring further medical review of their pain condition in addition to our program or if our services are inappropriate.

'In addition to' it says. The final paragraphs states—

If you have an interest or additional knowledge of chronic pain management and would like to be included on our medical practitioners list please contact the team on the numbers list above. Your involvement would be greatly appreciated.

This is about an organisation that works for Queensland Health—part of my Queensland Health team—that is being proactive. The member for Moggill stands up in this place and tries to mislead every member of this parliament about what really happened. He stands condemned.

International Women's Day

Ms MALE: My question is addressed to the minister for women. Firstly, I thank the Labor women's caucus for the flowers and the ribbons celebrating International Women's Day today. Can the minister please advise the House of the government's priorities for women in Queensland?

Ms BOYLE: I thank the member for the question. For Queensland women, International Women's Day this year is cause for a very special celebration, as together we mark the 100th anniversary of suffrage for women and the 40th anniversary of voting rights for Indigenous women and men. Community groups have registered more than 150 events across the state including art exhibitions, debates, morning teas and a walking tour of significant sites. There has never before been so many International Women's Day events registered on the Office for Women online events calendar. We have distributed more than 380,000 posters, bookmarks, calendars, stickers, balloons and postcards to help people celebrate.

I am pleased to announce two particular initiatives today. The first is an information paper on women in local government in Queensland. This shows women make up 50.1 per cent of the state's population but hold only 30 per cent of mainstream councillor positions. We need more women councillors. We need them in there making the grassroots decisions that affect our lives, and we need more women staff working in a range of positions right throughout the councils.

Secondly, today I am launching the Smart Women, Smart State Science, Engineering and Technology Task Force. This is an initiative that arose out of a report by my colleague the member for Barron River. In 2004 only 20.9 per cent of IT jobs in Australia were held by women. Worse, women made up only 7.9 per cent of engineers and 40 per cent of people employed in science and the environment. There is no question that more women should be included in these fields. There is no question that these are generally Smart State jobs and well-paid jobs, and women, too, should be there.

My task force, therefore, will develop a strategy in its first year to encourage the access and employment of women in science, engineering and technology, and then it will proceed to implement it.

International Women's Day should be a special date on every woman's calendar. It is a day to celebrate women, where we have come from and the battles yet to win, but it is also a day to remember that some of our sisters have not yet achieved full equity and access. It is a day to celebrate the past and make claim to an equitable and happy future for men and for women. I table the names of the excellent people who have been appointed to the science, engineering and technology task force.

Property Valuations

Mr CHRIS FOLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. It is imperative that valuers can determine whether properties have been sold on an arms-length basis. The proposal to delete purchasers' and vendors' names from data provided to valuers has the potential to seriously skew property valuations to the detriment of ordinary Queenslanders. One block of land in my electorate was purchased by a trader for $25,000 and then resold one month and three days later for $75,000. If names are not on the record, it will distort the view of the property market even to experienced valuers let alone a totally unsuspecting member of the public. Will the minister allow professionals to continue to be able to use this information responsibly to help the public gain reliable information on their property investments?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have been concerned now for some time about the misuse of valuations data provided by my department—so much so that, particularly in the real estate industry, previous attempts by me to confine the use of that data to the purpose for which we originally made it available have been ignored. Despite pleadings to the Real Estate Institute of Queensland that it somehow control its membership, it has been unable to do so. That is no criticism of REIQ; it is a simple fact.

Because of the significant number of concerns that I get through my own electorate office—and I know other members in this place do as well—about breach of privacy and the misuse of data by a number of organisations, I have said that I intend to significantly tighten up the laws pertaining to the use of that data.

Whilst I appreciate the sentiments behind the member for Maryborough's question, and I acknowledge that there are a lot of responsible providers of services that use the data coming from my department, the simple fact is that despite numerous attempts to tighten controls and to bring people who misuse this data to heel they have refused to do so. Whilst I appreciate that there will be some inconvenience attached to the tightening of the provision of the data that my department provides, nevertheless, I believe it is in the interests of Queenslanders in terms of protecting their privacy that they do not receive unsolicited mail that has been developed by the misuse of valuations data provided by my department.

As to the member's suggestion that tightening provisions with respect to the provision of valuations data may result in the skewing of valuations, or such information as valuers require to assess the appropriate valuation of a particular property, I do not believe that that is the case. Valuers have at their disposal a range of tools to glean what is happening in the property market around a particular locality that gives them good, robust information to determine the valuation of a particular property. They do not need names and street addresses to determine valuations of neighbouring property. I am informed by senior valuers in my own department that it is sufficient for their purposes that they are able to access data on a general basis without actually identifying the property owner. In my view, that protects the privacy and interests of individual Queenslanders, which I am committed to doing.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling matters of public interest, I welcome two groups of seniors to the public gallery—the COTA National Seniors from the electorate of Bundamba and residents of the Living Choice retirement village from the electorate of Kawana.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Information Commissioner; Taylor, Ms C

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.32 am): The smoke and mirrors were rolled out in true force in this place this morning, particularly by the Premier and the Attorney-General, in order to justify the flawed appointment of Cathi Taylor to the position of Information Commissioner in Queensland. We are not going to have any rewriting of the record of this place, and I would advise honourable members opposite to go and read the *Hansard* record of what the member for Maroochydore and I said in debate two weeks ago in relation to the recommendation for the appointment of Cathi Taylor.

The *Courier-Mail* got it right when it responded to the questions by Mr Beattie's office of why did the opposition not vote against it and express its concerns in parliament. The *Courier-Mail* said that any

reading of the *Hansard* record made it very, very clear that the opposition had very, very strong concerns about the appointment of Cathi Taylor. There is no doubt about that whatsoever. Our concern at that stage was based on two issues—one was the appointment process and the other was her relationship as the wife of the Director-General of Education Queensland. They were the two concerns that we raised in the parliament that night, and they were significant concerns. We said that we would be adopting a wait-and-see attitude with regard to her appointment.

Since then, a whole range of other information and evidence has come to our attention and come to the public's attention. We know what that information is—her strong involvement with the Labor Party in other states, including Tasmania and New South Wales, and her connection with Liddy Clark and her attempt at re-election in the seat of Clayfield. We saw some pathetic defence from the Premier this morning who said, 'Well, look, Ms Taylor only went to a fundraising function for the ALP in the seat of Clayfield,' and somehow there was a relationship between that and the member for Gregory going to a community cabinet meeting. I have been to a community cabinet meeting. We do that all the time. We get invited to go to those things. It does not mean that we support the Labor Party; it does not mean that we are going to a Labor Party fundraising function. What we have seen from the Premier—

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I rise to a point of order. People who come to Clayfield functions come from all sides of politics.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): There is no point of order.

Mr SPRINGBORG: My case is simply that Cathi Taylor is a former member of the Labor Party in two states. The fact that we have somebody going to a fundraising function for the member for Clayfield seems to me to be a trail that we should be somewhat concerned about.

We saw a class acting performance from the Premier this morning. Is it any wonder that he met with the actors from *The Bill?* I hope they got some tips from him. We also had the minister for police engaging in some sort of profound discussion with the actors from *The Bill* about how to address law and order. People were going, 'These people are just actors.' It just goes to prove the unclear distinction within this government about the difference between actually doing something and acting out something. We have an ongoing and continuing soap opera with the Premier being the lead actor. That is what we have with this government. It cannot distinguish between what is fact and what is fiction. It relies upon *The Bill*, which is what the minister for police did. When she became the police minister, she said, 'Oh, well, my experience is I watch *The Bill*.' We had the Premier take that to the next degree yesterday.

We heard more obfuscation from the Premier this morning and also from the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General stood here and said that there was no direct involvement from the government in the selection process. What are the key words? 'No direct involvement'. Certainly there was indirect involvement. He did not exclude indirect involvement in the process. It had indirect involvement all over it.

When the member for Maroochydore tabled in this place the other night the CV of Cathi Taylor, the referees were the current director-general of the Premier's department, Leo Keliher, the former director-general of the Premier's department, Glynn Davis, and a deputy director-general, Simone Webb. These are powerful referees, one would have thought. Then, incredibly, the Premier suggested that we have to believe that when they went into that selection process they all sat around and ignored the fact that Leo Keliher's name was on Ms Taylor's CV. It was a pretty powerful endorsement, I would have thought. The Premier said, 'Well, it's not really a reference, it was just somebody who was prepared to be a referee.' Talk about nitpicking, talk about splitting straws. So, when I act as a referee for somebody I know in my electorate, I am doing so hoping that nobody will ring me because I do not really want to be a referee for them. Is that what the Premier is hoping that we will believe? Come on! Pull the other one! It is just absolutely ridiculous!

There was infiltration, there was indirect input—there is no doubt about it—and there was no consultation in the spirit that the previous Ombudsman/Information Commissioner was appointed in Queensland because at that time the deputy chair of the committee, the member for Maroochydore, was part of that process. What was good then was not good enough in the case of Ms Taylor's recommendation. We now know why—because the member for Maroochydore would have asked some telling questions that would have compromised that particular appointment. There is no doubt about it.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: We have the minister seeking to justify the corruption of that process, and how he forgets! How he does not care! Can members imagine what that particular selection panel would have thought if they had known of this person's political involvement in the past, if they had known of this person's attendance at a fundraising committee for the member for Clayfield, and if they had known of the involvement by Ms Taylor with the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General?

The Premier stood in this House this morning and said that it was a professional involvement, not a personal involvement. That does not explain why Ms Taylor had been dining at Ms Hunter's place.

That seems to me to be taking it beyond a professional association to that of a personal association. If that does not set alarm bells ringing at the highest possible level I do not know what will. Surely there should have been disclosure to that selection panel of those particular issues. I doubt that that was the case. I doubt that any of those facts were disclosed to that particular selection panel. They were important facts; there is no doubt about it.

Our antennae went right up on day one when we heard of Ms Taylor's appointment because we know the contempt that the government has for the FOI process in this state. We heard a former employee of the FOI Commissioner's office on ABC Radio yesterday talking about the fact that Mr Sorensen was such a professional, and about the way that this government's introduction of fees has had a profound effect on the flow of information. This government hates freedom of information. This government knows that freedom of information is one of the only accountability mechanisms there is in this state at the moment to keep a check on their excesses. They hate it; we know that they hate it.

This government is so drunk on its arrogant majority that it can no longer distinguish between right and wrong. It can no longer see any problem in a circumstance where a personal friend/dining partner of the person who got the job was the head of the selection panel. This government can see no problem whatsoever with the director-general of the Premier's department being a referee. It can see no problem with that person's political involvement. It can see none of these particular issues. This government can no longer distinguish between what is right and what is wrong in the state of Queensland. That proves that we have a government that is drunk and arrogant on its huge parliamentary majority.

In the early 1990s Tony Fitzgerald, in 3.5.4 of the bible that was referred to all the time by the Labor Party and never really actioned, stated in relation to special appointments that there should be appropriate consultations with opposition shadow ministers, professional associations and other relevant bodies and people with reference to all potentially relevant circumstances, including any personal or political connections which the appointee has with the government or any of its members or their political party. Tony Fitzgerald warned of that over 15 years ago. This government continues to ignore those particular warnings and those processes because it feels that it no longer has to be accountable.

There is no doubt that this Information Commissioner is hopelessly compromised. She has to absolve and absent herself from so many potential appeals that she will not be able to do her job. She has been politically compromised. She does not have our confidence anymore. She is a lame duck. She must go. She can no longer fulfil that particular position.

PRIVILEGE

Alleged Misleading of House by Leader of the Opposition

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.42 am): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. In a purported matter of privilege raised in the House this morning by the Leader of the Opposition, it was alleged that I had made misleading comments on radio yesterday. Of course, that raises the question of whether it is indeed a matter of privilege in the first place, but I leave that aside.

The first point is that the Leader of the Opposition suggested that my comment in the media yesterday that I had not heard of the matters in relation to the FOI since well into last year was incorrect. He tabled certain documents purporting to substantiate that. There is only one document here that gives any indication as to when I had contact with the FOI commissioner and that is a document dated 20 September 2004 when I wrote to the FOI commissioner. That document substantiates what I said on radio yesterday.

Mr Springborg: You have no updates on any of that other information?

Mr WELFORD: I have not heard from the FOI commissioner since, to the best of my knowledge. The second point is this: in the matter of privilege that the Leader of the Opposition raised he said that he tabled a submission made by the Attorney-General to the Information Commissioner arguing why information should not be released. The Leader of the Opposition has misled the House dishonestly. There are two documents attached to a letter from the Information Commissioner to Mr Paul Turner in the Leader of the Opposition's office. The first document is headed ‘Submission—RE: 2004/F0088' and starts with the heading 'Background Information'. That document is not mine.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr WELFORD: The Leader of the Opposition has deliberately misled the House by seeking to surreptitiously slip into public disclosure under the privilege of parliament a document that is not a submission by me.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Education and Training

Ms STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (11.44 am): Young people need a good range of options and career pathways. The Beattie government's education and training reforms—ETRF—are designed to keep young Queenslanders learning or earning. The ETRF policy is in my view the best and most comprehensive policy agenda for young people ever introduced into Queensland and I am a self-proclaimed No. 1 fan of this policy.

I am pleased to see the business community this week supporting the idea of young people staying in school to year 12 and undertaking vocational education and training while in school. In response to the Howard government's dumb idea to encourage more young people to leave school at year 10, business leaders have thankfully brought good sense to the debate. They have argued that it is important for young people to have scholastic achievement to year 12 and vocational skills.

Queensland has the strongest record of all states and territories in providing vocational education and training for students while also studying at school. Some 6,201 Queensland students are undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship while in school. This is 45 per cent of the national number of students doing apprenticeships or traineeships in schools. That is thousands of young people who are picking up their carpentry skills, their electrical gear, their chef's gear, who are getting organised and getting real life trade experience. The students I have spoken to who are doing this, who are part-time at school, part-time at TAFE or into a work experience program or an apprenticeship, say that it is great to have that flexibility, it is great to have that opportunity.

To make sure that school is interesting and meaningful for young people and to make sure that we meet our skills shortages and needs for skills into the future, we have to offer flexible pathways, and Queensland is leading the way. It is often parents who are discouraging young people from the trades, so it is important that we show both young people and their parents the benefits of the trades and provide opportunities at school for them to do that.

I congratulate the ETRF trial in my area—the Corinda-Ipswich district—which is providing really good opportunities for businesses, TAFEs and others to get together with school staff and students to look at some really innovative opportunities for young people. I also congratulate schools in my area such as the Calamvale Community College and Forest Lake State High School for actively promoting flexible pathways for young people and supporting the ETRF program. Calamvale Community College, for example, has an early start time of 8 am for senior students allowing them to finish earlier to enable them to participate in work and training opportunities. They are also actively building links with local businesses through their business breakfast program and other activities.

There is abundant evidence to show that young people who complete year 12 generally have better employment opportunities and life outcomes. In Queensland our determined efforts to encourage young people through to year 12 is paying off. In 1999, 71 per cent of students stayed on to year 12. In 2003 this had grown to 76 per cent. I congratulate businesses in my local area that are achieving manufacturing excellence and, at the same time, creating employment and training opportunities for young Queenslanders.

Last week I presented B and R Enclosures with a 2004 manufacturing excellence award. The company has a $25 million world-class Brisbane facility at Heathwood that includes new state-of-the-art robotic machinery, 3D design modelling software and a training centre. B and R is a smart, family owned company with managing director Ken Bridges and sister Chris Bridges-Taylor as general manager doing a great job. They have provided training on site for more than a thousand customers and they are looking at opportunities to work with schools to provide training opportunities there. This is the future. It is local businesses and schools, TAFE and other training providers working cooperatively to generate meaningful learning and earning opportunities for young people. This is critical to the growth of trade skills and the future of our economy.

On a final note, I want to acknowledge that today is 8 March, International Women's Day, and I say to young girls in schools and around the state: consider trade opportunities, particularly the non-traditional trades, which are generally the higher paid trades. Not only can you develop trade skills; if you also become business savvy, trade careers are a springboard for tradespeople to run their own small businesses. As the saying goes, girls can do anything; go girls.

Townsville CD-ROM; Interstate Migration

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.50 am): Last October I spoke in parliament about the introduction of the skilled independent regional visa, SIR visa, where visas are being made available to up to 4,000 additional skilled migrants per year, providing they live and work in regional Australia for a nominated period. I envisaged the SIR visa as one possible solution to the skills shortage in the building industry and other trades and professions in Townsville and Thuringowa.

Following on from that, I draw attention to recent media reports about the federal government's plans to increase the migrant intake to the highest level in many years in a bid to stem the skills shortage nationally. The front-page headline in the *Australian* on 3 March reads 'Migrants to kickstart economy'. The latest announcement from John Howard this morning indicated that he thinks it is a good idea for young people to leave school at year 10 and take on a trade. I think that is a very retrograde step.

As well as migration from overseas being one possible answer to a serious skills shortage in the Townsville region, migrants from interstate need encouragement to look beyond the confines of south-east Queensland. They used to say in America, 'Go west, young man.' In this instance it is, 'Go north, young men and women.' The south-east Queensland draft urban plan highlights issues confronting state planning authorities in coping with the forecast influx of migrants from other states into the south-east corner over the next two decades.

In Townsville last month I had the pleasure of launching a CD-ROM which is designed to sell the city and region to potential Queensland-bound settlers from interstate. The Townsville Life in the Tropics Employee Relocation CD-ROM developed by Townsville Enterprise and TP.com is a comprehensive information package on Townsville and the north Queensland region. Some 5,000 copies have been produced.

The CD specifically targets young people and families seeking better employment prospects and a more rewarding lifestyle. Importantly, while it depicts a wonderful lifestyle, it also highlights the region in terms of technology and innovation. The economy of the Townsville region is one of the most diverse in the country and is growing at a rate above the national average. Unlike other economies that rely largely on one particular type of industry—tourism or manufacturing, for example—the Townsville region incorporates diverse industries and scientific pursuits. Many are leaders in their fields.

The Townsville Life in the Tropics Employee Relocation CD-ROM offers the promise of lifestyle, technology, innovation and a modern, healthy environment in one appealing package. It comprises five components. The live component incorporates information on services available in Townsville that make life easier for residents. This includes information on playgroups and where to find toy libraries, for instance. There is a house and garden section and a comprehensive list of sporting, entertainment and leisure facilities.

The work component has an overview of the Townsville and regional work force, including the main employers, training providers and professional development opportunities. The invest component shows a booming economy with a growing property market and an economy where the average income is higher than the state average and business is expanding. It also contains historical information for potential investors. Another important aspect of this component highlights Townsville's significant convention and events business. The economic spin-off for the region is substantial and growing annually.

The visa component illustrates north Queensland's wealth of natural tourism assets. It showcases the varieties of accommodation and a vast array of recreational activities. The visit component of the CD is crucial. Historically, a large number of people choose to live in areas where they have previously enjoyed their holidays or their recreation time.

Finally, the learn component publicises the north Queensland region as the knowledge hub of north Australia through such institutions as James Cook University and the Australian Institute of Marine Science. Townsville and Charters Towers boast some of the finest primary and secondary education facilities in the state. These are all shown on the CD. Access to high-standard education facilities for children is an important determining factor in a family's decision to relocate.

The CD's sponsors will use it to assist in recruitment drives and publicising the north. The sponsors are Townsville City Council, Thuringowa City Council, CHR, Queensland Nickel, Sun Metals, Maunsells Engineering, PDR Nationwide, WMC, North Queensland Cowboys and James Cook University.

TP.com produced the CD-ROM and Digital Dimensions provided the audiovisual content. I commend Townsville Enterprise on instigating this valuable marketing tool for the Townsville region. I congratulate Townsville Enterprise CEO, Glennis Schunner, on International Women's Day. She is a fantastic woman who will be taking this CD over to Japan and other parts of Asia in the next few weeks.

Queensland Health; Waiting Lists

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (11.54 am): This past weekend, a weekend well into March, we saw the belated delivery of the report from Queensland Health on waiting lists in Queensland. This report was dated 1 January 2005 and was not released until 6 March 2005. We have been waiting for that report since January to see how the government was going with waiting lists within Queensland. What do we know? Why was it withheld? The data in that report was very bad for the government. The data in that report showed that waiting lists are blowing out in Queensland and that they are getting worse right around the state.

In February of this year, well after the time the report should have been delivered, we heard the Minister for Health and the Premier announce that there would be an extra $20 million injection into Queensland Health to attack waiting lists. We asked the question: why have we got this money but we have not seen the report? We could only surmise at that stage that the report was going to be bad and this was a pre-emptive strike to try to deflect any criticism of bad waiting list numbers. And guess what? That is exactly what we saw last weekend when we actually got to see the report, which was dated 1 January. It should have been released at the beginning of January. It showed that waiting lists around Queensland have gotten worse in a very concerning way.

When this minister took over at the beginning of last year, he and the new director-general made a much-publicised tour around Queensland talking to Queensland Health employees and assuring them that things were going to change and that things were going to be different. They said that the past minister and the past D-G had focused too much on the bottom line and patients were going to become the focus. Those in Queensland Health took them at their word. They said, 'This sounds great.'

But 12 months down the track everyone in Queensland Health and anyone who deals with Queensland Health know that nothing has changed. Everything is going along exactly as it was when we were saying, 'Where's Wendy?' We could not get answers then and we are not getting answers now. What we are seeing is a minister who not only is not focusing on the bottom line but also has completely forgotten about patients. We have to ask questions about both.

This minister denies problems at every turn. When the AMAQ raises questions about the performance of Queensland Health, he denies that there is any problem and criticises the AMAQ. When the College of Emergency Medicine raised problems with Queensland Health and the performance of emergency departments he criticised the College of Emergency Medicine and said that it did not know what it was talking about.

He said that there is no such thing as access block and that it does not cause people to wait in emergency departments for hours on end. I raised the question of access block on the Gold Coast, where it is happening. It means that patients are lying on trolleys and on floors in emergency departments; they are not being put into beds because the beds are not there. The minister denies that even exists. If he talks to the personnel in some of his hospitals who are working on reducing access block they will tell him that it exists.

He criticises the cardiologists when they raise problems. The only person he does not criticise is the Premier's chief spin doctor when he produces a report to say that Queensland Health is fine. Queensland Health is not fine. This waiting list data goes to show that. Of the 31 reporting hospitals only 11 were able to reduce the number of patients on their elective surgery waiting lists. That leaves 20 that were not able to do this. That leaves 20 that are worse.

We heard the minister come out with the spin that it has done so well that 11 hospitals have reduced their waiting lists. What he did not say is that 20 are worse. The total number of patients on the statewide elective surgery waiting list increased by 737 from the October quarter. The lists do not include those patients waiting to see a specialist so that they can go on to a waiting list for surgery.

There is evidence that indicates that there are long waiting lists just to see a specialist and that some hospitals are refusing to accept new referrals. These are waiting lists for waiting lists that the minister refuses to accept exist. I will read a letter from the medical superintendent of the QEII Hospital health service district. It is addressed to a doctor. It states—

Re: Gastroenterology Service

Thank you for referring this patient to the QEII Hospital.

Unfortunately the demand for gastroenterology services on QEII far exceeds our ability to triage and manage such cases.

As a consequence we are returning your referral for your review. As we are unable to accept your referral, I would recommend you explore other options with your patient such as referral to a public service with a lesser waiting time or even a private consultation.

If you feel your patient needs urgent surgical intervention please contact the Director of General Surgery regarding an urgent referral.

Do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

There is just no assistance to actually get surgery; that is the problem. That shows that there are waiting lists to get on the waiting lists. The waiting lists that Queensland Health are compiling are dodgy, and this minister needs to do something about it.

Health Services

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (11.59 am): I am glad that the member for Cunningham is going to stay in the chamber, because he is now going to hear some good news about Queensland Health rather than a rubbishing of Queensland Health staff across the length and breadth of Queensland. Last Friday night I had the pleasure of launching the Queensland Cancer Fund's Nurse of the Year campaign for 2005. The Nurse of the Year gains significant community attention, draws a focus on improving health outcomes for Queenslanders with cancer and raises much-needed funds for cancer programs. The Nurse of the Year is judged on his or her qualities as an ambassador for both the nursing profession and the Queensland Cancer Fund.

Last year's Nurse of the Year, Mr John Gamlin from the Bundaberg Health Service, filled this role in an outstanding manner. The Queensland Cancer Fund has a long and proud history of directly supporting the nursing profession. Last year's campaign raised $1.77 million, which supported general Cancer Fund activities as well as special programs for nurses. The prizes for the Nurse of the Year campaign cover professional development, including overseas study tours. The educational value of this campaign is one of the most vital. For example, this year 52 nurses will take cancer prevention and early detection messages to all parts of the state. In Ipswich the Nurse of the Year entrant is Vaetolu Mulivai, an assistant in nursing at Nowlanvil Residential Care.

All entrants draw together colleagues and the community to raise much-needed funds for the Queensland Cancer Fund. The campaign started in 1971 and has raised over $24 million since then for the fight against cancer. This year is the 35th time that the Nurse of the Year campaign has been launched and is known to be one of the flagship activities of the Queensland Cancer Fund. The fight against cancer is not just about early detection and treatment; it is also about prevention. The continued partnership between the Queensland Cancer Fund and Queensland Health will improve the health outcomes for Queenslanders who have cancer and help prevent cancer through public education campaigns. This vital fundraising activity will continue the fight against cancer and save the lives of Queenslanders.

I note that the member for Cunningham is no longer in the chamber to hear a second piece of good news on behalf of the Queensland government and Queensland Health. I have very good news for the women of Brisbane and women who work in the Brisbane city area. The BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane city service at the corner of Adelaide and George streets, which I officially opened and which commenced screening in August 2004, has now been evaluated. I am pleased to inform members of the House that the evaluation revealed that 483 women were screened during the first six-week period, which equates to an average of 80 women per week or 16 per day. Of these 483 women, 58 per cent were new clients to the BreastScreen program and 42 per cent were rescreens. The level of overall client satisfaction was very high.

The evaluation of the city BreastScreen service revealed that the service is of high quality, convenient, appropriate and acceptable to the needs of Brisbane women. Breast cancer remains the most common cancer diagnosed and one of the leading causes of cancer death amongst Australian women. During 2001 there were 2,182 cases of breast cancer diagnosed among women in Queensland, with 471 Queensland women dying as a result of the disease. This is one of the reasons that the BreastScreen Queensland program and the early detection message are so important—to spread the message that BreastScreen provides free screening services to eligible women aged 40 and over and especially to encourage women aged 50 to 69 to have a breast screen. A doctor's referral is not needed. The Brisbane city service will continue to operate at this location, and I encourage women living or working in the inner-city area to go to this particular service because it is a professional and friendly service offered by BreastScreen Queensland.

As members of this House are aware, a heritage building within the grounds of Ipswich Hospital was damaged by fire on the evening of Sunday, 6 February. The safe evacuation of wards was a credit to the staff and also to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. Fortunately, the building was used as a business support area, not as a ward area. I am pleased to advise that the staff of Ipswich Hospital are back online in terms of day-to-day operations and that after an investigation the cause of the fire was determined to be an electrical fault.

I would also like to advise members of the House that the relocation of the Red Cross Blood Plasma Service at Ipswich is progressing. Ipswich Hospital and the Red Cross have found a potential site within the hospital, and the Red Cross will require accreditation by the TGA, given the stringent guidelines the organisation needs to meet to conduct its plasma service. Queensland Health and Ipswich Hospital will continue to work with the Red Cross for this vital service to continue for the people of Ipswich and the surrounding areas.

Finally, today I will be hosting a visit to parliament by the COTA National Seniors. Adel Stokes and her fellow seniors will tour parliament and have a barbecue lunch. It certainly was a pleasure to work with members of National Seniors on improvements to the entrances of Ipswich Hospital and on improved bus services to and from the hospital. Members of National Seniors take a keen interest in the Ipswich Hospital and their health in general, and I welcome them to the parliament of Queensland.

Tablelands Electorate, Primary Producers

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (12.04 pm): Most primary industries in my electorate are still doing it tough for one reason or another. Even though weather wise last year was a reasonable one and Tinaroo Dam filled to 76 per cent, we found that many potato growers had good crops but could not sell their products because of a glut on the market. After that, the mango growers, with a record high quality and quantity of produce, also found it difficult to sell because of another glut on the market as well as a scarcity of workers and trucking crates in which to send the mangoes away. The price was so low that

most growers were advised to send their mangoes off for juicing. This was on top of problems for our citrus growers, who were affected by the citrus canker outbreak in the middle of last year.

December and January brought good rains, further filling Tinaroo to 87 per cent and leaving the tablelands looking like a picture postcard. But February has been exceptionally dry, with only about a quarter of our usual rainfall. Today in March there is a cyclone bearing down on the coastline and we are hopeful that it will bring a deluge to fill the underground aquifer but do as little damage as possible to infrastructure. For our hardworking dairy farmers, their problems are more deep seated than how much rain they received last month. About another eight dairy farmers have just left or are about to leave the industry on the tablelands. There has been a massive exodus since deregulation, and now there are only about 100 dairy farmers left in an area that only recently had about twice that number.

Deregulation has shown no benefit for our dairy farmers nor for the consumers of milk. Deregulation has brought a massive slump in the farm gate price of milk without any benefit for the consumer, as the retail price of milk just keeps going up. It is true that recently our farmers who trade under the banner of the Dairyfarmers organisation have had a price rise of some 2c per litre, but it means little when they are still going backwards—that is, when the price that they get is still less than it costs them to produce the milk. I understand that in the southern part of the state some farmers are being paid about 10c per litre more from a different company, but we do not have access to those kinds of payments in the north.

The amount our farmers are being paid is just not enough, and it is not about efficiency. Our farms are tremendously efficient. They have weathered the slashing of around a third off their milk prices and have hung on, hoping that in the wake of deregulation some sanity would come back into their industry. But that, it seems, is nothing more than wishful thinking. The bottom line is that our farmers are still being gutted, their businesses are still closing and the consumer does not get cheaper milk. In fact, the price continues to go up—exactly the opposite of what is supposed to happen.

On a brighter note, the factory at Malanda has just won a Commonwealth grant of some $1.6 million to research and develop whey, a waste product of milk, into medicinal and beauty products. This follows state government support a few years ago for the industry. These grants are well and good and appreciated, but they are not putting the vital extra cents into the pockets of the producer. The producer is still being asked to continually be more and more efficient and work longer hours without any appropriate remuneration. As they tighten their belts, the council rates keep going up, the telephone bills go up, the electricity bills go up, the cost of fuel goes up, the price of machinery goes up and the price of food, including milk, goes up while Woolworths and Coles continue to make their profits.

The primary producer can continue for only so long, and already many have lost their livelihoods and have seen generations of effort in building up their farms, herds and knowledge collapse. They are the ones who know the real impact of national competition policy, of free trade agreements, of deregulation and all of the rest that makes up this so-called economic rationalism. They are suffering this immense pain because of an economic theory that is supposed to bring benefits if not to them then at least to their city cousins, but it has not and the pain is for nothing at all. Families and communities are in agony and nobody is better off—and all for a theory that has not produced a single positive result. It has to stop.

Alcohol Management Plans

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (12.10 pm): As the member in this House who represents the largest number of Indigenous Queenslanders, I welcome the appointment of the member for Logan, John Mickel, to the position of Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. I also welcome the appointment of Linda Lavarch as his parliamentary secretary. Since their appointment both of these members have taken time to speak to me and I can assure them that I will be a regular to them on the phone.

One issue I look forward to talking to them about in the near future is alcohol management plans. As the member for Cook, I spend a great deal of time defending the government's decision to introduce alcohol management plans in Indigenous communities. All 13 DOGIT communities on Cape York have had alcohol management plans in place for over 12 months now. On the whole, there is still support for the plans, but people are frustrated that there are not enough resources to enforce the plans rigorously. Wujal Wujal is one community that is certainly feeling the pinch in relation to the enforcement of its AMP. Wujal Wujal has the strictest plan in Queensland and is probably one of the few places where total prohibition is in place. It is a policy supported by both the council and the justice group and is difficult to enforce due to the nearest police presence being based in Cooktown or Mossman.

The justice group, with the aid of the local community police officer, is trying to enforce the ban without adequate resources. The community police officer has no car or place to lock up the grog if it is confiscated. The community champion is the police commissioner, who has been requested to put state police into the community on pay night when bootlegging and alcohol abuse are at their most prevalent. Although the police presence was increased considerably late last year, the community wants more. Certainly, I hear a similar story in other communities across the cape. There also remains some

resentment at the severity of the plans and the fact that some were enforced in the first place. I have been approached by many people, especially workers, who believe that it is their right to be able to drink in their own homes.

There are other complaints, suggestions and concerns expressed by my constituents. Unfortunately, I see fewer ideas on how we can attack the core reasons for Indigenous disadvantage. How do we stop the violence? How do we improve people's health? How do we get kids to school? It is the state police who deal with the violence on the streets and in houses, it is the Queensland Ambulance Service that deals with traffic accidents often caused by drinking, it is Queensland Health's doctors and nurses who patch up the abused and traumatised as well as the drunks, while treating the long-term effects of abuse in the form of chronic diseases. Surely anyone can see that we need a preventive strategy to address these issues.

I welcome comments by Premier Peter Beattie last Friday that the Brisbane CBD could be subject to an alcohol management plan to address violence in the capital. In Cairns, the CBD has reduced its operating hours for licensed venues and the police have been cracking down on public order laws. The Gold Coast has also altered its licensed venue hours and there are special procedures in place for events such as schoolies. These changes make it easier for me to sell the tougher plans in Indigenous communities.

Certainly, illegal alcohol sales remain a problem in all communities. That is why I welcome the fact that the Musgrave and Archer rivers roadhouses on the Peninsula Development Road have entered into voluntary agreements with Liquor Licensing to control the amount of takeaway alcohol being sold to non-general visitors. It is hoped that this will curb the amount of alcohol being sold in places such as Pormpuraaw and Aurukun. The licensees of these establishments should be commended for putting the interests of the community above their own financial interests. Certainly, Liquor Licensing will be looking at other licensed premises near DOGIT communities to see how they can work to prevent bootlegging.

There has been a fair bit of panic in places such as Weipa and Cooktown that they are going to be hit with alcohol management plans as well. To my knowledge, that is not the case. Are we talking to licensees about limiting takeaway at the point of sale? Yes. How will it affect residents? It may simply mean that large alcohol orders have to be home delivered. This will also assist in curbing drink-driving. Let me stress this: nothing has been decided and nothing will be decided until we sit down with the licensees and find a way forward.

While I understand that hoteliers are nervous and are seeking the support of the community in their campaign to be left alone, I think that there are some benefits to the hoteliers and their patrons. I think cracking down on bootlegging will improve their profitability in the long run, and other reforms that this government has introduced such as compulsory training will also help existing licensees by raising the standards for new entrants into the market.

Taking into account the concerns of communities like Wujal Wujal, the Queensland Police Service is increasing activities on the cape. This year a station and permanent police presence will be established in Hope Vale and in Wujal Wujal the year after.

Time expired.

Building Services Authority

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (12.14 pm): At the last parliamentary sitting I drew attention to the inadequacy of the government's prequalification contract system and how the PQC system is providing a false sense of security to subcontractors and suppliers. Members will recall that I asked the minister for public works and housing to urgently review the prequalification contract system and address the inadequacies and failures of that system. Further, I asked the minister to ensure that the Queensland Building Services Authority re-examines and revises the criteria in regard to assessing a company's financial statements by taking into account the net tangible assets of a company, including loans to and from related companies.

Today, I asked the minister for public works and housing to extend the review to include the full operations of the Queensland Building Services Authority. By no means do I wish to criticise the diligent officers who are trying their hardest to make this system work. But what I and many consumers who have had dealings with the QBSA want to see is the system working to meet the needs and expectations of consumers and the building industry alike. This morning, the minister for public works and housing vilified *Courier-Mail* journalist Tuck Thompson for carrying out his duty to his employer. I do not believe that Mr Thompson fabricated those stories and I am sure that deep down the minister does not, either. Mr Thompson was simply reporting the concerns expressed by the many consumers who contacted his newspaper. I carry no torch for Mr Thompson, but I believe in justice and fairness, and when I see that fairness spurned by anyone, a minister of the Crown in particular, I feel compelled to speak out about injustice and unfairness.

There are a number of concerns that should sound alarm bells for the Queensland Building Services Authority, if not for the minister. The QBSA should recognise that they have a perception

problem, even if they think that they do not have an operational problem. Although the minister stands and purports to support the QBSA, members in this place know that the minister is very comfortable with his hands-off, no-responsibility approach to his portfolio. In fact, members must wonder—and I know many constituents query—how this ineffective minister actually earns his money. His hands-off, no-responsibility approach to his ministerial duties has become well known and is the subject of much mirth within the industries that fall under his jurisdiction.

A media statement released yesterday by the General Manager of the QBSA, Mr Ian Jennings, stated—

Queensland consumers in the domestic building and construction industry continue to have the best protection in Australia.

It states further—

Legislation introduced in 2003 was helping rid the industry of dangerous building work and provide greater protection for Queensland from rip-off merchants.

There is no argument with that. Queensland consumers must be protected and that is why I ask the minister for public works and housing to get involved with his portfolio and have a look at how the system can be improved. The *Courier-Mail*'s stories do not tell a lie, no matter how much vilification of their journalists the minister wishes to engage in.

As I said, there is a serious perception that the government is not providing the protection to consumers that is expected by the broader community. How can it be improved? That is what the minister should be asking today. I now call on him to undertake an urgent review of this system within his own portfolio.

Federalism

Hon. J FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (12.18 pm): The Howard government seems hell-bent on taking over state responsibilities in its push to assume greater Commonwealth control over industrial relations, education, health and the GST. Federalism has never been so starkly challenged.

Peter Costello would have us believe that the economy is at the mercy of decisions made by state governments. His search for scapegoats is verging on the comical. On the one hand, he is urging the states to be more accountable in their use of the GST in the provision of health, education and infrastructure. On the other hand, he wants the states to use GST revenues to slash $15 billion in taxes for home buyers, small business and consumers—a stark contradiction. The real worry is that if the Howard government cannot admit its mistakes and fix the problems the market will ultimately do that, and its methods tend to be pretty rough.

Is congestion at the Dalrymple Bay coal loader responsible for the volume of manufacturing exports rising just five per cent in the past three years compared with 52 per cent growth in the Keating government's last three years? I think not. Did state taxes make the volume of our services exports slump six per cent since December 2000 or push down exports of commercial and professional services by 14 per cent? No way. A current account deficit of seven per cent of GDP in the December quarter means Australians spend $107 for every $100 earned. It is what happens if you live in a fool's paradise when living standards depend on not what you earn but on what you borrow.

Paul Keating recognised that a large current account deficit was a sign of policy failure. Labor took gutsy decisions then to strip away entitlements, slow the economy and shift resources to exports and manufacturing. In the following 10 years Australia's volume of exports more than doubled and manufacturing more than quadrupled. Had these trends continued, by now the current account problem would be behind us.

As soon as Costello became Treasurer in 1996, he found a so-called Beazley black hole which served the political purpose of providing the economic rationale for Howard's abandonment of non-core promises. Howard's cuts included $1.5 billion out of training schemes, $800 million out of higher education and more than $2 billion from the cut in the 150 per cent research and development allowance. For good measure, his Treasurer, Peter Costello, put $400 million a year additional tax on manufacturers. These cuts have undermined the restructuring of the Australian economy.

