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WEEKLY HANSARD

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51ST PARLIAMENT

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BY AUTHORITY
L.J. OSMOND, CHIEF HANSARD REPORTER—2005

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TUESDAY, 10 MAY 2005

The House met at 9.30 am.

ABSENCE OF MR SPEAKER

The Clerk informed the House of the absence of Mr Speaker. The Clerk further informed the House that the Deputy Speaker, the Hon. J Fouras, will take the chair as Acting Speaker until further advised. The honourable member for Glass House has been nominated by Mr Acting Speaker as Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Hon. J Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair as Acting Speaker.

ASSENT TO BILLS

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
QUEENSLAND

27 April 2005

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

Dear Mr Speaker

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

Date of Assent: 22 April 2005

"A Bill for an Act to amend legislation administered by the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend Acts administered by the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport"

"A Bill for an Act about private employment agents"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Liquor Act 1992"

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

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Governor

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
QUEENSLAND

3 May 2005

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

Dear Mr Speaker

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

Date of Assent: 29 April 2005

"A Bill for an Act to amend legislation administered by the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000, and for other purposes"

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

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Governor

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Hon. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.32 am): I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late honourable Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, a former member of the parliament of Queensland, Premier and minister of the Crown.

2. That Mr Acting Speaker be requested to convey to Lady Flo and the Bjelke-Petersen family the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the parliament of Queensland in the loss they have sustained.

Sir Joh was born in Dannevirke, New Zealand on 13 January 1911. He was one of three children of Carl, a Lutheran minister, and Maren, both Danish immigrants to Australia. Carl was sent to New Zealand by the Lutheran Church to perform pastoral duties in 1903 and was soon followed by Maren, who travelled there to marry him in 1904. Together they returned to Australia in 1913, settling near Maren's parents in the South Burnett region to take up dairy farming. Sir Joh attended the Taabinga village school in the Burnett region, contracted polio at nine, and left school at the age of 13 to work on the family farm with the ambition of lifting his family out of an impoverished existence and paying off the bank debt on the farm.

Alongside his long service to the Queensland Legislative Assembly, Sir Joh, motivated by a determined capacity for hard work, experienced great business success. After the purchase of a second property by the Bjelke-Petersen family in 1933, which he cleared and developed, Sir Joh moved into more diversified farming and acquired heavy farming machinery. He then established a successful contracting business, using the machinery for contract harvesting and farm work. The contracting business grew rapidly. Sir Joh took up flying and purchased a plane as a means of servicing the business. The purchase of the plane led to the establishment of a successful aerial spraying and seeding business, which in turn led to expansion into oil and mineral exploration and eventually speculative trading in stocks and shares.

In 1947, Sir Joh was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly as the member for Nanango for the Australian Country Party. After a redistribution in 1950, Nanango became the seat of Barambah. Sir Joh served 16 years as a backbencher before entering the ministry in 1963—he was obviously more patient than some in this place, including me—as the Minister for Works and Housing, a position he held until 1968. On 8 August of that year, he became the 39th Premier of Queensland. Posting a record term in office, Sir Joh was the Premier of this state for over 19 years, three months and 24 days. He also served as Treasurer from 1983 to 1987.

Undoubtedly, Sir Joh's term as Premier of this state was marked with controversy. At the same time, hallmarks of his term in office were his capacity for hard work in discharging his duties to this House and the state of Queensland, his unwavering support and commitment to rural and regional areas and his commitment to and stewardship of the development of Queensland. These hallmarks were encapsulated in Sir Joh's maiden speech to the Legislative Assembly on 21 August 1947 in which he said—

When I became a member of this Parliament I recognised that I incurred responsibilities that I did not carry previously. I assure Honourable Members that I regard those responsibilities as a duty ... I shall endeavour to assist in overcoming the many deficiencies that exist in primary production and country standards as a whole.

Sir Joh stated further in that same speech—

Australia has wonderful opportunities for obtaining markets, not only for her primary but also for her secondary industries. We should lose no time in rapidly expanding our production in order to seize the opportunities offered on the markets of the world, and keeping Australian economic life on an even keel. As you know, if we had no exportable wealth, the living conditions not only of the producer but of the city dweller would be seriously affected.

I agree totally with those remarks, which is one of the reasons my government has followed in that tradition by doing everything we can to expand an export culture and create jobs in Queensland.

Sir Joh's achievements as Premier included the abolition of death duties, the forging of trade links with Japan, particularly in the coal industry, and a range of significant infrastructure projects. In the course of his time in parliament Sir Joh made an indelible mark on the state of Queensland and the lives of Queenslanders and his legacy will not be forgotten.

By way of completeness for the record, as I have indicated Sir Joh served as the Country Party member for Nanango from 3 May 1947 to 29 April 1950 and he served as the National Party member for Barambah from 29 April 1950 to 1 December 1987, when he retired. Sir Joh was the Minister for Works and Housing from 26 September 1963 to 8 August 1986. He was Premier from 8 August 1968 to 1 December 1987. Sir Joh was also Treasurer from 19 August 1983 to 1 December 1987.