The Howard government has dined out on the Keating reforms and now it has been found asleep at the wheel. Instead of looking for culprits such as the states and the unions, the Howard government should expand education and training programs to give the unemployed the skills to find work. Instead of pork-barrelling the electorate every election time, Howard should have been funding much-needed infrastructure.

Australia now has 1.7 million willing workers who are unemployed, underemployed or prematurely retired. Most have relatively low skills and education levels, yet we have more jobs vacant than at any time in 30 years. Most of these are skilled jobs. Our problem is a mismatch between the low-skilled unemployed and the high-skilled jobs on offer. We need to solve this problem as it will become a long-term crisis as ageing tradesmen retire.

Recent apprenticeship figures show that in the year to September 2004 the number of apprentices dropping out of trade courses shot up 29 per cent. The number completing them rose just one per cent. Just 30,600 people completed trade training while 39,300 dropped out. For the 700,000 working age people on disability benefits, intensive assistance to give them skills and remove financial disincentives to taking on part-time work is essential. In the nine years of the Howard government, the number of Commonwealth employees with disabilities has halved from six per cent to three per cent. How is that for community obligation to the disabled from Howard?

The Howard government is using industrial relations as a smokescreen to deflect attention from his reform failures. He has done nothing about the skills shortfall and the tax welfare trap, both of which are affecting numbers and the quality of the work force. It is seeking the ability to freeze and even reduce the minimum wage. Workplace minister Andrews claims that the AIRC has raised the minimum wage by $70 a week more than it should have during the term of the Howard government. He seeks to expose all Australian workers to the full force of employer power by neutering the AIRC. Andrews is also seeking to give employers the power to force cuts in workers' wages and conditions. None of these IR changes will improve productivity, solve our lousy export performance or skills shortages or our material expectations which have risen faster than our means. We have to focus policies and resources on increasing our future ability to increase income. Howard's drive towards decentralisation of power and his reluctance to properly redress policy mistakes, preferring instead to use wedge politics, put Australia on a long and slippery slope to disaster.

Time expired.

Information Commissioner

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (12.23 pm): This government has a sorry history of frustrating FOI applications and denying access to sensitive documents. We have seen in the past the cabinet approving truck loads of documents passing across the cabinet table without any possibility of cabinet ministers considering all the documents laid before it. In one instance we even had a change to the law to prevent access to sensitive documents when the FOI commissioner ruled that access be given. The government did not like the commissioner's ruling and indicated that it would challenge it in the Supreme Court, changed its mind and then introduced legislation to change the act.

This latest controversy surrounding the FOI commissioner is indeed one that is of the government's own making. It has damaged the perception that this Information Commissioner could do her job impartially by its determination to control the process. We have a position now, in my view, in which the Information Commissioner is in an almost untenable position. If at some time in the future she decides an issue against a non-government applicant, then she will open herself up to allegations that she did so because she was biased.

All of this could have been avoided if the government had included a non-government representative on the selection panel, as it has in the past. What we are seeing now is the government reaping its own rewards in terms of its determination to control the process. If a non-government member had been included on the selection panel, all of the issues that are now in the public domain which are so damaging to the appointment of the Information Commissioner would have been resolved behind closed doors at the selection panel level, not out in the public arena where it is at the moment.

The Information Commissioner is an officer of this parliament. She deserves the support of all members of this parliament, not just the government members. That applies to all the other commissioners of this parliament as well, whether it be the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner, the Auditor-General or the Ombudsman. They all deserve 100 per cent support from the members of this parliament, not partial support, as we have in this particular instance.

We need to ensure that in the future a situation like this never arises again, where the government puts in place an appointment process that leads to only partial support for a commissioner of this parliament. We need to change the legislation to make sure that those commissioners who are not currently governed by such legislation which requires a non-government member to be on the appointment panel are governed by legislation. I think that is an important change in the legislation we should take as a lesson from this particular example and make sure it never happens again.

If we go down this track again where the government is insistent upon controlling the process and we have another division like this, then the appointment of parliamentary commissioners into those key roles will become almost useless because they will be appointed to what will be seen to be a partisan position, not bipartisan. They are officers of this parliament. They deserve our support. We should not put any future appointee in this almost untenable position where we are divided upon whether or not we will support the decisions of the officer at some time in the future. Whilst they may take an oath of impartiality and they may make their best endeavours to rule impartially on all of the issues that come before them in the future, there will always be the sneaking suspicion because of this public debate that the decision handed down, if not to the person's liking, will be made from a biased position. We simply cannot have that as a parliament. We cannot go through this exercise again.

I make it quite plain that the Liberal Party will be introducing into this House a private member's bill to make it a requirement under legislation that all future appointments to the sensitive commissioner roles of the parliament will have to have as part of the appointment process the deputy chair as well as the chair of the relevant parliamentary committee. That is the only way to ensure that we do not go through this terrible experience again of having a person nominated, supported by the parliament, and yet after that appointment people in this chamber indicating that they no longer support that person's appointment. We have placed that officer in an almost untenable position and it should not happen again.

Time expired.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. TA BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.29 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend legislation administered by the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. TA BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.29 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

When the Queensland Labor government came to office in 1998 it was committed to restoring balance and equity to Queensland's industrial relations system. The Beattie government introduced a fair and balanced system governed by the Industrial Relations Act 1999 and headed by an independent umpire that had real powers to avert disputes—the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. That act reflected the rapid changes which had taken place at workplaces here and elsewhere in the years previous. The measures I will be highlighting today bring further refinements to the act as a result of the changing demands of the modern workplace.

The Industrial Relations and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2005 introduces provisions that benefit both employers and employees, particularly low-paid outworkers in the clothing industry. Among the benefits and technical and administrative changes outlined in the bill are—

- support for outworkers to recover unpaid wages,
- help for workers to achieve a better balance between their work and family lives,
- better protection of workers from unlawful dismissal.

Outworkers generally are among the most exploited workers in the country. Outworkers often are exploited, are chronically underpaid and suffer poor workplace health and safety practices. In Queensland, many outworkers are from Vietnamese speaking backgrounds. Since 1998 the Department of Industrial Relations has stepped up its investigation of employment circumstances of outworkers in the clothing industry, especially their vulnerability to exploitation. A Vietnamese liaison officer has been appointed and education stepped up to build trust with the community, many of whom are fearful of government authorities after experiences in their homeland. The focus on education will continue, but compliance measures need to be enforced as well, and that is where these amendments will assist.

There are a range of reasons why outworkers are disadvantaged, but mainly it is because of complex production chains used by contractors in the industry and cultural barriers. The bill will help outworkers gain their just entitlements and provide a consistent regulatory regime across the eastern states, where the majority of outworkers live and work. This means that unscrupulous manufacturers will get no benefits in moving their bogus operations to Queensland or out of this state and into New South Wales or Victoria.

The provisions in the bill mirror those in the southern states. If an outworker's assumed employer denies liability for the outworker's wages, the bill ensures that it will not be up to the outworker to sort out the web of contractors and subcontractors hiding the employer's identity. Instead, the outworker will be able to make a claim on the person they believe to be their employer—called the apparent employer in the legislation—and it will be up to the people in the production chain to sort out amongst themselves who the legal employer is. It is expected that the industry will take the legislation into account in its commercial arrangements to ensure that no-one but the legal employer has to pay an outworker's wages. An apparent employer can use the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to recover

wages from the real employer. These provisions will end the web of deceit that has plagued outworkers and their families.

In 1999 Queensland led the country in becoming the first jurisdiction to provide unpaid maternity leave for casual employees when it was introduced for long-term casual employees with at least two years service. In 2001 the government took this a step further by reducing the qualifying period to 12 months service and expanding the entitlement to provide unpaid parental leave. The bill before us today continues the government's reform agenda for work and family by implementing key recommendations of the Ministerial Taskforce on Work and Family established in November 2001. These reforms include requiring the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to ensure that awards take family responsibilities into account and, wherever possible, include provisions that will facilitate agreement at the workplace on work and family matters. Extra unpaid bereavement leave also will be available to employees who have to travel long distances to attend the funeral of a family member. Employees who have obligations under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander custom to attend traditional ceremonies can request up to five days unpaid leave.

There are a number of provisions in the bill to implement the recommendations of an internal audit review of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. These provisions include providing statutory authority for the appointment and fixing of terms and conditions of commissioners' associates similar to the arrangements for judges' associates. They also empower the Governor in Council to determine conditions of appointment of commissioners where the matter is not otherwise covered under the Industrial Relations Act or determined under the Judges (Salaries and Allowances) Act. Other provisions relate to dismissal laws, which are extended to protect all casuals and all employees engaged for a fixed term or task from invalid dismissal. Invalid reasons for dismissal include dismissing an employee for being a member of a union, being temporarily absent from work because of injury or illness, making a disclosure under whistleblowers legislation or dismissal on discriminatory grounds.

The bill also addresses problems with the flow-on of agreement terms into awards. The existing provision has proven too limited on some occasions. For example, in one instance it prevented a consent application to amend an outdated, single-employer award to reflect pay rates from a certified agreement. The pay rates in the relevant award had not been updated for several years and were unlikely to provide a realistic no-disadvantage test to compare with an agreement. The current restrictions on flowing agreement terms into awards are generally justified, but a mechanism is needed to enable awards, in limited circumstances, to be amended by consent to keep them relevant and up to date. The bill achieves this by requiring the commission to permit agreement terms to be rolled into awards where—

(a) the parties to the agreement consent, and

(b) the parties to the agreement are also parties to the award.

The amended terms of the award must only apply to the parties to the agreement. This measure will facilitate the approval of consent applications and, in contested applications, the public interest test and wage principles that must be applied will provide safeguards against inappropriate flow-on.

As well as implementing the government's commitment to fair, safe and productive workplaces, the bill contains a series of amendments to clarify and improve the operation of the legislation in light of developments since the introduction of the Industrial Relations Act 1999. These amendments include—

- For breaches of the freedom of association provisions in the act, the onus will be reversed. This will strengthen the statutory protection of freedom of association and is consistent with the federal act.
- The jurisdiction of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission over wage recovery will increase from the current $20,000 claim limit to $50,000.
- Breaches of industrial instruments will be dealt with more effectively by allowing orders to enforce the payment of money required to be paid by the industrial instrument, if this liability cannot be enforced elsewhere under the act.
- The ability of employers to pay into a fund other than one of the funds specified in their industrial instrument has been removed. I am referring there to superannuation funds.
- The bill now provides a default calculation for working out the commission component of annual leave and long service leave payments. It only applies where an employee is already entitled to a commission component in their leave payment but the parties cannot agree as to how the commission should be calculated.
- The Presidents Advisory Committee and Industrial Relations Advisory Committee will be removed. Regular, informal consultation between key stakeholders made them unnecessary.
- Protected action will be able to be taken after the nominal expiry date of a determination made under section 149. This will encourage enterprise bargaining after the nominal expiry date of a determination.

- The bill will improve the conformity of the act with International Labour Organisation conventions by removing section 638(b). This section allows a union to be deregistered for taking industrial action that interferes with trade or commerce or the provision of a public service. It is a carry-over from previous legislation which was modelled on federal legislation. The federal legislation required the reference to trade or commerce to provide its constitutional basis. Removal of section 638(b) will not affect the commission's ability to deregister an industrial organisation for conduct warranting such action. For example, the commission will still have the power to deregister a union for continued contravention of a commission order or industrial instrument, or for engaging in industrial action that is likely to have a substantial adverse effect on the safety, health or welfare of the community.
- The bill amends the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 to plug a gap in the commission's jurisdiction over trading hours. The bill gives the commission jurisdiction over trading hours in south-east Queensland on Boxing Days and New Year's Days that fall on a Sunday, where there is a substituted public holiday.
- A number of technical amendments to correct drafting anomalies in the IR act, provide for consistency in wording in certain sections and clarify the meaning of the legislation are also included.

The bill also makes amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act 2003 to ensure provisions restricting industrial instruments providing for accident pay and other payments to incapacitated workers outside of the act will apply equally to workers under other contracts of employment.

An amendment to commissioners' powers for declaring void unfair contracts under the Industrial Relations Act 1999 affirms that the regulation of compensation payable to a worker on account of sustaining an injury resides exclusively with the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003.

Special amendments in the bill ensure that no party, such as an employer, third party or agency, can obtain or use workers compensation claim histories for the purposes of selecting a person for employment. Compensation claim histories consist of basic listings of a worker's previous workers compensation claim numbers and date of claims.

Non-compensable injuries from sporting or motor vehicle accidents are not identified, nor are other interstate workers compensation claims. Subsequently, the limited information provided in workers compensation claim histories does not provide sufficient detail for an employer to match a worker's capabilities to specific job duties.

Despite this, there is strong evidence that some organisations have been compelling prospective employees to provide a copy of their claims history before they will be considered for employment. Importantly, this amendment ensures that the rights of employers are in no way limited in relation to employment practices. If a position has specific physical requirements, an employer has the option of obtaining a pre-employment medical for the preferred applicant. These amendments remove the potential for any party to unfavourably treat a person in the event that they have had a workers compensation claim. The provisions do not affect workplace rehabilitation, return to work or employment programs organised by an insurer with the worker's employer or another employer to aid an injured worker's return to work.

These amendments are the product of a great deal of consultation. I thank everyone who has participated and I look forward to the bill's passage into law in the interests of a fair and balanced industrial relations system, safer and more productive workplaces and the best interests of the Smart State. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Rowell, adjourned.

HOUSING AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (12.45 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Housing Act 2003, the Building and Construction Industry Payments Act 2004 and the Local Government Act 1993 and for another purpose. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (12.45 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Honourable members will recall I introduced into this House in May 2003 a bill for new housing legislation for Queensland. On 1 January 2004, the Housing Act 2003 commenced, repealing the State Housing Act 1945 and dissolving the Queensland Housing Commission. This has resulted in a more contemporary and flexible system for the administration of the state's housing programs.

Today I am pleased to introduce the Housing and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2005. This bill seeks to further streamline the Department of Housing's administrative arrangements and improve outcomes for clients and those of state government funded housing service providers. The bill also clarifies the definition of a 'building contract' under part 4A of the Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991.

These amendments resolve inconsistencies, and clarify and make changes to a small number of legislative provisions. The bill also repeals legislation and legislative provisions which are no longer required.

The amendments in this bill concern the transition from the State Housing Act 1945 to the Housing Act 2003, including the regulation of funded organisations, the provision of housing loans and the powers of the chief executive. The bill also repeals the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (Service Personnel) Act 1991.

A significant development under the Housing Act was the establishment of a system of regulation for organisations funded by the Department of Housing. This regulatory framework requires all funded organisations to be registered. The amendment bill addresses an inconsistency in the application of a provision that safeguards housing services where a significant risk to tenants and/or assets is identified.

The provision enables the Department of Housing to appoint an interim manager to temporarily manage tenancies and properties funded by the department for a maximum period of six months. At present an interim manager may only be appointed to non-profit housing service providers.

The bill enables the housing department chief executive to appoint an interim manager to local governments and Indigenous community councils funded to provide a housing service under the Housing Act 2003. An interim manager will only be appointed where it is necessary to ensure that premises occupied by tenants of registered organisations are safe and that the allocation, rent assessment and collection processes result in equitable and accountable use of public resources. This amendment will ensure that all funded registered providers are covered, irrespective of whether they are a community group, church or local government.

As members of this House will know, many Queensland households continue to face difficulties in accessing affordable and appropriate home ownership. The state of Queensland has assisted tens of thousands of low and moderate income households to access and sustain home ownership for close to 100 years.

Amendments in this bill support the department's effective and flexible administration of its contemporary loan products. This includes the capacity to offer one or more standard fixed and variable interest rates for all owner occupied home loans under the Housing Act.

This provides a greater level of choice to clients and enables them to tailor their repayments according to their financial circumstances. These amendments will position the state government to respond more effectively to the diverse and changing needs of home buyers and home loan applicants.

Under existing provisions of the Housing Act, the chief executive can add the cost of alterations or improvements to a property made by the department to a contract of sale balance, without the prior agreement of the purchaser. The bill removes this power. As a result, the Department of Housing will no longer be able to unilaterally increase the unpaid purchase price for a home under a contract of sale where alterations, improvements or enlargements have been made to the home. This change improves the negotiating position of home buyers on the purchase price and is reflective of compliance with the Consumer Credit Code.

The bill amends some of the transitional provisions from the State Housing Act 1945 to the Housing Act 2003. These amendments are required to ensure that no person in receipt of housing assistance under the State Housing Act 1945 is disadvantaged or treated differently following the repeal of that act. The bill also removes references to the obsolete housing trusts and corrects inconsistencies in the power of the chief executive under the Housing Act.

The Department of Housing has identified two situations which could result in persons being treated differently or disadvantaged following the repeal of the old State Housing Act. These relate to the payment of rates by home buyers and the provision of concessions for the freeholding of perpetual leases. The bill amends the Housing Act to ensure that all properties the subject of new or renegotiated shared equity or instalment contracts are rateable land under the Local Government Act 1993. The bill also enables the department to continue to assist individuals into home ownership by restoring the power to provide concessions on the cost of freeholding, to holders of perpetual leases upon their conversion to freehold. Importantly, this will validate concessions provided since commencement of the Housing Act.

The Housing Act 2003 establishes a range of powers that enable the government to achieve the objects of the legislation. The act provides that the chief executive has, under the minister and as agent of the state, all the powers of the state that are necessary or desirable for performing their functions under the act. The bill corrects inconsistencies in these powers.

In particular, the bill will allow the chief executive to sell houses at a capital loss subject to financial limitations applicable to all state departments and to determine interest rates, both fixed and variable, for shared equity and contracts of sale products. These powers already exist under the Housing Act, but are assigned to the minister and Governor in Council. The proposed changes will ensure there is consistency in the general powers provided to the chief executive under the act.

The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (Service Personnel) Act 1991 is also to be repealed as this act is no longer required. This act governed the handover arrangements of defence housing from the state to the Commonwealth Defence Housing Authority, which was finalised in 1993-94.

The bill also amends a yet-to-be-commenced consequential amendment in a schedule to the Building and Construction Industry Payments Act 2004. The bill will clarify the meaning of 'building contract' and reinforce the requirement that all construction contracts that include any amount of building work will be subject to the contractual protection provisions of part 4A of the Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991. These amendments have been subject to wide consultation with stakeholders and I believe there is support for their introduction to the House.

Improving access to safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing has been the cornerstone of the Department of Housing's strategies in recent years and it will continue to shape its responses to the housing needs of Queenslanders. With the Housing Act 2003, we now have greater flexibility and authority to seek new and more contemporary ways to deliver services to Queenslanders. These amendments will further improve the effectiveness of the legislation in assisting the delivery of the department's housing programs. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.53 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Corrective Services Act 2000. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.53 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the Corrective Services Act 2000 to remove any doubt that where a prisoner was released on parole and had it cancelled before 1 July 2001, then the time served on parole does not count as time served for the prisoner's sentence. In late 2004, two prisoners, Psaila and Swan, applied to the Supreme Court for a ruling in respect of their entitlement to street time—that is, the time elapsed between the date of a prisoner's release to parole and their return to custody prior to 1 July 2001. In both circumstances the prisoners were released to parole and parole was cancelled under the Corrective Services Act 1988.

Under the 1988 act, a prisoner released on parole needed to get to the end of their imprisonment period, without the parole being cancelled, before they could be finally discharged from the obligations of the imprisonment. If a prisoner's parole was cancelled then the time lapsed between the date of release to parole and their return to custody or street time did not count as time served under the period of imprisonment and had to be served again before the prisoner could be finally discharged.

A provision was inserted into the Corrective Services Act 2000 which provides that prisoners who have their parole cancelled do not have to re-serve their street time. The change in policy introduced by the 2000 act was never intended to have retrospective effect in relation to parole that had been cancelled under the 1988 act or any previous act.

In the Psaila matter, the court determined that although the prisoner had his parole cancelled under the 1988 act—and as he was not returned to custody until after the commencement of the 2000 act—the provisions in the 2000 act apply and as such the prisoner should be credited for his street time.

This decision focused on transitional provisions in the 2000 act. This decision was successfully appealed by the Department of Corrective Services.

In the Swan matter, the court ruled in favour of the department and held that the street time did not count and had to be re-served. However, Swan has appealed this decision which is yet to be heard. Although the department was successful in both cases, this amendment removes any uncertainty that may have existed and seeks to remove any remaining scope for speculative challenge. It also reassures the community that prisoners serve the expected sentences the courts impose on them. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 12.57 pm to 2.30 pm.

EMBLEMS OF QUEENSLAND BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 23 November 2004 (see p. 3613).

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.30 pm): At the outset I indicate that the National opposition will be supporting the Emblems of Queensland Bill 2004. This bill introduces the Barrier Reef Anemonefish as the aquatic emblem of Queensland. It also rewrites the Badge, Arms, Floral and Other Emblems of Queensland Act 1959 in more modern terminology. In addition to the state arms, state badge and state emblem, Queensland now has the floral emblem, which is the Cooktown orchid; the faunal emblem, which is the koala; the bird emblem, which is the brolga; and the gem emblem, which is the sapphire. This bill will mean that the aquatic emblem will be the Barrier Reef Anemonefish.

Whilst having a number of state emblems is probably becoming a bit silly, the opposition does not oppose the creation of the new emblem given the way in which the public consultation process has been used to engender support for the introduction of the proposed change. Real questions must, however, be asked as to whether this proliferation of emblems for the state really does anything to enhance our reputation as either a tourist destination or a modern society. What other emblems can be suggested? Could we have tree emblems, food emblems, artistic emblems, music emblems et cetera? It can all become a little bit silly after a while.

It is noted that the rewrite of the legislation does not make any substantive change to existing legislation. This currently reverses the onus of proof in relation to a prosecution for unjustified use of the badge, flag emblem et cetera. This reversal of the onus is proof is justified on the basis that it would impose a very difficult burden of proof on the state if it had to prove unjustified use of an emblem by producing evidence that would satisfy a court beyond reasonable doubt. Real concerns, however, are held about the continuation of this principle which runs counter to the normal principle of criminal and quasi-judicial justice we inherited from the common law. Because this principle has not seemed to work any mischief in the old act, the opposition will not be opposing its continuation in the new act. However, we will continue to closely scrutinise its use by the government.

Our support for this bill is not to be interpreted as our support for using the reversal of proof principle in other circumstances. I want to labour that point for a minute. One thing that I have noticed in the last few years in this place is the continuing use of the reversal of onus of proof by the government. I would be concerned if this is becoming standard drafting practice for legislation that comes before this parliament. One thing that we have always prided ourselves on as a society is that the state has to prove its charge against the individual. There has been this ongoing proliferation of the reverse onus of proof, which puts an unduly onerous obligation on the person who is charged or accused to be able to prove that they did nothing wrong in the face of enormous resources from the state.

We have seen it in recent times with the Vegetation Management Act and with a range of other legislation. I am very concerned that it is becoming an easy way for the government to be able to absolve itself from its responsibility to prove its charge against the individual involved. It can be extremely onerous for that individual—and I will say it again—to be able to defend themselves. Certainly in recent times with the Vegetation Management Act we have seen that. That may be a consequence of the lack of resources or the lack of the real desire from the state to be able to do what it has been charged with constitutionally and also by inheritance of our democratic system which has been built up through many centuries of the British Westminster system.

The opposition will not be opposing this move to create the aquatic emblem being the anemone fish, but we would caution the government about a proliferation in this area. I am not sure that we need any more emblems—aquatic emblems or otherwise—in Queensland. That is a comment that we do receive from people from time to time. However, the anemone fish did create a lot of interest last year or the year before because of *Finding Nemo*. It is probably an appropriate fish to become our aquatic emblem, if we have to have one. Mind you, I have had discussions with some people in the last couple

of days who felt that the barramundi would not have been a bad aquatic emblem for Queensland. It is a Queensland fish. Somebody said a mud crab earlier today when having this discussion. If one is looking for a colourful fish and something which has captured the imagination of young Queenslanders in particular and, for that matter, young Australians, then the anemone fish is probably that fish.

In conclusion, we support the bill before the House but caution against further proliferation of emblems.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (2.35 pm): The Liberal Party will also be supporting the Emblems of Queensland Bill in that it gives added protection to the use of the state's symbols, and we think that that is appropriate in the circumstances. We also note that there is an addition to the emblems in terms of the Barrier Reef Anemonefish, or Nemo as it is now affectionately known. I am not surprised that, when the government embarked upon the process of finding this aquatic emblem, Nemo enjoyed some 26 per cent of the popular vote amongst those who made a submission, because it was done almost directly after the movie had been released and the movie was fresh in people's minds. Whether or not it is an appropriate symbol is a matter that people need to give some consideration to, because there may indeed be a better symbol like the barramundi, the mud crab, the spanner crab or whatever else.

The process has been gone through and people made their choice, I suspect, because of the rash of publicity surrounding the movie at the time. That is why the proposal enjoyed such a huge number of submissions. Some people have said to me, 'This is not necessarily a species of fish unique to the Great Barrier Reef. There may in fact be other anemone fish in other reefs around the world.' I raise that issue as one that people ought to consider. We may in fact have locked ourselves into a position that, because of the publicity at the time, may not be seen as appropriate in years to come.

As I said, we will be supporting the bill. I note the reservations indicated by the Leader of the Opposition. We also have some concerns about the reversal of onus of proof. It seems to be more and more prevalent in legislation these days, but on this occasion we do not propose to oppose this section of the legislation either. However, we simply make the point that it is not a part of the legislation that we want to see repeated in every piece of legislation that the government brings into the House.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (2.37 pm): The Emblems of Queensland Bill 2004 is necessary to adopt the Barrier Reef Anemonefish as the state's aquatic emblem. It also seeks to bring into current times the Badge, Arms, Floral and Other Emblems of Queensland Act 1959. Australia is an island surrounded by great oceans, and Queensland in particular is noted for its sunshine and life by the water with some of the most beautiful coastal regions in the world. We have a unique and diverse aquatic life which is a great tourism lure to our state, yet we did not have an emblem to signify this great asset of ours.

The Beattie government set out to find an aquatic animal which was worthy of representing our state along with our existing state emblems—the Cooktown orchid, the koala, the brolga and the sapphire. A panel with representatives from various notable groups was formed to select a number of creatures that would be appropriate to adopt as an emblem. After short-listing 11 species, the list put to Queenslanders for their views included the Australian brain coral, the Lamington spiny crayfish, the blue sea star, the dwarf minke whale, the barramundi cod, the Barrier Reef Anemonefish, the Queensland groper, the humphead wrasse, the channelled volute, the white-spotted eagle ray and the zebra shark.

A total of 19,202 nominations were received from the general public and their support for the Barrier Reef Anemonefish was received with 26.88 per cent of the popular vote. A final check was made with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives of the top three nominations to ensure that there were no potential cultural sensitivities.

The Barrier Reef Anemonefish emblem was clearly the choice of Queenslanders wishing to express the need for a colourful and striking representation of our aquatic life and, indeed, our outdoor lifestyle. The state coat of arms and state badge are important symbols of Queensland. It is important that we continue to protect these symbols from unauthorised use, particularly for commercial or business purposes. I am sure that the Beattie government will put all of our emblems to great use, encouraging further tourism and trade opportunities for our great state and for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (2.40 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Emblems of Queensland Bill 2004 and in doing so will ask the Premier for clarification on one issue only. Before seeking that clarification, I believe that the emblems that we have in terms of the Cooktown orchid, the koala, the brolga and the sapphire are well chosen, but I am surprised by the number of students who cannot respond to all of those. I think that most of them know the Cooktown orchid. They have a pretty good guess with the koala, but the brolga and the sapphire often throw them a little bit. The coloured booklet containing emblems of the state is a really handy booklet to take to school classes in terms of acquainting children with our emblems. I look forward to the reprint of that booklet containing the Barrier Reef Anemonefish in it as the additional icon for the state. It is appropriate that we have a seaborn emblem as well, because we are a major island country. Certainly, the sea, the sun and the sea air have a great deal of importance to our lifestyles in Queensland.

The one thing that I would seek clarification from the minister for my sake as well as for those in my community—and I believe in other communities, too—is that an offence is contained in this bill, and it would have been an offence in the previous legislation, that a person must not assume, use or publish the state arms or state badge in connection with a relevant enterprise without lawful authority. Just for the record—and so I can provide it to people who expressed some concern to me—I would seek either examples or instances of breaches of the legal provisions as outlined in this bill which have been brought across from the existing emblems legislation.

People go onto the internet. Kids can put a picture of the Barrier Reef Anemonefish in school projects, most probably because, as the member for Robina said, the year before the movie *Finding Nemo* was released and it was an absolute hit. Also, kids put pictures of koalas in projects. Pictures of the Cooktown orchid, the brolga and the sapphire are all downloaded and used for all sorts of purposes. I just wanted to get on the record what would constitute a breach in terms of this legislation so that people can reproduce lawfully pictures that they find useful, colourful or entertaining without any fear of being in trouble with the legislation that is in place in Queensland.

I know that there are a number of aquarium backdrops that people can get that often have different fish species on them. Because this particular species is very colourful, it is often included in backgrounds. I seek that clarification so that it can easily be accessed by those of us who provide information to our constituents. This will enable us to set constituents' minds at ease about the general use of those elements in isolation where they would not be in breach, or some specific examples as to what constitutes a breach. I look forward to receiving that clarification.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (2.43 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak to the Emblems of Queensland Bill and do so with some degree of guilt. Having been elected to this place to put forward the views of the Surfers Paradise community on a number of issues, I am here speaking about the value of the not-quite clownfish and discussing a children's movie. But who am I to criticise the priorities of this government. I am sure that this is a very important bill that must be debated at the beginning of this sitting week.

I was interested to do some reading on the family of the anemone fish, particularly when I discovered that the Barrier Reef Anemonefish is not the only member of this family that is found in Queensland waters. It made me think about why the government decided to choose the particular anemone fish that it did over a number of other members of the anemone fish family. The Barrier Reef Anemonefish grows to about 13 centimetres in length and is generally darker in colour than its most famous brother, the clown anemone fish, made famous in the film *Finding Nemo*. Larger adult Barrier Reef Anemonefish are more orange in colour than the smaller adults and their stripes tend to be slightly bluer in colour. Coincidentally, these are the same colours of the Gold Coast Rugby League bid, the Gold Coast Dolphins. Perhaps if the bid was called the Gold Coast Nemos, the bid might have received assent in 2005, rather than the NRL delaying the Dolphins' inevitable entry into the competition.

However, we are here to talk about the Barrier Reef Anemonefish as the newest member of the Queensland emblem family. When the nominations for the position of Queensland aquatic emblem were announced last year, the anemone fish would have easily opened up as a short-priced favourite. With the success of the movie *Finding Nemo*, the other 10 species were hard pressed to beat the not-quite clownfish and, of course, they did not.

So almost assured that this species would win, why did the government choose this particular member of the anemone fish family? No doubt the fact that it is named after one of Queensland's and the world's most recognised landmarks, the Great Barrier Reef, had a great deal to do with it. I also think that the behaviour of the Barrier Reef Anemonefish is perhaps something easy for the Premier to relate to. The fish spends the first part of its life building up immunity to the possible threats of the stinging cells of the anemone. Then for the remainder of its life, the Barrier Reef Anemonefish uses that same anemone that posed a threat to protect itself from any other predators. However, I digress. As I mentioned before, this is not the only member of this fish family that is found in Queensland waters.

Swimming off the coast of the Great Barrier Reef is also the clown anemone fish, or clownfish as it has become affectionately known. However, this member of the Barrier Reef Anemonefish family could most definitely not be used, because if one goes to the Get Active in the Smart State web site, they will see that one of the criteria for choosing the emblem is that it cannot be used for commercial purposes. Now that this clownfish is a movie star, one would think that it is far too commercial for this purpose. Instead, the Queensland government has rung the agent of Nemo's younger brother, the Barrier Reef Anemonefish, to see if he was interested in the part and, of course, he was.

Perhaps, though, considering the events of the last few weeks, the Premier may have considered changing the emblem to another member of the anemone fish family, namely, the amphiprion Clarkii, or the Clark Anemonefish. This fish, one of the largest members of the family, is a striking black fish with an orange mouth and tail growing to about 14 centimetres. It is not quite the same looking fish as Nemo. However, the name alone would have been a fitting tribute to another Clark, as I note that we have two members of this name in the House: the member for Clayfield and the member for Barron River. So it would seem perhaps the Premier does not want to give the naming rights of the new emblem to a former

minister or other member. He may want to give it to one of the anointed ex-union representatives that the Queensland Labor Party seems to roll out from time to time. Another member of the anemone fish family is the McCulloch Anemonefish, although this would be a tenuous appointment as the fish is mainly found off the north coast of New South Wales.

I must also say that, on International Women's Day, perhaps the Spine-cheek anemone fish, which is also found in the Barrier Reef, could have been a good choice. The female of this species grows to 16 centimetres while the male of the species grows to just seven centimetres. I am sure that there are many women out there who would be happy to see such a strong womanly presence lifted to emblem status. I must also add that, as the representative for Surfers Paradise, I am disappointed that the Wide-band Anemonefish was not considered. This is the member of the anemone fish that swims off the Gold Coast in northern New South Wales. As much as the Barrier Reef Anemonefish is distinctly Queensland, I have to mention the fact that his sister, the Wide-band Anemonefish, makes her home in my electorate.

In all seriousness, I am happy to see the addition of an emblem put forward in this place. It is very good to have symbols that bind us as Queenslanders. I am not sure, though, with the raft of issues that need legislative remedies that making this bill such a high priority is necessary. It is all very well and good to use the fame of a character from a movie as a way of promoting the new emblem. However, it may also be worth while for the government to consider putting some effort into helping Queensland film-makers make their own lovable movies. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (2.48 pm): It gives me much pleasure to rise to speak in support of the induction, for want of a better word, of the Barrier Reef Anemonefish as one of our great emblems. It joins the Cooktown orchid, the koala, the brolga, and the sapphire. When this suggestion was first made—some time over the past nine months or so—I had no doubt which fish would come first. I had a 1½-year-old, now a 2½-year-old, little baby girl who loved Nemo and she continues to love that fish. I think that it is great that we will now have an emblem—even though its proper name is the Barrier Reef Anemonefish; not Nemo or a clownfish—that is recognisable throughout the world. People will know that it has come from the Barrier Reef and will know what it is about. The member for Surfers Paradise was trying to put other meanings to the names of the fish. I think he should keep out of the water.

This legislation is about promoting Queensland. It is about having an emblem that people can relate to. My little girl Brianna relates to fish. Knowing that it is a Queensland fish, she will be very proud of the state that she is from. I think it is great we have an emblem that the young people of Queensland know is a Queensland emblem, in particular, from the great area of the Barrier Reef. It gives me great pleasure to support the bill before the House.

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (2.50 pm), in reply: I would like to thank all honourable members for their contribution and for their brevity. Today is a great day for Queensland. This bill provides for the formal adoption of the Barrier Reef Anemonefish as our state's official aquatic emblem. I am very pleased about this. For a state with such a close connection to the coastline and the water, it is only fitting that we have chosen an emblem that symbolises this connection.

I agree with the member for Gladstone when she made the point that this is an island continent. The fact that we have not had an emblem such as this—an official aquatic emblem—has been an oversight. I heard the Leader of the Opposition nitpicking, as he does so well—he is a gold medallist at it—suggesting that this was in some way trivial. Not at all. Promoting Queensland to the world is never trivial. It supports our second biggest industry, the tourism industry. If we can use an aquatic emblem to do that, it is a good thing, not a bad thing. As I said, the member for Gladstone hit the nail on the head because we are a large continent bounded by sea and we need, in my view, to have an aquatic emblem. I make no apology for it. It is my idea to do it, and I stand by it. For clarification, I would like honourable members to note that the emblem is not the Nemo of the movie fame. Nemo is part of the same breed as the Barrier Reef Anemonefish but the Barrier Reef Anemonefish is more endemic to the Barrier Reef. I just want to get our fish clear.

This government made every effort to ensure that all Queenslanders, especially key interest groups and the Indigenous community, were given the opportunity to have input into the process of selecting the aquatic emblem. This has meant that we have selected an emblem which can be embraced equally by all Queenslanders. The passage of this bill will see the Barrier Reef Anemonefish taking its place beside the Cooktown orchid, the koala, the brolga and the sapphire as our newest state emblem.

The bill also provides a timely update to the Badge, Arms, Floral and Other Emblems of Queensland Act 1959. We need to continue to provide protection against the unlawful assumption, use or publication of the state's coat of arms and state's badge, but we also need to ensure that the legislation is applicable to the contemporary environment. Accordingly, the bill modernises the 1959 act and puts in place provisions to protect the coat of arms and state badge which are more reflective of the 21st century than the previous act.

Let me deal with some of the particular comments that have been made. I have noted the Leader of the Opposition's comments that Queensland has enough emblems. That is his view. However, the addition of an aquatic emblem to the suite of existing emblems is a sensible addition to give the importance of the water to Queensland across a range of sectors including tourism, the environment, recreation, sport and industry. We should not be reluctant to use emblems to promote particular aspects of the state. We can never do that enough. We can never promote Queensland too much as far as I am concerned. If we need other emblems to do that, we should do that and not run away from it.

A state emblem such as this can be used by anyone in Queensland and aims to both increase the sense of identity for Queenslanders and promote the positive aspects of the state. I have noted the Leader of the Opposition's and other members' comments regarding the reversal of the onus of proof. This is considered necessary to ensure that individuals are unable to escape prosecution for unauthorised uses of the coat of arms or the state badge by acting through corporations which could bear legal responsibility for their actions. Of course, these types of provisions are used only when it is considered necessary. I think that is underlining the position.

The member for Gladstone asked what would constitute a breach of the legislation in relation to unlawful use or publishing without lawful authority. These provisions are intended primarily to prevent the unlawful use of these symbols for business or commercial reasons. So, outside of that, it is not a difficulty and people should be aware of that. I think the honourable member for Gladstone also made some useful points about educating our students. I will pursue this issue about reprinting the publication with all the emblems in it. I think that is a great idea. I would love all students to be aware of the various emblems of the state—every single one of them. I share her view about that. I think we should be very proud of this state, regardless of our political differences. We live in the best place in the world, in my view. I think that is a view shared across the political divide. I do not think we should be reluctant to highlight our emblems.

I thank the opposition for its support for the bill. I thank the Liberal Party and Independents for their support for the bill. I thank all honourable members for their contribution including the members of the expert panel who short-listed the species for consideration as the aquatic emblem. I also thank all members of the public who voted.

Before I commend the bill to the House, I want to respond to one point. The honourable member for Surfers Paradise made a reference to priorities, about this being our second week and why this bill is being debated now. This bill is being debated because of my program. That is the reason. I wanted it debated. I think this is a very important bill. It has been dealt with efficiently by all members, for which I thank everyone. As the member would understand, as Premier I have a program which is chock-a-block. I had some time this afternoon and I was grateful to the House for debating it at a time when I could be in the House to hear what members have to say. I try as Premier to be in the House to give members the courtesy of listening to them and responding to what they have said. I thought the member for Gladstone raised a serious point. I understand the commitment of the member for Surfers Paradise to aquatic emblems. It would be very easy for me to have a bill before the House, to have a minister sit here and for me to not hear what members have to say. I would rather come in here and hear members expressing their views myself. I cannot always do that but that is what I try to do. That explains the timing. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time.

MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 7 October 2004 (see p. 2829).

Hon. KR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (2.58 pm): The opposition supports the intent of the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill and certainly will be supporting the bill. The objectives of the bill are listed as increasing the penalties for pitch invasions, giving the Major Sports Facilities Authority the statutory power to regulate traffic and parking at its facilities and making other minor machinery amendments to the act.

We accept that early in 2004 a review of the Major Sports Facilities Act was undertaken to ensure the legislative framework was operating effectively now that the authority has six major venues under its control. Those six venues are the Brisbane Cricket Ground, the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre, Willows Sports Complex, the Sleeman Sports Centre and, following the completion of the redevelopment, Suncorp Stadium.

The review found that in most part the act provides a sufficient framework for the operation of the authority, but in addition to minor machinery amendments to the act the review identified the need to do three things: one, amend the meeting requirements for the board of the authority; two, increase the penalties under the act for pitch invasions; and three, give the authority the power to regulate traffic and parking at its facilities.

I attended the ING Cup the other day, the final between Queensland and Tasmania. Whilst it was a disappointing result for Queensland, I was personally amazed at the number of controllers that were around the oval. Quite honestly, I wonder sometimes exactly what the cost is to provide personnel at a facility like that, especially when the crowd is disappointing, but there is no doubt that we need all of that security to ensure that there is no pitch invasion. We had it happen recently, but we have to enhance the deterrent to people invading the authority's grounds during a sporting or entertainment event to make a public protest or public statement or simply for fun. We all accept that. It is just a matter of how we do it and exactly what the fees are that we try to enforce. We obviously have to protect the safety of both participants and spectators, and we have to support the government's ability to attract major events by bringing the act into line with the penalty regimes for such offences at major facilities in New South Wales and Victoria. Whilst some of the increases are quite dramatic, I do note that they are now in line with New South Wales and Victoria.

I note the insertion of provisions in the act to regulate traffic and parking that will assist the authority to deal with inappropriate parking at its facilities. There have been difficulties at the Sleeman Centre and the QSAC. There has been a particular problem at the Sleeman Centre where inappropriate parking has caused traffic congestion, inconvenience for staff, visitors and athletes, and in some instances damage to facilities. The authority's attempts to control parking in these locations through administrative actions have obviously been unsuccessful. I note that the government is saying that there are no direct budgetary implications anticipated for the government in relation to the implementation of the amendments proposed in the bill, and the authority does not anticipate considerable costs in regulating parking and traffic at its facilities.

I note the explanation that the bill has been drafted with regard to fundamental legislative principles as defined in section 4 of the Legislative Standards Act 1992. The bill increases the penalties under section 32 of the act in order to deter pitch invasions by spectators. As I have said, they have occasionally occurred at sporting events, including major sporting events such as the 2003 World Cup at Suncorp Stadium. Unauthorised entry onto the authority's grounds, whether sport or entertainment, such as when a cricket match is occurring, is an offence currently carrying a maximum penalty of $1,500. Most people would say, 'Well, that surely is a deterrent, $1,500,' but it has now been increased by clause 8, which amends the provision to increase the maximum penalty now to $3,000. Interference with a person engaged in such sport or entertainment is an offence that will now attract a maximum penalty of $6,000. I personally wonder whether a person who intends to run on to a ground would be deterred by $6,000 as compared to $1,500 or $3,000, but, as I have said, the explanatory notes state that the objective of the increases is to deter invasions on to the ground. I note that the fines are consistent with those for similar offences under the New South Wales Sporting Venues Act, the Sydney Olympic Park Regulation and also the Victorian Major Events Act. Therefore, this act brings our act into line with those states.

I also note that the committee has asked the minister to respond with regard to these increases. I note that the Treasurer has responded that the costs referred to are reasonable costs and says that the amendment that the committee suggested is not considered appropriate because the intent of this clause is to recover the actual costs incurred by the Major Sports Facilities Authority rather than the costs deemed by the authority to be reasonable. I accept the Treasurer's comment. He also refers to clauses 10 and 11 and says that compensation is not recoverable against the authority because of payment under this section. The committee expressed concern that these clauses deprive a person of the capacity to institute legal proceedings seeking damages for any negligent conduct of the authority in relation to the disposal of unclaimed vehicles and the application of sale proceeds.

The minister says that clause 10(4) specifies the conditions that must be met for the disposal of an unclaimed vehicle. Clause 11(2) specifies the order by which the application of proceeds from the sale of a vehicle must be disbursed. The minister says it should be noted that a person would have the capacity to institute legal proceedings seeking damages for any negligent conduct of the authority if the authority failed to comply with the prescribed procedures in this clause and the authority would be unable to rely on the exemption in that regard. The minister also points out that provisions relating to the control of traffic on facility land contained in the bill have been tried and tested previously as they mirror a similar intent relating to the control of traffic contained in the Griffith University Act 1998.

In supporting the legislation let me again express my concern that the government does not allow the Public Works Committee to investigate Suncorp Stadium. This has been a bone of contention with me for a long, long time. I think I have had three terms on the Public Works Committee, and members know that this issue has been brought up many, many times. It means that the Public Works Committee or the Public Accounts Committee still cannot investigate these six buildings, and they are substantial buildings. Anyone who has been to the cricket ground recently would see the massive increase in the building program. Everyone knows what has happened at Suncorp Stadium. But we do not have to accept that the government has done the best deal that it possibly could have done. We do not have to accept that the people of Queensland have got value for money. The government would like us to accept that because it is very proud of what has happened with Suncorp Stadium; it is very proud of what has happened with the cricket ground and the Sleeman Centre. They are magnificent facilities. However, all of these facilities surely should be open for a committee such as the Public Works Committee or the Public Accounts Committee to investigate.

We are looking at programs where we have introduced legislation into this House to allow the sports authorities to raise $250 million. It is taxpayers' money. Surely the people of Queensland, if we have a committee system and if this committee system is to work, must allow those committees to go in and investigate. The government has continually rejected any proposals to go in and investigate any of these facilities. As I say, taxpayers are entitled to be assured that money is spent correctly and that the facilities that we provide are the best possible. Whilst they are magnificent—we all know they are magnificent—it does not mean to say that they are the best that could have been provided, and that is surely what these committees are set up to do.

The other thing is that, according to the 2002-03 annual report of the Major Sports Facilities Authority, the authority now controls over almost $600 million of property and equipment. Each year the authority is turning over $60 million with revenue of $30 million. That is a massive amount of money. Everyone in the government knows that that amount of money cannot be investigated by the PAC or the Public Works Committee in this parliament because continually those committees are saying, 'No, we will not investigate.' These authorities now have $600 million worth of property, they are turning over $60 million per year and they have revenue of $30 million per year, yet the government continually refuses to answer questions about this.

At last year's estimates committee hearings the government refused to provide any information to the parliament about the operation of this authority and would comment only about the operating grant. The government maintained that the only accountability to this House was provided by the financial auditing of the authority by the Auditor-General and the publication of the annual report. We must realise that in this state we do not have performance auditing. The Auditor-General continually goes in and looks at the expenditure and says, 'Yes, the invoices and the statements match up' and therefore gives his report. But the Auditor-General in this state does not have the ability to go in and say, 'I believe the minister could have spent his money better' or 'I believe that the minister should have spent money in a different area.'

This government continually refuses to allow the Auditor-General to do that. The government is saying that the only accountability to this House in relation to the money of the sports authority is provided by the Auditor-General and the publication of the annual report. If we look at the annual report of the authority that is to be fundamental to the accountability process, it is very telling to note that the annual report of the authority is published on the internet site for the authority but only part 1—that is, the nonfinancials. Why is that? Why has the decision been made to remove the financial part of the report from the web site?

The government refuses to accept any accountability for the operation of the authority. The problem with the government's assertion regarding the accountability of the authority is that this legislation mentions specific provisions for the administration of parking at these facilities. On the surface this is quite a reasonable provision, but its application to individual stadiums can raise interesting issues. Unfortunately, because of the structuring of the financial reports it is impossible for this House to be aware of the true position in relation to any stadium.

We will never know which facilities are being properly administered. Under the present arrangements, we will never know which facility raises what revenue. We will never know how much revenue it raises in relation to parking or, for that matter, any other operational issue. It is absolutely ridiculous for a government which says it is accountable to place itself in that position.

Whilst the explanatory notes mention parking of unauthorised vehicles at the Sleeman centre and at QSAC particularly, this is an issue at other facilities as well. I am aware that at these and other facilities there are contractual agreements and other relationships in place regarding parking with lessees. My concern is that on occasions disputes do occur regarding parking entitlements and that the MSFA will utilise these proposed powers, which include the seizure of vehicles, to intervene in these issues rather than resolve the problem in the terms of the agreement between the parties.

By way of example, tenants at most of these facilities are entitled to certain parking spaces, but they often find that these spaces have been utilised by others not entitled to the space and the tenant is

left with no choice but to park in a no-parking area. I acknowledge that these provisions may assist in addressing the first aspect of the example I have mentioned in relation to protecting the tenant's space, but my concern is what then happens to the tenant? Are they also to be penalised even though the problem has been caused by others?

So that this parliament is able to monitor the success of this legislation, how is the minister proposing that we will be able to get the relevant data? In the best traditions of a secret state these figures will be aggregated so that it will be impossible to tell one facility from another. I believe that this parliament deserves an answer from the minister as to how we will be able to establish whether the authority is operating in accordance with section 7 of the original legislation, which states—

(1) The Authority's functions are to manage, operate, use and promote sports facilities.

(2) The Authority must perform its functions in a way that—

(a) is consistent with sound commercial principles; and

Can the minister give this House an assurance that this fundamental requirement of the act in relation to sound commercial principles is being complied with? What information does the minister base this assurance on?

Another aspect of the bill I would like to comment on is one that the minister just happened to omit from the second reading speech. The change that has been proposed is to amend the requirement that prohibits the appointment of a person affected by a bankruptcy action to now prohibit an insolvent under administration. I note that the reason set out in the explanatory notes for this change is to amend the act to accord with modern drafting practice. I believe it also narrows the definition of a person who is excluded from appointment. In light of the existing provision, I believe that a person who is a discharged bankrupt would now be eligible for appointment to the board. I ask the minister to clarify that particular aspect of the bill and ask particularly if the minister may actually have any ideas about any individuals who are presently excluded and who may become eligible under this provision.

I note that the 2003-04 annual report for the authority was recently tabled and that the full-time staff equivalent for this authority is 87. Although the numbers have increased by only two positions, I note that the salaries and wages bill has increased from $3.6 million to $4.5 million. In view of the concerns by tenants of the authority, who are already concerned at the size of bureaucracy being created within the MSFA, will the minister please indicate if he believes that the number of staff employed by the authority is appropriate?

Finally, I congratulate Suncorp Stadium for attracting the new Brisbane soccer team—whatever its name is going to be—to this facility. These additional fixtures will help maximise the use of the facility. I ask the minister to advise the House whether Suncorp Stadium has been fully handed over by the contractor or whether there are outstanding issues in relation to the construction of this facility. As the minister well knows, the long-promised pedestrian link back to Roma Street is still to be provided. I also invite the minister to advise the House when we can expect these facilities to be provided.

I stress the concerns of the opposition in relation to the accountability of this authority to this parliament and ask the minister to specifically address these concerns. Otherwise, we certainly support the intent of the legislation and will support the bill.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.15 pm): The primary objective of the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill is to increase the penalties for pitch invasions, to give the Major Sports Facilities Authority the statutory power to regulate traffic and parking at its facilities and to make minor machinery amendments to the act.

Since the authority was established in 2001 to manage, own, operate and provide the state's major sports facilities, it has increased its workload from just the Brisbane Cricket Ground to managing the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre—QSAC, formerly ANZ Stadium—Willows Sports Complex, incorporating Dairy Farmers Stadium, the Sleeman Sports Centre and, following completion of the redevelopment, Suncorp Stadium.

There was a need to review the act to ensure that the authority was operating effectively to manage these six major sports facilities. This review, undertaken in early 2004, found the framework sufficient for the most part. However, there were a few amendments needed to be made, as I mentioned previously.

Spectators who walk onto the field of a game or event can cause harm to themselves as well as other participants. Consequently, this bill provides a deterrent to this act by increasing the penalties for this offence. Safety must be a high priority at these events, and penalties need to be consistent across states for Queensland to continue to be competitive in attracting major events. We also must ensure that access to these events is made as convenient as possible by regulating traffic and parking. Therefore, the bill provides for the appointment by the authority of authorised persons to enforce traffic and parking controls at these facilities by issuing on-the-spot fines under the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999.

Many residents in my electorate of Mount Ommaney comment on how smoothly events at Suncorp Stadium progress, with crowds accessing public transport to the venue. I know that local

businesses appreciate the promotion of public transport as it decreases the difficulties they have with patrons taking their customer parking spots. A lot of planning needs to go into how the general public can access these events when a venue is established.

Recently the Centenary Canoeing and Rowing Club organised a regatta on part of the Brisbane River, which bounds my electorate. The event commenced at the Jindalee boat ramp, and a number of high school students enthusiastically took part. Parents and interested onlookers lined the streets to watch the race, and parking was very difficult. There is a huge demand for places for young adults to participate in this sport.

My local club, under the leadership of Simon Newcomb, a former Olympian, Russell Poole and Peter Cooke, are raising funds and repairing old boats to give these young people the opportunity to get involved in this particular sport. The Brisbane City Council is currently looking at providing a venue for this club to establish a clubhouse or rowing shed to house their boats. Presently a space has been generously loaned to them courtesy of Hutchinson Builders. However, this arrangement may cease when the owner leases the building to a paying customer.

We need to encourage participation of our young people in any sport and do everything that we can to provide those opportunities for them. The more attractive and exciting the particular sport the better. It keeps them fit, healthy, focused and socially engaged.

People are flocking to visit and live in Queensland. We need to ensure that we have the types of facilities which continue to attract tourism to this state and that we are on par at least with Victoria and New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (3.18 pm): I will speak briefly in support of the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill as it appears that it has support from both sides. In these days of professional sports it is important that our sporting facilities are run in a safe and professional manner. The Queensland government, and the Deputy Premier in particular, should be congratulated on the way that they have set up the Major Sports Facilities Authority, which oversees our world-class sporting venues. In my electorate, the Willows Sports Complex—home to Dairy Farmers Stadium and the mighty North Queensland Cowboys—has now come under the control of the authority.

Ms Jarratt: Go Cowboys!

Mr WALLACE: I take the member for Whitsunday's interjection and say, go Cowboys—especially this Sunday when they beat the Broncos. The Deputy Premier announced last year new funding for the stadium which will see its capacity increased—much to the delight of north Queensland locals, who are looking forward to a successful season ahead. I thank the Deputy Premier for coming to the north last Thursday to officially open the Cowboys' season, which kicks off this Sunday against the Broncos at Suncorp Stadium.

For the information of fellow members, Dairy Farmers Stadium has an interesting history. It was a former trotting facility under the Bjelke-Petersen government. It became the stadium we know today following the efforts of the Thuringowa and the Townsville city councils and local business leaders, many of whom put their own time and effort into the development of the stadium without compensation. In this regard I would especially like to mention the inaugural Cowboys chairman, a good friend of mine and the current chair of the Townsville Port Authority, Mr Ron McLean, who quite literally put his money where his mouth was to get the Cowboys off the ground.

This bill today will help keep Dairy Farmers and other stadiums under the control of the MSFA safe for players, officials and spectators. Some people may say that this bill is not needed. I turn my mind back to the 1980s and that unfortunate incident when a pitch invader in Perth caused Australian leg seamer Terry Alderman to dislocate his arm and miss many years of cricket afterwards.

I also remember a trip that I made to New Zealand as a child with my parents in 1977. We saw Australia play New Zealand in a cricket test match in, if my memory serves me correctly, Auckland. It was the height of the streaking craze, when sport events were regularly subjected to naked men and women running across our sporting fields. Before the start of play my mum said that she hoped she would not see any streakers. By the end of the day we had seen three. Indeed, Greg Chappell got stuck into one with his cricket bat.

The deterrents contained in this bill will hopefully make people considering illegally entering these arenas think twice. Whilst parking has not been a big problem in Thuringowa, I can see how this bill will help keep this problem under control. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (3.21 pm): The Major Sports Facilities Authority was established in 2001 to be responsible for the management of the state's major sports facilities. One of its main assets, the Boondall entertainment centre, is located in my electorate and is home to the Brisbane Wizards basketball club, of which I am patron.

The main objectives of the bill are to increase fines for pitch invasions and penalties for inappropriate parking around major sports facilities. Increasing fines for pitch invasions are in line with those in New South Wales and Victoria and are aimed at protecting both players and spectators.

The Treasurer mentioned in his second reading speech the invasion of the Rugby World Cup field at Suncorp by a spectator who was knocked out when he attempted to tackle a South African player. Another example of the disruption that can be wreaked on major sporting events was the spectacle of the person who ran onto the track during the running of the marathon at the Athens Olympics, potentially costing the runner the race and endangering his safety and that of spectators. This amendment seeks to discourage such acts of stupidity by spectators.

Parking problems at the Sleeman centre and the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre have prompted another amendment. While illegal parking is a problem for residents who live near major sporting facilities, it also has the potential to prevent easy access for emergency vehicles and can cause damage to public assets such as gardens and footpaths.

In closing, I will say a few words about Suncorp Stadium, which has been the subject of considerable debate over the past few years. This project has been a spectacular success. It was delivered on time and on budget and has proven to be one of the most significant and popular contributions to public sporting facilities in our state's history. Some 3,400 jobs were created during its construction. Its existence now supports hundreds of jobs, both direct and indirect. Since it opened in June last year over 1.3 million people have visited the stadium, and 406,340 attended the Rugby World Cup, which contributed about $200 million to the Queensland economy.

While some people are not sporting fans, no-one can deny the important and beneficial impact that Suncorp Stadium and other major arenas have had on the state's economy. It is important that these facilities are properly regulated for the benefit of everybody involved, including sportspeople, fans and nearby residents. This bill reinforces that need. Accordingly, I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.24 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill 2004. In so doing, I express concern about the issues raised by the member for Beaudesert in relation to the accountability of this authority to the parliament and accountability to the Public Works Committee for the works carried out on these sites. The committee system of this parliament was established in part because we have a unicameral parliament. It is essential that the expenditure of public money is accountable and transparent. It is through the vehicle of the committee system and this appropriate accountability to the parliament that this transparency can be assured.

I note, as other speakers have, that part of the intent of this bill is to increase the penalties under the act for pitch invasions. There have been incidents—some of which may be amusing at the time—that in hindsight could have caused serious damage either to the invader or to those already on the pitch. We have seen this with sporting events held overseas as well. One that comes to mind happened recently in New Zealand, where a lot of articles were thrown onto the pitch. Potentially, the players could have been injured. Any measures that will remove the risks to players and spectators alike are welcome.

The bill also gives the authority the power to regulate traffic and parking at its facilities. I can remember that a significant parking plan was put in place for the sporting facility out at Mount Gravatt when it was first established. Quite a number of residents of the area were concerned about the impact it had on them.

In relation to these parking regimes and the regulations that will be put in place for these other sporting facilities, I would seek from the minister clarification as to what work has been done with residents to ensure that the regulated parking that will be put in place will not be detrimental or disadvantageous to them. Many of the people who live near these venues were established prior to any of these facilities being constructed and therefore they deserve priority consideration in relation to the impact on their quiet enjoyment of their place of residence.

The other issue that I will raise with the minister relates to the concerns expressed in his second reading speech about Griffith University students parking at the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre. They have been parking on the ring road surrounding the centre and walking through the bush to the university. This is probably taking one step back from the problems that it creates for the facility. Students walking through the bush at night are presented with a significant risk to their personal safety and therefore an impact on the university. Does the fact that students park there indicate that there is insufficient parking for the Griffith University?

Mr Mackenroth: We actually make parking available for them. We do allow them to park in the car parks. The ring road is just that little bit closer. There is the ability for them to use the car park free of charge when it is not being used for major events.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is a significant offer to them. I thank the minister for that clarification. I know that parking at Griffith is regulated. There are student permits. If a student is a bit late getting a permit they are out of luck in terms of available spaces. If there is alternative parking available—and it still ensures that areas are kept free for access to the major sports facilities—then I believe the minister has done all that he can to afford some service to the students at Griffith University.

They are the issues that I wish to raise in relation to this legislation. I look forward to the time when there is a major sports facility in my electorate, which is very sports orientated, and then being able to look at this legislation in a slightly different light in terms of its effect on my electorate. I look forward to the minister's response to the comments by the member for Beaudesert on financial accountability and accountability in terms of works that are done on these facilities.

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (3.29 pm): I am pleased to rise in support of the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill 2004. As previous speakers have outlined, it is a fairly simple and straightforward piece of legislation that is designed to improve the enjoyment and the safety of our major sporting facilities, particularly throughout south-east Queensland but also throughout the rest of the state, and generally to enhance the experience of sports lovers as they pursue all of the sports that are their particular passion, whether that be cricket or the various codes of football. In considering the issues in relation to this bill such as improving parking and ensuring that there is better regulation of parking around these facilities and also, as others have mentioned, discouraging people from running on to the field and interrupting play or in some other way detracting from everyone else's experience of sport, these are great things that we need to see improved through this legislation. I am pleased that we are doing that.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mrs REILLY: We definitely want to discourage that sort of thing, particularly people who want to streak around a football field in the middle of winter. I cannot understand why they would want to do that. Maybe during the preseason games when it is not quite as cold, but in the middle of winter one really has to question their sanity. I am pleased to take the interjection from the Deputy Premier and minister for sport, because unfortunately I missed that game at Carrara on the weekend. I would have very much liked to have been there.

Mr Mackenroth: Not last weekend; two weekends ago.

Mrs REILLY: We keep having sell-out crowds at Carrara Stadium, which is in the electorate of Mudgeeraba on the Gold Coast. Over the years I have had a number of discussions with many people on the Gold Coast, including those who are leading the bid to improve Carrara Stadium in the hope of attracting a major football team to play there. I want to encourage them to continue along that path. Being a bit of a fan of most sports—television watching fan of course—I try to get to the games as much as I can. I would like to see a major team play at Carrara like when the Chargers played at Carrara. I took many opportunities to watch them play. My husband was a season ticket holder. There is great support from the Gold Coast. If we continue to let the NRL know that we want to see that happen for the Gold Coast, I am sure that eventually it will come.

I want to talk about a couple of the other facilities that were mentioned in the minister's second reading speech. I have been so excited to see the transformation of Suncorp Stadium. I actually worked at Suncorp as an usher taking the tickets at the gate in the mideighties when it was Lang Park.

Mr Mackenroth: I sold pies there in the early sixties.

Mrs REILLY: Some years later in the mideighties I took the tickets at the gate when there were the old-fashioned turnstiles which we had to press with our foot to let people in to see the football. We closed the gates at kick-off. The best part of that job was not the minimal wage that we were paid but the opportunity to stay back and watch the football even though we missed kick-off. Thinking about how Suncorp Stadium looked then and how it looks now, it is like two different worlds. I take this opportunity to congratulate the minister again on his commitment to seeing one of the best sporting facilities for most football codes, particularly Rugby Union, improved in Brisbane, and it was long overdue.

I have had many great experiences over the years at ANZ Stadium, at the Gabba and at the Sleeman Sports Complex, which was being built when I lived in Chandler in the street behind the complex. I watched it grow as it was built from a bit of bush until it was completely designed and developed. That was a very exciting opportunity. Not a lot of kids whom I grew up with could say that they got to ride their bike around the Sleeman Sports Complex when the car parks were being put in or roller skate on the floor that was to become the space for the weightlifting held during the Commonwealth Games. The workers would let us in late in the afternoons after school to have a look around. Once we turned up with our roller skates, they said, ‘Come on in. Have a skate around here.' I have a few good sporting experiences that I treasure.

The point of telling those stories is to say that we have a great sporting culture in Queensland that I am very proud of. Any moves that we can put in place that will continue to enhance the safety, the enjoyment and the experience of those sporting facilities for all Queenslanders who attend them are certainly to be commended. I again congratulate the Deputy Premier and minister for putting this together and commend the bill to the House.

Mr FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (3.35 pm): I, too, am pleased to support the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill. As many people would know, as the member for Mount Coot-tha one of the most significant assets of the MSFA is within my electorate—that is, Suncorp Stadium. This bill seeks to increase greatly the penalties for people seeking to invade the pitch, a move which I fully support. A key

deterrent to those people who think it is a good idea to run onto sporting fields in past years has been the fact that television stations have, in my view, responsibly declined to broadcast the acts of people running onto sporting fields, clothed or otherwise. It is certainly timely that we increase the penalty that applies and make a distinction between those who run on to the pitch and those who seek to harm a player on the field. These people are dangerous not only to themselves in that regard but also to other people, officials and the public as well.

Suncorp Stadium does sit within my electorate. It is fair to say that its operation these days is acknowledged, even by its harshest initial critics, to be first-class. Those people who at the time were doomsayers about the stadium now admit—many of them publicly and most of them privately—that the stadium does work incredibly well. There are always going to be issues with operating a stadium in an area like that.

Mr Mackenroth: Even a couple of people wrote to me to say they were wrong.

Mr FRASER: I take the interjection from the Deputy Premier. As anybody who regularly attends Suncorp knows, it is an impressive facility. From my point of view as the local member, it does work well in the local community. A lot of credit for that operation has to go to the people who run the stadium, Ogden IFC. Geoff Donaghy, the CEO of Ogden, works incredibly hard to make sure that the stadium is run in a way that takes account of the local community. The most interesting thing that appears in my diary every three months is when I have to go to SMAC. That sounds more fun than it is; it is actually the Stadium Management Advisory Committee. Nevertheless, it is probably the most interestingly titled meeting I get to go to. That is made up of Alan Graham, the stadium's general manager, and Greg Adderman, the marketing manager. Both of them do an excellent job in making sure that all issues raised by the community—by the local police, emergency service worker representatives from the community, people from Owen Strong's congregation next door at the church and other traders and residents' representatives on that committee—are always discussed in full and the work that is done by people on that committee is first-class. In particular, I have to mention Gary Moore from Queensland Transport who is the transport guru for Lang Park. He provides a service above—

Mr Mackenroth: Suncorp Stadium.

Mr FRASER: I stand corrected; Suncorp Stadium. I was regressing for a minute, Deputy Premier, as everyone reminisced about the times in the 1960s when they sold pies and the people in the 1980s who sold tickets. In the 1990s I did my bit and sold programs outside Suncorp Stadium, or Lang Park as it was then. The payment at those times was not in brass, but we got to sit in the dogbox in the top left-hand corner of the stadium and watch some incredibly good football. I apologise for regressing back to 10 years ago, but I am sure the Deputy Premier will indulge me given that everyone else has reminisced about the time.

I did mention Gary Moore, who does an excellent job with Suncorp Stadium. He goes to the trouble of individually phoning people who have experienced an issue. He follows up everyone's concerns. I must say that the community generally is looking forward to the time when the eastern infrastructure—the pedestrian infrastructure—is put in place, because that will greatly alleviate many of the issues, including those that relate to the use of Upper Roma Street and Milton Road. A stadium in operation like that has to have an impact on the local community. It is felt amongst traders, who will tell members about issues they have when the roads are closed. The building of that infrastructure will obviate the need to implement the full closures at each time, which can only be a good thing for residents and traders. We are all looking forward to that initiative, and a decision was announced by the Deputy Premier as Acting Premier with the lord mayor on 23 December last year.

Finally, I make mention that I will be there on Sunday for the first game of the season. I am a loyal Broncos fan. I am very proud of the electorate that I represent and I will be sitting there in aisle 314, row 27, seat 18 in the southern stand with only a slight pang of loyalty for my birthplace of Proserpine in north Queensland. I reserve a special place for the Cowboys, but I will be barracking for the Broncos on Sunday. It is not just a matter of loyalty. Many people probably would not be aware, but I used to play Rugby League, albeit rather badly. I played with Paul Bowman.

An honourable member: He joined the forwards.

Mr FRASER: I have to admit that I was a half-back, but the five-eighth was Paul Bowman who for many years was the captain of the Cowboys. He still continues to play for them and to play for Queensland. The bottom line is that he was very good and went on to earn a living as a professional footballer. I was not very good. That is why I am a politician and why I get to vote for this bill and he does not. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (3.40 pm): The Liberal Party will also be supporting the bill before the House. It rightly increases the penalty for those who invade the pitch. Whilst we sometimes think that it is a source of entertainment to see people disrupting games, it is, in fact, a dangerous practice and can lead to an injury of both the spectators and the players concerned, not to mention, of course, the officials who are regulating the game.

The bill also increases the powers of the authorities to regulate parking around stadiums. I understand why. In many cases, these places are located in the middle of business precincts, such as Suncorp Stadium, and they have parking problems. So the Liberal Party will support the bill in terms of those issues.

The Deputy Premier and Treasurer mentioned the anecdote of selling pies at the old Lang Park. In the late 1960s to the early 1970s, I was a regular visitor. Now I understand why the pies tasted so bad.

An honourable member: Did it do something to your hair?

Mr QUINN: Obviously, they were the source of some hormonal imbalance later in life. Could I put a plug in for the Gold Coast. Very seriously, the Gold Coast is the sixth largest city in Australia. The construction of its entertainment and convention centre was recently completed. This government put the funding in place and delivered on it. I give the government credit for that. But I now say that it is time for a stadium. Whilst other people made mention of our desire to enter the National Rugby League competition, that will not happen until the government steps forward and says that it is interested in upgrading Carrara Stadium. After talking to the people who are involved in putting together the bid, it is my understanding that part of the conditions is for some commitment by the government, the local authorities and the businesspeople in the area to provide a better facility. Carrara simply is not a financially viable proposition.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr QUINN: That is right.

Mr Mackenroth: It has never been said to us until this week.

Mr QUINN: I am putting the case in the House now, because it has been mentioned to me over a period that we need government support down there. It is simply unthinkable that the council would assume the role of managing, financing and providing the facility. As members could understand, it is not willing to do that and the proponents of the bid desperately need some government support to upgrade the facility there.

Mr Reeves: The Prime Minister is giving you money today.

Mr QUINN: One could say something about the extra GST money coming into the state, but I will not worry about that. From the local perspective, there is a need for the sixth largest city in Australia to have its own major sporting facility. We are well endowed in terms of convention and entertainment facilities down there. We are now in line for a stadium. I hope that the government, through its major sporting facilities fund, looks actively at providing that support in the near future. Hopefully, that will precipitate a Gold Coast team in the National Rugby League. I think that we can now support it. In the past we have had several false starts. I think that there is more maturity about the Gold Coast. The business sector certainly is much greater both in terms of strength and depth and can support a major Rugby League team on the Gold Coast. The public down there desperately want to support it. To date, all the trial matches have been highly successful. On many occasions the stadium at Carrara has been booked out for trial matches. So there is a growing strength in support for a Gold Coast Rugby League team. The entry of that team in the national competition will certainly magnify that support. I think the Gold Coast deserves it. With those few words, I support the bill.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (3.45 pm): I would like to say a few words in support of this bill. The content of the bill relates to crowd safety, the invasion of pitches and the regulation of parking at these major stadiums. It is certainly a worthwhile intent of the bill and reflects the government's concern to make sure that patrons and participants in sports can attend these matches and participate in them in safety and enjoyment.

In previous speeches members recounted anecdotes about sporting events. I must say that in the past I regularly attended the Gabba, which has changed over the years from a very picturesque, picket-fenced oval with Moreton Bay figs on the southern side to what it is today in the space of what seemed to me to be a few years but, in reality, I suppose, is about 40 years. I certainly have some regrets that the appearance of that beautiful Gabba oval has changed. Nevertheless, that is something that has to happen to accommodate the demand. I want to place on record my appreciation to this Treasurer for the support that he has given, particularly to the Gabba, in terms of the completion of the stadium there and to the former treasurer Keith De Lacy as well, who I think was the treasurer when the first major works were agreed to some time ago.

This bill follows the passage during the last session of the Summary Offences Bill, which in one of its provisions dealt with the throwing of objects onto pitches—beer cans et cetera. This bill is also indicative of the government's attention to a need to give some legislative teeth to ensuring that there is proper crowd control and safety for players. In that regard, in terms of my own neck of the woods in Toowoomba, in recent years the government contributed about $2.5 billion to the stadium in Toowoomba—which was known as the old athletic oval—for a magnificent refurbishment of the Duncan Thompson stand. That has been very well received in Toowoomba. The trust that was associated with

that complex recently wrote to me concerning the issue of smoking. They were banning smoking at the stadium, which is apparently similar to what applies at the Gabba, Suncorp Stadium and elsewhere. It would be helpful to the trust if the government direction covering the major sports facilities was extended to stadiums such as the one at Toowoomba. It would be easier for the trust to enforce its own regulations and wishes in places such as the Toowoomba stadium.

I want to place on record my appreciation for the amount of money and support that has been given to major sporting facilities in and around Queensland over recent years. In November, the Treasurer announced a $20 million boost for sport and recreation facilities. That was on a dollar-for-dollar program, pursuant to the Major Facilities Program. It is indicative of that type of real support in terms of the sizeable amounts of money that are necessary to support recreation and sport in Queensland—not just in Brisbane, of course, but throughout the regions.

Recently, my own electorate has been the beneficiary of significant support from the government in terms of the indoor sports centre at Highfields. About $1 million was spent on that centre and a further million was put into the new basketball courts at St Mary's Christian Brothers school in Toowoomba as well. So there are real signs of the government's support for country areas and regional areas. I am thankful for that. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (3.49 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill 2005. This is essentially a simple bill. It clarifies and improves the powers and responsibilities of the major sports facilities authority in a limited number of areas to improve the practical operations of major events. It has come about in recognition of the major changes that the authority has made from its beginning in 2001 when it managed the Brisbane Cricket Ground to its present position where it has in addition the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre, the Willows Sports Complex, incorporating the Dairy Farmers Stadium, the Sleeman Sports Centre and, following its redevelopment, Suncorp Stadium under its umbrella.

These are significant parts of Queensland's public infrastructure, and they all play even more important roles in our sporting, social and cultural lives. Today's bill, however, deals with somewhat more mundane aspects of operating these facilities and hosting such events. It is proposed to increase the penalties for what are known as pitch invasions. They sit, at present, at 20 penalty units and will be increased under this bill to 40 penalty units for pitch invasions and 80 penalty units for interfering with a person engaged in sport or entertainment on facility land.

I have spoken frequently against the massive increases in fines and penalties introduced in Beattie government legislation. However, in this case I would like to raise the issue of invasions carried out with a commercial goal such as when a streaker may have been paid to adorn their body with the logo of a company before running onto a field. The minister may wish to comment on whether any penalties might be considered to deter such activity.

The other area of interest to be amended relates to the ability of the Major Sports Facilities Authority to properly direct and control traffic and parking. This appears to be commonsense and intended to ensure that the majority of well-behaved, responsible drivers are not inconvenienced or placed at risk by the actions of a few. The amendments allowing the authority to meet 12 times a year rather than monthly are minor and essentially provide some increased flexibility to board arrangements. I support the bill.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (3.52 pm): As honourable members would know, I often stand in the House and give some flak to the ministers when they spend money on establishments such as Suncorp Stadium or other major sporting facilities at a time when there are so many other worthwhile and urgent needs in the community. The major responsibilities of health, power infrastructure, reliable water supply and many other issues appear to fall by the wayside to a certain extent while millions are spent on what I classify as nonessentials. In saying that, I would like to acknowledge that Suncorp Stadium is truly a great stadium. I have been there and I have enjoyed the facilities, but I still believe the priorities of any government are the major ones to the community and they should always remain a priority until they are at least brought up to a reasonable level.

The bill is aimed at providing a framework for the operation of the Major Sports Facilities Authority, which started with the management of Brisbane Cricket Ground. The extra responsibilities are management of five more sporting complexes: the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre, Willows Sports Complex—incorporating Dairy Farmers Stadium—the Sleeman Sports Centre and Suncorp Stadium.

The minister stated in his second reading speech that one of the major amendments proposed in this bill is to increase penalties for pitch invasions. I ask the minister: what was the extra cost to the authority and how will such costs be absorbed in the future in the case of additional staff being required?

Recently when I went to the cricket it rained all day, which seems to be my wont whenever I get a day off to go to see the sport. It rained all day and people were playing with beach balls in the stands. I cannot say exactly how many there were—there was a considerable number—but slowly, one by one they inevitably went over the fence or in the pathway where they park the tractor, and they were

punctured. These people who had paid to get in were left to watch a rerun of cricket from weeks and weeks before and were harmlessly playing with beach balls. I thought to myself at the time it was a bit sad that these harmless beach balls were getting popped left, right and centre. But I do understand the reason why things cannot be thrown onto the field. They do cause injury to players. I remember seeing some footage on the TV where a cricketer was hit in the head with a full can of beer. That is abominable. I also remember watching the Olympics, and I think every single person who has a heart would have had it twinge just a bit when they saw the threat to one of the runners' chances during the games as a person ran onto the track and tried to push them clean out of the race all together.

The other thing that the member for Tablelands mentioned was streakers. I have noticed in the past that the media tend to shy away from showing streakers on TV, and they are to be commended for that. One of the things that does worry me is the fact that on a rare occasion I have seen a streaker with a sponsor's name on their back. I think that has to be discouraged. We need a big penalty for that. The sponsors should not be encouraging that type of behaviour. I would like that to be addressed.

I would like to turn to the issue of parking. Every time we have gone to the cricket or the football we have had difficulty in finding a park. Even though we end up parking six or seven blocks away, we always smile to ourselves when we see the number of cars parked on people's front lawns. We think to ourselves that if those people are renting out those parks they are probably doing all right over the football and cricket seasons. I remember, too, at the time of the construction of Suncorp Stadium there was a huge outcry as to the lack of parking facilities. To be quite honest, I have not noticed any huge change over the course of the years but maybe there has been. I know that people who come from out of town into the city tend to head to where they want to be and it can be very difficult, whereas locals know where all the parks are that they can get to without too much trouble. Most people from the country do have trouble finding a park. I think parking will always be a major issue.

I support this bill. I think it has needed to be brought in to stop some of the hooliganism that occurs on our sporting facilities. I did not notice anywhere where it said that the money collected from the six venues would be tallied and kept track of as individual amounts. I ask the minister whether that is going to happen or whether it is going to be lumped into consolidated revenue. Does that remain with the authority to use on the various fields it manages or is it going into government coffers? With those few words, I support the bill and commend it to the House.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (3.58 pm): I rise to support the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill. This bill is crucial as we approach another football season and our major sporting grounds will play host to tens of thousands of fans. This bill increases the penalties for those who are thinking of having fun, as it is put in the bill, and ruining the spectacle for thousands of fans.

I was disturbed to read the other day that Peter Hoare, Australia's serial pest, was releasing a DVD of his antics over the last decade, all of which have been absolutely disgraceful. This is the man who gatecrashed the funeral of INXS lead singer Michael Hutchence, as well as the 1997 Melbourne Cup and the Iran-Australia soccer qualifier in 1997. One of his other notable invasions was when he assisted the release of refugees from the Woomera Detention Centre. His antisocial behaviour has become almost folklore. However, I am pleased to see this is being treated seriously now here in Queensland.