I want to pass on to Sir Joh's wife, Lady Flo, whom he married in 1952, and to his four children—Meg, John, Helen and Ruth—and grandchildren who survive Sir Joh the condolences of this House and best wishes. I also extend my deepest sympathy and that of this House to his family.

As members know, as Premier I made the decision to authorise a state funeral for Sir Joh, which was attended by somewhere between 2,500 to 3,000 people. The Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and I addressed those people at the funeral. I seek leave to have my address from that state funeral incorporated in the *Hansard* record as it pays appropriate tribute to Sir Joh.

Leave granted.

Tribute by Premier and Minister for Trade, Peter Beattie MP State Funeral 3/5/05—Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen.

When I was growing up, my grandmother taught me about respect, courtesy and good manners. She also taught me that on days like today, the family left behind are the most important.

To Lady Flo, her children and her grandchildren, I pass on the condolences of all Queenslanders.

I think too often in the adversarial nature of politics we forget that behind every leader, behind every politician, is a family. And we shouldn't forget that because often they are the ones who have to deal with the difficult circumstances that can arise.

Sir Joh's family are entitled to respect and courtesy at this time.

Sir Joh is Queensland's longest serving Premier. He served for 19 years, 3 months and 24 days. I believe that record will never be beaten.

I recently had the pleasure of opening a $290 million extension to the North Curragh coal mine in the Bowen Basin.

I was very pleased with this achievement for Queensland. The original mine had been opened by Sir Joh in nineteen eighty-four, which some of the owners took great pleasure in pointing out to me.

This opening reminded me of Sir Joh's vision and commitment to the coal industry and indeed the opening up of the Bowen Basin.

And we have to remember, at the time when Sir Joh was opening up this industry, it was a difficult time. It was during the late 1960s and the early seventies and a lot of people—quite rightly—still had memories of the war and the hardship that it had created.

But Sir Joh knew that we needed that capital. He knew that we needed to have that Japanese investment to open up that wonderful industry, which he did. I pay tribute to Sir Joh for his vision in opening up the coal industry in this state.

I can remember when I first became Premier, and I was taken into the Premier's office. I opened up the window and it was facing the city.

I said to my staff, "Why aren't we in the Director-General's office, because he's got a view of the river." And I was told Sir Joh had insisted on that position because he wanted to see the cranes over the Brisbane skyline.

He wanted to see the work being done building Brisbane. But in a sense, he could have been on the other side too, because then he would have been able to look over the site for World Expo, which he helped bring about.

He also could have been there to share in some of the celebrations of the Commonwealth Games. And both those events, World Expo and the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in 1982, changed our city, in fact changed Queensland.

So did many other things Sir Joh was involved in, like the Gateway Bridge, the Wivenhoe and Burdekin dams, the rail electrification and the expansion of the tourism industry. Imagine what the Gold Coast, or Cairns, or even the Whitsundays would be like now if he hadn't have been so committed to the development of that wonderful industry.

We all know quite well about the benefits of the abolition of death duties. That is something that Sir Joh not only did for Queensland but for Australia because other leaders were forced to follow his lead.

We also very well how he attracted investment in Queensland and encouraged people to come here.

He was also a fighter for Queensland and people like the Prime Minister know quite well that nobody was ever left in any doubt about where he stood on issues.

He was also a strong supporter of the Joh jet. The name no longer applies, but the fact remains that it was a good and sensible investment. Queensland is the most decentralised state in Australia and the Joh jet took him, and other representatives of his government, to all parts of the state.

I know my party at one point suggested getting rid of it, but I don't think so.

The jet allows us to get out to see Queenslanders wherever they are, wherever they live in the State.

I can remember when Suncorp Stadium was being opened, Sir Joh sent a message to me indicating that he wanted to see it. He had never lost his interest in the new things in Queensland, the building blocks.

He was flown in with Lady Flo to have a look at that stadium because he just wanted to see this new stadium, he wanted to see what was being built. Even in his retirement, he'd never lost his interest in what was happening in Queensland.

I can remember he said to me once—and it would be remiss of me if I didn't acknowledge this—he said he was never defeated by the Labor party and he was never voted out by the people of Queensland, and he was proud of that.

The people of Kingaroy should be very proud of Sir Joh. Kingaroy was in fact the second capital of Queensland during the Joh days. I think it's only fitting that such a large crowd has turned up in Kingaroy today.

Joh and I didn't agree on everything, but one thing I do know is that history will never be able to forget him and it won't be able to ignore him.

Lady Flo, Heather and I wish you well. To you and your family, we are thinking of you and we feel that you have been incredibly courageous during what has been a very difficult time. Only a political family in the leadership role knows how tough it is, how difficult it is to deal with the media and deal with the circumstances. Lady Flo, you have handled it with style.

Mr BEATTIE: I know there was some controversy about that decision. Therefore, I seek leave also to incorporate in *Hansard* the guidelines that apply to state funerals because I think they confirm and support the appropriateness of the action that I took.