Formerly, as has already been stated, the fine for invading a pitch was $1500 and a night in the lock-up. It was rare, though, that these maximum penalties were handed down. Despite a history of being a pest and a nuisance, Hoare was fined only $300 for running on to the marathon track at the Sydney Olympics with a didgeridoo. As we saw last year and as others have mentioned, similar antics cost a runner the gold medal in Athens.

With the increase of the fine to $3,000, or $6,000 if a player is interfered with, hopefully this will serve as a deterrent to those looking to disobey the law just to have their little bit of fame. Even more significant is the threat that a pitch invasion poses in this modern era of sport. First, the people on the sporting field are now professional sportsmen. It is not like the old days when the kids would head down to the fence 15 minutes before the end of a game at Bottomley Park to get the front position to souvenir a corner post. Today sport is the livelihood of many players and an injury caused by a spectator interfering with them in the course of the game could open up a Pandora's box of litigation. While such action may not end up at the feet of the state because stadiums are under a public authority, such actions could certainly hurt the sport and the willingness of sportsmen and sportswomen to play in Queensland. Secondly, with the heightened fears of terrorism and the amount of exposure and sheer numbers of people at sporting events, a pitch invader now raises concerns that go over and above what was usually expected or thought of. While a streaker used to be a bit of fun in a dull match between Zimbabwe and New Zealand, the immediate thought that pops into the mind now is whether that streaker could be out there for a more sinister reason.

We also have to realise that sport is worth a lot of money now. Particularly with the money that can be wagered on sport, a streaker or organised group of streakers could easily affect the result of a game at a crucial stage. In the preliminary final in the AFL in 2004 we saw a bunch of supporters interrupt the momentum of St Kilda, which looked to have Port Adelaide on the ropes. I would hate to think that such organised activity could interfere with the fairness of a sport.

All of this congratulates the government on the new increases to the maximum fines against streakers. However, I would also encourage the authority to exercise the maximum penalty where possible and make it be seen that it is doing so. This may prevent further behaviour of this nature. With those comments, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (4.01 pm): I rise this afternoon to support the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill 2004. The Major Sports Facility Authority was established in 2001 so that there would be one single body responsible for the management of the state's major sports facilities. The authority now manages the Brisbane Cricket Ground, the entertainment centre, Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre, Willows Sports Complex, the Sleeman Sports Centre and Suncorp Stadium.

Early last year the Deputy Premier started a review of the 2001 act to ensure that the legislative framework is operating effectively. The main objectives of the bill are to implement the review findings by making some minor machinery amendments, to amend the meeting requirements for the board of the authority, to increase fines for pitch invasions and to give the authority the power to regulate traffic and parking at its facilities. The increase in fines for pitch invasions are in line with those in New South Wales and in Victoria and are aimed at protecting both players and spectators. There were six invasions during the nine World Cup games, and the question of safety for players and officials as well as spectators is paramount. Hopefully the fines will act as a deterrent to people who think that invading the playing fields is acceptable behaviour. It is not acceptable behaviour. It should be noted that this does not apply to kids running on to the field at the end of a game. This is still considered to be a bit of fun, and whilst there are no problems it can continue.

Parking problems at the Sleeman centre and the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre have prompted another amendment. While illegal parking is a problem for residents who live near major sporting facilities, it also has the potential to prevent easy access for emergency vehicles and can cause damage to public assets such as footpaths, gardens and the like. This bill will provide the authority the power to appoint appropriately experienced, authorised persons to control traffic and parking. Their powers include the ability to give directions to persons on facility land in order to control traffic, to erect or display regulatory notices in relation to speed, driving and parking restrictions and removing abandoned vehicles.

This is a sensible bill that will ensure the safety of players and spectators alike as they attend our major sports facilities, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (4.03 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise and support the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill. Just two weeks ago we put in some legislation about summary offences regarding spectators at sporting events. This goes with it in ensuring that we set some barriers and fines and the like for those who invade pitches. We have all heard the stories from previous members. While sometimes they are funny occurrences, all the time they interfere with most of the sporting events.

I would like to commend the minister responsible for the Major Sports Facilities Authority. I think it does a great job, particularly in managing the sporting venues around the city and in Townsville. Everyone has talked about Suncorp Stadium. It is simply the best rectangular sport stadium in the world. That is not just biased Queenslanders saying that; people who have travelled the world watching sporting events have said that.

Once the new stand is completed at the cricket ground, the facility will be second to none. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the manager of the cricket ground and Brisbane athletics, where the QAS is now, Chris Cochrane, who does a mighty job at those two venues. I congratulate the Major Sports Facilities Authority for the great work that it does in putting on a great venue, and hopefully we will see some great events this year, particularly starting from Sunday.

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (4.06 pm), in reply: I would like to thank all members for their contributions to the debate and their support for the legislation. A couple of issues were raised. The shadow minister asked a couple of questions in relation to the act and how the MSFA will deal with tenant parking in an appropriate zone. The MSFA is developing policies and procedures that will deal with those issues. There are many parking areas available and there is a need for parks. No parking zones are prohibited.

The main problem we have is at Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre, or ANZ Stadium or QEII—but today's name is Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre. We are bringing back there a parking regime that existed under the Brisbane City Council. With the advent of the major authorities facility authority, it did not have the power to have a parking regime there in the same way that the Brisbane City Council did. So, the parking regime that will be repeated there will be similar to that which operated when the Brisbane City Council was there.

The second question was in relation to the amendment to clause 5, which is the substitution of ‘an insolvent under administration' rather than ‘a person affected by a bankruptcy action'. The intent of this is simply to bring it up to today's drafting standards. It does not change the intent of what is meant. The present bill and the amendment to the bill does not exclude a discharged bankrupt from being a member

of the board nor does the current act. We are using today's drafting to do this, so it is not something new that we are bringing in.

The member for Nanango raised the issue of car park revenue and whether we would be disclosing that individually for each venue in our annual report. I am not sure that financial reporting gets down quite to that level, but if it is required by the Auditor-General to have the car parking revenue there we will put it there, as we would with the swimming revenue and all the other different revenues.

The MSFA is an accountable body and the shadow minister raised issues previously. I recall at the estimates committee that the member tried to ask questions in relation to its finance. It is not a part of the budget. The grants from government to it are, so it is able to be debated and questioned at the estimates committee.

The actual operations of the MSFA, and indeed a number of other authorities and GOCs, are not open for discussion at the estimates committee because it is the estimate of the budget, not of authorities that are outside of the budget. We went through this explanation last year, and I am sure we will go through it again this year. The answer will be the same this year as it was last year, as it was the year before, as it was, indeed, when the shadow minister was in government when they referred to bodies outside of the budget as not being bodies that could be questioned at the estimates committee. The Auditor-General is the person to whom the MSFA has to provide its accounts. They are audited and they are signed off before the annual report is presented to this parliament.

In relation to funding, the member for Nanango raised the issue of whether money that goes to the MSFA could in fact be spent on things like health and education. I would like to repeat something that I have said many, many times. The funding that is going to the Major Sports Facilities Authority—if we look at Suncorp Stadium—comes about from a specific levy which was placed on the more profitable hotels' gaming machines in Queensland. That funding goes to the MSFA to meet the majority of the loan that was taken out in relation to Suncorp Stadium. It is not competing in any way for funds from health, education or any of the other service areas. It is a specific levy that was introduced to meet that debt.

Secondly, the other grants that are made available are grants that are made available from the department of sport. The department of sport's funding of that comes from funds that it receives from gaming machines. Once again, that is a specific percentage of money that is paid from gaming machines to the department of sport to fund sports related matters. That money is paid to the Major Sports Facilities Authority. This year it has helped to build a new beach volleyball centre at QSAC, which is available for people to use and also available for the Queensland Academy of Sport. The capital grant came from the sports fund to enable that to happen. It needs to be understood that consolidated revenue does not fund these sports related matters.

I thank all members for their support for the legislation and, like everyone else, I am waiting in anticipation for Sunday when Suncorp Stadium will, I predict, host the biggest crowd of any NRL round match this year.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 14, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time.

RACING AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 28 September 2004 (see p. 2395).

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (4.13 pm): In speaking on this bill I hope to give a broad outline of the parts of the bill that we, the opposition, agree with and also the concerns that we have about the racing industry in Queensland, particularly country racing. We all know the decline that our country race clubs have suffered over recent years and the concerns of many of them that they do not face a viable future under this minister and his cronies at Queensland Racing. I know that the member for Bulimba, Pat Purcell, has, at the insistence of the minister, toured many country race clubs on a listening tour designed to provide an opportunity to blunten the teeth of the real concerns that country race clubs are expressing about this minister and his policies. Hopefully this tour has provided race clubs with the capacity to achieve some input into the drafting of this bill and was not merely yet another example of the Beattie government's willingness to waste a lot of money on public relations waffle and media manipulation.

This tour was actually a brilliant move by the minister as part of a move to take the heat off him from the failures of his predecessor, Merri Rose, while he thought he could settle comfortably into this portfolio. Mr Purcell, rather than Minister Schwarten, was to go out to face the uproar from country race clubs arising from the policies of Merri Rose and her minion, Bob Bentley, so protecting the minister from having to face them and answer their concerns.

To the member's credit, he possesses the capacity to walk into a potentially hostile meeting and after a few moments turn the mood of the meeting around by his personality. This is in stark contrast to how the minister operates; he is more concerned with confrontation than conciliation. The use of Mr Purcell in this way was intended to give the minister a smooth transition into his new portfolio after the failures of the previous minister, Merri Rose, which were so bad that her electors dumped her at the last election. Unfortunately, Mr Purcell seems to have failed to achieve any more than minor advances in the protection of country racing, let alone the general Queensland racing industry.

This bill addresses to some degree the issue of funding to non-TAB race clubs, which basically covers country clubs, through requiring that seven per cent of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board's share of net UNiTAB product fee be allocated as prize money for non-TAB racing. From what I see, the seven per cent is basically no more than a statement of the current moneys being made available from the product fee for the benefit of country racing; it merely confirms the status quo.

The great problem with these provisions is that they are setting in legislative form the current status of prize money for country racing. Whilst growth in the total product fee will result in growth in the sums available as prize money for country racing, the inability to increase the percentage figure without coming back to this parliament will mean that country racing will always remain the poor cousin of racing in Queensland and be condemned to perpetual poverty.

Interruption.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): If I could just interrupt the member for Darling Downs briefly, I want to welcome to the public gallery an official delegation from the Taiwan Highway Police Bureau led by Commissioner Lin and Deputy Commissioner Yang.

RACING AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed.

Mr HOPPER: The current moneys made available by Queensland Racing to country racing have declined drastically over recent years, as Chairman Bentley and his board have slashed the number and type of race meetings that country race clubs can conduct in favour of their mates in other race clubs.

Because of this slash and burn policy that Bentley has implemented, country racing has suffered a significant decline which this legislation is now seeking to permanently enshrine through putting a maximum level on potential prize money available. This means there will be no capacity to increase the number and range of meetings conducted by country race clubs, nor the level of prize money that will be available for those meetings.

The point I am making is that racing throughout Queensland is a major employment source for many people, from the lucerne grower to the breeder, the trainer, the jockey, the bookie, the race day staff et cetera. This does not include the many people who just love following the industry and attending race meetings right across Queensland, in the city as well as the country. These are the people who are going to be hurt by this attempt by the minister to put country racing into a straightjacket and ensure that it has minimum potential for future growth and development.

Earlier last year we heard the minister talk down the actual number of people that the racing industry actually does employ. The reality is that there are literally tens of thousands of people throughout Queensland who at least partly earn income or derive great social pleasure from the Queensland racing industry.

The people in charge of the industry—that is, the Queensland Racing board, and especially the chairman thereof—must act to keep the seven per cent to be returned from the UNiTAB product fee at a healthy level so that country racing can survive, let alone prosper. Credit comes where credit is due. I can honestly say that the main reason the turnover in this industry is where it is today is the healthy economy under the Liberal-National federal government. People are happy, as the economy is the best it has been and they are willing to spend a bit of money and have a bet. Imagine what the turnover could be if they had confidence in the industry.

Government members interjected.

Mr HOPPER: Compare the turnover now to what it was when Keating had interest rates at 21 per cent.

Government members interjected.

Mr HOPPER: They do not like the truth. One of the biggest disappointments to my local area is the loss of the TAB class meetings at Dalby. This now puts the Dalby race club in the category of clubs that this bill is trying to address. The downgrading of Dalby by Chairman Bentley has dramatically reduced the betting turnover at that club and the turnover of other clubs in adjoining electorates.

I know from talking to my constituents how detrimental the policies pursued by the minister and his board have been for local racing. This bill will go a bit of the way towards addressing some of the needs of our country race clubs, but none of them will ever forget the destruction that this government has wreaked on all country race clubs. They have all suffered massive race day cuts. No doubt all members representing country electorates have heard this from their local constituents. The race dates were stolen. This is absolutely horrific. Some country clubs will never heal the wounds that the minister and the Queensland Racing board have inflicted upon them.

We now have workplace health and safety operatives putting the claws in and squeezing country race clubs such Warra, Jandowae and Tara by imposing stringent requirements on infrastructure, allegedly due to world health concerns. How can these small country clubs possibly afford to upgrade their facilities to the extent that is being proposed without access to funds? The funds are required to be devoted to prize money, too.

I know that one country race club in my electorate is travelling out west to take down the outside running rail at another club and transport it to its club and put it up there. This is the sort of thing that these people are faced with. Volunteers run these clubs. No-one gets paid. It is community service. These dates have been snatched away from them. Now they have to follow workplace health and safety legislation and have an a la carte course.

A government member interjected.

Mr HOPPER: If those opposite disagree with that, they do not know much. In a lot of the country areas, the country race club meeting is the only significant social occasion that brings the whole community together. It is also the only event that is held in some of our western towns. It is day when people get together.

The policies pursued by the minister and the Beattie government in downgrading rural areas by withdrawing services and preventing economic development follow in the footsteps of the Goss government, which withdrew police, railways and courthouses from so many of our smaller communities. Mr Beattie and Mr Schwarten are continuing this fine Labor tradition of attacking country folk by their withdrawal of race meetings and by closing down country racing.

The Queensland Racing board is the controlling body for racing throughout Queensland. We have now heard two ministers in this parliament refusing to take responsibility for their actions. Instead, they have adopted the attitude that when anything bad happens in racing it is the board's responsibility. But we see the minister gloat about announcements like that which was made in this House recently about the abandonment of the supertrack proposal for Brisbane. Even then we heard the minister threaten to use the sledgehammer. What a typical example of Labor Party thuggery.

The Queensland Racing board is by law the controlling body of Queensland Racing and will be the body implementing the laws that will be passed today in this legislation. This is my biggest concern about any legislation that will pass through this House. Board members have to be people of the highest integrity to be able to run an organisation as big as Queensland Racing. It is hard not to make any further comment on this matter. I need not state to this House where I stand on the matter. Members have heard it all before. We are all aware of what has come out to date from the Daubney-Rafter inquiry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I will make a ruling for members as we go into debate on this bill. It is not sub judice to talk about an inquiry. It is within the new sub judice rules. Nevertheless, standing order 236 is relevant here. It talks about relevance and tedious repetition. I think we are talking here about country racing. I will allow the opposition spokesperson to draw some analogies about the importance of the management skills of the board but I will not allow a debate on an inquiry that is happening at the moment because it is not relevant to this bill. I call the member for Darling Downs.

Mr HOPPER: I will await with interest its final report. I will merely state that what has been exposed to date more than amply justifies the pressure the opposition has placed on the minister for racing that has forced him to launch inquiries after assuring this House and the Queensland public that everything was honest and upright in racing on his watch.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House. There has been no such pressure placed on the board.

Mr HOPPER: I have heard it said by so-called leaders of Queensland Racing that non-TAB race clubs, which are mainly country race clubs with race meetings where UNiTAB does not offer off-course

wagering, provide little direct financial return to the industry. They may not provide a direct return to the UNiTAB wagering pool, but they certainly provide a huge base of support, both physically and financially, which underpins the whole industry throughout Queensland.

Can members name some jockeys that have not done a stint in the bush at one stage or another? A lot of trainers get a start in the bush, as do many horses, strappers and others in the industry. In 2003, the number of non-TAB race meetings was reduced by approximately 200 per year. I am told that this enabled some increase in prize money available to country races per race. The end result has been to make more country race clubs nonviable. It has had a drastic effect on the ownership and training of horses in country areas.

All of the clubs in my electorate have been affected dramatically. I will give members a few examples. The Bell Race Club, of which I am a very strong and keen member, has had its race meetings cut from four to two per year. That does not sound like much. However, the effect on a small community the size of Bell has been extremely dramatic.

I know most of people who attend these meetings. I know for a fact that a lot of them are genuine country people. They attend these meetings simply for a day out and a good country get-together. The point I am trying to make is that these country race clubs are not only race clubs; they also provide a wonderful service to the community. They enable people to socialise as well as raise large sums of money for local charities and community groups.

This government, under the combined leadership of Merri Rose and the now 'king of integrity' Chairman Bob Bentley, has nearly destroyed country racing and the many country race clubs that go with it. This legislation may go a bit of the way towards healing some of these very deep wounds. However, I simply do not want to see the minister walking around with his chest poked out saying how he has helped country racing when he was, and remains, part of the government that was, and still is, seemingly committed to totally destroying our country race clubs.

At the moment the TAB clubs, or at the least the ones favoured by Chairman Bentley, are the ones getting fat. This is at the expense of the non-TAB clubs. It is quite easy to say that the non-TAB clubs are the ones that are suffering immensely.

Let us hope that this piece of legislation goes a far way towards addressing this major problem for I am very worried and concerned that, with the emphasis placed on the seven per cent of the UNiTAB product fee, other issues facing country race clubs, such as the necessity to reinstate and where appropriate hold more country race meetings, will continue to be ignored. In saying that, I cannot emphasise enough the strength the industry as a whole must show for all followers of racing to prosper throughout Queensland.

There are those who argue that it is a policy of this minister and Chairman Bentley to concentrate all available funds for prize money and race club development in the hands of a few race clubs primarily in south-east Queensland and a limited number of provincial centres. They say that this is designed to provide prize money equivalent to that payable in Sydney and Melbourne and make racing viable for the professional owners and trainers et cetera. While it is of course nice to have the interests of these people at heart, the Queensland racing industry and its supporters are more wide ranging than this relatively small elite of 'in' people. Racing should be run in the interests of all supporters, no matter where they might live in this vast state. The interests of the part-time or hobby owner or trainer or small country race club deserve equitable consideration by the current controllers of Queensland Racing instead of largely being ignored, as they are at the present time. From what I see of the rapid restructure that our country race clubs have had to undergo, it has been the ideas of a very select few under the chairmanship of Bob Bentley that are forced through no matter what opposition might be expressed or what concerns might be raised by people being affected by these proposals. We all know what will happen to a person if someone dares even question Chairman Bentley's authority. Plus 50 is the number of casualties from Queensland Racing to date.

The thing that saddens me is that when I heard Mr Schwarten was to take over as racing minister in Queensland I became quite excited. I have shadowed this minister for the last few years and have always found him generally willing to address concerns as they arise. But what do we see here? We see a minister who has joined the rest of the industry and put his tail between his legs and headed straight for the dog kennel as soon as Bentley sticks his head up. This is not the minister—

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments untrue. Comparing me to a dog is unparliamentary. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr HOPPER: I withdraw. This is not the minister for public works that I used to know. I must say that his performance in the racing portfolio leaves a lot to be desired. I remember the briefing I had with Mr Bentley and how that briefing occurred. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lawrence Springborg, and I were asked if Mr Bentley could give us a briefing. I advised my leader that it would be wise if he would give that time to sit down with Mr Bentley and listen to what he had to say. On arriving at that briefing I,

as the shadow racing minister, asked Mr Bentley to address my leader and me. What was the response? He said, 'I'm here to listen.'

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Is this relevant to country racing?

Mr HOPPER: It is very relevant. This is the man who put this—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: But is this related to matters in the bill?

Mr HOPPER: Very much so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will give the member a hearing for a little while longer and see if it is.

Mr HOPPER: Okay. I will just finish the last bit of this paragraph and then move on. What sort of briefing would one call that? The chair of Queensland Racing came to give us a briefing. I asked a lot of questions about country racing. We talked about different things to do with country racing. After talking to the chair of Queensland Racing for a while, I became quite comfortable and honestly thought that we might be able to achieve something by opening up to each other for the sake of racing in Queensland. I remember walking Mr Bentley downstairs. On the way he told me to always talk to him as he is only a phone call away. I must say to the House today that I left that briefing feeling that I could trust him. He even told me to lay off the Reardon case unless I wanted to embarrass him a lot, as Mr Bentley seemed to say that he had a lot more on him and would expose him if I did not lay off.

That is what makes this whole bill so hard to take. The opposition will be supporting this bill, and some people out there will think that we are supporting a step forward by the minister. Our support for this bill is, however, reluctantly given as the person left in charge of racing in Queensland still remains Bentley. Under his leadership, country racing has not got a hope. It is this man who has brought on the destruction of our country race clubs. The minister seeks to argue that the creation of a new Country Racing Committee comprising representatives of non-TAB clubs and the appointment of the chair thereof from the board of Queensland Racing, who cannot be Chairman Bentley, will ensure somehow that the interests of country racing will be protected when it comes to determining issues such as the allocation of prize money and race dates. The reality, however, will be vastly different.

Queensland Racing determines how many race dates that non-TAB clubs will get in any one year. Indeed, it is Queensland Racing that determines whether a club will even be registered as a race club in the first place. Because only seven per cent of the product fee will be available as the total prize pool for country racing, this means that the choices faced by the allegedly independent Country Racing Council will be significantly circumscribed. Only a set figure—that is, the total prize money pool divided by the allocated number of prize dates—will be available for each non-TAB race club to fight over. Naturally, each non-TAB club will expect to get the same amount for each race meeting it conducts as do other country clubs, so members can imagine what fighting and manoeuvring will go on if someone seeks to get a better deal than the average.

It is important to again note that the power to allocate race dates by Queensland Racing for country racing is deliberately skewed to protect the interests of the TAB race clubs. This means that country race clubs are going to be even more adversely dealt with by Queensland Racing when it comes to race dates and there is nothing that the Country Racing Council will be able to do about that. Neatly, the minister and Chairman Bentley will have transferred much of the anger currently felt over these issues which is directed at them to the new Country Racing Council—smart divide and conquer tactics to protect Chairman Bentley. Even if the Country Racing Council does arrive at an agreement, it still has to go back to Queensland Racing, which can reject the proposal and require that an agreement be reached between Queensland Racing and the Country Racing Council. I can just see Mr Bentley now giving deep consideration to the representations of any country race club dissatisfied with the decisions of the Country Racing Council and saying, 'No matter what you have decided, you have to satisfy me that you have properly considered all issues.' His power is enhanced—not diminished—by these proposals.

The reality will be that, given the way in which Mr Bentley dominates the board of Queensland Racing and this minister, his power to achieve his objectives in relation to country racing remain undimished.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. I find the words that Mr Bentley dominates me to be offensive and untrue, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr HOPPER: I withdraw. His capacity to avoid the heat arising from decisions has been improved immeasurably. Under this bill, the chair of Queensland Racing will still have the ultimate say on all issues involving country racing. So members can see that our country race clubs might think that they will have a say, but the reality is that the ultimate say will come down to the chair of Queensland Racing. It is a bit like what the world witnessed in Germany. Hitler got rid of anyone he thought would be a threat to him, and that is exactly what we have seen happen to Queensland Racing.

I honestly cannot believe the way the minister has performed in this portfolio. This is Minister Schwarten that I am speaking about—the hard hitter, the man who is always ready to take something

on. Now we have seen him hiding in the corner and letting the chair of Queensland Racing walk all over him. I would love to take the minister to a few—

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. This is yet another reference to Mr Bentley dominating me and walking over the top of me. It is untrue, it is offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr HOPPER: I withdraw. I would love to take the minister to a few country race meetings—maybe Bell, Home Hill or any of the other country race meetings of the minister's choice. I am sure the minister would get a feel for what these country race clubs are going through and they would all tell him that their biggest fear is having Bentley have the last say. The fact is that I am sure the minister would have a great day, and hopefully he would get a better feel for country racing than he obviously currently possesses.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr HOPPER: I would like to take you up on that. Of course, it may be that the minister is being even more devious than he usually is. The purpose behind the legislation—

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. These comments are offensive, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member to withdraw. Firstly, I suggest to the member that during the debate he should address his comments through the chair and, secondly, I remind him that disparaging comments about another member are not allowed under standing orders.

Mr HOPPER: The purpose behind this legislation may not be to take the heat off Chairman Bentley for his decisions on country racing but rather to provide a smoother mechanism for 'Big Bill' when he ultimately goes on to the board of Queensland Racing and takes over as chairman. Let Bentley take the heat off. 'Big Bill' can ride to the rescue of Queensland Racing. Mr Schwarten certainly has demonstrated his political sensitivity about the current bill by his uncalled for attack on me in his letter of 13 December 2004 to country race clubs. The minister has had the hide to blame me for the failure of parliament to debate the bill following its introduction on 28 September 2004.

I ask members to remember that this is the government that has the capacity to completely dominate this House. It routinely rides roughshod over the genuine interests of members when it seeks to achieve objectives. The minister had at least four sitting weeks in 2004 during which the bill could have been debated, but he and the government thought so little of its importance that we are only now coming to debate it in 2005. So much for the minister's concern for country racing! The minister had four sittings in which to debate that bill, yet he still blamed the National Party for holding up the bill. How could we hold up the bill? Just because I said that most of the members of the National Party want to speak to it, the minister said, 'You are going to waste too much time,' wrote to all the country race clubs and tried to defame me.

An opposition member: He was scared of the inquiry.

Mr HOPPER: He was running very, very scared of what we would have said, and what we would have brought up. Now we are hushed up because of an inquiry.

What was the excuse for the delay? The fact that the opposition might use the debate to expose the failures and the policy for racing by the minister, his predecessors, and by the Labor Party's hand-picked chair, Bob Bentley? If the minister had nothing to fear, why did he delay the debate? Was it in the hope that the inquiry might finish before the minister had to confront the House? I do not want to speak about the inquiry, but I think that it is an honest, good attempt. Because of my concern that the inquiry proceeds with its work in an expeditious manner, I have deliberately refrained from commenting on matters that the inquiry might be pursuing. That debate will now occur at a later time after this House has had the opportunity to consider the final report of the inquiry. I would now like to table the letters that I referred to.

Leave granted.

Mr HOPPER: I have indicated that the opposition will support this bill, not because it offers any drastic improvement to the position of country racing in Queensland but because it will at least provide some minimum protection from the direct impact of the anticountry racing policies pursued by Mr Bob Bentley. At least the level of prize money cannot easily be reduced below the seven per cent of the product fee. At least there will be some mechanism for country racing to have its concerns addressed to the board of Queensland Racing, but I again state that at the end of the day, on the current provisions, Mr Bentley will get his way.

Given the way in which the heart of country racing has been ripped out by this chairman and by the Labor Party over recent years, I suppose we have to be thankful for the small mercies that this bill represents. It is yet more crumbs thrown by the Labor Party to country people to keep them relatively quiet whilst its mates are looked after.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (4.42 pm): I am very pleased to rise to participate in the debate on the Racing Amendment Bill as there is a need to put the record straight. The truth is that Queensland

Racing has gone from a deficit in 2000 to an operating surplus in the 2003-04 financial year. This is something that is often not talked about, especially by the shadow minister. In fact, we often hear that prize money is down when, in fact, it has never been higher. The increase in prize money has been seen in both TAB and non-TAB racing. There are people in Queensland who rely on the racing industry for jobs as well as those who just simply enjoy it. It is important that those jobs are secure for Queenslanders, and the spirit of racing is kept alive. There is a need to move on, to think about today's challenge and not how the past was, to face those challenges and make changes for the future of racing.

I heard the shadow minister speak about the community importance of country racing. I agree with him wholeheartedly. He talked about the big events, the community coming together, what a wonderful social day it is and the atmosphere being wonderful. Then he said that workplace health and safety was not important. There is a whole community coming together. I think it is very important that they are safe, not to mention the workers and the jockeys. I think they have a right to be safe. I would think that workplace health and safety would be a very important part of a race day. So I certainly do not agree with that.

Mr Schwarten: I think it was a terrible blunder on his part.

Ms STONE: That is exactly right. If the member thinks that workplace health and safety is not part of it, he does not understand racing at all.

The Queensland thoroughbred racing industry has undergone major reform. While some in the industry are reaping the benefits, it is obvious that others are facing challenges. I know that the member for Bulimba has spent a lot of time travelling to various country clubs to hear their concerns. I must say that he has taken up their fight with passion and commitment to bring about change. The feedback given was that the current structure is not meeting the clubs' needs in terms of representation of funding. It has been through those concerns raised by those clubs in the country that this bill has been formed.

In terms of representation, the current five racing associations will be abolished and replaced by eight smaller regional based country racing associations. Each club will nominate one person to represent the club on its country racing association. In other words, every club gets someone around the table. Each country racing association will form a three-person selection panel to appoint its representative on the Queensland Country Racing Committee. The Queensland Country Racing Committee will replace the Queensland Regional Racing Council with a representative from each of the eight associations and a chair who will be one of the existing Queensland Racing Board members. The committee will develop and recommend the non-TAB race calendar and the distribution of funding and prize money. Queensland Racing must consider the committee's recommendations and provide reasons for change if they choose not to accept them. The publishing of the changes and the reasons for the change by Queensland Racing bring more public accountability into the industry.

Queensland Racing will be required to allocate at least seven per cent of its share to the net UNiTAB product fee as prize money to non-TAB clubs. In other words, the non-TAB clubs will be guaranteed seven per cent of prize money. Compared to other states, this will be one of the highest in Australia. The seven per cent is expected to be around $6 million compared to the figure in Victoria, which is less than $1 million; in New South Wales the figure is approximately $4 million; and in South Australia, the figure is around $300,000. So all of this is good news for Queensland country racing.

I want to thank the racehorse owners, bookmakers and others who are involved in the industry in the Springwood electorate who have contacted me. They speak to me about the industry regularly. In particular, I want to thank Mr Wayne Gannon who is a Springwood resident and also a business owner in Springwood. He often contacts me and speaks to me about the industry. I am sure that that will continue while I am the member for Springwood.

This bill will give country racing a stronger role. It shows the Beattie government's commitment to regional and rural racing. It also shows that the minister is listening and acting. It does not matter how long the opposition had to debate this bill. I still have not heard what are the holes in the policy that it is talking about; the shadow minister went on with a lot of mumbo jumbo and did nothing of any substance except run down the people he wants to run down. So it did not matter how much more time the minister gave him; nothing worked. Can I just say that, ultimately, it is the business decisions that the industry will need to make that will see the industry grow. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (4.46 pm): I am pleased to speak to the Racing Amendment Bill 2004. This legislation makes changes to country racing. Unfortunately, racing in Queensland continues to be in turmoil. I am really sorry to have to report that. Morale is very low, particularly in country racing, and metropolitan racing is now embroiled in yet another major inquiry.

The only bright spot is the proposed increase in prize money, particularly for metropolitan racing. In that regard, there have been some gains. I think that is commendable. It was inevitable that it would happen, as we predicted it would. The slash-and-burn mentality has meant that funding would also flow across from country racing to metropolitan racing. The TAB pool has grown. That is the one bright spot on the horizon.

Prize money for country racing is abysmal. It is still at about $4,000 a race for an average race meeting. Country owners and trainers get about $2,600 for a win, $800 for a second, $400 for a third and $200 for a fourth. After taking off the five per cent plus for the winning jockey, 10 per cent to the trainer, and the $173 fee, the winner takes under $2,000 for a win. In fact, the horse that comes fourth will take home more than the horse that came third, as the full jockey gratuity and the starting fee does not apply. So there are a lot of issues that have to be addressed in relation to country racing.

I notice that in his second reading speech the minister stated that Queensland has more money going into country racing than the other states, such as Victoria. Of course we have, compared to a state the size of Victoria. We have a lot of country areas and a lot of people who want to race—in fact, people who are dedicated to racing.

Queensland Racing selective events funding gives an additional $2,000 to one race for the day. That is beneficial, but in actual fact that is what each race should be worth—at least $6,000 or probably even more, but that would at least be a start because there are some serious problems in relation to country racing. While this bill relates to country racing issues, it will not fix those issues. I will detail some of the reasons why that is so.

Labor policy with regard to racing has basically closed down over 200 race meetings across Queensland. The funding that was directed to those race meetings is now going to others across the state. In some instances, some of those clubs had to be closed down. We have no problem with that. We do not like to see any of them closed down but the reality is that some could not make the grade. We will always have the situation where some will want to come on and some will want to drop off. So we have that situation but we do not believe that 200 should have been cut back.

Existing trainers have to travel further to take their horses to race meetings. For instance, trainers based in Roma, where I am based, have to travel from Blackall to Toowoomba virtually every weekend and anywhere in between to get a race meeting. One trainer based in Miles has to go from between Mackay to Blackall to Moree each weekend. These trainers have never had to travel so far to get a race meeting. They have anything from 15 to 38 horses, or maybe even more, that they train. They have to try to get those horses to race meetings. In the past they could always get a meeting within an hour or two hours drive from where they are. Now they have to drive up to 10 hours to get to a race meeting and back again, and then go again the next week or midweek. So they are burning out. Even the most dedicated, sophisticated and popular trainers will not be able to cope.

I do not believe the government thought hard enough about what would happen to country racing. We predicted what was going to happen, and exactly what we predicted is happening. Three trainers in Roma recently folded up. They felt they could not afford to travel. They had about five horses each and they just could not keep going. So 15 horses are gone from the system. I have horses myself. I have not got any right at the present moment. We will have some more one day soon, but one has to have a very good horse, one has to be prepared to travel and one has to be prepared to wait. I do not think there is enough fat in the game for people to want to do that.

In country areas we race basically for fun. If a horse can pay its way, people are generally reasonably happy with that. As long as it does not cost too much money, people are reasonably happy with that. When it costs more and more and you get into bigger and bigger syndicates, it is not the same. I am warning the government: country racing is grinding to a halt. It is the structure upon which racing in Queensland is based that is helping it to do that. I want to go through some of those things in due course.

Another point is that from approximately November through to March—a seven- to eight-week period—there is no racing. It is the Christmas period and things wind back. In the past there was always a race meeting that people could go to to get a run for their horse, but not anymore. People have nowhere to take their horses and it is a problem. We need to pursue a no-cost racing formula. I know that in many ways we are probably heading towards that. It has not been achieved but it needs to be. With the amount of money coming in, we need to be able to increase the prize money. If additional funds come in, we need to reduce the cost to get a horse on the track.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr HOBBS: Yes, starting fees and that type of thing.

An opposition member: More race meetings.

Mr HOBBS: And more race meetings. We still need to reduce these fees. It was inevitable that a major inquiry had to occur. It stemmed right back to the appointment of Bob Bentley and the QTR Board. It had to happen. It was as clear as can be that—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order! The speaker in the chair before me ruled on relevance; that inquiry has nothing to do with the debate today.

Mr HOBBS: With due respect, he talked about other things. Mine is purely relevant. I am talking about the structure—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: As long as you are talking about country racing.

Mr HOBBS: Country racing and the structure, yes. It all ties in.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will listen very carefully.

Mr HOBBS: I am sure you will be very pleased with what I have to say. It was clear the government had set the direction for racing and it wanted Bob Bentley to implement that plan. This is the problem we have. He has implemented the plan that the government wanted and he has crucified country racing in doing that. I want to explain to the House the way we see it. The board appointment process was crooked. We all know that. Everyone knew that. This bill has exactly the same hallmarks—

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. That is offensive, it is untrue and I ask that it be withdrawn. It has no basis in fact whatsoever. In fact, it has been investigated a number of times and has been proven to be the case.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the member for Warrego to withdraw those statements.

Mr HOBBS: I withdraw, and I point out there was no reflection on the minister. I was talking about the system. Quite clearly, it was not right and, as I said before, the bill has exactly the same hallmarks. It has the same structure on selection panels. There are some members in this House who were not here when the previous selection process was put in place. I want to explain to them exactly what happened. This is the same principle that will be put in place to select the selection panel for country racing. First of all, there was a panel set up by the minister for racing, Merri Rose, to select the board for the Queensland Racing tribunal.

Mr Schwarten: What has that got to do with this?

Mr HOBBS: It has a lot to do with it. I am explaining exactly what happened. That panel which selected the board came up with a set of names. One of those people—a lady called Nerolie Withnall—was selected as the chairman of that board. The government did not want that member to be chairman of the board and consequently Bob Bentley was appointed as chairman of the board. That is exactly what happened and it can happen again.

Mr Schwarten: It is not true.

Mr HOBBS: Let me explain.

Mr Schwarten: Where is your evidence?

Mr HOBBS: I am explaining the evidence.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warrego, I have asked you to address the matters in the bill before the House, and I again ask you to do that.

Mr HOBBS: I have read the bill in depth. I hope you have read the bill in depth because what I am doing is explaining exactly what happened—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please get to the point.

Mr HOBBS: I am trying to explain it to members. I hope you appreciate that, Mr Deputy Speaker. This structure can happen again. This selection panel was appointed by the minister. The minister said when Bob Bentley was appointed that he was on the short list. He was not on the short list. I have a letter here from Craig Black and Chris Sourris, who were on the selection panel, and they stated quite clearly—

Although Bob Bentley may have been interviewed for the first selection panel, he was not selected either as a member of the board or any reserve list by the first selection panel and the first selection panel did not sign off on any reserve list.

Quite clearly, that structure is still in place for this new bill to follow the same line. Let me say further to that: the minister came into the House and tried to defend it—the same as the minister is trying to defend it here now. She said that Bob Bentley was on the reserve list. In fact, he was not on the reserve list at all.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The matters that are being raised were investigated by the CMC some time ago. I am struggling to find the relevance of this to the country racing bill.

Mr HOBBS: I'll bet you are. Well, sit down and take it!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order! The member for Warrego will cease interjecting.

Mr HOBBS: Sit down and take it!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That is my final warning.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The point that the honourable member is trying to make is that there is some correlation between the system that appointed the Thoroughbred Racing Board and what is proposed in this bill. That is just simply not true and I ask you to rule on the matter of relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have already warned the member for Warrego. I ask you to address the matters before the bill.

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order. The member is speaking about the chairman of Queensland Racing, who has the ultimate say over country racing. This bill is about country racing. If we are going to get to the bottom of this bill, the minister must let him go on.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Resume your seat.

Mr HOBBS: I am referring to clause 9 and clause 15 of this bill, and I am saying that this same structure can happen again. The minister does not have the courage to face these issues in the parliament. It is no wonder he did not want this bill to be debated in the House, because he knew that this sort of thing was going to come up. I suggest to the minister that he try to listen. Maybe we can help in some way to fix country racing. Had the previous minister listened to what was going on in the industry and to what we were saying, we may not have had half the problems we have. There probably would not have been the current inquiry if the minister had listened to what is going on. It is happening because the minister did not listen. I say to the minister now in relation to the reserve list that there is no doubt in my mind—

Mr Schwarten: Where is the reserve list in this?

Mr HOBBS: The reserve list will be in this.

Mr Schwarten: Mr Deputy Speaker, what is the relevance of the reserve list?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, are you rising on a point of order?