Leave granted.

Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Governance

SECTION: Protocol Queensland
NUMBER: GES.PRO.003
SUBJECT: State Funerals
AUTHORISED:

1. Purpose

1.1 This document outlines the Queensland Government's policies and procedures in relation to State Funerals.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to the current and former public officials identified in paragraph 4.1.

3. Definitions

3.1 **"State Funeral"**—A funeral arranged and funded by the Government which is held to honour prominent people (usually high-ranking public officials) who have given long and outstanding service to the State.

3.2 **"State Memorial Service"**—A church service held in lieu of a State Funeral in circumstances outlined in paragraph 4.5.

3.3 **"Reasonable expenses"**—All expenses of the funeral director [including interstate and intrastate transfers but not international transfers (unless the death occurred whilst on official business)]; burial costs (including burial plot) or cremation costs (including wall niche); and appropriate casket and service expenses (including printing of the order of service). It does not include the cost of catering or refreshments nor stonemasonry, monument or headstone expenses.

4. Guidelines

4.1 **Eligibility**—State Funerals have traditionally been held to honour certain high ranking public officials although there is nothing to preclude one being held for other prominent Queenslanders. A list of the various categories of public officials who are eligible for a State Funeral (or a State-funded private funeral) and the levels of eligibility is shown below. The decision to honour other prominent Queenslanders with a State Funeral upon their death is the prerogative of the Premier of the day. Whether a State Funeral is held is subject to acceptance of the offer by the deceased's family or next-of-kin.

Public Officials:	**Eligibility** (See below)
Governor and former Governors:	A
Premier and former Premiers:	A
Deputy Premier and former Deputy Premiers:	A
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court:	A
Former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court:	B
President of the Court of Appeal:	A
Members of the Executive Council:	A
Former Members of the Executive Council (who served at least four (4) years in such office and have been out of office for less than ten (10) years):	A
Former Members of the Executive Council (who served at least four (4) years in such office but have been out of office for more than ten (10) years):	C
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:	A
Former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (who served at least four (4) years in such office and have been out of office for less than ten (10) years):	A
Former Speakers of the Legislative Assembly (who served at least four (4) years in such office but have been out of office for more than ten (10) years):	C

Eligibility Codes

A Eligible for a State Funeral, provided 4.3 does not apply. Also eligible to have all reasonable expenses associated with a private funeral met by the Government.

B Not eligible for a State Funeral. However, provided 4.3 does not apply, eligible to have all reasonable expenses associated with a private funeral met by the Government.

C Not eligible for a State Funeral. However, provided 4.3 does not apply, eligible to have all reasonable expenses associated with a private funeral, excluding the cost of a burial plot or wall niche, met by the Government.

4.2 **Premier's Prerogative**—As stated in 4.1, the decision to offer a State Funeral to prominent Queenslanders, other than those public officials listed above, is the prerogative of the Premier of the day. Among the issues considered by the Premier in determining whether to exercise this prerogative and offer a State Funeral are the following

4.2.1 The deceased's public profile and standing within the community;

4.2.2 The extent and length of the deceased's service to the community;

4.2.3 The deceased's personal achievements.

4.3 Disqualification

4.3.1 For the purposes of this section,

"Senior Public Officials" means the Governor and former Governors, the Premier and former Premiers and the Chief Justice of Queensland.

"Public Officials" means all public officials listed in 4.1, other than Senior Public Officials.

4.3.2 If any Senior Public Official is subsequently convicted of an indictable criminal offence, all entitlements previously available to them under this policy cease. Similarly, any Senior Public Official who was removed from office would no longer automatically qualify for the entitlements outlined above. In such cases, the Premier has a discretion, after considering the nature and circumstances of the removal and whether the public office formerly held by the official has been brought into disrepute, to authorise one of the following options:

- Eligibility unchanged;

- No longer entitled to a State Funeral but eligible for a State-funded private funeral;
- No longer eligible for either a State Funeral or a State-funded private funeral.

4.3.3 If any eligible public official is subsequently convicted of an indictable criminal offence, all entitlements previously available to them under this policy cease. Similarly, any public official who resigned or was removed from office would no longer automatically qualify for the entitlements outlined above. In such cases, the Premier has the discretion, after considering the nature and circumstances of the resignation or removal and whether the public office formerly held by the official has been brought into disrepute, to authorise one of the following options:

- Eligibility unchanged;
- No longer eligible for a State Funeral but eligibility for a State-funded funeral retained;
- No longer eligible for either a State Funeral or a State-funded funeral.

4.4 **Funerals held outside Queensland**—A State Funeral will not be held in circumstances where the funeral is to take place outside Queensland, although the Government may offer to meet all reasonable expenses associated with the funeral.

4.5 **State Memorial Service**—In those cases outlined in 4.4, a State Memorial Service may be held in a more convenient location in Queensland with all costs being met by the Government. Consideration may also be given to holding a State Memorial Service in Brisbane in circumstances where the funeral takes place in a less than convenient location within Queensland.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 The Director, Protocol Queensland, Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPQ), is responsible for the implementation of this policy and for all matters associated with the organisation of State Funerals.

5.2 During a State Funeral, the DPQ's primary role is one of co-ordination. This includes ensuring an adequate level of official representation, particularly by key Government figures, as well as the observance of ceremonial aspects.

5.3 All reasonable costs associated with a State Funeral are home by Protocol Queensland.

Mr BEATTIE: I also table for the information of the House the program of the state funeral service, which I thought was a very dignified affair. I commend all of those who were involved in it. I want to thank the mayor of Kingaroy for his support and the support of the whole community. I think it was an appropriately respectful occasion.

I also want to pay tribute to Sir Joh's grandchildren. After the service I had the opportunity to have a discussion with quite a number of them. They were just wonderful grandchildren. I can understand why Lady Flo and Sir Joh himself were very proud of them. I know this is a difficult time for all of them. I have also provided some additional assistance to Lady Flo. I have written to her. I have also written to the head of the CMC, the Auditor-General, the Leader of the National Party and the Leader of the Liberal Party to inform them of my decision. I table that information for the House.

I know there have been some suggestions that there be a public statue of some kind for Sir Joh. For the record, I indicate to the House that the last statue that was erected was for TJ Ryan. The Brisbane City Council yearbook of 1975 states that the TJ Ryan statue was unveiled on 6 September 1925. The statue itself was funded by public subscription. The land was gifted by the state and the base was gifted by the Brisbane City Council. *The Premiers of Queensland,* edited by Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, points out in relation to TJ Ryan that after his death money was subscribed for an imposing statue outside the Executive Building. It was money donated by the public.

As I said, I know there has been some debate about this, and the Leader of the Opposition has in fact suggested it. I have had a total of 14 people correspond with me in relation to this because I sought public response. As is the nature of politics and the nature of our profession, seven people were in favour and seven people were against. I indicate today that if the community of Kingaroy and the mayor wish to proceed with this matter and build a statue—if the council is prepared to donate some land for a statue and there is sufficient public subscription—obviously we would follow the TJ Ryan tradition in that regard. If there are sufficient public funds for a statue and the community of Kingaroy wish to build one then we would obviously help to facilitate the collection of those public funds.

I say two things in conclusion. The first is this: my government and I have tried to act appropriately in these circumstances. As I said at the state funeral, Sir Joh and I had our differences. Indeed, the Labor Party and this Labor government have had their differences with Sir Joh. He also did some good things for this state, and I have acknowledged that. In the case of a death, we should remember that the family is more important than anything else. We have tried to turn the page and put politics behind us. Some have found that easier than others, but I think it is a hallmark of our mature democracy and the maturity of this parliament that we are able to do that. I accept that some people have been critical of my decision and I respect their right to express their views. As I indicated, in the case of a death we need to act with some dignity and in an appropriate way.

The second thing I want to share with the House is this: as some of you will recall, towards the end of Sir Joh's term I, in fact, met him in a private meeting that then became very public. There was a very important lesson in that meeting with Sir Joh. The lesson is for all leaders and all members of parliament. While Sir Joh had things he wanted to express—we talked about a possible parliamentary arrangement whereby we obviously sought a fairer redistribution—he felt very disenchanted at that time. He was very disappointed, for example, with the National Party. He felt betrayed and disillusioned. I do not intend to pursue that any further—that would be inappropriate—but it would be remiss of me not to say that. Bob Katter expressed his views about that prior to the funeral, and I do not want to get into any

of that. The important thing that needs to be said, in addition to what I have just said, is that Sir Joh highlighted to me then, as he did on other occasions—and he was very proud of this—that he was never defeated by the Labor Party and never voted out by the people of Queensland. That says it all. My condolences to Lady Flo.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.44 am): I rise, along with the Premier, to extend my sympathies and those of the National Party to Lady Flo and the Bjelke-Petersen family. Johannes Bjelke-Petersen was born on 13 January 1911 at Dannevirke in New Zealand. In 1913 he moved with his family to Kingaroy and settled on a property, Bethany. The property produced a variety of agricultural and pastoral pursuits including beef cattle, peanuts and maize. Sir Joh passed away on 23 April 2005. He was the son of Carl George Bjelke-Petersen and Maren Poulsen. Carl Bjelke-Petersen was a Lutheran pastor before becoming a farmer. He had a younger brother, Christian, who died at the age of 22 years, and a sister, Agneta, known as Neta.

Sir Joh was educated at Taabinga State School until aged 13 years. Between the ages of nine and 11 he suffered the effects of polio. On 31 May 1952 Sir Joh married Florence Gilmore and they had four children: John, Ruth, Margaret—otherwise known as Meg—and Helen. Sir Joh left school at the age of 13 years to work on the family farm. In 1933 the family acquired a second property on which Joh Bjelke-Petersen set about clearing the land and planting crops which were mostly peanuts.