Mr HOBBS: He has not got a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HOBBS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I also refer to the Australian Racing Board. I suppose the minister is going to say that it is irrelevant to this issue.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr HOBBS: He would. How can the Australian Racing Board be irrelevant to this issue? Under the Australian rules of racing there are two prerequisites for Australian Racing Board recognition of a racing control body as a principal club. This is under the old figures, but the law is the same. The prerequisites are that a control body must have the control and general supervision of thoroughbred racing within its territory and that it not have any members who are direct government appointees. We virtually have that in many instances. With Bob Bentley we virtually have that. The minister knows it and everybody out there knows it. The whole racing industry knows it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego will address the chair.

Mr HOBBS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The interim thoroughbred racing board, which was to approve nominations for that secret selection panel, did not even notice that the secret selection panel existed. This can happen again. We are saying to the minister that he does not need to have this.

Mr Schwarten: Where?

Mr HOBBS: We will explain it when we come to considering the clauses. There was an initial cover-up and even a break-in at the Attorney-General's office, from where documents relating to the original chairman of the QTRB were withdrawn or stolen.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Warrego, again I have asked you to speak to the bill. This is my final warning. Unless you do it I will sit you down.

Mr HOBBS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. These matters are actually very relevant. Clearly, there are people who are very sensitive about this issue of racing—even people in this House.

A government member interjected.

Mr HOBBS: You and you—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego will address the chair.

Mr HOBBS: I note that the Attorney-General is in the House now. I am pleased to see that the Attorney-General has arrived, because I was just talking about him. I think the minister should check the locks on his office.

Ms Nolan: What are you talking about?

Mr HOBBS: What am I talking about? I can perhaps explain. I could tell members about the break-in at the Attorney-General's office, but the Deputy Speaker will not let me tell them about those things.

A government member: You've been smoking too much pot.

Mr HOBBS: The member reckons I was smoking pot and another member reckons I have bookies' bills. I have a pretty busy life! The member opposite can throw all the accusations he likes, but the reality is that these people do not like being told the truth and seeing what they have done come back to haunt them. They have put all this in place and it is coming back to them.

There are eight country racing associations. I do not know why going from five to eight is a really good idea. Probably fewer is better, but that is not too bad. But the minister is going to appoint a selection panel to appoint those people. He is appointing a selection panel on the same principles as he did under the previous bill. Why would he do that? Why would the minister not let each club have a vote? Why appoint three people when there can be a democratic vote of members? What is wrong with a democratic vote by clubs? The minister wants to have a cosy little arrangement with Bentley in charge of it again.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr HOBBS: That is right. The member for Darling Downs has made a very good point. The Country Racing Committee will have nine members, with the chairman to be appointed by the control body. That chairman should not be from a TAB club. That chairman should be a member of a non-TAB club. I think the shadow minister will move an amendment to that effect. I think that would be quite reasonable. We can discuss that later.

The funding of seven per cent of the net UNiTAB product is good in one respect. However, it is also bad. It needs a base. That seven per cent equates to at least $6 million. We need to have a base so that it cannot go backwards. What happens if the money runs out halfway through the calendar? There has to be a resource that keeps going. There have to be some guarantees. Members can bet their boots that Eagle Farm or Doomben will not be closed down midyear, but Quilpie and Cunnamulla will be closed down. We want to have a base. We want to have a base of, say, $6 million plus CPI and we pay the higher amount, whether it be the seven per cent or eight per cent. Let us hope it goes up. Let us hope for everyone's sake it goes up and up.

Time expired.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (5.07 pm): I am pleased to support the Racing Amendment Bill, which provides more certainty and support for country racing in Queensland. Before I make some further comments on the bill, I record my best wishes to the minister's racing adviser, John Conway. He is a great mate to many people in this House. John is going through some personal struggles at the moment. We certainly wish him well and look forward to seeing both him and his wife, June, back at the track as soon as possible.

In addition to strengthening the opportunities for country race clubs to have an influence on the allocation of race dates and prize money to non-TAB race meetings, this bill for the first time provides a guaranteed source of prize money for the country racing sector, which is comprised of around 100 race clubs. The bill achieves this by legislating for a guaranteed seven per cent of the product fee UNiTAB pays to Queensland Racing to provide race meetings for wagering purposes. This is a solid foundation for country racing, and I commend the minister for taking the steps he has to secure the future of this important racing sector. I also commend his parliamentary secretary, Pat Purcell, for his strong advocacy on behalf of the sector.

The racing industry as a whole is dependent on a healthy UNiTAB, but it is also useful to acknowledge the other factors which underpin the levels of wagering on horses in this state. For example, apart from the number of people who wager on races via their local UNiTAB outlet or telephone or internet accounts, attendances at race meetings are a significant factor in the success of racing in Queensland. Both anecdotal and statistical information reveals that attendance at race meetings in country and city venues is, in fact, on the rise. One only needs to note the increase in media attention and focus on major carnivals, highlighting everything from the champions that will race at the tracks to the social atmosphere at a race meeting and the fashion.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics publication *Sports Attendance* published in December 2003 demonstrates how racing is experiencing a revival in Queensland. For instance, in Queensland in 2002, 359,400 people attended a horse race meeting. If harness and dog racing is added, the number of attendances is 416,500. This is the second highest number of attendees of all sports in Queensland, falling only behind Rugby League, which had attendances of 455,800. Based on the ABS figures for 2002, horse racing has around three times as many attendances as cricket at 118,400 per year and about twice as many as Aussie Rules at 176,400 per year.

The growth in attendances at horse race meetings since the last ABS survey in 1999 was 19.7 per cent. As a comparison, increased attendances during the same period were 6.6 per cent for Rugby League and eight per cent for cricket. Aussie Rules has been a standout exception to this. Although it started from a much lower base than the other sports, it has delivered a staggering 55 per cent increase in attendances over this period. The great run of success of the Brisbane Lions and the massive investment by the state government in the Gabba have helped achieved these results.

These figures show that horse racing is still a major spectator sport in Queensland. In fact, it is the second largest spectator sport in the state. The contribution racing makes to Queensland's economy is also significant. A recent report commissioned by the Australian Racing Board identified that racing contributed around $1.593 billion or 1.57 per cent of the gross state product in Queensland. Wagering taxes contribute around $30 million annually to our state budget.

Recently, the minister and the Premier demonstrated the government's commitment to a viable Queensland racing industry with the announcement of proposals for new management arrangements and upgraded track facilities at the current Eagle Farm and Doomben racecourse sites. I welcome the minister's announcement and look forward to the main participants in the industry working constructively to ensure that this proposal is implemented in the best interests of racing in this state. As a part of this, I note the government and the minister's welcome decision to commit up to $12 million to link the two tracks together, thus providing safer access for horses and people and providing a stimulus for more efficient and effective use of both existing racecourses.

Before closing, I want to acknowledge some significant gains and achievements for the industry since the establishment of Queensland Racing, which has responsibility for day-to-day governance issues in the industry. Since August 2003, Queensland Racing has delivered on one of the most significant issues raised with me concerning the needs of our local industry, that is, increased prize money for metropolitan, regional and country racing.

During his contribution, the member for Darling Downs was somewhat critical of the recent decision by Queensland Racing to guarantee significantly improved prize money for metropolitan racing. In particular, Saturdays and public holidays will be $40,000 or more, as a minimum. In fact, two-thirds of Saturday metropolitan races will carry stakes of $50,000 or more.

Mr Hopper: The fact is that we have lost 200 race days. That is a fact.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS: I was interested in the member's criticism because the facts of the matter are that without a—

Mr Hopper: Two hundred race days.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr NEIL ROBERTS: The facts of the matter are that metropolitan races are a significant and necessary part of sustaining the industry in this state, just as the country racing sector is.

Mr Hopper: They are; absolutely.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS: Better prize money will attract better horses; better horses will result in bigger turnover at those race meetings; bigger turnover will result in bigger returns to Queensland Racing and, ultimately, bigger returns to the very sector that the member is advocating on behalf of.

Mr Schwarten: That's right. That is the whole purpose of it.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS: In fact, the member's argument is against what in fact will be the reality and the results of that increased prize money.

Mr Schwarten: He doesn't understand it

Mr NEIL ROBERTS: Exactly; he doesn't understand it. It is a pretty basic fact.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Darling Downs!

Mr NEIL ROBERTS: I commend and congratulate Queensland Racing on a great initiative to bring racing in this state up to par with New South Wales and Victoria.

Apart from the major stakes races, there is now no good reason for trainers or owners to send their horses south in search of better prize money. Brisbane racing now has prize money that is equivalent to Sydney and Melbourne. If one takes into account training costs, Brisbane probably represents better value for trainers and owners than the southern tracks. This is a significant achievement of Queensland Racing and sets the foundation for a racing resurgence in Queensland. Congratulations to Queensland Racing and, indeed, the minister for achieving these major leaps forward over the last few years.

In closing, I again congratulate the minister and his department on preparing a sound and practical reform of the country racing sector and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (5.14 pm): I am pleased to rise in the House today, as the Liberal spokesman for racing, to speak on the Racing Amendment Bill. I am also pleased to say that the Liberal Party congratulates the Australian Labor Party on finally doing something about the state of Queensland racing, in particular the racing at our country tracks. I have fond memories of being at Centacare days at Esk and Beaudesert, and I know that my wife had a memorable weekend at the Roma picnic races while I was slaving over hot mouths in the UK many years ago.

For a long time now the art of country racing has been dying. We have heard many times from members on my right about the contribution that country racing makes to communities. We have also heard of the dire situation that some of these clubs are in and the need for this to be fixed. I tend to agree with these sentiments. Country racing has had a big cloud over it for too long, not knowing where the future lies for this Australian institution. This bill may provide some certainty over that.

While the Liberal Party supports the bill in general, there are a number of provisions in the bill which will be watched by the Liberal Party as they are implemented. The bill ensures that country racing clubs in various regions have representation and, further, that these areas are designed such that the areas represent clubs with similar interests. This is a very good idea. Too often country racing is grouped under one category. Perhaps both sides of the House have been guilty of looking for a quick-fix solution for all non-TAB race clubs in Queensland, without recognising that there are different needs for different clubs. This recognition in the bill is important.

Whilst recognition is important, it is also important that the intention of this move is maintained throughout the bill. For this reason, there are a number of provisions that should be looked at to ensure that they maintain this intention. Firstly, when looking at the selection panel mentioned in clause 9, proposed subsection 64A, which chooses people for a committee, we see that of the three members of the panel, one of the members does not have to be from the country racing association area specified. Of the three members, two must be from the country racing association and the other can be a trainer, bookmaker or jockey who need not be in the geographical region of the country racing association.

Further, there needs to be a unanimous decision for the appointment of a person to represent that country racing authority on the Country Racing Committee. This means that someone who does not have to work or live in the geographical region of the authority can veto any candidate who may seek appointment.

Mr Schwarten: They must be selected locally, though.

Mr LANGBROEK: I take that interjection. Thank you. I do not feel that it is fair if the bill seeks to maintain the intention that different areas have different needs when this provision allows an out-of-towner to have a final say on an appointment to the committee.

Mr Schwarten: I have answered that.

Mr LANGBROEK: I share the concerns of the honourable member for Darling Downs and I note that he has some proposed amendments to this clause when it is considered in detail.

Secondly, while I feel that this intention is attempted to be maintained by the provision excluding members of committees at TABQ clubs becoming members of the Country Racing Committee, the manner in which the bill prescribes this could be dangerous for cohesion in Queensland Racing. The Liberal Party will not continue their support of this bill if, de facto, there is a division created between the nine TABQ clubs and country racing clubs. The Liberal Party will not support a bill that, de facto, creates a rift between the two sectors of the industry. I believe that both sectors have a great deal to offer the other about new ways of running clubs and furthering the horse racing industry in Queensland. We cannot afford to factionalise Queensland's fourth largest industry. While the bill does not create a visible or intentional gap, there is the ammunition there for it to occur. I urge the minister to watch this carefully and I remind him that the Liberal Party will be watching this carefully. With those two minor submissions, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (5.17 pm): I rise to speak to the Racing Amendment Bill 2004. Unfortunately, this bill has been delayed for no apparent reason and country racing has been in limbo for the last two years. I attended a meeting of approximately 500 people at the Lockyer club about 18 months to two years ago to protest the way in which country racing had been gutted. Unfortunately, the Racing Amendment Bill 2004 will not improve the situation, as the money that has been tagged at seven per cent is the same amount, $6 million. There is no growth.

At the protest meeting, a local jockey spoke of how he had surveyed jockeys at the last four racing meetings held in the local area. Out of approximately 107 jockeys used at those four meetings, 102 were full-time jockeys. It would be interesting to know how many of those jockeys are still full-time in the industry. I can assure members that, unfortunately, a lot of jockeys have had to take part-time jobs or have got out of the industry altogether. This is what has happened to a lot of the country racing in our area. The race meetings have been cut dramatically and we are really in trouble. Unfortunately, the Racing Amendment Bill does not put any more money into the failing system.

I spoke to a good friend of mine and that of the member for Southport, Bob Potter, and he told me that he had to get rid of some of his horses simply because he could not get starts for them.

Mr Lawlor: No, no, they were too slow.

Mr RICKUSS: Bob has plenty of money so I do not think it was the fact that they were too slow.

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr RICKUSS: He was not backing them. He was complaining that he could not get a start for his horses in the local area and it is too expensive to keep horses that he cannot get runs for. He had nominated for four meetings and still did not get a run.

The big problem with the Racing Amendment Bill is that it will not solve the problems facing our local clubs. The Esk, Beaudesert, Gatton and Kilcoy clubs will lose between $20,000 and $30,000 this year. They cannot survive with those sorts of losses. These are small clubs. I know that the Lockyer

Race Club has been cut from 12 meetings to four meetings per year. It cannot survive for more than two years under those circumstances. It has a fairly big bank balance at the moment, but, unfortunately, it will dwindle away because it cannot survive with only four meetings a year. Its maintenance costs are the same. Its track upkeep costs are still the same. It cannot keep burning money the way it is. It has cut costs to the bone. The full-time workers who used to look after the track have gone. It cannot survive with this sort of money. Unfortunately, the seven per cent that the bill refers to will still only result in the same amount of money for the clubs. If we are faced with a downturn in the economy and betting turnover falls the industry will go backwards. This could be a real problem.

I honestly believe that the backbone of the country racing industry has been broken. We must support country racing to a greater degree so that it in turn keeps the city industry going. If we were to survey where the horses come from for the weekend races in Brisbane we would find that probably more than 50 per cent of the horses come from country areas. This will dry up. We are killing the industry from the bottom up.

Mr Lawlor: Fifty per cent come from the Gold Coast.

Mr RICKUSS: Come on now. Does the member count Beaudesert as the Gold Coast?

Mr Lawlor: No.

Mr RICKUSS: Unfortunately, the Gatton club will have to close within two years. I have had meetings with the minister about this and we have talked about other strategies. Without more funds being pumped into race meetings I cannot see how they will survive. We have been talking about sprint racing, but that all costs money. Sprint racing is not anywhere near as exciting as real racing.

The Lockyer club cannot survive unless it has more money put into it. The seven per cent referred to in the bill will only maintain the status quo. There is no room for growth. There is no room for improvement. We have been talking about how betting turnover is going to improve. If we have a downturn in the economy this will not happen. I cannot see how these clubs can survive. Esk, Dalby, Beaudesert and Kilcoy are all in the same situation. They are slowly eating into their reserves but they will not be able to keep doing that.

I suggest that the minister support the amendments that the member for Darling Downs will move. They are logical and make good sense. Those opposite have to realise that not all the bright ideas come from one side of the House. Bright ideas come from both sides of the House. Even those opposite have one occasionally.

I honestly feel that we have to look after this industry. Country racing is the basis of the industry in Queensland. We are the most decentralised state in Australia. We are a bit different to Victoria where people can get to a metropolitan meeting on the weekends no matter where in the state they are training. The racing industry across Queensland has been gutted. If members were to go out to the member for Warrego's electorate they would find that there is no room for more reductions. All the local clubs are struggling as it is. I suggest the minister read and support the opposition amendments to this bill.

Mr POOLE (Gaven—ALP) (5.24 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Racing Amendment Bill 2004. This bill may be small in size but is huge in consequence. It will have a huge impact on country races that do not have TAB wagering on their race days. Being a former horse trainer both here and in New Zealand for three years, I understand the importance of country racing to the community. Country racing plays a very important and special part in Australia's heritage and culture. To some people, the little non-TAB fixtures are as important as the city and large town carnivals. It is a date to show off the finest in fashion and horse flesh. All this is treated very seriously.

On a lighter note, I remember some of the old stories—some true and some that have grown with the years—that originated from country race days. One in particular was a trainer who had an unbeatable ex-city winner running at one of these non-TAB meetings in outback South Australia. The horse carried about 15 kilograms more than the next weighted horse. Everyone knew that it could not be beaten, but the bookies' odds were prohibitive and the wily old trainer knew what would run second to his charge. He decided that the only way he could make any money out of the race was to go and back the second horse. But he was not going to let on to the jockey or bring him into the scam by giving his horse a run. He decided to leave the lead weights that make up the handicap weight back on the saddling stall rail. Of course, his horse romped in and won easily. The horse he backed ran second but to the old trainer’s shock and horror correct weight was declared. On the way back home that night he stopped at the pub for a drink. Still stirred by the events he bumped into the clerk of the scales who had given correct weight. The clerk sidled up alongside the trainer and suggested he should buy him a drink because he had done him a favour earlier in the day by declaring correct weight.

This would not happen nowadays, and especially here in Queensland, due to this piece of legislation that ensures non-TAB clubs will be allocated seven per cent of UNiTAB's net product fee. This translates into prize money of course. This bill also ensures country racing by replacing the existing five-member board with a nine-member country racing committee comprised of like-minded non-TAB

race club representatives—all who are familiar with the needs and concerns of their racing communities. This is a good piece of legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (5.26 pm): As an interested participant in Queensland racing and, in particular, country racing, I rise to speak in the debate on the Racing Amendment Bill 2004. As I do, I wish to take the opportunity to point out areas where I believe this bill falls down in its intention to reform the existing structures of country racing and provides a token amount of funding, appeasing a number of race clubs on their last legs as a result of the actions of this government.

The Racing Amendment Bill refers to country racing clubs which are non-TAB clubs and are not able to access the prize money and sponsorships that many metropolitan and TAB clubs use to operate their activities and not supplement their revenue as was originally planned. This result has seen racing in Queensland develop a very insular attitude towards metropolitan racing and, in particular, TAB racing, as is noted in the amendment bill. This has gone forward to the detriment of the country race clubs which quite often provide an isolated entertainment service to a community that has little else. The fact that many of the major metropolitan clubs are so reliant on the TAB top-ups when it has such a large population from which to draw trainers, jockeys and punters must surely put the onus on the poor operations of TAB sponsored clubs and demonstrate the poor leadership on this issue by the Queensland Racing Board.

I notice that the seven per cent of revenue that will be extracted from UNiTAB to assist country race clubs will only consist of around $6 million in the initial stages. Now, considering the coalition went to the 2004 election promising $20 million as appropriate to help kick-start country racing, then it is clear that the government offer falls well short of the need. Further, it is reliant on the development and improvement of the Australian TAB revenue pool.

The Queensland Racing public has had its confidence deflated by recent revelations that have been well publicised in the media. Yet, the Beattie Labor government keeps bleating, like the policeman in the cartoon program *South Park,* 'There is nothing to see here. Move along, move along; there is nothing to see here.' I congratulate my colleague Ray Hopper for his continued diligence on this matter and his efforts to bring about much-needed change at the top of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, which should eventually benefit the industry in the long term.

Before I continue on to key aspects of the bill, I want to enlighten members as to the racing interests in the Burdekin electorate and the four race clubs which operate in the area, with all four suffering varying levels of problems. This is due to a number of reasons—from the disorganised rabble that is Queensland Racing through to the inability of Beattie Labor to provide the direction and the framework for the racing industry to work within the regions. As a member of the Bowen River Turf Club for a number of years, I saw first-hand the frustrations of a small country race club that has been dictated to by an organisation such as the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, which has little idea of the impact that country racing has in its own area.

After 118 years of proud racing history, last year saw the first year that racing did not occur in Bowen River, apart from during the two war years. This was a direct result of the cost-cutting rationale of Merri Rose. Like many of the race clubs in north Queensland that had seen their race meeting numbers slashed from 216 in 2003 to 112 in 2004, a great day of racing enjoyed by people from all over the region and more particularly Collinsville and Bowen was lost. The sad fact of the matter on this issue, however, is the fact that unfortunately Bowen River is not alone, with many other bush race meetings boasting long histories in the industry all being lost as a result of the incompetence of the government. There is no other way to describe this but as a tragedy, and especially so when one considers that in January last year Bowen River was recognised as the 2003 Collinsville community event of the year, and that was not for the first time. However, I guess it is one thing to be recognised by the community and the local council for being a successful specialised event, but it is simply another race meeting to the Queensland state government.

As I mentioned before, Bowen River Turf Club is one of four racing clubs within the electorate. The Burdekin electorate is lucky enough to count as well the Townsville Turf Club, the Burdekin Race Club and the Bowen Turf Club among its number. I say 'lucky enough' because, due to the massive cuts which were handed out by this government to country racing, some of these clubs are just treading above water. Whilst I acknowledge that the Townsville Turf Club is going ahead in leaps and bounds and would be expected to as a TAB club that has a large population on which to draw, the other three clubs are in no such position.

It was a most unfortunate situation for the dedicated race-going public and even more devastating for the Burdekin Race Club members that on Melbourne Cup Day last year there were only four races run between the hours of 12 pm and 2 pm due to the fact that other race clubs in the position of receiving TAB support were able to offer many more financial incentives. Both the number of entries and the available number of jockeys in the area had limited the race program. This was a great disappointment to a dedicated committee that has not given up in the face of adversity and has been responsible for creating one of the great marquee race days on the Queensland Racing calendar, with the Burdekin Grower Race Day taking place every May. In fact, I invite every member in this House to

join me and the shadow minister for racing, Ray Hopper, in attending this fantastic race meeting on 28 May to allow them to see what an impact country racing can have on its community.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mrs MENKENS: I hope so. The Burdekin Race Club deserves credit for being a leader in the north Queensland racing scene, becoming the first club in north Queensland to regularly hold a Melbourne Cup meeting and, for such a little club, boast facilities that are second to none. The fact that it is able to turn its annual race meeting into a national event speaks volumes for its ability and its dedication. In fact, I stood here in this House last year and extolled the value of the Burdekin Grower Race Day in terms of actual monetary value to the local community and the outstanding efforts of the Burdekin Race Club in promoting racing and the region. I specified from research undertaken that the Burdekin Grower Race Day was worth $1 million to the north Queensland region in 2003 and was responsible for putting the Burdekin into the national spotlight. That it was able to do this in spite of the Beattie government's devastating cutbacks to country racing was remarkable and testament to its successful history and ability to fight back against the imposts that have put many clubs out of business.

There is no doubt in my mind that the enthusiasm and hard work of the Burdekin Race Club volunteers resulted in a race day attended by over 4,000 people—greater than the town population in which it is situated—and which injected over $180,000 into the local economy. Unfortunately, despite its success, as is often the case in business with the larger businesses swallowing up the little ones, it is a fact that those clubs that are in the position of receiving TAB support and a guaranteed income base have almost swallowed up the smaller, more active racing bodies. Similar to the man running for his life with the bullets being fired from behind, the Burdekin racing club is continuing to duck and dive, trying to remain alive in the game. But, just like the man who tires and gets one right between the eyes, without the support of the government and committed support for country racing, it will be wonderful organisations like the Burdekin racing club which will go down for the count.

It is a similar story with the Bowen Turf Club, where a stalwart band of volunteers works very hard to keep this historic race club functioning. It is not only the loss of the race meetings, but with increased regulations and further distance to travel to race meetings country trainers and owners are becoming virtually non-existent. Just as Rugby League needs junior Rugby League to bring through the players, so, too, does the racing industry need the country race meetings. Two years ago a senior departmental officer in Queensland Racing said to me that country people are not interested in racing anymore; they all want to go camp drafting. That is true, but one has to ask why. Why? Because the Queensland racing industry has shot itself in the foot.

Specifically in relation to the amendment bill in front of us, I draw the inference that the funding that has been promised will not be enough to stem the damage of losing over 200 non-TAB race dates from the Queensland Racing calendar. Also, many of the member clubs which will make up the eight country racing associations representing the areas of Capricornia, central west, downs, eastern downs, far north, Leichardt, north-west and south-east are on their last legs and need better cooperation from associated TAB clubs that surround them for this proposal to actually work. This concern relates especially to section 67 contained in clause 13 where the conglomerate racing committee comes together and makes recommendations regarding the distribution strategy for prize money and other funding that member clubs of each of the country racing associations require to hold non-TAB races, as well as recommendations to the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board about racing calendars for non-TAB races.

It is my hope that the small member bodies like the Bowen Turf Club and the Burdekin Race Club have the appropriate representation for their interests and their needs. I am concerned that the status quo of the larger clubs swallowing the dates and trainers and jockeys may continue despite the reforms. I am interested to know if the government and the racing minister do actually care if this system of reform does work, or if it is merely a reaction to the anger and frustration that the government would have faced in its tours of country racing—tours made by Mr Pat Purcell last year. My senses suggest that these are token efforts in an effort to appease the mouth-frothing members of country racing. I appeal to the minister to ensure that these measures are not merely token efforts.

I guess my sense of this issue has been tempered by comments from the minister for racing last year when he stated that it was a nonsense that the racing industry was a huge employer in Queensland and that the government does not benefit from its operations. I would suggest that the figures I specified earlier regarding the Burdekin Grower Race Day in themselves would contradict such a statement, with the government clearly benefiting from a result of that kind. Whilst a positive outcome for the Burdekin area, it is also a positive outcome for Queensland, and so too in so many other country race meeting areas. A large contingent of tourists take part in the day and often stay over in the area. Particularly in our area, they stay over and work in the horticultural industry. A large number of people fly to the event. A proportion of these would fly Virgin Blue, which is based in Brisbane. That would, once again, assist Queensland. There is petrol consumption with car travel, registrations and the list goes on. It really is a total value-added industry. However, I hope that that statement was an aberration, for in consideration of the specialist members of the industry—whether it be the lucerne growers, horse float drivers, trainers,

strappers, breeders, jockeys and all of the other associated businesses—there is no doubt that racing has made a significant contribution to this state, and it needs more representation.

As a member of the Queensland opposition, I believe that the Racing Amendment Bill 2004 does not go far enough to recognise the plight of country racing which, for the knowledge of all members, is clearly on its knees. There is a great number of Queensland employees and volunteers who have a large stake in the Queensland racing industry and who are looking to this government to provide some leadership. Unfortunately, this element is once again lacking in this legislation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order! Before calling the member for Southport, I would like to remind honourable members that they should refer to other members by their title and seat, not Christian names and surnames.

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (5.40 pm): The thoroughbred racing industry is going through an interesting transformation that started several years ago and which is designed to bring the industry into the 21st century. It has been a common criticism that many clubs and attitudes were stuck in the 1950s. As a member of the board of one of the more successful and progressive clubs, the Gold Coast Turf Club, I can say that some of the decisions made by Queensland Racing were not popular. Nevertheless, tough decisions have had to be made and the Queensland Racing Board, led by Bob Bentley, has presided over reform that has resulted in the greatest increase in TAB wagering turnover in Australia. Additionally, prize money has increased by $18 million per annum—a dividend from those tough decisions.

The Racing Act 2002 established five regional racing associations with members elected by clubs in the association and also people elected by trainers, jockeys and bookmakers. However, the non-TAB racing sector has sought more influence in directing reform and sharing in the outcomes. At the moment the Queensland Regional Racing Council provides recommendations to the Queensland Racing Board in relation to non-TAB racing. However, non-TAB clubs desire a stronger voice and this bill will address the concerns of non-TAB race clubs and participants in regional and country Queensland.

As the minister said, this bill will ensure that all non-TAB race clubs are able to advocate on country racing issues without having to compete with TAB clubs' interests. There are five main reforms proposed by this bill, mainly relating to the structure and representation on country racing associations. Probably the most important reform is the requirement of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board to allocate at least seven per cent of the net UNiTAB product fee to the committee as prize money for non-TAB race meetings. The new committee will also have a hand in the allocation of race dates subject, of course, to the approval of Queensland Racing. Therefore, the committee will have as much autonomy and responsibility as allowed by the Australian Rules of Racing. The seven per cent share of the product fee will be approximately $6 million and that will allow country and regional racing to share in the revival and success of Queensland racing.

The shadow minister conveniently avoided the comparison that was made by the minister. People are always comparing Queensland prize money with the prize money available in both New South Wales and Victoria. But in non-TAB racing Victoria distributes $924,000 in prize money; New South Wales distributes $3.92 million; and South Australia distributes a measly and miserly $271,581. So Queensland, with the $6 million that it is distributing, compares more than favourably with the prize money distributed in both Victoria and New South Wales. This bill is further evidence of the government's commitment to and support of Queensland thoroughbred racing. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (5.43 pm): I rise to speak to this Racing Amendment Bill 2004. I think that many people have been waiting for a long, long time for this legislation to come before the House. Although the minister in the former government, the member for Currumbin, Merri Rose, certainly made a botch of racing in many areas, I will give some credit where credit is due. At least the current minister has been out there trying to find out the ways and means by which we might be able to reverse and correct some of the anomalies that lie in this great industry.

As I see it here today, the real issue is the policy objective of the bill, which is clearly identified in the explanatory notes, to establish eight country racing associations that replace the five current racing associations. The real fear that I have is how much power the executive of those eight centres is going to have in relation to some of the smaller clubs. That is something that I hope that the minister might clarify in his reply, whenever that may occur.

We have heard many members in this House canvass the issue of the seven per cent TAB. It is all very well saying that, but the real fact of the matter is that there are many country clubs that do not have any TAB at all. These are primarily the clubs where we are seeking to redress some of the anomalies and the pitfalls that they have been subjected to and, not only that, how we can reverse some of the trends in country racing that we witnessed in recent years. I know that the minister has worked in western Queensland and remote Queensland and understands fully the importance of country racing—places such as McKinlay and Kynuna. As I see it, we have to make absolutely certain that we continue to make sure that country racing remains a presence.

I heard the member for Southport refer to the Gold Coast Turf Club. I refer to the Toowoomba Turf Club, the Rockhampton Jockey Club, the Townsville Turf Club and Corbould Park. All of those clubs are not country clubs; they are regional clubs. They are major clubs in virtually metropolitan areas that are TAB funded. I hope that we do not have a downturn in the profitability of the TAB. The minister says that that seven per cent equates to $6 million. I would like to see how that $6 million is going to be broken up for the country clubs. Some of those country clubs are now not holding races.

I will give members an example of the impact this has had on country racing. I know that the minister has had his inquiry and I know that a lot of people think that we are going to have some outcomes from that. In September in the far west we have the carnivals at Birdsville, Bedourie and Betoota.

Mr Schwarten: I hope to come out with you this year.

Mr JOHNSON: I hope the minister does. He would be very welcome. The point I make is that the carnival held on the fourth Saturday in September was always held at Windorah. I have heard other members in the House canvass this issue. People might pull horses from Adelaide, Broken Hill, Mount Isa, Cloncurry, or even as far away as the downs and places such as Longreach, which is only 700 kilometres away from Birdsville, to go to the races. The point I make is that after they pull those horses that far, they have to have them for a week or 10 days before to allow them to get over soreness et cetera. That costs money. People might not win a race at Birdsville, but their horse might run second at a race at Bedourie. But it might not even pick up a race there. It might not get going again until the following week at Betoota. All of these places are 200 kilometres apart. They are all remote areas. A lot of people descend on these centres to support the racing.

The real fact of the matter is the cost factor involved in getting to these venues. It is not only the cost factor; it is the cost of staying there for the duration. Those people who do not win a race or who do not even pick up a second or a third no longer have that fourth Saturday in September meeting at Windorah. It has gone. I believe that that is one place that really justifies having its race meeting. I know that it is located in my electorate, but I am talking about a very important race meeting in the far west of the state. For example, for just on 100 years races have been held at Eromanga, but not anymore. A lot of the profits from these meetings go to the Royal Flying Doctor Service or some other charity within the region. It is the one social day of the year for these people. They go out and have a bit of fun. Probably 80 per cent of people who go to races do not even have a bet, or they go there for the social outing and the fun of the occasion.

Mr Schwarten: A beer and a Bundy.

Mr JOHNSON: That is okay; I have done that, too. My point is that this is a business. Ever since I have been a member of parliament I have heard the member for Warrego canvass the significance of country racing and the role that it plays right through the small western towns. Even places like Ilfracombe, which is only 28 kilometres from Longreach, boasts a horse trainer who has a throng of horses. It is the same at Barcaldine, Blackall, Tambo, Augathella, Charleville, Cunnamulla, Mitchell and right down the line to Emerald. Now there is no race meeting at Jericho. Alpha is out of the equation. There are no trainers at Alpha. We can see what is happening.

To give the House a little understanding of this, I will give this example: the western carnival started on 19 February. For the 20 weeks from 19 February, there are eight Saturdays without a race meeting. A horse might have to be pulled 700, 800 or 1,000 kilometres to get to the start. Who will do that? Nobody!

Mr Hobbs: You'll soon get sick of that. There's too much travelling, isn't there?

Mr JOHNSON: Absolutely. That is the situation.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: They cannot afford the haul, as the member for Lockyer said. That is happening now. People, such as the jockeys themselves, do derive a living from racing. Jockeys will have a job on the side, and they are hard to get. The price of fuel is astronomical in rural areas. There are feed, vet and farrier expenses. Many trainers do their own farrier work and animal husbandry when caring for the horses. At the end of the day, this is a professional industry and we are trying to keep that professional industry going. However, country racing cannot be a professional industry if it does not get the dollars that will put it on an equal footing with racing in metropolitan areas.

I do not say this lightly: The situation with country racing today is bleak. Some people say that you do not need a real good horse to win in the bush. I have to tell the House that you do need a real good horse to win in the bush. If someone is thinking about taking a second-class nag to Birdsville, Bedourie, Betoota, Mount Isa or somewhere like that, they had better think again because the professionals and the prize money are out there. Those professionals work for that money and they make sure that they get it.

Some of the smaller clubs such as Barcaldine and Blackall have lost meetings. Last year I was at the St Paddy's Day race at Springsure and about 1,200 or 1,400 people attended. Eight hundred people

would attend a normal race there, yet they have lost one of their race meetings. When we look at where Springsure is located, although it is just 67 kilometres from Emerald it is another 160 kilometres from Clermont, 140 kilometres from Blackwater and 300 kilometres from Roma. That is not too far to pull good horses and to try to pick up good races, yet we are seeing meetings cut from those places. If there is not a meeting in Springsure, there might not be another meeting anywhere in the southern area. People in Dalby might have to travel to Cunnamulla to get a start. If a horse will not win because it is not ready or is not eligible for the race that is being run in Toowoomba, say, it will have to be pulled back the other way. This situation defines country racing. I do not think anyone realises that the essence of this problem is the tyranny of distance. Then there is the cost of training a horse.

I have raised horses in the bush. One of my first horses was the first horse that young Peter Moody ever trained, and that was in Charleville. Do members know what happened to Peter Moody? Firstly, he went to Sydney with TJ Smith and then worked with Billy Mitchell, also in Sydney. He came to Brisbane with Billy Mitchell and then finished up on his own in Brisbane. Now where is he? He has gone to Melbourne! We are losing good young people out of the industry in Queensland because the industry is on its knees.

I say to people like Bob Bentley that a lot of the responsibility is on their shoulders. They are the ones who have made the difference. Bob Bentley himself is a product of western Queensland. He worked and owned properties out there. He ought to know exactly and precisely what we are endeavouring to achieve and bring about that change.

The real issue here is to keep the industry going. This is the third biggest industry in Queensland. It employs many people and generates many jobs. And we talk about the Smart State! This evening I was talking to a western bookmaker and he said that with $250,000 we could probably lift a lot of the problems in country racing in western Queensland. However, these problems do not affect just western Queensland. They occur right across the board.

For a lot of races there is an $87 nomination fee. If a horse finishes further back than fourth in a Brisbane race, the acceptance money is refunded. However, in the bush that $87 goes into the coffers of the industry and the owner does not see that money again. If a horse runs stone motherless last, the owner does not get his $87 back. In addition, it probably cost $500 or $600, even up to $1,000, to get the horse to the race meeting in the first place. This afternoon, the member for Warrego mentioned how at country race meetings the total prize money could be $4,000. If the winner takes $2,600, there is not much left for the rest. We have to start to think how we will redeem the situation.

Racing in rural and regional Queensland is on its knees. The drought that everyone thinks is over has been going on for about 15 years in some of those places. A lot of western areas are totally destocked, and the situation in the territory is the same. We have talked about commodities, amusements and the fun that we get in the bush. The member for Burdekin talked about Rugby League in the bush. Nobody knows more about that than I do. We have to train our young kids and teach them to be good players at the junior league level so that we can bring them through the ranks to the top. It is the same with the racing industry, as the member for Burdekin also said. This is a very grave situation. Whilst the minister is endeavouring to put in place some measures to save the industry, they will not work. Members have said that country racing is on its knees. I have to say that, while country racing is flat on its back, it is not yet out cold. I appeal to the minister to ensure that it will not go out cold and that we will see a rejuvenation in the industry.

A lot of race meetings have been cut back in rural areas and a lot of horses have gone by the wayside. I know a western owner who races horses in Brisbane. Last year he took eight horses back out west, after they had finished the season in Brisbane. He usually races them around the western towns as part of their training, but this year he spelled them; he bushed them. Straight away, there are eight horses that are not going to be a part of the western nominations. When that is done by such horse owners, and this man plays the game very professionally and sincerely, it is a very big slug to the industry and one that we cannot afford.

At the end of the day, when there are successful race meetings in little places like Caulfield, Birdsville and others in the electorate of the member for Warrego, it is the local people who keep them going. Their heart and soul is in it. At the same time, we do not need regulation to have strangulation of the industry. Today I appeal to the minister. Whilst this will probably be a template to try to bring in some corrections, I do not believe that it will go far enough to resolve some of the problems that we are enduring in country areas. I do not say this lightly.

We have to remember that over recent years there has been a downturn in rural industries. Firstly we saw the demise of the wool industry in many areas and a lot of other industries have also suffered. On the north Queensland coast the sugar industry has suffered. Ever since this country has been settled, it has been an agricultural hub on the international stage. Some commodity somewhere has suffered as a result of drought, low prices or whatever and everything else suffers at the same time. Our racing industry in rural and regional Queensland is sacred to us. We hang on it it and we treasure and value it.

As I said earlier—and the minister recognised this—a lot of people go to the races and do not even have a bet. They probably do not even see a horse go around. They spend their afternoon at the bar or at the tea tent or whatever.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: That is right, but at the same time you have to make the profits of the bar work, too. This is where race clubs get their money from. I am all about making a profit and seeing somebody else make a profit.

This is a very serious issue and one which I hope the minister will recognise. There are race meetings in the west which have been cancelled in recent times because of poor nominations. It is all because of the distance factor and a lack of jockeys. I would like to talk about the central west racing authority's office in Barcaldine. The full-time stipendiary has been transferred to Rockhampton and he operates out of Rockhampton. We have a part-time operation in Barcaldine but I understand that is going to be moved on, too. We will lose these personnel—people who are full time in the industry and who play an integral part in the industry. They might be a family in town. They might have kiddies at the school. But it is the old adage again: we continue to lose by default, and this is not good. We have to make certain that we get this industry right.

I am the first to admit that there were some clubs across the state—I know; I have been to some of these places—where I would not race a horse myself because the infrastructure is in a poor state or the track might not be safe. I can assure the House that the greater majority of these clubs in question are made up of people who come from the land or come from the towns. Thy are stockmen who know how to look after their horses and who know how to race them professionally. I invite the minister to come to any of those race meetings in my electorate. Come to Emerald in October for the Emerald 100. What a magnificent race meeting that is. Come to St Paddy's Day at Springsure. Come to Barcaldine for the Workers Heritage Cup on Labour Day weekend. Come to Longreach for the Hall of Fame Cup or Charleville for the Newmarket. They are magnificent race meetings and are absolutely supported by the patrons.

Mr Schwarten: You might come up to McKinlay with me this year.

Mr JOHNSON: I will go anywhere if it is about promoting country racing. We have to rid this industry of some of the anomalies that have crept in. We had a lame duck minister in the last Beattie government who paid the industry lip-service, who was led by the nose and who did not understand it. I appeal to the minister today: the amendments which will be moved by the shadow minister in the consideration in detail stage are worth listening to and looking at on their merits. As I heard somebody say this afternoon—either the member for Warrego or the shadow spokesman—because somebody thinks it up on this side of the House does not mean it is not a good idea.

I believe everybody in this House is here to try to correct some of the anomalies in this industry so we can again see a resurgence in country racing where we can get people back to wanting to own and race horses. The day is gone where there is one bloke owning a horse. It is syndication, and that is what makes horse racing great in the bush.

Time expired.

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (6.03 pm): I rise to support the Racing Amendment Bill. I congratulate the minister for bringing the provisions before the House and for his work in reforming country racing and racing in Queensland since taking over the portfolio 12 months ago. If we can get this bill through the parliament this evening, it will be an important outcome for country racing. I have a great country racing club in my electorate—the Cooktown Amateur Turf Club. The club draws on a tradition that has seen horse racing in Cooktown for approximately 120 years.

The bill contains provisions that will ensure that clubs like the one at Cooktown receive better representations when decisions are being made that affect their club. This is achieved by setting up eight regionally based country racing associations and by ensuring that one member of the local association is on the Queensland Country Racing Committee. The Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board will allocate country racing dates from which the committee will decide the appropriate dates. The committee will have the responsibility of allocating the much sought after race dates in country areas.

Cooktown has not been allocated a race day for a couple of years now. While the community has been quite upset by that, it has got on with it regardless, in the true spirit of people who live in the bush, I suppose. They have received permission to run a self-funded meeting which they conducted successfully last year. They are intending to conduct another meeting on 23 July this year and will hopefully get a race date from the committee the year after that.

The day is an important social outlet for people in Cooktown and the many visitors who also attend from all parts of north Queensland. I believe the provisions in the bill allocating a fixed percentage will provide certainty and growth for country racing and should be supported by all members. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (6.05 pm): In rising to speak to the Racing Amendment Bill 2004, I note that many of the representatives of country areas have spoken today about the impact that recent decisions have had on their local clubs. I have two race clubs in my area—the Gladstone Turf Club and the Calliope Jockey Club. Calliope is more of a country race meeting. In the past they had a Boxing Day race meeting and maybe one other race through the year. These organisations have been gutted by decisions made in the last couple of years, particularly decisions made in relation to the allocation of race days by the Thoroughbred Racing Board.

Only a couple of weeks ago I had a discussion with the minister in Rockhampton about the Gladstone Turf Club, and I was pleased to hear his level of support for that club in terms of its value. It faces, and has faced, a significant challenge over the last few years with the quality of the race facilities slowly deteriorating and the ability of that club to compete in terms of the facilities—the surface of the racing track—with other clubs in the general vicinity where owners and trainers can opt to transfer.

However, the racing industry in Gladstone is strong. I am not a race person. I go when I am invited, but I would not say that I front up for every race meeting—far from it. There is a really strong core of people who own horses and want to race them locally. There are the trainers, the strappers, the jockeys and those who provide all of the ancillary supplies that are needed by these racing people. They are the salt of the earth generally. I do not understand the bookie system. I do not understand all the numbers on the board and how they change.

Mr Schwarten: That is a wise thing to not understand, I reckon.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I will take the minister's word for that. For those who do get involved, it is either an interest, an industry or entertainment for them. Provided they do not develop a problem that becomes detrimental to their way of life, it is an enjoyment that they should be able to continue with. However, decisions that have been made by the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board in recent years have made it increasingly difficult for these smaller clubs to survive. As I said, there is that strong core of people who wish to see racing in the Gladstone-Calliope area progress.

There has been on the books for a long time now a proposal to transfer the current turf club from its location on Dawson Highway, almost in the centre of a commercial precinct, to Ashpond Seven and that area of land has been set aside for a number of years.

The obstacle was felt by a lot of people for quite a number of years to be in the area of the current minister's responsibilities. However, there has been a bit of duckshoving, toing and froing, between what is now the Thoroughbred Racing Board, the minister for racing, whoever it was at the time, and the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, whoever it was at the time. To show encouragement to those people—and there are a significant number of people who wish to remain involved in racing in my electorate—there will be a need for cooperation between the current racing minister—and I believe he does have the best interests of the Gladstone Turf Club at heart—and the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. I have not had an in-depth conversation with the minister to date, so I cannot say that he is either in favour of or opposed to the necessities to have the club transferred. But I would hope that, in the interests of rural and regional development, he would be able to see the value in cooperating with the proposal. The land that the current turf club is on is in trust to the current turf club but it is owned by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. It would require approval from that department for the land to be sold. A number of businesses have expressed interest in a commercial sense in that block of land.

Last year there was actually a meeting with Bob Bentley, who agreed in principle to the thoroughbred racing club being allowed to take possession of any income from the sale of that block of land and the Thoroughbred Racing Board would then allocate ‘necessary funding' to ensure the relocation of the turf club to Ashpond Seven. During those meetings I made it clear to Mr Bentley that the amount allocated to the turf club needed to be sufficient to provide a facility that would not only be able to accommodate horse riding but also be a facility of a standard that would allow for perhaps hiring out of the facility and other income generation streams, because Mr Bentley made it patently clear at the meeting that once that transfer occurred Gladstone would be on its own. So just relying on the income from turf meetings would be insufficient. He agreed in principle to that. However, it appears that the hold-up is getting some agreement with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to actually use part of the proceeds of the sale of that land to relocate the Gladstone Turf Club.

I do not think people in the Gladstone Turf Club—and I am excluding Mr Bentley in this statement—would give two hoots where the rest of the money went. The department of natural resources can keep it. They would like to see sufficient—

Mr Schwarten: I think Bentley wants it.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Bentley did want it. The people of Gladstone want to see sufficient funds allocated from the potential sale of that block. It is a multimillion-dollar sale because it is on a major highway and it is in close proximity to Kmart Plaza and the Kin Kora Mall. It has very good traffic patterns and, as I said, it is in close proximity to those other developments, so it would be quite a lucrative sale. But at least half, if not slightly more, of the proceeds would need to be relocated to the re-

establishment of a turf track with facilities that are up to standard in terms of today's race meetings and also to allow for those additional income streams. Again I put on the record my thanks to the minister for the discussions that we had, and I look forward to an opportunity to speak with the minister for natural resources to progress that proposal. Certainly the people in my electorate deserve that consideration.

At the end of last year the thoroughbred racing club, under the hand of Bob Bentley, posted a copy of a speech that Bob made in the course of his role as chair of that board. It was fine in the context of the speech that was made, but I think he sent it to all rural and regional members of parliament as well. It waxed lyrical about how much of an increase there had been in prize money in the major turf clubs in the south-east corner and had little or no regard at all for the impact of reduced prize money to country race clubs. This legislation attempts to remedy that situation in some measure, and I welcome that. It is guaranteeing that seven per cent of TAB income, or the equivalent of the previous year's prize money, whichever is greater, will be allocated to rural and regional racing through the new Country Racing Board that is being established to ensure continuity of funding for regional and rural race meetings.

I also welcome the requirement that the racing association be made up of representatives of all of the clubs within the area of representation. I will not mention names, because I do not think it serves the purpose here well. However, there were instances where the race board that was made up of people purportedly representing our area was represented from the Capricornia region by a person in the Rockhampton racing fraternity. He had a difficult situation to deal with. He had his own Rockhampton race club, jockey club, whatever it is called, to represent, but he also had responsibility in a genuine way to represent the other racing clubs in that area and that included Thangool, Gladstone, Calliope and Yeppoon, and there would be serious questions in my mind that he actually did that in a fair and reasonable way. One instance I clearly remember was that I think Yeppoon had requested additional race days. It was my understanding that the group was advised that those race days should be allocated from Rockhampton's program. However, those race days were removed from Gladstone and allocated to Yeppoon.

Mr Schwarten: That's because the delegate didn’t come from Gladstone.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is the point I was just making; the delegate did not come from Gladstone and was representing his own interests. I would hope that these new country racing associations will more fairly and even-handedly represent the interests of all of the country racing associations within their jurisdiction so that there is a fairer and more even-handed allocation of both race days and funds.

I would just like to make a comment on the member for Cook's contribution. He indicated that a race club in his area had been self-funding meetings. Again, I reiterate that I am no racing specialist, but I have heard different people across Queensland talking about the cost of running these meetings in terms of prize money and other costs. I would have to commend the group in the Cook electorate for doing that, because it shows not only a great commitment to racing as a sport but also a great commitment to their community. The downside to that is that they even had to do it in the first place. Originally most of the clubs had at least one day, whether it was a picnic race day or some other designated day, and they were able to enjoy not only a wonderful time of friendship and fellowship as country people but also a shared interest in horse racing.

This legislation addresses concerns and problems that have arisen over the last few years with the changes in structure to the Thoroughbred Racing Board. There has been a lot—and there will continue to be a lot—of fingers pointed as to whose responsibility it is, whose fault it is. I hope that this new legislation will address the anomalies that country racing has had to face, the disadvantage that it has had to tolerate, and the annihilation in some areas of the race meetings that were once enjoyed which increased revenue to the community through the tourism aspect. I also hope that it will go some way to rejuvenating country racing, which is a very well deserved and worthwhile activity.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (6.19 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the amendments to the Racing Act 2002 contained in the Racing Amendment Bill 2004. I congratulate the minister, his parliamentary secretary and staff on the results of extensive consultation with thoroughbred race clubs and the racing industry in Queensland. The result promises certainty to the non-TAB clubs and rural racing in general. I know first-hand how much work was put into that consultation and planning, and I know the deep conviction of the minister that racing needed to get it right. I believe that this bill will address most of the concerns which have been expressed. It appears that the only reason for the debate by some National Party members is character assassination. The shadow minister claimed that we stole his policy. If that were true we could do away with most of the rubbish that has been peddled.

The regional racing council, which was comprised of five members, had become ineffective in its operation, and the Thoroughbred Racing Board seemed to favour TAB clubs in the allocation of dates—although this was not correct. Under the current structure, TAB clubs generate the majority of revenue for racing in any event. It will come as no surprise to many members of this House that I, personally, have a strong love of racing and a somewhat vested interest in having a strong country racing industry.

I suppose that will just mean there are more meetings at which I can lose. The member for Gladstone commented on her lack of knowledge about the racing industry. I am not sure that any greater knowledge does anything for betting support.

For many years money was thrown at the racing industry, which became a sinecure for many National Party supporters but gave no real thought to the future of the industry. I was only young when I commenced to sell race books—probably more years ago than I care to admit. Ninety per cent of sales were to people who were in racing only because they had so much money given to them on a plate. I do not know how many members remember a comic strip called Uncle Joe's Horse Radish, but it was a good parody of the racing industry under the National Party. There is no doubt that race clubs ran for the benefit of the landed gentry, who were looked after by their mates. The only way workers or townsmen could enjoy racing was to have a bet. They got no other benefit from it. We do not need to return to those times.

The system changed when those circumstances were recognised and action was taken to restructure the industry. This bill is a further portion of that restructuring. Restructuring had to occur. There was some pain amongst small clubs, which were mostly non-TAB clubs. As the member for Southport set out, some hard decisions cause pain. In my electorate the Yeppoon Turf Club suffered, but the circumstances—once again, they were alluded to by the member for Gladstone—were not caused entirely by restructuring. Years ago, some difficulty existed between the Yeppoon club and the Rockhampton Jockey Club. That has now been resolved.

This restructure of the industry will create eight country racing associations. Each of those will provide a nominated representative to the Country Racing Committee, not to a country racing 'council'—the ineffective one—as the member for Darling Downs continually referred to. The Country Racing Committee will have a chair who is not a member of the Thoroughbred Racing Board. Opposition amendments have been circulated, but they are unnecessary because they really only restate matters set out in the original bill.

The country racing associations will comprise non-TAB clubs and licensee representatives. On that basis, TAB clubs will not be members or be represented. The Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board will be required to allocate country race dates and the committee will decide the appropriate dates, which must not conflict with TAB dates. A fixed allocation of at least seven per cent of UNiTAB product to the committee is provided for race meetings for non-TAB clubs.

The committee will be required to develop a formula for the allocation of non-TAB race dates in conjunction with the thoroughbred control body. That formula will be used by the committee for the allocation of non-TAB race dates. Allocation of dates may be changed only by approval or by Queensland Racing if there is a workplace health and safety issue—I note that that did not seem to be of much concern to the shadow minister—if there is non-compliance with country racing policy, a depletion of revenue, inclement weather or other reason for changing the date. The two parties must advertise and publish reasons for recommendations and decisions in the racing calendar.

The amendment will require a review of the effectiveness of the structure of the country racing associations and whether a club should be moved from one association to another. The first review must be completed within one year and then every two years. A mechanism exists by which these associations can be assessed on their efficacy.

I have had a lifetime of contact with and working in the racing industry and my contact with the diverse members of that industry confirm that they support the bill. I commend this bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (6.24 pm): I rise to speak on the Racing Amendment Bill 2004. This bill focuses on matters affecting country racing, an activity in which I have a particular interest. The Tablelands electorate is home to three country race clubs in the far north—Atherton, Mareeba and Mount Garnet. They are part of a group which also includes Cairns, Gordonvale and Innisfail. Both the Atherton and Mareeba turf clubs operate regularly and are fortunate to have quality tracks in pleasant surroundings. Atherton, in particular, is travelling very well, while Mareeba has recently begun taking some important new initiatives. These clubs are managing their own affairs, are well supported locally, are secure and are working towards their futures. They are major and necessary parts of their community.

Mount Garnet, which holds an annual two-day race meeting in conjunction with a rodeo, has built up such a fine reputation that the event has become an icon of the far north. I have been able to attend many of these meetings and they attract thousands from all over the north and throughout Queensland.

Mr Schwarten: How much rum did they sell last year?

Ms LEE LONG: I think there was tonnes of it. It is a very good race meeting.

Mr Schwarten: They hold the record, I think.

Ms LEE LONG: They probably do. It is a very, very successful meeting. They have a wonderful cabaret on the Saturday evening, if any member would like to come up. We are inviting all of you.

Mr Schwarten: I am going to try and come up for that this year.

Ms LEE LONG: Yes. It is a great meeting. There is a lot of interest in the far north in the proposal to build a new track in Cairns. Many people are asking questions about the cost of building it from scratch for what they think is a mere estimated $20 million. We have not seen all of the figures, but a lot of people are asking if it is possible to start from scratch in a low-lying area such as Cairns. Others are querying the wisdom of a new track for the Cairns Jockey Club when it has only 12 race meetings per year, plus the Cairns Amateurs, which is an annual two-day meeting. It is hoped that the race dates for other clubs in the area will not be transferred to Cairns. There is concern that other clubs might lose their race dates to Cairns. The clubs on the tablelands guard their clubs and race dates very jealously. Our clubs on the tablelands have been operating very successfully financially and they are very proud of this. We know that the Cairns club has had problems and has had to be bailed out on a number of occasions. We are all aware of that.

In recent years, many small owners and trainers have been forced out of the industry through the increased costs and conditions forced upon them. A number of clubs which had raced annually have now closed down completely. It is a tragedy that this wonderful industry is struggling to survive, like so many other industries in rural Queensland.

A great deal of centralisation has gone on in this state. However, I am pleased that this bill shows a trend towards slight decentralisation again. We are very pleased about that. It is moving more of the action closer to the people in the racing industry—the ones who are left, of course.

When the principal club was in Townsville, our local supporters used to complain that Townsville was too far away and they did not feel as though they had enough say in matters. That office is no longer there, but we feel that creating eight racing associations will give our race clubs a bigger say in things.

Mr Schwarten: Will our old mate up there nominate for one of the positions?

Ms LEE LONG: I have been mentioning his name around the ridges.

Mr Schwarten: I hope he does.

Ms LEE LONG: I think that will be a crucial part of the success of this new administration. The person each association picks will be crucial to their success. I was up at Mount Garnet on Sunday and I mentioned to them that some of the clubs should get together and work out who they will nominate. That will be very, very important.

This bill is intended to provide a new structure to guide country or non-TABQ thoroughbred racing. It is proposed to do so by dumping the five existing racing associations and replacing them with eight country racing associations. These are to be based on geographical areas to ensure that the interests of members and licensee representatives are better aligned. There will also be a Queensland Country Racing Committee established to provide advice and recommendations to the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board. Prize money for non-TABQ racing will come from an allocation of seven per cent of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board's share of the net UNiTAB product fee. I want to look at clause 9, which inserts a new section 64A.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

Debate, on motion of Ms Lee Long, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Information Commissioner

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (7.30 pm), by leave: I want to address the House on recruitment in the Queensland Public Service. There were a number of comments made today during question time which were inaccurate. I have done some research. I think this needs to be put on the record. The question of the rules regarding recruitment in the Public Service have been to the fore today. In particular, the opposition has been trying to make all sorts of mischief about who should and should not give references and when they should and should not do it. Let me see whether I can lay this to rest. As I said this morning, there is a difference between referees and references.

Generally, recruitment in the Public Service is covered by the Public Service Commissioner's directive 01/04—'Recruitment and Selection'. This directive covers the recruitment of senior executives. Section 6.6 of the directive is particularly relevant. It requires at paragraphs (c) and (d) the following—

(c) A pool of preferred applicants may be created by applying one selection technique, which must be transparent and reviewable.

(d) At least one further selection technique and a referee check must be used to determine the preferred applicant from that pool. Over reliance on information obtained from any one selection tool is to be avoided.

Section 6.7 of the directive deals with referee checking. Let me set it out in full for the benefit of honourable members. It states—

(a) Referee checking must be undertaken for at least the preferred applicant.

So, in other words, that is required. It continues—

(b) Referee checking includes seeking employment related information about an applicant from present or past supervisors and other people with a direct knowledge of the applicant's work behaviour or performance. Referee checks are also used to explore, clarify and verify information provided by the applicant in their application or at an interview.

(c) Referees are obliged to disclose all information known to them that is relevant to the responsibilities and duties of the advertised vacancy.

(d) Applicants must be given an opportunity to respond to any unfavourable or adverse referee comments and any such response must be taken into consideration when evaluating the merit of the applicant.

(e) Referees must be advised of the panel's duty to disclose unfavourable or adverse comments to applicants.

I will restate the relevant part of point (b). It states—

Referee checking includes seeking employment related information about an applicant from present or past supervisors and other people with a direct knowledge of the applicant's work behaviour or performance.

Given that requirement to acquire 'employment related information about an applicant from past and present supervisors', a person who has worked at the most senior levels in a department would find it hard to avoid getting a reference from the departmental head. As I said this morning, no interview panel would take seriously an applicant who would not or could not produce a reference from his current or former supervisor.

A government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Well, the people of Queensland will. The Public Service Commissioner's directive requires that there be at least two members of a selection panel. Another Public Service Commissioner's directive No. 29/99—'Senior Executives and Senior Officers—Employment Conditions'—requires that panels for the appointment of senior executives and senior officers comprise—

... at least three members of whom at least half are from outside the 'host' ministerial portfolio.

In addition, at least one member of the panel must be appointed by and represent the Office of the Public Service Commissioner.

There is nothing in the directive or in Public Service custom and practice that precludes directors-general from being members of selection panels. Indeed, where the position is a senior statutory office holder, or a senior member of a department's staff reporting to the director-general, it is hard to imagine that the DG would not sit on the panel.

In the case of senior executives, the requirement to have a majority of members from outside the portfolio agency and a representative of the Public Service Commissioner provides an appropriate safeguard. This is common practice in the Public Service for senior positions. It is almost unavoidable.

Today my staff have checked out what happens in the Australian government. The advice is that departmental secretaries routinely sit on selection panels and not uncommonly provide references for applicants for the position. So it happens federally. Let us be really clear about this.

Mr Schwarten: That's what happens in the other states.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right. I take that interjection. The practices and procedures in Queensland align with similar practices around Australia. There is nothing untoward about either a departmental head sitting on a panel or providing a reference for an applicant for the position.

To turn to the specific case of the Information Commissioner, the practices followed were exactly those that have been and are used in the Public Service. For the opposition and the *Courier-Mail* to continue to pretend that something sinister has happened here is a complete furphy. The repeated attacks on the integrity of members of the panel—particularly the director-general of my department and the director-general of the Attorney-General's department—are a disgrace.

The opposition and the *Courier-Mail* are silent on all but those members but, by implication, it is saying that the other members of the panel—who made up the majority—were such wimps that they stood by and were bulldozed by these two. Again, that is just nonsense. Such a suggestion is without foundation and is offensive. Perhaps those in the opposition would like to return to the good old days when they were in power and promotion in the Queensland Public Service was by seniority and merit was irrelevant.

Mr Schwarten: How did Terry Lewis become the police commissioner?

Mr BEATTIE: Good example. It was cheaper and quicker and had a wonderful certainty about it. However, even those opposite might have noticed both the condemnation they received for it and the fact that the rest of the world abandoned such systems years ago.

I do not intend to pursue this matter any further unless asked to do so by the opposition. I want to make sure that it is on the record. Newspapers come and go. I want it on the record of this parliament that this selection panel was appropriately established and the people on it behaved appropriately. I stand by my director-general and I also stand by the director-general of Justice. The director-general of Justice is, in my view, one of the best public servants in this state. I have absolute faith in her integrity and in this selection process.

RACING AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 381.

Ms LEE LONG (7.37 pm): The prize money for non-TABQ racing will come from an allocation of seven per cent of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board's share of the net UNiTAB product fee. Clause 9 seeks to insert new section 64A. This requires each country racing association to form a selection panel of three people to choose a person for nomination to the committee. As I have said previously, this will be a crucial selection for the future of racing in country areas. The selection panel must include two people who are members of a different race club which is still a member of the relevant country racing association and one person who is either a licensed trainer, racing bookmaker or jockey. The third member is not required to live or work within the association's geographical area.

Clause 13 seeks to insert a new subsection providing recommendations about the distribution strategy for prize money, other funding and racing calendars to be accompanied by written reasons. The sister clause to this, clause 16, seeks to insert new section 68E which requires the thoroughbred control body to consider recommendations from the committee and provide its decision in writing to the committee along with any details of changes and the reasons for those changes.

I believe the more open racing is the healthier for everyone. I believe in the interests of transparency and accountability that this material should all be a matter for the public record. I come finally to proposed new section 68M which provides that where at the end of a year the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board has not paid seven per cent of its net UNiTAB product fee as prize money it must, in agreement with the committee, use the amount remaining for supporting non-TAB racing.

I believe we are all familiar with the recent mass exodus of staff from Queensland Racing. I strongly hope that the restructuring of country racing does not lead to a similar upheaval. In conclusion, I would like to say to the minister that if he does get the chance to get to the Mount Garnet races over the May weekend he would be made most welcome. We would even give him a feed at the camp if he so desires. I support the bill.

Ms CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (7.39 pm): As the electorate of Clayfield boasts two thoroughbred racing facilities and a harness and greyhound racing facility, it is important that I rise to speak, albeit briefly, on the Racing Amendment Bill before the House. Eagle Farm and Doomben racecourses employ a great number of people—not just on race days but every day. The electorate is made up of owners, trainers, strappers, apprentices, jockeys, bookies, punters, farriers, horse vets, stewards, managers, TAB operators, hospitality and many more. The racing industry is a great employer, which is why I am very pleased that both Eagle Farm and Doomben remain in the electorate of Clayfield.

Many residents of the area who do not have an interest in racing have a great interest in maintaining the racing industry in our area. It is and will continue to be a part of our life. Yes, there has been consternation regarding prize money, black type racing and non-TAB racing here in Queensland, but all concerned are working to make Brisbane and Queensland the place to race, and this bill assists greatly in supporting and understanding the needs of country racing and thoroughbred racing in this state. It is also important to note that Queensland still leads in the export of our thoroughbred horses. I reiterate that racing is an important industry in Queensland. It is an important industry nationally and it is an important industry internationally. This is a sport—an industry—that cannot be automated. It is about horses. It is about people. It is about their livelihoods, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (7.41 pm): I hope the Racing Amendment Bill addresses some of the issues of funding to non-TAB race clubs—that is, basically country clubs—by requiring that seven per cent of Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board shares of the net UNiTAB product fee are allocated as prize money for non-TAB racing. I hope this bill addresses the effects of racing cutbacks in my electorate, because 16 clubs in my electorate have been affected. Charters Towers, Moranbah, Clermont and Georgetown have lost three meetings. Hughenden, Aramac and Richmond have lost one while Capella, Alpha, Jericho and Mingela have had their only meetings taken away from them. Other clubs such as Einasleigh, Twin Hills, Oak Park, Kooroorinya and Towers Hill have lost significant funding.

I want to bring to the attention of the House the fate of the community of Georgetown following the cutbacks made in the regional racing program. Georgetown is at the southern part of the Gulf of Carpentaria and the closest town to the north of Georgetown is Kowanyama. Many of the communities in this area are isolated and people have few opportunities for social interaction outside their families. There are at least four racehorse trainers in this area alone. Prior to the cutbacks there were three annual race days at the Georgetown racetrack. The community was led to believe that it would lose one of these race days. However, it has lost all three. This has caused great headache amongst the entire community and surrounding districts.

The minister must take into consideration that race days in rural communities are eagerly anticipated as a major social, sporting and community event. They are historically well attended, with people travelling hundreds of kilometres. These gatherings encourage and develop a great community sense of spirit. Removing these race meetings is akin to removing the Birdsville race meeting. These meetings are the lifeblood of these small communities. If we take them away, there is nothing much left. I have been asked to bring this issue to parliament, as the people of Georgetown and surrounding districts are very passionate about their racing and about the traditions that have been lost.

One of the biggest events was held on New Year's Day. Generations of people have attended it and it had become a basis for traditional family get-togethers. I request the minister to intervene and return this race day to the Georgetown community. Outside of Georgetown are river systems, crocodiles, roos and pigs. There are no race meetings. They have been taken from the community—three of them. There are no race meetings. The area has four trainers, and they want those race meetings back. Any amendments to this bill that strengthen and support the effort of the many country race clubs in Queensland are a step in the right direction.

I now want to speak about the Moranbah Race Club and the struggles it faced against Queensland Racing last year alone. In August last year the highly successful BMA Cup was run, but not without drama. The Moranbah committee was advised by Queensland Racing to seek sponsorship, which the committee had done with great success. However, Queensland Racing decided that it would not permit Moranbah to offer the agreed amount of sponsorship on this particular race day. It made this decision without any consultation with the Moranbah committee. In fact, Queensland Racing actually confirmed the initial prize money. It later changed its mind but never contacted Moranbah to let it know of the change. Rather, it contacted the Barcaldine district—completely out of the district—and gave it the responsibility of advising Moranbah of the decision after the close of the calendar. This ensured that Moranbah had no chance of appeal. Consequently, the Moranbah Race Club had to run this race day on reduced prize money and struggled to get the horses to race on that day. I hope that this never occurs again as it caused a great deal of stress to organisers and the community of Moranbah. The tactics employed by Queensland Racing for this particular event were heavy-handed and unethical.

With regard to the Moranbah Race Club, Moranbah is a town of approximately 10,000 people. Within the next two years, the town will increase to 12,000 or even 14,000 people. The town has two race meetings. It had five race meetings; it has been reduced to two. The race meetings are held in August and November. At its last race meeting it was given the opportunity to fund that particular race date. It was granted that funding. It increased the prize money and drew a crowd of 1,600 people. However, the town has to wait 10 months before the next race meeting. It is, as I said before, a wonderful social event. It is one of the biggest events and an opportunity for the miners to kick their heels up and have a bet and a beer. As I was saying, the town's race dates have been cut from five to two. It is one of the biggest events in the town. It has to wait 10 months for the next race meeting. With a crowd of 1,600 people in an area that produces over $6 billion in gross revenue, one would be led to believe that they would be given a fair share of race meetings. It is asking for a race date in April so that the town does not have to wait 10 months. If that were the case, it would be about halfway, so it would be five months between almost every race meeting.

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (7.47 pm), in reply: I want to thank everyone for their contributions tonight. It has been a very good debate. Obviously the shadow minister and the member for Warrego, the former shadow minister, chose to spoil the debate to some extent by entering into what I thought were some pretty silly and vicious attacks on other people. I do not intend to play that game. What I do want to say is that the member for Tablelands has made a very good contribution here tonight, because she has understood exactly what this bill is about. I do not want to undersell any contribution that has been made by members on this side of the parliament, because their contributions have been very good also. The fact of the matter is this: Pat Purcell, the parliamentary secretary, despite what the shadow minister said, has done something that no other member of this parliament has ever done, including me or any member of the National Party—that is, he went to over half the race clubs in Queensland and was told first-hand the nature of the issues that were troubling people. To suggest, as the shadow minister did, that I somehow shirked my duty shows that he does not understand how a minister has to work. I have a very big portfolio of responsibility, and I am delighted that I had somebody like Pat Purcell who could discharge those duties for me in that regard.

Mr Hopper: We didn't criticise Pat. We didn't. Did you read *Hansard*?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I do not know what the honourable member has been on during the dinner break, but I did not say—

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments insulting and I ask—

Mr SCHWARTEN: I withdraw. The honourable member was not listening, because what I said was that he said that I shirked my responsibility in sending Pat Purcell out in my place. That is what he said. Whether he likes to backtrack from that now or not is up to him. It is a matter for him whether his memory serves him right in that regard.

I sent Pat Purcell because I knew that he had that common touch with people. He could sit down with people. He is a bushie himself. He has spent a lot of time in rural Queensland as a sharefarmer and he understands those issues. Having done that, within a very short period I received feedback that no other minister—National Party minister or any other minister—has ever had. He has been to over 70 racetracks and sat down and talked to those people. He came back and gave me a report on them.

On top of that, the member for Tablelands, for example, who is interested in this issue, invited me to come up to her electorate office to sit down with an old gentleman—I will use the word—who has been around racing for a long, long time. What he was saying accorded with what Pat had reported to me. So I knew that the views that Pat had picked up were being benchmarked against the views of people who were actually out there in the industry and knew what was happening. It was a great connection.

The thing that has come through undeniably—and this is a reference to both the shadow minister and the former shadow minister—is that the old system of election does not work. Why? The member for Gladstone actually attended to this argument. She said that Gladstone lost a couple of its race dates. Why? Because there was no Gladstone representative. I know that the member for Fitzroy, who has been intimately involved in racing and who will no doubt make a contribution in the consideration in detail stage because he wishes to speak to a particular clause, will make that point also. The fact of the matter is very, very clear. There is no way in a representative system whereby you can ask somebody, as a member of a club, to come down and give away race dates. It will not happen. It cannot happen. It does not happen. Pat Purcell proved that to me. Little clubs had lost race dates because the representative came from another area. Guess what he took? When he went down and put his hand up on the country racing council he took away the little race date. So we need a system to get around that. I know that the member for Warrego regards the selection panel process as a rort.

Mr Hobbs: That's right.

Mr SCHWARTEN: But if it can be a rort, the only people who can rort it are those committees. They are not appointments by me. They are local appointments made by the conglomerate of those committees.

Mr Hobbs: You're doing it by allowing them. You're allowing it. You're allowing it to happen.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I take that interjection from the member for Warrego. His interjection was that I am allowing it. What am I allowing? I am allowing the local committees to make a choice. The member for Warrego does not trust that. The member for Tablelands is acutely aware of the conversation that I had with her and the representative of racing in her electorate. He is a horse owner. He owns a lot of very good thoroughbreds in Queensland and he has been in the racing industry forever. He said to me, 'You cannot expect one of these clubs to send a committee person or a member of that club to Brisbane and vote away race dates for them.' That is what he said to me. It will not work. I believe that if the committee system was proper in its aspiration to run its own affairs then it would try to find an independent broker. That is what this system aims to do.

Mr Hobbs: Who is going to be the broker? Who's that?

Mr SCHWARTEN: It may be any number of people.

Mr Hobbs: Bob Bentley?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I will give the member an example of who it may be. Gary Peebles is out there with Vaughan Johnson at the moment. He supports what I am doing. He is a licensee. Nobody would know more about racetracks in central western Queensland. Under the member's amendment, he is barred.

Mr Hobbs: No, he's not.

Mr SCHWARTEN: He is barred, because he is a licensee.

Mr Hobbs: He's not.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes, he is. Under the system that the member wants to promote through his amendment, Gary Peebles is barred from doing that. They are saying that the system of allowing those associations to come together to form a panel of their own, with one licensee of their nomination—not mine, not Queensland Racing, not anybody else's—cannot be trusted to find somebody in the community who nominates and says, 'I am interested in racing.' It may well be that somebody from the bush who has retired to Surfers Paradise, for example, puts up their hand for this. I think that would be great, because there are a lot of bushies I know who have had horses, who have been trainers or whatever else, who want to make a contribution and who do not have the blinkered view of committees who say, 'If we want to set up a circuit then you have to have these meets and all the rest of it,' and make the tough decisions accordingly. I could nominate a dozen people.

Mr Hobbs: They could have been hounded out of the district. You wouldn't know. You have to have somebody who is local.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The decision is made locally. I do not think the member could understand this. I wish that I could put this in cartoon form for the member, because he might be able to understand it better.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. I find the minister—

Mr SCHWARTEN: I have no problem at all. I withdraw the word 'cartoon'.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Male): Order! Thank you, Minister.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The fact of the matter is that the National Party is proposing to take away—

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. I find that word offensive and I ask the minister to draw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! He withdrew that word.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I withdrew. The member should keep his ears open. The reality is that what we are proposing is all locally based. The associations will appoint or elect—whatever system they choose—the three people who sit on the panel. I will not do it. Queensland Racing will not do it. Peter Beattie will not do it. This Labor government will not do it. The locals will do it. The eight associations, established under this bill, will do it.

I believe that, through that process, we will get the best person. These people tell me—and I agree with them—that they know what is best for them. By coming together and forming a panel, they will then call for applications from various people who are not necessarily members of committees. I had a discussion with the member for Gladstone. I said that I was thinking of ruling out members of committees. The reason I have not gone down that path is that it might narrow down the pool. But my view is unchanged. Anybody ought to be able to nominate for these positions and be judged on their merits at a local level by their peers. That is what I am asking. I think any sensible, reasonable person would adopt this view, because you cannot expect people to wear two hats.

As I said, in central Queensland we have the representative on the council coming from the Yeppoon Turf Club. What did he want to do? He wanted to take days from Gladstone. If we put one from Thangool there, I would hate to be him going back to Thangool Race Club and saying, 'Guess what I just did. I gave up three race days.' I would not like to be in his predicament.

I think this transference system, which has no government involvement—no member of parliament involvement and no Queensland Racing involvement whatsoever—of transferring the ownership of this process of appointing a delegate to local people, is the best way to go. It can only become unhinged if people do not want to do the right thing. But unlike the member for Warrego, I have got enough faith in these committees to know enough.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. I find that word offensive and I ask for that to be withdrawn.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I am happy to withdraw it, but his interjection before said that this could be corrupted and I will let that stand by its own statement.

Mr Hobbs: It can be corrupted.

Mr SCHWARTEN: 'It can be corrupted.' I will again place on the Hansard record that the member believes that the system can be corrupted.

Mr Hobbs: Your system can be corrupted, yes.

Mr SCHWARTEN: It can be corrupted by whom? Let me tell the member that the only people who can corrupt it is the system—the committees.

Mr Hobbs: It is your system.

Mr SCHWARTEN: In clause 9 it is very clear. There is an established process for doing this. It does not mention Queensland Racing. It does not mention the minister. It does not mention any person other than those tied up with those local associations. We create eight of them now. I think the member thought there were too many of them. I was advised by Pat Purcell, the parliamentary secretary, that he believed that the areas were too large. Again, the member for Tablelands reinforced that view in her speech tonight. In the Tablelands electorate office we talked about how we really need some local solutions, and the member for Cook made that point tonight. That is reflected in this legislation.

This legislation does two things. It transfers the whole responsibility of running the race dates and getting a proper mix to a committee system that is made up of people who come from associations. They become delegates via a selection panel rather than by a direct election which, in the past, yielded the system that we have now. That system does not work. I invite anybody to disagree with the statement that it does not work. I probably should not say this because I do not want to pre-empt the committee, but I dearly hope that people like Gary Peebles and the gentleman in the Tablelands think about this, because they are interested in racing and they are not bound necessarily to any committee. Including licensees will bring a different point of view because those people—the jockeys, the trainers and all of the people whom the opposition has talked about tonight—make a quid out of the industry. They are excluded under the opposition proposal. However, under this proposal they get a say too and I think that is appropriate.

Secondly, for the first time in the history of this state country racing will have a benchmark. It will have a guaranteed amount of money, which is seven per cent of the turnover. Never before has that occurred. The member for Tablelands referred to the days of the principal clubs. The Rocky jockey club told those clubs how much money they could have and with a wing and a prayer they could cut it from them. In those days, people raced for a farthing. Now we have more prize money as a result of this system.

This is not about Queensland Racing running country racing. It is far from that. The legislation provides that the committee will have the opportunity to be the master of its own destiny. It can come up with a set of race dates and put together a calendar. Then somebody from the board—and not the chair because they are all crook at him—will be the spear carrier for that country race meeting. In other words, the views that are extolled at the committee level will go straight to the board of Queensland Racing. Never has that happened before.

I would like to give the whole box and die of race dates to the Country Racing Council. However, if I did that the Australian Racing Board would deregister every jockey, strapper and anybody else tied up in the racing industry in Queensland. It is not possible to do that. Through Bentley, the board of Queensland Racing told me that it would be happy if that occurred because it does not want to be setting the race dates. As far as I am concerned, the limitation on race dates is the jockeys and the horses. We will not go back to three or four horses at a start. Queensland Racing will not tolerate that and, if it is worth its salt, the Country Racing Council will not tolerate it either. We will not go back to boat races that nobody will gamble on, where they would tie a lantern on the tail of one of the horses to make sure that he came home by midnight. We will not go back to that sort of procedure. We want a proper country racing circuit and proper country race meetings with proper fields and proper gambling.

The other proviso is that one does not kill the golden goose. The golden goose is the UNiTAB. Any attempt to strangle that goose will strangle country racing. Setting the benchmark at seven per cent of the turnover means that there has to be a disincentive for anybody trying to interfere with race meetings that will return.