Sir Joh was quite an inventor. He developed a peanut harvester and other agricultural equipment and raised capital from working as a contract harvester to farms in the surrounding district. In 1937 Joh Bjelke-Petersen applied for a patent on his apparatus for sowing peanuts in the shell. Two years later he patented a mechanism called a chain and bucket elevator for shifting dirt and refuse while peanut threshing.

Joh Bjelke-Petersen took up flying as a means to expand his contracting business and he bought his first plane in 1949. Sir Joh and his sister Neta formed a company for contract land clearing and later expanded to aeroagricultural operations such as aerial crop spraying and seeding. Sir Joh's disabilities suffered from polio prevented him from joining the Australian Defence Force during World War II. Sir Joh's community activities included being a Sunday school teacher in local parishes of the Lutheran Church. He was elected to the Kingaroy Shire Council in 1946.

On 3 May 1947 Sir Joh was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly as the member for Nanango representing the Country Party. In 1948 he opposed wage rises for members of parliament and refused to join the parliamentary superannuation scheme. On 29 April 1950 he was elected as the member for Barambah. On 26 September 1963 Sir Joh was promoted to Minister for Works and Housing and remained in that portfolio until 8 August 1968. In January 1968 he was voted in as Deputy Leader of the Country Party. On 2 August 1968 he was voted Leader of the Country Party after the death of the Country Party Premier, Jack Pizzey, in July 1968. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen was sworn in as Premier on 8 August 1968 and remained in that position until 1 December 1987. Between 19 August 1983 and 1 December 1987 Sir Joh also took on the responsibilities of Treasurer.

His life was an extraordinary one. Sir Joh was a great man—indeed, in my estimation, Queensland's greatest. If anyone doubts Sir Joh's popularity and standing amongst Queenslanders, they should reflect for a moment on the *Sunday Mail* 'Your State Your Say' survey in 2000 which voted him the greatest Queenslander of all time, putting him ahead of Wally Lewis, Cathy Freeman and Greg Norman.

Sir Joh, or just Joh as he was affectionately known by thousands of Queenslanders, had a deep and abiding faith in God and an absolute commitment to his family. This strong Christian faith and absolute commitment to his family underpinned and guided the values which Sir Joh not only believed but also practised in his day-to-day life either in his early upbringing with its associated pre-depression hardships, his battle with polio or his daylight to midnight work ethic, which he practised as a young man and later as an MP, minister and Premier.

Sir Joh believed absolutely that you mean what you say and you do what you say. These values drove an enormous energy which achieved extraordinary things within the community, whether it be local, state or national. He was this state's longest-serving Premier, and that was no accident. Sir Joh was the architect of modern Queensland. Sir Joh became Premier in the year that I was born and was the Premier for the first two decades of my life. Therefore, his effect on me was profound. I, like many of my colleagues, was drawn to his values, his no-nonsense, get-on-with-the-job style. Even if you disagreed with him, you respected him because you knew where he stood on every issue, and on balance you could be assured that what he did would be good for Queensland and would be good for Queenslanders.

In the last few weeks, the usual grab bag of historical revisionists who questioned Sir Joh's contribution in life continued to question it after his passing. If they are having trouble understanding his success, it is as simple as this: Sir Joh knew what was important to everyday Queenslanders and delivered what was important to everyday Queenslanders. This grab bag of historical revisionists would never accept his success because it was outside their self-cloaked paradigm of intellectual and moral superiority. These intellectual revisionists and historical revisionists who will never achieve even one per

cent of his extraordinary legacy should never be taken seriously. The only people who never make a mistake are the people who never do anything. Sir Joh did lots and left a mark to prove it.

Sir Joh cherished Westminster principles, which he exemplified when he acted to preserve and entrench the Queen in our state's Constitution. Sir Joh also had an electoral system that ensured a government needed greater than 50 per cent of the two-party preferred vote to form a government. The area where the historical revisionists have been busiest in is undermining Sir Joh's electoral legitimacy. For the record, let us look at facts. Wayne Goss won power in 1989 with more than 50 per cent of the two-party preferred vote—the first time that Labor had achieved that since it lost office in 1957. Following that election, Labor held 54 seats, the Nationals 26 and the Liberals nine. Just three years later, following the full state redistribution and the abolition of the so-called gerrymander, the votes received by each of the parties were within 1.5 per cent of the 1989 election results, yet all those parties won exactly the same number of seats. History's revisionists, or, as I call them, distorters, will never tell you this: Sir Joh and the Nationals held the least populated seats in the country and the most populated seats in the cities, including on the Gold and Sunshine coasts and also in Brisbane. To spell it out in simpler terms for those who wish to reconstruct history—and these figures are in primary vote terms—in 1983 Joh and the Nationals received 39 per cent of the vote for 50 per cent of the seats in state parliament. In 1986 they received 40 per cent of the vote for 55 per cent of the seats in parliament, which contrasts with Labor's 47 per cent of the vote for 71 per cent of the seats in parliament in 2004.

In September 1986, frustrated by their failure to discredit Sir Joh on his policy and infrastructure achievements for Queensland, his opponents in the Labor Party resorted to personal attacks. Commissioning two British researchers to analyse Sir Joh's psychological health and wellbeing, they concluded and highlighted 'the Premier's rapid and public mental disintegration'. Their personal attacks failed, and Sir Joh and the Nationals went on to win the state election two months later with an increased majority.

The SEQEB strikes of 1985 still resonate for many Queenslanders. The debate in recent times has been very one-sided, focusing on the experiences of the sacked workers. Many people were affected during those strikes including Queensland families and businesses that just wanted the lights to stay on and the hospitals to keep operating. The personal impact on their quality of life and the destruction of businesses are never mentioned by history's revisionists. Who could also forget the harassment by the unions of those electricity workers who wanted to exercise their lawful right to work and to return to work? The people who supported Sir Joh's stance on this issue are generally silent and in the majority.

Sir Joh knew that to be successful in politics you must understand what people actually want, have an affinity for them and with them and deliver for them. Sir Joh was a man of the people who delivered like no other Premier for the people. During Sir Joh's premiership Queenslanders wanted safer communities. Sir Joh delivered safer communities. During Sir Joh's premiership Queenslanders wanted a free hospital system that was efficient. Sir Joh delivered a free hospital system that was efficient. During Sir Joh's premiership Queenslanders wanted a low-tax state. Sir Joh delivered a low-tax state. During Sir Joh's premiership Queenslanders wanted Sir Joh to build dams, roads, bridges and railway lines. Sir Joh delivered. He built dams, roads, bridges and railway lines. Sir Joh's numerous achievements also included defying the doomsayers and abolishing death duties in Queensland, forcing all other Australian governments to follow. For this alone the whole country should be eternally grateful.

During Sir Joh's term as Premier he oversaw the construction of Griffith and James Cook universities, and he secured Expo 88 for Queensland. The one and only Indigenous person ever elected to the Queensland parliament, Eric Deeral, was elected as a member of the Nationals in 1974. The first woman cabinet minister, Yvonne Chapman, was sworn in. South Brisbane's vast cultural precinct—including the Art Gallery, Performing Arts Centre and Museum—was constructed. Sir Joh trebled the area of Queensland's national parks and properly managed them. He passionately promoted the Sunshine State as Australia's prime tourist destination and as a great place to live. He also opened up the state's enormous mineral resource potential. Sir Joh introduced the deed of grant in trust legislation to ensure greater autonomy for Queensland's Indigenous communities. It is an act of parliament that is still with us today. He saved half of the Torres Strait from being reliant on Port Moresby when the Whitlam government was prepared to hand it over—an action many of the region's residents are still grateful for today. To the eternal gratitude of many Australians, Sir Joh also saved them from the excesses of the Whitlam government.

Sir Joh also achieved much, much more. Sir Joh did not just govern Queensland; he built Queensland. By anyone's estimation, the mark of a successful premier is to leave an indelible print on your state. Sir Joh has done that, and he has done it for the better. Sir Joh's failed 'Joh for PM' bid and the early stages of the Fitzgerald inquiry hastened his political exit and finished a remarkable political career, which spanned four decades. For Queenslanders, Sir Joh and Lady Flo were a great team—an unbelievable partnership in marriage, in family, in politics, in service and in the community.

Sir Joh has not been Premier of this great state for almost a generation, yet he is talked about by Queenslanders, including young Queenslanders, as though he was Premier just yesterday. Most politicians, including premiers, are hardly mentioned even a term after their departure from the political stage. That was not the case for Sir Joh; his name is still there, larger than life.

Whilst he sadly no longer graces use with his physical presence, Sir Joh's great contribution to this state, to his local community and to his family will live on for generations to come, and for that Queenslanders will be forever grateful. To Lady Flo and the Bjelke-Petersen family I simply say: thank you for letting Queenslanders be a part of your life in the good times and the sad times.

The constant dignity and politeness that Lady Flo and the Bjelke-Petersen family displayed during the intense public and media interest in Sir Joh's health and well-being over the years is the real indication of the core beliefs and values of this remarkable family. To them I simply say again: our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (9.58 am): Johannes Bjelke-Petersen was born in Dannevirke, New Zealand on 13 January 1911. His Danish father, Carl George Bjelke-Petersen, a Lutheran pastor, brought his family to Australia two years later and settled on a small property near Kingaroy. For years the family spoke only Danish at home. At age nine young Johannes suffered an attack of poliomyelitis. This kept him out of World War II. He left primary school at the age of 13 and spent the next 15 years living by himself on the family farm. He worked from dawn till dusk clearing land and returned home only on Sundays to help his mother teach Sunday school—something he did for over 40 years. His commitment to Christianity would remain with him for the rest of his life.