It is a shame that the member for Charters Towers has cleared off, because he talked about Moranbah. By allowing Moranbah to have higher prize money than Mackay, the TAB take at Mackay goes down. Guess who suffers? All of country racing in Queensland, because the money comes from them! The $20 million promised by the National Party was taxpayers' funds. I will not take $20 million off the homeless, for example, to give to racing in Queensland. I will not do it and it will not happen. I will not take $20 million out of country schools. If we have $20 million we will put it into more airconditioning—

Mr Cummins: Hospitals.

Mr SCHWARTEN: And our hospitals. We will not put it into our racetracks, and that is where we differ. Members should remember this: the National Party lost an election on that promise because the people of Queensland rejected wholeheartedly that view. Anybody who tinkers with the notion of a TAB race date and tries to take money away from it will not be doing country racing any good. It is absurd to suggest otherwise.

What does the committee need to be charged with? It has to come up with a set of dates that do not conflict with one another and that do not take from one another. It has to come up with a guarantee that it can put together race meets with a number of horses and a number of jockeys in order to put a calendar together. Having done that, it puts it to the board of Queensland Racing. The Queensland Racing board must endorse it unless there are very good reasons for not doing so. It cannot just say, 'No, you're not having that.' It has to provide an answer in writing, so it will be transparent for everybody to see. I do not know why anyone would oppose that piece of transparency.

The member for Surfers Paradise also made a very good contribution. He was concerned that we would develop a rift between TAB and non-TAB racing. However, I would say that the whole lot is intertwined. In these circumstances it is proper to exclude the TAB clubs from the governance of country racing, because their views are represented through the board of Queensland Racing via its chair. Having the TAB clubs represented on the previous Country Racing Council really did nothing to allow autonomy to exist. While I take the point that we do not want a rift between TAB clubs and non-TAB clubs, I believe that it is in the interests of both to cooperate and that is why we have an overarching board of Queensland Racing. The point is well made.

The Liberal Party is also concerned about the selection system, and I will go through this again. This is not some nefarious plan of mine to try to gain control. Nowhere in the legislation does it say that I am proposing to take a certain course of action in that regard, or that I will appoint anybody. It does not say that. It does not say anywhere that any member of this government, any politician or Queensland Racing will do that. Somebody, possibly the member for Burdekin, made the point that we need to come back to grassroots. This is about the grassroots. This is about the committee system transposing itself into an association, setting up a panel and choosing three people who will then choose the most meritorious person for the job.

The other day I said to Tom Burns, 'Why don't you put your hand up for one of these positions?' He said, 'I'd have rocks in my bloody head. I don't want to do that.' I hope that somebody like that who has knocked around in the bush will put their name up. There are plenty of them, such as Russell Cooper, for example. There is a host of pollies who have retired and who are not necessarily on committees and do not want to be involved in committees but who could make a very positive contribution. The bloke who ran the Great Western pub in Rocky would be ideal. He is not a member of a committee, but I would like him to be on a council like this because he has lived all of his life in the bush in the Territory and Queensland. Under the National Party's proposed amendments, he would be excluded from being considered. If passed, those amendments would mean that only somebody from a committee could be elected and we would be back to square one. I urge the parliament to reject that amendment for that reason.

Finally, I want to talk about the position that I have taken, and this has been raised by various speakers tonight, on the status of racing in Queensland. I have never said—and I challenge anybody to come forward and show me where I have said—that country racing does not matter. I have been at more country racetracks than most people in this parliament. I have misspent a great deal of my youth going to places like Birdsville, Betoota, Bedourie, Boulia, Kynuna, Aramac and so on. I had interests in horses when I was in Mount Isa, and the list goes on.

I do not believe that I need, as a minister, to live my life on a racetrack to understand it. I long since departed from the view that it was a commercial arrangement when I took $50 notes out of my pocket, gave them to the bloke with the big smiling bag and he converted them into green pieces of paper which I subsequently, in a fit of pique, threw on the ground. I found it was neither economically sustainable nor environmentally sustainable to keep going down that path. But I do not deny for one moment that some of the best times I have ever had in my life were at country race meetings. I have talked about the McKinlay Race Club. I lived there for two years and had a great time. I have been back to race meetings since and I hope to again get back there.

Nobody should devalue the statements that I have made about country racing, but we have to live in the real world. We can bury our heads in the sand and say that the money will just pour in from some unknown source into country racing. This bill establishes for the first time ever a nexus between the TAB and country racing. It has never happened before; it is a lot of money and that will continue to grow. It is a lot of money that we are talking about. It is $6 million to $7 million. That money has not gone down. In terms of indexing it, that is absurd because nothing else is indexed in the racing industry. Nothing else is indexed, so it is quite absurd to go down that path.

I stand by what I have said about where racing fits in the economy of Queensland. This morning I was talking about the BSA. The BSA has overseen about $7 billion worth of work just this year. We are talking about 70,000 or 80,000 licensees in some cases. We are talking about 135,000 direct employees. Speakers here tonight have told me that racing is the third biggest industry in Queensland. Come to my electorate in Rockhampton and tell me that it is the third biggest employer in Rockhampton. Rocky is a pretty big racing centre. Let me tell honourable members that the least number of people employed in Rockhampton, directly or indirectly, are in the racing industry. I will bet any money you like that that is the case. I will even go this far: I will bet anybody in this parliament any money they like that it is not the third biggest industry in Queensland. My mate up the back spent his working life in the coal industry before he became a member of parliament. How big do members think that is in the state? What about the tourism industry? The building industry employs about 135,000 direct employees. That is not including the people who grow the lettuces that go on the smoko of the chippie. That is not including the bloke who sells him a pair of work boots. That does not include any of that. Multiply that by four or five and you start to get to some reasonable view.

My statement of fact has been deliberately misrepresented by members of the National Party. It is a statement of fact that we need to understand if we are going to go forward with this. We need to put it into perspective. We do not need to live a lie that it is the second or third biggest industry in Queensland because it is not. It is far from that. There are 8½ thousand licensees. There are 70,000 in the BSA. There is an enormous difference between perception and reality in this regard, but I will not have it said by the members of the National Party that I somehow devalued country racing by speaking the truth in that regard. As I say, I invite any member of the National Party to put up the facts and figures about where it stands. I am happy to live with the outcome of that.

I thank members, especially those on this side of the parliament, for their contributions. I know some of them wish to speak to the clauses. It is a shame that the National Party could not have enough interest to have people here tonight to continue the debate. That is a matter it is going to have to live with. The shadow minister has a bit of form in this regard. I understand he was not here for the 2002 debate either. That is probably why he does not know too much about it. That is as I understand the situation.

Mr HOBBS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find the minister's words offensive. They are untrue and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Were you here? You did not go back to your electorate?

Mr Hobbs: Of course I was here. I was here for all of it.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I am quite happy to withdraw.

Mr Hobbs: I appreciate that.

Mr hopper: Well done.

Mr SCHWARTEN: It is better than you have done here tonight. You certainly have disgraced the reputation of the National Party.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. I object to the minister's language and I wish that it be withdrawn.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I will withdraw, no problem at all, but let the statistics show that there are two National Party people in the room. How many Labor people are here tonight interested in this debate?

Mr Hobbs: Because you've got to keep the numbers up.

Mr SCHWARTEN: That is an interesting statement: 'You've got to keep the numbers up.' That is the responsibility of any government but it is the responsibility of a good opposition to make sure that there is enough debate on the matter. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Mr HOPPER (8.16 pm): This clause replaces the existing five regional racing associations with eight country racing associations. The composition of these associations will be determined by regulation in accordance with section 62 of the Racing Act 2002. Naturally, no regulations have yet been made available, but it seems clear that all TAB clubs will be excluded from the membership of the country racing association of an area in which it operates. Whether the final allocation of clubs to a particular association will have any political implication is as yet unclear.

There is a certain concern that the size of clubs—for example, the number of clubs allocated, particularly the country racing associations—will result in a diminution of influence given the small number of clubs some associations will represent. I ask the minister to specify to the House—maybe he could table a document—what clubs will be allocated to what country racing associations so that this matter can be put on record. I would also like to ask the government whether through regulation it is going to move one club from one association to another. We have eight associations. Would the minister table a document tonight to say which clubs are in which associations? In the future does the minister plan to shift one club, for example Bell, out of the downs? Could the minister clarify that?

Mr SCHWARTEN: That is a fair enough point. I do not intend to do anything in that regard. That is what this committee will do. I think it is best placed to determine that. There is a broad set of committees that have been put together. My own view is that you probably have a better chance of hurting cats than coming up with an absolutely perfect solution because there is always going to be some level of conflict. I believe that those will evolve over a period of time. Again, I lean on the member for Tablelands. A gentleman there said to me, 'Mount Garnet should probably be in another one.' Then he said, 'Now, wait a minute. If we put it in there, then it will conflict with another one.' I think that will be the first major challenge that this committee will have: to come up with proper boundaries and a proper interface between those boundaries to make this work. I do not intend to politically determine, other than what we have done today, what can be. As far as I am concerned, it is a matter for that committee and it rightfully should be.

Mr HOPPER: I thank the minister for that explanation. On that aspect, I was having a look at one proposal that was set up, and I believe Mount Perry and Beaudesert were in the same association. That is going to involve a lot of travelling. From what I have read I think they are going to meet two times a year. I know it is going to be very hard to have those members do that. Queensland is a big place. We heard the member for Gregory speak before on the distances travelled—over 700 kilometres. A lot of people in this House would not have a clue what 700 kilometres is to drive, but they take a horse there just for fun. Does the minister know what I mean?

Mr Schwarten: Absolutely.

Mr HOPPER: I know it is going to be very hard to draw up, but it obviously will involve that sort of thing.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Again I say to the member that that is a responsibility that they are going to have. As minister I do not want to dictate to them, but there has to be a starting point and we have come up with a set of clubs to start with. There will be no problem as far as I am concerned, and there ought not to be from anybody else, with one club transferring to another CRA. Somebody put the proposal to

me—and I cannot remember whether it was Pat or one of the clubs—that people should be able to be in two racing associations. I think there may be a big problem if that happened.

Mr Hopper: It wouldn't work.

Mr SCHWARTEN: And I do not think it would work either. Somebody from one of the clubs put that proposal forward, but I think that will sort itself out.

Mr HOBBS: Can the minister share with us why we are going from five to eight associations? The minister mentioned that Pat Purcell, the member for Bulimba, mentioned it to him, and that is fine, but are there any other reasons why we are actually expanding this? I suppose, as the old saying goes, a committee of one is what is needed in a lot of these things. We are actually expanding it. Does the minister think it will be more difficult, does he work on the basis that it will be a bit more democratic, or is there some other reason why that is happening?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Part of what I said before is that the thinking came not only from the parliamentary secretary but also from the member for Tablelands. The shadow minister raised a very valid point before, and that was where these would be grouped. The bigger they are the more distance is going to be involved. Pat's view was that they were too big; we had to get a smaller area geographically so there could be better participation. He told me that there were clubs out there that had not participated for many years because the committee members were volunteers. They are busy; they have had a drought to contend with. They have had all sorts of problems, and racing and being a member of the committee has been the last thing they want to be bothered with. But if they have to travel, as the shadow minister said, 700 kilometres or further, if we can get that finite distance down, that would be good. That is the only reason I suggested that it be that. There was no other agenda.

Mr HOPPER: That is fair enough.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr HOPPER (8.24 pm): This is basically a reiteration of the existing exclusions from memberships of racing associations. The only difference is that under the existing provisions the exclusions of licences from memberships have been removed. Licensees have traditionally not been able to be on race club committees or associations; I heard the minister state that before. In order to ensure that racing is conducted and supervised as objectively as possible, licensees have a direct financial interest in the outcome of the race. The minister knows that and I know that. We all know that.

Mr Schwarten: It is a fact.

Mr HOPPER: This experience has been gained over decades. The issue of integrity has arisen when they have had membership of race clubs et cetera before because there is no doubt that they have a big influence. The amendment will now allow licensees to be members of country racing associations. This change has been sought by some country race clubs from time to time because in some areas the activists who keep racing going are hobby trainers. We have only to look at my little home town of Bell. We had a trainer living right beside the course. The next minute he got active in our club. He was a great asset to our club. Unfortunately, he had a terrible accident on his horse and he is in a lot of trouble and not training at the moment. He became a part of the club and no doubt he had a lot to offer us, but if this guy was not right on the ball and was not straight with us he could have an influence as a licensee that could have been dangerous. Does the minister know what I am saying?

Mr SCHWARTEN: No, I do not know necessarily. I do not know whether the member for Darling Downs saw *Stateline* the other night. I said wherever there is money and people there will be thieves, and that is reality. There is always going to be somebody—whether it is a member of parliament, a member of a race club or a member of anything else—who is going to do the wrong thing. There is an element of people who will never do the right thing. I do not think branding licensees in that regard is necessarily going to stop the problem.

Mr Hopper: I did not mean to brand them.

Mr SCHWARTEN: No, and I accept that. No, I am not suggesting for a moment that the member is doing that, but I take the point about the member's mate down the road at Bell. There would have been nothing wrong with him being a trainer and being on the committee. He is obviously an honourable person.

The adviser just said that the racing association does not have an integrity role, and that is true. I am saying that I have lived in small communities—not as long as the member for Darling Down has—but people pretty well know who is around. Those sort of people do not last very long. Quite frankly, the reason that I am doing this is that I think the pot of people who can really add value is diminishing in country areas, and to exclude people like Gary Peebles—and I hate to mention his name but I told him I was going to mention his name; he is out there with Vaughan tonight—I just do not think makes any sense. The member's point is made well that they have a financial reason for doing this. What better reason to have them in the tent? That is the way I think about it. If their business is good business and it is good business for the clubs, that is fine. I think that it would be different if we were starting to include

them on committees and telling stipes and being in that influential position, but these CRAs are not going to do that. I have heard that view and I came down on the other side of it. I think that we have enough talented people out there who are tied up in racing. We do not have that many of them to pick and choose from, to a certain extent, and I think we are excluding people who we all know could do a very good job in the CRA and probably do it without the blinkered approach that I might have as the member of the Yeppoon race club or whatever. That is the reason for it. There is nothing sinister behind it.

Mr HOBBS: In 5(c) it says—

A person is ineligible to be a member of a country racing association if the person—

…

(c) is subject to an exclusion action under any control body's rules of racing;

Do exclusion actions have sunset clauses? I have other examples. DVOs are a good example where, in fact, retrospective legislation is coming in and it is causing all sorts of trouble with roo shooters and so forth, even though it might have been five years ago et cetera. Do those exclusion actions have sunset clauses or if there is one against someone are they banned for life in this?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I do not know. I will be guided. I think people can get warned off for life, although some people have been warned off and let back in for life. Robbie Waterhouse was one person who was warned off and who has come back. Presumably if someone is warned off for life then they are excluded for life, but if there is a sunset clause and they have been chased off for a year or had their bookie's licence taken off them for 12 months, then they are excluded through that provision. This does not really change the fact that at the end of the day we do not want people who are excluded, whether it is for six months or whatever. They can come back then, but if they are excluded for life then they ought to be excluded from meets for life, too, I think. The member might have a different view of it. They are my feelings.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr HOPPER (8.29 pm): These proposed amendments remove direct access to the Thoroughbred Racing Board by country race clubs in relation to race meetings and require that access on prize money, race dates et cetera be through the Country Racing Committee. Could this have the effect of isolating the Thoroughbred Racing Board from the interests of country racing and further marginalise country racing in Queensland?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I do not think so. That is my view.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mr HOPPER (8.30 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 9—

At page 6, lines 22 to 29 and page 7, lines 1 to 18—

omit, insert—

'64A Nomination of committee member by country racing association

'(1) Each country racing association must, from time to time, nominate a person as a member of the committee.

'(2) The nomination is to be decided by the members of the country racing association at a meeting of the association.

'(3) Notice of a meeting to be held under subsection (2) must be given to the association's members and must state that the nomination is to be decided at the meeting.

'(4) The decision about the nomination must be by secret ballot conducted in the same way as a secret ballot for election of members of the racing association is conducted.

'64B Revocation of nomination

'A country racing association may revoke its nomination of a person as a member of the committee at a meeting of the association if—

(a) at least three-quarters of the members of the association present at the meeting or, if three-quarters is not a whole number, the next highest whole number of its members, agree to the revocation; and

(b) at least 14 days notice of the meeting, including the purpose of the meeting, was given to the association's members.'.'.

I table the explanatory notes to the amendment. The minister outlined his point of view pretty well in his reply to the second reading debate. Proposed new section 64A seeks to have each country racing association form a selection panel of three people to select a person to represent the country racing association on the Queensland Country Racing Committee. This proposal is subject to two problems. It removes country race clubs from a direct say in who represents them on the Country Racing Committee

by placing yet another layer between them and the Country Racing Committee. Does the minister understand where I am coming from?

Mr Schwarten: I know where you are coming from.

Mr HOPPER: It also requires that a member of the selection panel be a trainer, bookie or jockey—a licensee. This is contrary to the experience in the racing industry over many decades in relation to the integrity issues posed by the involvement of licensees in the management of racing. Also, the provisions as drafted do not necessarily require such licensee representatives to have any interest at all in racing in the particular areas covered by the relevant regional association. There were representations from the South East Queensland Country Race Clubs Association to the minister that these proposals will involve time and cost impositions on race clubs. Opposition members are really concerned about this. The amendment has the following intention—that nomination to the proposed Queensland Country Racing Committee by country racing associations occur at general meetings of the country racing association at which notice of the proposed nomination shall have been given; and that the determination of the nominee shall be by secret ballot of all persons entitled to be present who are present at the meeting of the country racing association.

A major town may have a big, non-TAB club that is prospering. It is surrounded by small country towns that cherish their race clubs, which are good, active race clubs. The guys in the bigger towns probably want those country race meets to be held at their town. They would like the smaller town race meet to go. The minister knows this.

Mr Schwarten: Yes, of course.

Mr HOPPER: They would like the smaller town race meet to go, have an extra race date at their town and call it the smaller town race date.

Mr Schwarten: Human nature being what it is, yes.

Mr HOPPER: I do not want to mention names here. This is a problem that we are facing. I would like to see one member from each club on that country racing association have an equal vote in order to try and level out the say as to who will be on the committee. No doubt that committee will have direct representation to the Queensland Racing board. A member of the board will be the chairman. It will be a very powerful committee. We need to be very careful that dominating people from a bigger club do not overrule and hurt these smaller clubs. Does the minister understand what I am saying?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I do understand and I have taken that view into account. I do not want to appear hard-nosed about this. The very reason the member just outlined was what guided my thinking. I hate to use his name again, but Gary Peebles is the very person I was thinking about in relation to this. There might be five or six people in any community who have something to offer country racing. None of those people might necessarily be tied up with the committee.

Initially, the member's proposal was exactly how I was going to proceed. Then I stood back from it and thought that what we could well end up with, human nature being what it is, is seven or eight people out of 14 clubs getting together and basically picking who they want. That is the reality. You can get a block of votes. I am told that that has happened before. That was one of the things I was told. Some of the little clubs complained that four or five clubs got together and knocked out the little clubs. They are in a powerful position, as the member has said.

I was trying to find a way of divorcing that process to get someone who is almost untouchable, if you like. If they muck up, the whole lot will get them. If they do the wrong thing, everybody will chuck them off. However, in a situation where there is a majority vote and it is a small majority vote, you are more inclined to go with that majority of people to make sure their race clubs are looked after and to hell with the others. That is the dilemma I was faced with.

With this system, the association picks two of its kind and a licensee, bearing in mind that a licensee takes a broader perspective of all the race clubs because they carry a bag around it, ride a horse around it or train horses that go around it. Then there are two other people who are appointed. I do not know exactly what politics will go into that, but we all know that some politics will go into that decision. Having done that, it is narrowed down to a position where whoever is selected is not beholden to anyone and can therefore make decisions in the interests of all clubs.

I put this proposal to members of the Thangool club who came to see me. Like members of a lot of race clubs, they had the view that I could wave a magic wand and give them 10 more race dates. I said, 'I would give you all 10 more race dates if I could, but that is not going to work and the ARB would have something to say about it.' I put that proposal to them because they spoke to me about the Gladstone situation. Everyone would like to get a few days off Gladstone. However, as I said to the member for Gladstone earlier, had there been a delegate who came up through the election process we could guarantee that the club that lost the days would not have been Gladstone but would have been one of the other group of people who did not elect them.

It is not, as the member for Warrego suggested, that I will select a panel and get the person I want on there. I could not care less who goes on these, except to say that I hope they are people who are

interested not just in a club but also in racing in their region. This has been my attempt. I am interested to hear whether members have a better idea.

I cannot accept the suggestion about a direct election. That is what we have now and it has yielded the current result. If there is a better suggestion than the panel I am happy to look at it. The panel will be made up of locals. Members should remember that there is no interference from anybody else. The locals come together, the licensees are included and they select someone. In terms of the person being an absentee licensee, that is only there because it was suggested to me that perhaps some regions may not have licensees and they may want a licensee from somewhere else to sit on the panel. However, it will be a local decision. I will not have any influence.

I even suggested that what we probably should do is cast around amongst all of us and get a list of 20 or 30 people and put them out there—I am happy to take nominations from the member or anybody else—to say, 'Here are 30 people in Queensland who are interested in country racing.' One might live in Rockhampton, for example, and have an interest in it. And people in the central west might be interested in having this person because they have spent most of their working life out there, they know the story and they have a bit of time on their hands.

I toyed with the idea of putting up, from an all-party position, a heap of names we could recommend to these committees that they choose from. The further we can get them away from clubs the better the choice. I said to the member for Gladstone the other day that if I came back to Rockhampton and said, 'Guess what I have been down in parliament fighting for? A TAFE college for Gladstone at the expense of Rockhampton', I know what would happen to me at the next election.

The people who represent a club have the same dilemma if they go on to the Country Racing Council. With an appointed model I think we are more likely to get somebody who is genuinely interested in doing the job. It does not preclude others in the community. But I think it is the fairest way of doing it. Someone could say, 'The shopkeeper down the road is not on any committee, is not a licensee, but he is a damn good bloke and he knows all about race meetings because he is an old punter and goes to all the clubs.' He is far better placed to be on a council. He will have the guts to stand up for what he is doing because nobody will get him, whereas if someone is elected people just have to go to the next meeting and knock that person off. That is as sincere as I can be on this issue.

Mr HOPPER: I heard it said before that I do not understand this legislation. I do understand it. I have worked hard on this. I want to get to the bottom of this for our country race clubs. We mentioned Bell before. The minister knows that I have been a member of Bell for most of my life. I am clerk of the course and its red coat. From that small club we are going to have to get a person on that committee who has a fair bit of strength otherwise Bell will not be represented properly. We have to get the message out to our country racing clubs that this is fair dinkum. If they want an input into their club then they have to be careful who they put forward as their representative on the association.

I honestly believe that every club should have a say. I have heard the minister's argument. He mentioned names such as Russell Cooper. I see where he is coming from. He named a few different people in the community who could be part of this. What we need is equal representation from both the smaller and bigger clubs within the associations so they have exactly the same say. That is why we chose this amendment. We put a lot of time into it. I heard the minister say that he thought about going down this road as well. That is why we will stick to our guns on this amendment. We honestly believe that the most democratic way to do this is for clubs to elect their representatives and then each club would have equal rights.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I accept the logic in that and I will not belittle that. I do not know whether other members want to have something to say about it. My view is that what we are arguing about is an elected rather than an appointed model. In my view, the appointed model is the better way to go. There is a better chance of getting someone who is not going to push the Bell club's position, for example—noble as that may be—nor push the Jandowae position. They will say, 'Bell wins out of this if we can get a proper circuit and we can share jockeys, infrastructure and facilities.' I think it takes somebody who can stand back from the situation and say, 'Well, this is what is best for racing in this region. This is not necessarily what is best for Jandowae. This is not necessarily best for Gladstone because we could have five or six more race dates at Gladstone but actually interfere pretty savagely with a lot of other clubs and by doing that destroy the capacity to have a proper race circuit.'

I know that those opposite love to hate Bentley. He is big enough to stand up for himself. I think the elected model which we have now has enabled people to sit on a council, put up a set of race dates to the board and then say, 'The big bad board said we not could not have them and said to take away 200 race days.' With this model what will happen is that Bell, for instance, will go to the racing association and say, 'We want five dates. We have had four, but we think that we can get enough jockeys'. Sitting next to them is Jandowae and they say, 'Wait a minute, you can't have the Labour Day weekend, we want that.' They will have a nice little barney in that racing association and so they should. Hopefully, they will have a delegate who says, 'Wait a minute people, if you do that then you are going to affect Toowoomba and I know what is going to happen once I take that to the committee. The committee is going to say that will affect the TAB date, so you have to come up with another choice.'

What has happened previously is that people have sat on the council knowing full well that they were going to have a date knocked off but could blame somebody else. I said at the outset of the debate that this is about country racing owning its own problems and owning its own solutions. The board ought not to have a view and will not have a view on whether or not there are another 30 or 40 race days because it does not matter to them provided that the TAB is not affected. It is going to be damned hard for everyone to sit around and say, 'Let us be sensible about this. If we want to get a circuit that works, we have to do this.' I think if there is another elected cog in the wheel there will be problems. That is why I go for the appointed model.

I will go through it again, not because I do not believe those opposite understand it but because I want to make the point again. There would be a system that is very transparent. The racing association would elect three members, two from a race club whom we all think are pretty fair dinkum people who are interesting in racing and a licensee who is also interested. They will interview and get the best person to push racing for the association district—not for the Bell race club or the Yeppoon race club or whatever the case may be.

That is going to be tough. The member is dead right that this is serious stuff. This is about making people justify the number of race dates, the prize money and the participation rate at country racing. They have never had this challenge before and will need a fair bit of support. I have said to Bentley that they are going to need a fair bit of support to get this going and it will cost money to do it.

One of the things I was delighted Bentley did was put a bloke back into the field to look after country racing. I think that has gone down pretty well. He happens to come from Rockhampton, but he is very well acknowledged as someone who knows country racing. It is bit like all care and no responsibility at the moment, as far as I am concerned. I do not want to be too harsh on the people who are there. I know some of them. I think they are absolutely committed to what they are doing. But I think they are committed to a club or a couple of clubs more than the district concerned. I think this gets over that problem. I respect the member's right to move the amendment.

Mr HOBBS: I would like a brief clarification about the selection panel. The selection panel must comprise three persons, two of whom must be a member of a different member club of the country racing association. Say we have the far northern country racing association with 10 clubs. If three people have nominated from three of those clubs, then they have to find someone from another club.

Mr Schwarten: Say that again.

Mr HOBBS: Say we are looking at the far-northern country racing association and there are about 10 clubs in that. Say, for instance, the first three—Atherton, Cairns and Chillagoe—have nominated people for the selection panel to consider. Is the minister saying that those clubs cannot participate in that?

Mr Schwarten: I see where you are coming from.

Mr HOBBS: Does that mean that the other clubs can provide members or is it in fact the next association?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I see where the confusion is. I now understand where the member is coming from. The clubs will not be nominating people at all. All they will be doing is sitting down as an association. It will be a bit like the parliamentary association electing an executive, for example. We would say that we have to have one from the Labor Party, one from the Independents and one from the Liberal Party, or whatever the case may be. So we would actually prescribe who is going to be on the executive. The racing association will decide who the three are going to be. There will be a bit of argy-bargy about that.

The Cairns club will not be nominating Howard Hobbs, for example, as its nominee for the racing committee. The person will volunteer themselves. They will not be a nominee. It could be Robert Schwarten nominating from Rockhampton, but the chances of me getting appointed are probably pretty slim. However, it might well be that the person is somebody who used to live in Cairns. The club might say, 'Wait a minute. He's pretty good. He's got a lot of time on his hands. He's got a lot of dough to fritter around on this stuff, and he or she is our man or woman.' I see where the confusion lies. It will not be like the old system of clubs nominating people. I am advised by the country racing people that there are enough people in the community who are interested in being that nominee—that delegate—who will put their hands up, go through a selection process and the committee will find who the best person is for the job. Does that answer what the member asked?

Mr HOBBS: I thank the minister. Yes, it does certainly help. However, it does create another problem, and that is that this clause—I have only two opportunities to speak, so I have to go into this issue now—goes back to the selection panel. I presume what the minister is saying is that people will put their hands up and, say, for instance, the far-northern country racing association will put its panel together and will select those people. What I am saying to the minister—and I am hoping to convince this House that there is a problem with this—is that we have been there and done that. All I have to do is remind the House of the controversy over the Merri Rose selection panels. All we have to do is look at history. There has been controversy ever since that process was set up. It is not me saying that;

everybody is saying that out there. Irrespective of whether members believe what I am saying or not, there have been problems.

It is far easier to corrupt three than it is to corrupt a whole association. If there are 10 clubs, there is no way in the world they will be rounded up to do the right thing. But three people is another story. If one of them is a licensee, for instance, he is beholden to the QTRB. His livelihood depends on him doing the right thing. Numerous people have come to us and talked about the fact that Bob Bentley has threatened them with losing their licences. So there is that situation. I have no problem with having a bookie, a trainer or a jockey on there. Under the shadow minister's amendment, that can still be done. We need to have that expertise.

The reality is that the selection process of a small number of people creates corruption, and we saw that with the Merri Rose inquiry. The CMC did over 1,500 hours of investigation. It came up with some very interesting results. In the end, there were a lot of barristers and people kept quiet. That is what happened. One can say that nothing was achieved from that, but the reality was that it was a serious investigation. I am saying to the minister that the same thing will happen again. Three people are easier to corrupt than a whole country racing association.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I do not agree with the member about that. I know he wants to rake over old coals in that regard, but there is an entirely different thing happening here. In this process the association itself makes this choice. Quite frankly, in the back of my mind I think, 'Who'd want to do this?' It is not as though it carries with it a $100,000 a year job, a car, a phone and God knows what else. These people are going to be pretty dedicated.

Mr Hobbs: How hungry? Bob Bentley! Forty thousand bucks a year! Why does he do it?

Mr SCHWARTEN: If the member for Warrego wants to distil it down to a personal attack on Bentley again—

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The member keeps doing it, and I am trying to rise above that. He is trying to draw this into a comparison about a process that has been done by the CMC, and he discredits that here tonight. It is up to him if he wants to do that. But I believe that the process that I am putting in place will pass muster. It is as simple as that. If the member stands back and looks at what he is saying, he will realise that he is saying that these people on these clubs—like the bloke sitting next to him—are corruptible. I do not believe that. Of course there is an element of people who will do the wrong thing.

Mr Hobbs: As a club they won't.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Oh no? Is the member telling me that the clubs could not rort it if they wanted to? Of course they can. Anybody can rort anything if they want to.

Mr Hobbs: There's 10 of them.

Mr SCHWARTEN: There are 10 clubs there, and they have to come together and select three people. Where is the corruptability there for a start? Then what is it their job to do? Their job is to go through the applications of the people who want to do this job. Where is the incentive to be corrupt?

Mr Hobbs: Why can't they have a vote?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I have been through the bit about the vote. I do not agree with the member. I do not think that the member is going to get the result he wants. I know that he is having a cheap shot at Bentley. He likes doing that and it is his way of doing it, but he is not being helpful to this overall debate.

Mr Hobbs: You're a Bentley fan.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The member can say that I am a Bentley fan or whatever. I am trying to do a job here, and I resent the member's implications about that. I am not going to get that bothered about them. I wish that he would grow up and get away from the name-calling. It is really not helping us here. What I am sincerely trying to do—and I have given the member a bit of a respectful hearing this evening; I have not stooped to his level of name-calling—

Mr Hopper: You know we've been good.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The reality is that I have sincerely tried to explain the position that I am coming from. There is no suggestion as far as I am concerned that one system would be better than the other in terms of stopping people from doing the wrong thing. You are going to get that if you have the worst intentioned people. I try to judge—and I know it is difficult in politics to do this—people on their merits. If people are prepared on the basis of their community to put their hand up and say, 'Look, we believe that we've got something to offer in country racing,' then I think they are worth a fair go. An appointable system will get the best people out of the community, not necessarily out of the clubs, because what the member is saying is that it will be restricted only to people who are in the clubs. That eliminates that for a start. There can still be people rorting it together. I do not intend to respond to it any further. I think I have said all that I can.

Mr HOPPER: To go further on that issue, we wanted a secret ballot in case there is a strong person from a big club in one of these country racing associations. Usually in a big town the people who run the race club are fair dinkum people, otherwise they would not be there. They are people who can handle a crowd and people who can handle staff. Those sorts of people will come to those association meetings and will no doubt dominate them. It would be very easy for those people to be part of this selection panel. When we only need two from that association, their domination will override other people in the meeting. People will not be game to speak up. That is why I want a secret ballot where every club could be represented. Every club would have the exact same say.

We used the example of a small country town before. We want a ballot if we get a person from that small country town who is, let us say, a farmer who has not had much to do with staff or with the community. He may be a shy sort of person, but he loves his club. He comes to that club and works hard. The people in the club love him and vote for him as their representative. He is going to go to that meeting and be totally overruled and totally dominated. That is why the National Party put this amendment forward—to bring fairness into this issue. All we want here is fairness for our small country race clubs. That is why I have moved this amendment tonight, and I ask the minister to accept it. The minister need only ask the member for Bulimba. He went out there and met with those clubs. The member for Bulimba toured many of those clubs and met with those clubs. When he went to the Bell club I was not invited as the local member, but I am a member of that race club, and they made sure that I was there. The member for Bulimba walked into that potentially hostile meeting and, to his credit, grabbed a cup of tea and with his big bull voice had them eating out of his hand in no time.

That is a perfect example of how people can be bought. I am not saying that Pat bought the people; I am saying that, because of the way these associations are set up, it could quite easily happen that we could get someone who is overpowering. That is why we want a secret ballot. On voting day everyone can say, 'I voted for you, Ray Hopper,' but maybe they did not. They would still be my mate, but I would not know if they voted for me. That is the only fair way we can elect this representative. That is why I have put this amendment forward tonight. I have heard the minister's explanation, but I ask him to seriously consider where we are coming from. I know that this will happen in a lot of those little country clubs.

Mr LANGBROEK: I seek clarification on the same clause. I apologise if the minister has already gone through this. I did not expect the speakers to the bill to finish as quickly as they did. The Liberal Party has an issue with clause 9, which inserts a new section 64A(3). I think I mentioned this in my speech. I know that the minister said that he answered this point, but I would like clarification on our concerns. It says—

The selection panel's choice of a person for nomination as a member of the committee must be unanimous.

Our concern related to what the situation would be if all three had to agree on who the nomination would be and one of those three who could be chosen was not necessarily from the town or the club. We are tending to accept the amendment, but I would like to hear what the minister has to say about that.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the member for reminding me of that. It is a very valid point. The reason that there is an inclusion there of an allowance for somebody to be outside the area is that the view was put to me by those who supposedly know that there are some areas where there may be no licensees, or at least no licensees who are prepared to participate in the associations. So it was believed that we should not restrict it to just one area. The telltale is that it is still a local decision. The local association makes the choice as to who they want as that licensee's representative. So they control that; I do not. Queensland Racing controls that. That is the system. It was just about allowing them to do that.

I take the member's point. I certainly believe that it would work against any licensee outside who thinks that they were going to get it. The local people are best placed to do the job. This amendment does not subvert that at all. It merely provides an opportunity to put together a panel. I honestly believe that people will not go outside of their association. They will not need to. I think that there are sufficient licensees in those areas to qualify for this association.

Members should bear in mind that we get jockeys who ride all over Queensland, we get bookies who travel around a fair bit in Queensland, and trainers and so on. So it might well be, though, that an association does have a particular affinity with a certain trainer and invites them to be part of that panel.

The unanimous decision was to do what the National Party people have been talking about here tonight—to make it very difficult to corrupt the process. They all have to agree. So, in other words, they all have to be corrupt. The three of them have to be in on the swing. My experience tells me that that is pretty hard to do. This bill is not about disfranchising people. Quite the contrary; I think it is about getting a model that makes people more responsible. I did thank the member in his absence for his good contribution tonight.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: In the amendments moved by the member for Darling Downs—and I do not mean this disrespectfully—I could see a situation where each country racing association would put

up a nominee and then it would be voted on in a secret ballot. There could be a retained risk that the largest club, albeit in a country racing association, could still end up with the representation simply because they are dominant in numbers, or perhaps in persuasion, and still then pursue their own agenda, for want of a better word. The minister has partly answered this question already, but I will just ask him again now. He has said that the selection panel will be chosen from the country racing association and it is going to be two people from differing clubs in the association's district and a licensed trainer, a racing bookmaker, or a licensed jockey. What risk is there that two of the three will be from the same club? Again, it could be a dominant club, albeit in the country racing association. That is the first question.

Is it the minister's understanding or his belief that the requirement that it be a unanimous decision in nominating the person for the committee will bring some equity back into the pattern, that is, even if one club does have two representatives on the panel, that unanimity that is required will bring back some balance?

The final question that I was going to ask was: does the legislation as it stands preclude a secret ballot, such that the member for Darling Downs is suggesting?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Just to set record straight there, those members on the panel cannot be from the same club. They have to be from two different clubs. In that regard, my thinking was the same as the member's in that if we did have them from the same club the possibility could exist for that to occur. No, I can reassure the member that her concerns are the same as mine and that I believe that this addresses them.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I know that, in terms of new subsection (2)(a), they have to be from different clubs. But is the minister saying that the person who is a licensed trainer, bookmaker or licensed jockey must be from a third, different club?

Mr SCHWARTEN: They could come from anywhere. There is a possibility that they could come from the same club, in which case we would need to look at that. Perhaps we need to rule that out—to take an amendment on the floor to that effect. I am quite happy to do that—to say that the one person who is a licensed trainer, racing bookmaker or licensed jockey shall not be a member of any club of the other panel, or words to that effect. It is a bit hard to do this sort of stuff on the run. One person is a licensed trainer, racing bookmaker or licensed jockey. We should say that the three persons appointed shall be from different clubs. There is an amendment before the parliament. I am quite happy to take it.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Madam Chair, do you need an amendment moved?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jarratt): Order! We will seek some clarification.

Mr SCHWARTEN: If we discharge this amendment, we will just hold it over.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: So the minister is giving an undertaking that he will bring in a further amendment to this clause 9.

Mr SCHWARTEN: After we deal with this amendment that the opposition has moved, I will introduce this amendment.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I thank the minister.

Question—That Mr Hopper's amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 20—Copeland, Flegg, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lingard, McArdle, Menkens, Messenger, Quinn, Rickuss, E Roberts, Rowell, Simpson, Springborg, Stuckey. Tellers: Hopper, Malone

NOES, 59—Barry, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, E Clark, L Clark, Croft, Cummins, E Cunningham, N Cunningham, English, Fenlon, Finn, Foley, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Lee Long, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Pratt, Reilly, Reynolds, N Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, C Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T Sullivan, Reeves

Resolved in the **negative**.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I move—

1A Clause 9—

At page 7, line 2 after "jockey"

insert—

"who must not be a member of a club from which the persons under (2) (a) are selected."