Joh became quite the entrepreneur in the years before and during World War II. He sold off the farm's dairy cows, replaced the maize crops with peanuts, built his own harvester, performed contract work on other farms around Kingaroy and became the first large-scale land clearer in the South Burnett. Joh also learnt to fly a plane and was soon seeding and spraying crops across the region. Flying was to become a passion that he embraced throughout the rest of his life. In 1946 Joh was elected as a councillor for the Kingaroy shire and a year later was elected to this House as the Country Party member for Nanango, an electorate he was to represent for the next 40 years.

In 1952 he married Florence Isabel Gilmore and they had three daughters—Margaret, Helen and Ruth—and a son, John. In 1963 the then Premier, Francis Nicklin, appointed Joh as minister for public works and housing. In 1968 he was elected and served as deputy leader of the Country Party under Jack Pizzey. Then Premier Pizzey died six months later and Joh became Premier of Queensland on 7 August 1968. After the dissolution of the coalition with the Liberal Party in 1983 he took over the Treasury portfolio and held it until his resignation. Sir Joh was awarded a knighthood on 23 June 1984 and was the last Australian premier to receive such an imperial honour.

Sir Joh resigned as Queensland Premier and from this House on 1 December 1987. He was a member of this House for over 40 years and served nearly 20 of them as Premier—a record that will probably never be broken. After his resignation Sir Joh was never far from the headlines, with his ongoing legal battles receiving widespread media coverage. In his retirement Sir Joh turned the family property, Bethany, into a mini tourist attraction with a steady stream of well-wishers coming through to meet Sir Joh and Lady Flo and try some of those famous pumpkin scones.

No matter what is said about Sir Joh, one thing that always comes to mind is his promotion of all things Queensland and the development of this great state. He championed huge development projects like the central Queensland coalfields through foreign investment and facilitated the delivery of essential infrastructure such as dams, power stations, universities, ports and rail electrification. While Sir Joh was Premier, Queensland also secured the Commonwealth Games and Expo 88—events that changed the way we viewed ourselves and the world and the way the world viewed us. Perhaps Sir Joh's biggest contribution to the advancement of Queensland that happened under his premiership was the abolition of death duties in 1977. This decision led to massive population growth as a result of rapid interstate migration—a trend continuing today.

Above all, Sir Joh was a committed Christian and a devoted family man. He is survived by his children and Lady Flo. He was a colourful character who will be sadly missed by many. On behalf of the Liberal Party I extend to his wife, Lady Flo, and his family our sympathies on this sad occasion.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.02 am): On behalf of the Independents, I endorse the condolence motion moved by the Premier. I also endorse all that the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party leader have said. Therefore, I will not go into a lot of the things they have canvassed.

Love him or hate him, there is no doubt that Queensland has lost its equivalent to royalty. To the vast number of people across Australia who know his name and to those who travelled thousands of miles to see him and where he lived, that is surely what Sir Joh is and was. Those people have lost a great and admired friend. No other state leaders, in the past or to date, have left their mark on the Australian people as has Sir Joh.

A lot has been said about Joh the political figure, but very little has been said about the man. Many have tried to emulate him, and some still do, but each will fall short because Joh was not an untouchable politician. He would walk the streets, would drop in on people just to say hello and was never afraid to be seen with dirt on his hands. To most of us and many others, he was one of the real people.

Joh presided over a state fast becoming the richest in Australia. Having come from New South Wales, I can attest to the number of adults—I was a child at the time—who would say how great he was and how they would not have minded if he was the leader of their state, even the Prime Minister of Australia.

Joh led where others were afraid to venture. He pioneered many things including the industry my husband enjoys in the Burnett, which is aerial spraying. As a final salute, a lone spray plane actually flew past Joh as he was laid to rest on the property of Bethany.

If he did make an error of judgment—and some will say that he did or perhaps that he even made many—he accepted the fact without all the breast beating that goes on today and he got on with things. When I resigned from One Nation, Joh was the only political person who rang me. He offered me his counsel. We talked for some time and at the end he said, 'Do what your instinct tells you to do; do what you think is right.' I always did. I was not always right, but you have to live with yourself at the end of the day. He may not have been right all the time, but Joh's reign was exceptional: 40 years as the local member, 19 of which he served as Premier. As the current member for Nanango, I do not aspire to be in the job that long, but I have learnt one thing: his shoes are hard to fill and I doubt that anyone in the future will ever come close to filling them.

He was a very rare man in that, unlike the majority, he recognised the tragedies of the past but did not dwell on them. He realised that you cannot change what has occurred but to continually delve is to pick at a sore and never let it heal. He lived for the future. He worked for the future of Queensland, and his adage that an area's growth could be calculated by the number of cranes on the horizon is one that I often hear used in this House.

During Joh's leadership major projects were under way almost every two years; as one was finishing another was starting. Queensland was the envy of the southern states, and why wouldn't it be, for we have the greatest assets when it comes to development. This is the state. Joh saw it, he dreamt it and he worked for it. When Joh was Premier we had a fully functioning health system and no gambling. Overall, Queensland was a wonderful state. Today we have $800 million coming in via gambling, a health system in tatters and people on hospital waiting lists forever. That is just one example of Joh's reign. There are many other examples that could be mentioned.