This amendment has been prepared very hurriedly and I doubt that I will make it any clearer by speaking to it further. However, while I am on my feet I will say that I neglected to thank Pat Purcell for his commitment to this legislation. He cannot be with us tonight because unfortunately he has had to attend to a family bereavement and is out of town. He will be as mad as a hornet that he could not be here. Also it would be remiss of me not to thank the people from the racing division who are here tonight who put a lot of work into the legislation and to John Scrivens. I pay tribute to my good friend and advisor John Conway, who is very seriously ill. He has put a lot of work into this bill. Unfortunately, he cannot be with us tonight. He is one hell of a human being and I certainly miss him greatly.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I thank the minister for the amendment. I believe it makes it clear that the intention of this clause now is that all three members are independently minded in terms of affiliation. One would hope that a good result would occur. The only thing I would ask of the minister is, whether now or later on, he will have a watching brief on the process in case there are problems with it. If it does not come back as independently and objectively as intended, will he make further amendments a year or two down the track?

Mr SCHWARTEN: It is the intention not only to keep watch but also to review it in 12 months to see how it is going. I am sure there are enough members in this parliament who will help me to do that.

Mr LANGBROEK: I seek clarification on the amendment that has just been moved. I find it a little confusing that clause 2 said that of the three people who were to be on this selection panel two would be from race clubs. By having a division of a section that had a licensee, it seemed to indicate that it was not to be someone who was a member of a club. As a race club member, I had always thought that licensees could not be members of clubs—

Mr Schwarten: Wrong.

Mr LANGBROEK: I stand corrected on that. Now I am perplexed because, by this amendment, the minister is obviously saying that he specifically wants a licensee to be one of the three members of the selection panel that there has to be one who is a licensed trainer, bookmaker or jockey who may or may not be a member of a club.

Mr SCHWARTEN: That is correct. Until Howard Hobbs messed around with my bill book here, I had the answer to that. No, he did not really. I am blaming him unfairly.

The intention was always to have one licensee on the panel and two club members who are not from the same club. All this amendment does is clarify that that licensee will not be from the same club. So, for example, the Gladstone Turf Club cannot have two bites of the cherry. It cannot have a licensee as a member and another club member. I think the chances of it happening are pretty remote but it makes it very clear.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 10 and 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—

Mr HOBBS (9.23 pm): This clause changes the Regional Racing Council to the Queensland Country Racing Committee. I have a very simple question. Was the minister happy with the performance of the previous Regional Racing Council?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I believe I answered that previously when I said that I am sure it is full of well-meaning people who were trying to do their best, but I believe it lacked an agenda like this legislation gives it here tonight.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.

Clause 13—

Mr SCHWARTEN (9.24 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 13—

At page 8, after line 17—

insert—

'(3A) Section 67(1) (c)—

omit, insert—

'(c) to make recommendations to the thoroughbred control body about racing calendars for non-TABQ races—

(i) including about matters mentioned in section 38(1) (a), (b) and (c); but

(ii) not including about the number of days on which non-TABQ races are to be held; and

(ca) to attempt to reach agreement under section 68DA with the thoroughbred control body on the number of days on which non-TABQ races are to be held in a year; and'.'.

Clause 13 is amended by omitting section 68(1)(c) and replacing it with new section 68(1)(c), which provides that it is a function of the Queensland Racing committee—the committee—to make recommendations to the thoroughbred control body about racing calendars for non-TABQ races but not about the number of days on which races will be held. The committee is given a new function to attempt to reach agreement with the thoroughbred control body on the number of days on which non-TABQ races are held in a year. I table the explanatory notes.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 13, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 14—

Mr HOPPER (9.26 pm): I move the following amendment—

2 Clause 14—

At page 10, after line 24—

insert—

'(1A) If asked to do so by a country racing association, the committee must reconsider the formula each year and may alter it to provide additional dates on which, and places at which, non-TABQ races are to be held.'.

This proposed new section 67A will require the Queensland Country Racing Committee to review the composition of country racing associations and develop recommendations about the effectiveness of structure and whether clubs should be moved from one country racing association to another country racing association. I presume this all takes place once this is up and going.

The Country Racing Committee is then required to report to the control body with its recommendation and reasons. A review must be conducted within one year of the commencement of new legislation and then no later than every two years thereafter. Presumably it will be up to the thoroughbred control body to determine if it will act on any recommendations it might receive from the Country Racing Committee—

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I rise to a point of order, Madam Chair. I seek some clarification. In the minister's amendments, he has an amendment to clause 14 omitting lines 19 to 28, and the member for Darling Downs is speaking to line 24, which the minister's amendment proposes to omit.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jarratt): Order! I am not sure what the point of order was.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Should we be dealing with the minister's amendment?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! It is not really a point of order.

Mr HOPPER: I will just start that paragraph again. Presumably it will be up to the thoroughbred control body to determine if it will act on any recommendations it might receive from the Country Racing Committee and approach the minister and the government to change the regulations controlling the membership of a country racing association. There seems to be no obligation on the thoroughbred board to act on a recommendation, and that gives it the capacity to frustrate any approaches from the Country Racing Committee.

What will happen if the thoroughbred board does not agree with the recommendations of those committees? By the looks of this, we have set all these committees up to take the plight of country racing back to the board. Say that committee comes to the board with a situation that it believes has a lot of strength from country racing. Ultimately the board will get the last say, but what will happen here? Does the minister understand my question?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes, I do understand it, and it is for that very reason that I proposed the amendment which the member for Gladstone has picked up on. After we put the bill together, I had another look at it and thought that was an issue. Clause 14 is amended by omitting section 67B, which gave the committee a special responsibility to develop a formula for the allocation of non-TABQ race dates in consultation with the thoroughbred control body.

Mr HOPPER: This new section requires that within one year of the commencement of the amending legislation the Country Racing Committee, in consultation with the thoroughbred control body, must develop a formula for the allocation of the dates and places where non-TAB races are to be held. In the explanatory notes it is stated that the formula, once developed, is to be used by the Country Racing Committee as the basis for the allocation of non-TAB race dates.

The term 'formula' is not defined in the amendments. What does it mean? According to the dictionary it means 'a set form of words, as for stating or declaring something definitely or authoritatively, for indicating procedure to be followed, or for prescribed use on some ceremonial occasion'. Using this definition, is the minister trying to lock the allocation of race dates for non-TAB racing into a mechanism that cannot be changed or take into account changing circumstances? There may be many factors that can apply to the setting of a race date. There are many circumstances beyond the control of race clubs that can impact on whether a meeting can be held. We are worried that this section tries to lock country racing into a straitjacket and it cannot be varied. Is that going to happen?

Mr SCHWARTEN: No, it is not going to happen because I intend to dispose of that section—delete it completely.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: With reference to the point of clarification, I have taken advice and we are dealing with those amendments in the right order. Mr Hopper's amendment deals with an insertion and the minister's amendment deals with a deletion, and we must deal with insertions before deletions.

Amendment negatived.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I move the following amendment—

2 Clause 14—

At page 10, lines 19 to 28—

omit.

Clause 14 is amended by omitting section 67B, which gave the committee a special responsibility to develop a formula for the allocation of non-TABQ race dates in consultation with the thoroughbred control body. It deletes that section.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 15—

Mr HOPPER (9.32 pm): Proposed new section 68 sets out the composition of the Queensland Country Racing Committee.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Darling Downs, would you like to move your amendment before you speak to it, please?

Mr HOPPER: I move the following amendment—

3 Clause 15—

At page 11, line 8, '(4)'—

omit.

Proposed new section 68 sets out the composition of the Queensland Country Racing Committee. Rather than comprising the current chairs of the regional racing association, it now consists of eight persons nominated by the proposed selection committees—and I know we talked about this earlier—to be established under proposed section 64A, together with one person nominated by the Queensland thoroughbred control body other than the chair of Queensland Racing. Therefore, we have another board member who is going to chair this.

Whilst it is theoretically possible that the chair of a country racing association can come through the selection committee process that the minister proposes, in reality it is likely that different people will be on the country racing council from a particular country racing association than the person who is the chair of that association. Separate centres of power will almost certainly result in disputes within country racing associations and between country racing associations and the Country Racing Committee. These proposals are arguably designed to enable the chair to perhaps cause a lot of division within the country racing associations and are a recipe for enhanced disputes. The interests of country racing can then arguably be downgraded even more by this. Does the minister follow what I am trying to bring out?

Mr Schwarten: No.

Mr HOPPER: I will try to explain it more. It is unclear why there is to be a member of the control body on the Country Racing Committee and in particular why that person has to be the chair of the Country Racing Committee. The result of this will be that the capacity of the Country Racing Committee to even form a view and press it strongly to the control body will be limited as their only access mechanism to the control body will be through an existing member of that control body itself.

The proposal establishes beyond doubt that the amendments are not designed to provide for an independent capacity for country racing to argue for support, as it currently can do, but rather to ensure that ultimately all decisions and views coming from country racing will be controlled by members of the thoroughbred body. They will have a fairly controlling role. Does the minister understand what I am saying there?

Mr Schwarten: Yes, I understand.

Mr HOPPER: This prevents a member of the committee of a TAB club, one that conducts racing on which UNiTAB conducts betting on the majority of races during a year, from being on the Country Racing Committee. If one accepts that there needs to be a strong division between TAB and non-TAB clubs, then this type of proposal is understandable. However, the problem with this provision is that it acts as a disincentive for individuals to be active in the country race club and over the years build up the number of races on which the TAB will conduct wagering. This is in accordance with the UNiTAB desire to limit races on which it wagers and through which it provides money by way of product fee to a small number of racecourses in south-east Queensland. It is indicative of an attempt to prevent growth in country and provisional racing in favour of maximising short-term profits for UNiTAB and its shareholders. This type of approach should be looked at very carefully. We are pretty concerned about that.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I think the member is referring to subparaph (4), which states—

The person nominated by the thoroughbred control body is the chairperson of the committee.

Mr Hopper: Yes.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I have already answered this, in my reply to the second reading debate, but I will go through it briefly. My view is that by having somebody from the control body chair the Country Racing Committee that person is in a minority if a vote is ever taken, for example. It forces the Thoroughbred Racing Board to take into account the views of country racing. I think I used a term that is probably not a very politically correct one in that they become a spear carrier basically for the country racing council on the board. Instead of having direct representation of country racing on it, I think this gives the best of both worlds.

The member should be under no illusions about the UNiTAB situation. Whatever is good for UNiTAB is good for country racing because it is tied with seven per cent of the turnover. The better the outcome for UNiTAB the better the outcome for country racing, so I do not think there is a conflict of interest there. I understand the point the member makes, but I do not agree with him.

Mr HOPPER: I thank the minister. Proposed section 68B states that a member of the Country Racing Committee holds office for two years. There appears to be no limit on the total amount of time a person can serve on the Country Racing Committee. Surely there should be a provision put in place to say that no-one can serve more than two consecutive terms on the Country Racing Committee. Does the minister want me to repeat that?

Mr Schwarten: No. What is your reasoning behind that?

Mr HOPPER: From what we have here, they are locked in for two years. It states—

A member of the committee holds office for 2 years ...

There appears to be no limit on the total amount of time that a person can serve on the Country Racing Committee. Does the minister see a problem with that?

Mr SCHWARTEN: No, I do not. I do not see a problem with that. The Teachers Union has a limit of two terms on the presidency. It is similarly the case with the presidency of the United States. I have never been of the view that members of parliament should serve for only a couple of terms. I think if people are doing a good job then there is less likelihood that they will be ousted. While they are making a contribution I think that they are entitled to put their name up every two years and, on their merits, stay there.

Mr HOBBS: I am interested in what the minister has said. However, there are a couple of points that we have not canvassed, particularly in relation to proposed section 68(4), which states that 'the person nominated by the thoroughbred control body is the chairperson of the committee'. This relates to nomination by, say, the QTRB. Should there not be a situation, if there is a temporary vacancy, whereby it can appoint its own deputy chairman for that short time? Obviously the process is that the committee will appoint the chairman—and we agree with that. However, would that change if there was only a short meeting to complete? Would the person who will be appointed be up to speed in relation to the debate that is going on? Surely a deputy chairman would do the job in that short time? We all know about the chaos that has been going on in the QTRB and the inquiry relating to staff and conflicts of interest, and so on. I think that is important.

Also on clause 15, the member for Darling Downs has proposed an amendment to 68(3), that the person nominated by the thoroughbred control body must be a member or director of a control body other than its chairperson. A person is ineligible to be a member of the committee if the person is a member of a TAB club. Would it not be better, if there are non-TAB clubs, to have a chairman of similar ilk rather than one from the TAB clubs themselves? It is far better to have someone with more empathy for the background and the problems of non-TAB clubs.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I hear what the member for Warrego is saying but I do not agree with him. I took this decision very seriously. The reason for this decision was that the Thoroughbred Racing Board must live up to its responsibilities to country racing. By ensuring that they are always there, that they will not be able to hand over the reins to somebody else on the committee, that is exactly the message I will send. I expect that board to take this very, very seriously. A member of the board—not the chair—will be there at all times to chair these meetings. This is serious and we do not expect them to be delegating or finding excuses not to be there. I would be opposed to any watering down of that provision.

Amendment negatived.

Mr HOPPER: I move the following amendment—

4 Clause 15—

At page 11, after line 28—

insert—

'(h) is not a member of a non-TABQ club.'.

The proposed new section 68M ensures that non-TAB racing receives seven per cent of the UNiTAB product fee as prize money each year. It also provides that if the thoroughbred control body does not pay out as prize money the full seven per cent of the product fee the balance can be used in an agreement with the Country Racing Committee to support non-TAB racing. The example given is of

carrying out maintenance. We are a bit worried about this legislation. The only way in which funding for non-TAB racing can be increased will be by legislative amendment and there is a possibility that that will not occur under this government. Additionally, it is obvious from that example that the thoroughbred control body has been given approval not to provide any financial assistance for maintenance, capital improvements et cetera at country race clubs. If country racing wants funding for these purposes, it will have to reduce the amount of the seven per cent devoted to prize money and then both the Country Racing Committee and the country board must agree on the use of those funds. We are extremely concerned about this. How will these clubs be maintained? It seems that there will be no money coming in for extra things that might happen. Given the competition for funds for maintenance et cetera between country clubs, this is likely to cause fighting between country clubs thus leaving the control body with the option of deciding, since the clubs do not agree, that it does not have to provide funds. We are concerned about that.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I seek clarification. This clause deals with the composition of the committee and proposed subsection (5)(g) of the bill states that a person is ineligible if they are a member of a committee or a TABQ club. The member for Darling Downs' amendment states, additionally, that they are ineligible if they are not a member of a non-TABQ club. Is there any protection afforded in proposed subsection (5) that is similar to the protection afforded by the member for Darling Downs' amendment?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I don't quite get the drift of the member's question.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: It is my understanding that the member for Darling Downs' amendment—if I have read it correctly—ensures that a member of the committee is a member of a non-TABQ club. For a person to be eligible for the committee, they must be a member of a non-TABQ club. Is there any other protection in this section of the bill to that type of member for this committee?

Mr SCHWARTEN: No, and I do not think there needs to be. I am satisfied that the bill provides for the level of accountability we want. I think it is splitting hairs. I really do.

Question—That Mr Hopper's amendment (No. 4) be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 14—Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Lingard, Menkens, Messenger, Rickuss, Rowell, Simpson, Springborg. Tellers: Copeland, Malone

NOES, 63—Barry, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, E Clark, L Clark, Croft, Cummins, E Cunningham, N Cunningham, English, Fenlon, Finn, Flegg, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Langbroek, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Lee Long, Livingstone, Lucas, McArdle, McGrady, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Pratt, Quinn, Reeves, Reilly, Reynolds, N Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, C Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T Sullivan, Nolan

Resolved in the **negative**.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hopper, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.00 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Harris, Mr M and Mrs C; Commercial and Consumer Tribunal

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (10.00 pm): I rise tonight to speak on behalf of two constituents of mine, Cheryl and Michael Harris, whom I have been doing work with since I was elected, to be honest. Michael Harris is a builder in Toowoomba and has been involved in an ongoing dispute to try to rectify some problems that he encountered with a plasterer approximately five years ago.

I table for the interest and information of members documents relating to the Harris case. They include: a letter from the Harrises to the Premier; a response from Rob Whiddon, the Premier's chief of staff, to the Harrises referring the correspondence to Margaret Keech, the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development, who is responsible for such issues; and a response from the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development to the Harrises.

A dispute arose surrounding a house that Mr Harris had built and a plasterer who did some work on that house for Mr Harris. The matter was referred to the Queensland Building Tribunal, now the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal, for mediation. It is fair to say that the Harrises really have suffered and were unimpressed with the way the mediation was conducted. The Harrises feel that they were bullied by the mediator. They had real problems with their treatment at the hands of the mediator. I think it is fair to say that a number of other people who have been through mediation with the same mediator at the then Queensland Building Tribunal have also felt they were treated quite badly.

This issue has really taken a toll on the health of both Michael and Cheryl Harris. All they are looking for is an apology from the Queensland Building Tribunal or the CCT for the way they were handled by the mediator. They are people without legal training and without any experience in

mediation. They felt that the treatment that they got at the hands of this particular mediator was not to their advantage. It really is very difficult for people who are faced with mediation.

A lot of the correspondence we had back from both the former minister and the current minister says that mediation is voluntary. Those people who are pushed into it feel that they need to come out with an answer, whether that answer is in their best interests or not. That is certainly how the Harrises felt. They would like an apology. The response from the minister for fair trading is that, under both the repealed and current legislation, a mediator has in the performance of their duty the same protection and immunity as a District Court judge. Additionally, the tribunal is a quasi-judicial body which, in exercising its jurisdiction, is not subject to direction or control. Therefore, where do my constituents go? They cannot make a complaint about this mediator because the mediators are given that protection. They really feel that they were wrongly treated during this mediation.

Trewern, Ms J; International Women's Day

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.02 pm): On International Women's Day this year, the centenary of white women's suffrage in Queensland, it is particularly appropriate to focus on the achievements of women who have paved the way for us and fought for the rights that we enjoy today. I was particularly pleased therefore that long-time feminist Joan Trewern was recognised by the Cairns City Council in its annual International Women's Day award for her services to women in our community at a breakfast held on Saturday attended by over 150 women, including Desley Boyle, the minister for women, and several councillors, including key organiser Councillor Deidre Ford.

Joan was born in Melbourne in 1924 and was a feminist before the word became part of our vocabulary. In fact, it could be said that she drank it in with her mother's milk, a woman who would not wear her wedding ring because she considered it a 'badge of servitude'. Joan moved to Cairns in the early 1970s after a career in teaching and became a key member of a group of dynamic women including Pat O'Hara, Joan Wright, Marjorie Cockburn, Jean Bleyerveld and Ruth Thomas who formed the Cairns branch of the Women's Electoral Lobby, the national body formed in 1972 to fight for women's rights. Joan became the secretary of the Cairns branch of WEL and responsible for all of its submissions on a vast range of women's issues.

WEL's achievements include the establishment of a women's shelter in 1978, known today as Ruth's Women's Shelter in recognition of its principal founder. Joan's submission for government funding was a critical part of its successful campaign. WEL was also responsible for raising the awareness of Cairns women to wider political and social issues and organised regular meetings with high-profile women throughout the UN Decade of Women that ran from 1975 to 1985. While WEL today in Cairns is small, it still exists and, at 80 years of age, Joan is still its secretary. She single-handedly puts out its newsletter full of the happenings of women and their issues which is sent to about 100 women, including all women politicians in far-north Queensland.

Her Excellency the Governor, Quentin Bryce, recognised Joan's achievements in the following message that was read out at the breakfast—

> Joan Trewern's contribution to the advancement of women stands as a source of courage, support and inspiration to all who support equality of opportunity and equal status for women. Ms Trewern's leadership through her involvement in the Women's Electoral Lobby in Far North Queensland is admired and respected. I join her friends in congratulating her on the International Women's Day Award by the Cairns City Council.

Joan, I salute you and the countless other courageous women in far-north Queensland whose actions over the last 100 years have advanced the cause of women. There is of course still more to be done, and I hope that the commitment of our early feminists serves as an inspiration to young women today to continue their fight for equality, which is yet to be fully won. For example, while women are entering the work force in greater numbers than ever before, they are not distributed equally across occupational categories. In 2003 I presented a report to the Premier in my role as his parliamentary secretary which highlighted the significant underrepresentation of women in the fields of science, engineering and information technology. One of my recommendations in the report to remedy the situation was the formation of a task force of eminent women from these fields of endeavour which are critical to the government's Smart State agenda. I therefore welcome the announcement of the minister for women that this recommendation for a Smart Women, Smart State SET Task Force has been formed with the role of advising the government on how best to increase the number of women in these fields.

I want to put the membership of the task force on the record. The chairperson is Ms Else Shepherd, the chairman of Powerlink; Ms Susan Hamilton, the director of Bright Minds at the University of Queensland; Ms Leeanne Bond, an engineering project manager with Worley Ltd; Ms Barbara Tobin, the president of Women in Technology; Emeritus Professor Rhondda Jones from the School of Tropical Biology at James Cook University; Associate Professor Margaret Greenway from the School of Environmental Engineering at Griffith University; Professor Maria Orlowska from the School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering at University of Queensland; and Ms Leisl Packer from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. I think we would all agree that they are most eminent women.

Time expired.

Grandparent Carers

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.06 pm): Today the *Grandparents as carers* report was released. This report is the result of the grandparents as carers forum organised and hosted by the New South Wales Council of the Ageing in November last year. This report provides very sobering reading. In the report reference is made to research undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics last year which revealed that 55 per cent of grandparent carers are over 55 years of age. Some 17 per cent of grandparent carers are over 65 years of age and two-thirds of all grandparent carers depend on a pension or benefit. This report identifies a clear trend towards kinship care rather than foster care and that many of the problems encountered by the grandparent carers lies with the inability or failure of economic and social resources to adapt to this changing trend.

In Queensland the state government provides financial support to foster parents and relative carers, but this financial assistance, in the Premier's own words, is limited to children the subject of child protection orders. Tonight I flag for the benefit of the Treasurer, Terry Mackenroth, that in the near future I will be introducing a private member's bill which will extend the power of the chief executive under the Queensland Child Protection Act to provide support for grandparents who are the carers of grandchildren who are not the subject of a child protection order. My private member's bill, if passed, will have a financial implication in this year's state budget in three months. I take this opportunity on behalf of Queensland grandparent carers to put the state government on notice that it is time to stop talking and it is time to now provide some leadership and support in this year's state budget to our grandparent carers in Queensland.

Last year the Minister for Child Safety, Mike Reynolds, said that these grandparents have raised their own children and now they are being called on to raise their grandchildren. He said that they need our support, and they deserve our support. The minister for women, Desley Boyle, is reported as saying at a recent Commonwealth community and disability services ministerial council meeting that changes are needed to ensure that grandparents and the grandchildren that they are raising are not further disadvantaged by a system with a narrow view of what family is. Our own Premier said only 11 months ago in this very chamber on the topic of grandparent carers that the difficulty we have is that if we do not have a care and protection order in relation to the child it does not give us an opportunity to legally ensure the protection of the child as well as their funding and that that is the legal position.

I say to the Premier on behalf of Queensland grandparent carers: we can change that legal position with a simple amendment. The law is not set in concrete forever. Shortly I will show the Premier just how easy it is to amend the Queensland Child Protection Act to give the chief executive extended powers to provide support to grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren and who are not children subject to a child protection order. In May 2002 I first raised this matter, and it is disappointing that, notwithstanding all of the resources that the state government has to date, there has been very little change in Queensland for our struggling grandparent carers. I also table for the benefit of the Treasurer a copy of a letter I have received from the Logan East Community Neighbourhood Centre in support of my proposed private member's bill.

Time expired.

Prawn Farming

Mr WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (10.09 pm): I know that some of my colleagues get a bit sick of the way in which I come into this place and praise north Queensland—the fabulous climate, the friendly people and the wonderful North Queensland Cowboys, who I am sure will thrash the Broncos on Saturday as it is easy to do. Then there is the magnificent seafood that we in the north take for granted. With pressure being put on wild seafood resources, farmed delicacies are the way of the future. In this regard, Thuringowa city is blessed to have a couple of barramundi and prawn farms. Prawns are what I want to speak about tonight.

This evening I proudly served five kilos of farmed Thuringowa prawns to some of my fellow members, who I trust enjoyed their sweet taste. I would have tabled them here but feared that they may have gone off. They were given to me only yesterday morning by Prawns North owner Rick Hobson, just as I caught the plane down to Brisbane. The prawns are nice and big, and I can assure my colleagues who did not get a taste that they tasted as good as they looked. Rick Hobson is a champion of the industry in north Queensland. He is a down-to-earth bloke who calls a spade a spade. Like me, Rick was born at Home Hill. His prawn farm at Toomulla is a multimillion dollar investment that Rick wants to nearly triple in size. It employs nine people and generates millions of dollars for our region. Recently, Rick's prawns won gold and silver prizes at the Sydney Fish Market.

I have tasted and caught a lot of prawns in my time, but I would have to say that Rick's prawns are some of the best. Prawns North's goods are served in some of the best restaurants in Australia and can be found in Townsville's Jupiters Casino and, I believe, soon in the Treasury Casino, which is just down the road.

Unfortunately, there is a major problem that is hampering Mr Hobson and other Australian producers from getting the rewards that they deserve. That problem is low-cost imports that flood the Australian market. Rick's operation produces prawns at a cost of around $10.50 per kilogram. The stuff coming in from Asia is landed at around $6.50 a kilo. Price-driven consumers are attracted to those prawns even though they lack quality and taste. I do not know how many members in this place have been to China or South-East Asia and seen the way they produce their prawns. I have and I can say that it is not a pretty sight. Environmental degradation is the norm, not to mention the concern with some of the hygiene and feeding practices. I ask members to compare that to Rick's operation at Toomulla. Extensive permits, studies and protection of the surrounding natural environment are required. Indeed, as Rick says, the water that comes out of his ponds is cleaner than the water that is put in. The imported prawns that we see in our supermarkets, whilst cheaper, really do not compare in taste and texture to the locally grown variety. They are small and often have been frozen for weeks.

We need to look after these fledgling industries. Aquaculture is the way forward so that all Australians can enjoy fresh and healthy seafood. Accordingly, I call on the federal government to consider placing a higher tariff on imported prawns, recognising the fact that they are dumped on our market and that their production is detrimental to the environment. This will help level the playing field and allow producers like Rick Hobson the chance to compete in our markets. I give congratulations to Rick. His prawns are first class. I implore all Queenslanders to ask one question before buying their next lot of prawns: are these prawns Australian prawns?

Agricultural Colleges

Hon. KR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (10.13 pm): I want to outline the problem that is being faced by many students who are attending the agricultural colleges. On 28 January the minister wrote to parents of those students saying—

You will no doubt be aware that I have conducted a review into the governance of the four agricultural colleges. On 15 December 2004 I announced that cabinet had decided to amalgamate four colleges into a single entity. This single agricultural college will continue to operate as a statutory body being a corporation constituted by the Director-General of the Department of Employment and Training. Under these new governance arrangements the existing four colleges will continue to operate as campuses of the one agricultural college.

The minister stated further—

I want to reassure you that current students of Dalby Agricultural College will not be adversely affected by this decision.'

Many current students of the Dalby Agricultural College have recently finished the first year of a two-year program and these students will be able to complete their two-year course as planned. However, the Dalby Agricultural College wrote to the parents and said that the college is currently preparing a submission to cabinet requesting ministerial approval to increase the residential fees. Ministerial approval is required as the proposed increase is greater than the annual adjustment to the consumer price index.

When we look at the increases that the students are facing, we see that currently students are charged on average $201.27 per week for the duration of their stay. However, a costing exercise indicates that the actual cost of providing the service is $355.11 per week. The college is unable to continue to subsidise such a significant shortfall, so these students are being faced with an increase in their fees of at least $150 per week as they are now doing their two-year service.

Recently the college completed this costing of the service. It is saying that not only is there the increase in residential service but also the current fee structure does not provide for a sinking fund to facilitate the necessary capital works to maintain the facilities to the desired standard. So not only are these students who are part-way through their course facing a $150 increase but also they now have to pay into the sinking fund. As well, the Dalby college advises that the courses that they are participating in—and I refer to the chainsaw course, which is conducted over three days—will cost $418 per participant. In relation to show cattle preparation, it states that the course is run over three days. The cost of the course would be $418 per participant. The welding course takes 60 hours to complete. It will cost $676 to participate. The pregnancy test on animals course takes three days to complete and it costs $498 per participant. An artificial insemination course will take three days. The course will cost $533.

So here we have these students, many of them coming from outside areas such as my area, going to the Dalby Agricultural College and facing massive increases in fees and costs for the courses that they are doing.

Time expired.

International Women's Day

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (10.16 pm): International Women's Day has come around once again and women of all shapes and sizes have been celebrating. Of course, we talk of women in shapes and sizes. After all, that is how we are judged. At least that is how it seems at times. But we women know better. As a woman in politics, I get referred to as the lightweight in Noosa, at least by that Liberal bloke in the electorate of Caloundra who thinks that jumping on the bandwagon and ticking me off for

addressing all issues in my electorate will somehow make him come away looking, or at least hoping he looks, more attentive to supposed issues of greater priority. I will put it on the public record that I have lobbied for a clothing-optional beach in Queensland. A very confused and excited few conservative males have taken umbrage at my so-called lack of priorities. They fail to understand that they speak volumes more about their own minds than they could ever wish to articulate about me. Freud would have had a great time with them.

They fail to realise that I will not back down on matters of public importance, be it a new TAFE—and Minister Barton is officially opening the Tewantin campus next week—a new police station at Coolum, funding for youth workers from Noosa Youth Service or a national park estate at Emu Mountain. As a woman supported by women and men who believe that all people are deserving of representation, I will speak up.

On International Women's Day, women all over the Sunshine Coast celebrated. There were conservatives, conservationists, ex-politicians, editors of magazines and newspapers, the unemployed, pensioners, little girls and older girls, bank employees et cetera. We took time to reflect on how far we have come and laughed that no-one has to burn their bra to make a political statement anymore. But we have much work ahead of us. Our guest speaker, Marg Gargan, who founded Bloomhill Cancer Centre, enthralled us all with her story, which was to make a place both beautiful and sacred for cancer sufferers. I thank Marg.

Thanks also go to Pam Lenthall, Jeannie Wood, Julie McGlone and Anne Kennedy. These are the organisers of the morning's function. Of course, there was Beryl Muspratt, Barbara Hansa, Marietta Haupt and daughter Samira, Jeannie's daughter Michelle, Rae Gate, Ethel from the Solomon Islands, Colleen and Gwen from Coolum, Jill Fisher from Suicide Prevention, Diane from Fiji and Coolum, Colleen Giles, Jo Justo, Rosemarie, Sharon Longmore, and a host of other wonderful women who all contributed by being there.

Let us face it: yes, we are worried. We are worried that our children will never afford tertiary education, buy a home, secure award wages or secure a decent future for themselves. We fret at the imminent Howard takeover of the Senate later this year. Well girls, watch this space. It is dedicated to all women on the Sunshine Coast.

Caloundra Courthouse and Watch-House

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (10.19 pm): The construction of the Caloundra courthouse and watch-house is nearing completion, with the expected opening date to be some time towards mid to late this year. There are a number of questions that arise as a consequence of this event. Firstly, will a magistrate be appointed to operate from the courthouse five days per week? The second question involves the manning of the watch-house itself.

With regard to the magistrate, if he or she is not to operate from the court five days per week, can the Attorney-General advise what period the magistrate will be there during the week and whether that magistrate will be a visiting magistrate or drawn from the existing pool of magistrates on the Sunshine Coast? If the magistrate is not operating five days per week, at what point will the magistrate become a permanent appointee to that court and, again, will that magistrate be a new appointee to the Sunshine Coast region?

Perhaps the more important question is the police manning of the watch-house. As we know, police throughout Queensland are stretched to the limit in dealing with current problems. However, if one considers the manning of a watch-house, then there are certain guidelines that require manning numbers to increase based upon the number of prisoners per year dealt with at the watch-house. For example, if the number of prisoners per year exceeds 5,000 a full staff of 18 is required, 10 of whom are used on a roster basis per day. This number drops away gradually. When prisoner numbers are between 900 and 1,499 per annum one requires five full-time staff, three of whom are used on a roster basis per day.

If the watch-house is to be manned, the question for the police minister is: are those police officers to be drawn from the current Caloundra Police Station or other local police stations, or will they be additional police officers? If they are drawn from the Caloundra Police Station there will be a depletion of effective operating numbers on the Sunshine Coast, and particularly at Caloundra, to deal with the concerns that are rife right across the region.

In addition, if the courthouse is to operate less than five days per week, that would mean that prisoners who are in the watch-house but are unable to appear in court because it is not operating will need to be transported to Maroochydore or some other court facility. In those circumstances, will the transport duty of those prisoners be the responsibility of the Caloundra Police Station or will there be additional police provided to facilitate the transport of those prisoners?

Is the police minister able to give an assurance that no police will be removed from existing duties to fulfil the duties that the watch-house will bring with it? Further, is the minister able to provide an assurance that police officers will not be taken from other duties to transport prisoners from the watch-house to courts within the vicinity?

Volunteer Marine Rescue; Bribie Island

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (10.23 pm): The electorate of Pumicestone benefits from hundreds of dedicated volunteer groups. Among them are the enthusiastic members of the Bribie Island Volunteer Marine Rescue, which has been operating at its headquarters on Sylvan Beach Esplanade, Bribie Island for over 30 years. It had humble beginnings, starting on the verandah of the home of local identities Julie and Ron Walters. Between them they notched up 40 years of volunteer service with VMR, with Ron becoming a commodore in 1976. There are many notable examples of commendable service and it was pleasing to see them, along with many other VMR stalwarts and invited guests, including current Commodore Ross Evans and his team, Mr John Jacobsen, the state president of VMR, and emcee Mr John Knox of 4KQ, at the commissioning of the new VMR patrol boat, *Bribie 1*, on 23 January 2005.

The new vessel is great news for the local boating community. It provides the most up-to-date equipment to help VMR perform marine search and rescue operations, sometimes in very hazardous conditions. It was purpose-built and was designed to suit the Bribie Island area. It took over two years to build, and what a credit it is to them. The state government contributed $105,000 towards the cost and, with a trade-in worth some $90,000, there was a shortfall of funds that needed to be raised by VMR volunteers from a community that proudly and generously supports the VMR.

The Hon. Chris Cummins, the Minister for Emergency Services, was on hand to commission the boat with the assistance of Mrs Melissa Irwin, the wife of the late Senior Sergeant Perry Irwin, who was a highly motivated police officer and well respected in the Bribie and Caboolture communities. The vessel, *Patrol 1*, was dedicated to his memory and now stands as a permanent reminder of his help and sacrifice for us all. The plaque on the boat reflects this.

When Premier Peter Beattie visited Bribie Island in December last year to open the refurbished Bongaree jetty precinct, another member of the VMR ensured that he was steered in the right direction on board the *Samari*, which was named after the island of Samari in New Guinea. Denise Thorley, who is the holder of an open commercial coxswain licence, ensured that the Premier arrived safely at his destination.

I take this opportunity to thank all volunteers and their families in the electorate on behalf of a very grateful community. They all do a sterling job and it is difficult to imagine what life would be without them.

Mosquitoes

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (10.26 pm): Approximately 3,500 Queenslanders were affected by mosquito-borne illnesses in the financial year 2003-04, whether it be some form of malaria, Ross River virus, dengue fever or similar disease. I have been contacted by the Burnett Heads P&C President Sharon Eggmolesse, who told me recently that the school was suffering from a mosquito plague. Now, while there have not been any reports of serious mosquito-borne illnesses, there are a number of children with infected sores and one young child who has a kidney infection because of mosquito bites. I have spoken with the principal about the mosquito problem and he has confirmed that some children are sick and are staying at home to escape the pests. The worry and concern of the school community is that while these mosquitoes are in plague proportions the risk grows greater that the kids will catch a serious disease.

Why are the mozzies there? How do we get rid of them and protect the kids from them? Whose responsibility is it to get rid of them? They are there because of seasonal factors and because there is plenty of water and heat. The short-term option is to have a fogging program. The long-term option is to get rid of the water that is laying around Burnett Heads. Of course, better drainage will reduce the breeding opportunities. Perhaps airconditioning the classrooms will stop the bugs flying in. That could be a long-term option.

Is it the state's responsibility to manage this mozzie plague because it is on crown land, that is, the school grounds? Is the state giving the school a helping hand? The answer to that is no. The $600 it cost to fog the school grounds is being paid by the Burnett Shire Council, which is providing those ratepayer funds out of the kindness of its heart. Should the state be helping the principal with his budget? Yes!

In May 2002 Queensland Health conducted a survey of Queensland local governments in relation to the management and control of mosquitoes which resulted in the estimation that councils spent $3 million a year controlling mosquitoes on state-owned crown land. Councils just do not have that sort of money to spend in one area, yet the state government refuses to financially support councils. Sure, the state government may boast that it is supporting councils in other means, such as mosquito research, but that simply is not good enough. This Beattie Labor state government should accept responsibility for controlling mosquitoes on crown land.

Redland Bay Police Station

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (10.29 pm): I am pleased that the Beattie Labor government is committed to improving the safety and security of residents at Victoria Point, Redland Bay, Mount Cotton and the southern bay islands. Work will soon begin on expanding the Redland Bay Police Station. This $3.7 million expansion will mean a significant increase in policing resources in my local area. I welcome those improvements.

I am disappointed that the federal member for Bowman, Andrew Laming, is upset that we are improving facilities for the police in our community. During the construction phase it will be necessary to close the existing building as it will in effect be a construction site. During construction security could not be guaranteed for police weapons, equipment and documents so it is crucial that the police are temporarily transferred to Capalaba. This relocation of staff is only temporary. This relocation is really only about where the police start and finish their shift. It is about where police complete their paperwork. Obviously, the federal member for Bowman believes that the police sit in their stations waiting for a call. I want my police to be out and about in their patrol cars, doing their job.

I understand the difficulty that this temporary closure will cause for local residents and I have spoken to the officer in charge of the Cleveland police about operating regular counter duties at local centres to allow residents easier access to police. However, this is an operational decision for the police and not one for politicians.

The federal member for Bowman is continuing on a path he set during the recent federal election. That is, he is embarrassed about the performance of the Howard government, of which he is part, and chooses to focus on state issues instead. He chooses to criticise the Beattie government for expanding the Redland Bay Police Station but does not go in to fight Howard for increased aged care beds for the Redlands, increased Medicare rebates and an increased number of bulk-billing doctors in the Redlands. Obviously the federal member for Bowman does not want a Medicare or Centrelink officer in the southern part of his electorate. He is silent on these issues. The member for Bowman must believe that there are sufficient nursing home beds for our elderly. He is silent on this issue, too.

The federal member for Bowman is happy for the doctors union, the AMA, to restrict the number of specialists. This results in lengthy delays to see specialists. What about the recent large increase in private health insurance? The federal member for Bowman is silent on these issues, too. I urge the federal member for Bowman to stop being silent and earn his pay and do his job as our representative in the Howard government. Stand up and fight for a slice of that $10 billion surplus to be spent in the Redlands. We need more nursing home beds. We need more bulk-billing doctors. Our veterans and TPIs need better support. I urge Mr Laming to earn his money, do his job and fight John Howard for a better deal from the federal government. If he wishes to join the Queensland opposition and continue whingeing and petty political point scoring, he should resign his seat now. The people of the Redlands deserve better. The Beattie Labor government continues to work to provide better services for the Redlands and all Mr Laming can do is whinge.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.31 pm.