Joh saw the opportunities. He had the courage to pursue the dream of what he envisaged this state could become. Today many people state that we must push the boundaries and live outside the square as if it is a new concept. Joh was pushing those boundaries long before it became fashionable and it is only people like him that make the world or any state progress. Many condemned him for some of his attitudes, but time and history have proven him to be an individual who has contributed more to Queensland's growth than any other leader before or possibly in the future. He understood that it is income-generating job growth which creates wealth in society, not the paper-shuffling, non-income producing jobs which in the longer term reduce our resources.

Joh was an ordinary man—yes, I say an ordinary man. He understood how hard life can be, not only on the land but also in health and in business because he experienced the hardships himself. He knew the betrayal of friends and colleagues; he witnessed the demise of a party that tested his very loyalty; he has been lauded and pilloried. He experienced all this world has to offer. He was never cowered by his antagonists and he was not an apologist for his beliefs. He lived his life based primarily on a strong Christian foundation and he drew comfort from that deep faith in God. Joh's life is one they will write stories about, as they have in the past. It has all the ingredients of a best seller: love, hate, success and betrayal. Joh did not deserve the trials that were inflicted upon him in relation to his health in his later life, but for all his frailty at the end he was still a great man in his thinking. His opinions were still sought and many claimed him as a friend, not because it was necessarily true but because it served them well.

Joh was enigma. He engendered all emotions from adoration and hero worship to total loathing. He chose a life that by its nature was controversial. Those who knew him well loved him. People have their own opinions of Joh based firmly on how the decisions his government made affected them. Some bear malice towards him, while others revere him. Their opinion of him is purely politically based. We of Kingaroy and the South Burnett know the family man. Queensland may have lost a once great politician, a great political leader, but we have lost a friend, a valuable community member, a fighter right to the end. During his dying days he said, 'Keep the chooks waiting,' as they flocked around the hospital night after night after night—and he did keep them waiting.

Joh was, quite simply, one of us. His fighting spirit endured to the end. Every time he was knocking on St Peter's door and the chooks were gathered, he kept them waiting. Joh did not allow himself to be rushed in any way, and he chose his own time to go to his maker.

Our sympathies and our love go to Flo, who has lost a beloved husband; to her children, who have lost their dad; and to her grandchildren, who have lost their grandad.

Joh was a man who led an extraordinary life, going from farmer to political leader. In all avenues of life, he was serving the people of the community and the state, from knight to entrepreneur, and most would agree that, love him or not, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen was a legend in his own lifetime.

The funeral was a fitting memorial for a man who served his community and his state passionately. The Premier, opposition leader and Prime Minister spoke well. I particularly commend and pass on to the Premier the words of the community, for I have never before heard them speak so highly of this Premier of the state.

Goodbye, Sir Joh: you were the last of the true statesmen. I will finish my contribution with the words of Sir Joh's son, John, at the funeral: 'Joh Bjelke-Petersen will be remembered; don't you worry about that.'

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.10 am): I rise to make a contribution to the condolence motion for Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. The details and statistics relating to Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen's service in this parliament have been well detailed by the Leader of the Opposition. Those statistics are such a part of the public record that there is no need for me to repeat them. Suffice it to say, as this parliament expresses its condolences to the family of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, that record of service and achievement is such that it is recognised by all sides of politics that it will never be equalled or exceeded. In that sense, as in many others, this parliament will never again see the equal of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Indeed, the political dynamics have changed so much and to such an extent that such a political career would be almost impossible today.

Sir Joh was from a generation that built things where nothing existed before. He and his generation built rural communities like Kingaroy right across the state and they built the industries that were the economic base of those communities using very little else but their resourcefulness and their initiative. The governments that he led built the essential physical and social infrastructure that Queenslanders needed to enable the Queensland economy to develop—and develop it did under his stewardship. They did it ahead of the demand for that infrastructure and they did it while maintaining the strong financial position of the state.

While I was at Sir Joh's funeral last week a constituent of mine, who was not much younger than Sir Joh, made a comment to me that I think summed up the situation and which I want to share with the House today. He said that in his view Sir Joh had spent 19 years as Premier building rural and regional communities across Queensland and that governments since then have been trying to close them down. While that is probably not strictly true, it certainly encapsulates the spirit of the time and the way the political dynamic and the role of the government has changed since the late 1980s.

Sir Joh was elected and re-elected time and again by a generation of Queenslanders who were intent on building something where there was nothing before. They were intent on building and developing the state of Queensland and they were spectacularly successful in doing that. It is ironic that many of the know-everything, done-nothing types who criticise him now do so from the comfort provided by the economic success that his drive and determination provided.

I am pleased and proud to represent a small part of that area of Queensland that constituted Sir Joh's electorate of Barambah. I am constantly regaled by my constituents, especially the older ones, who always have very fond memories of Sir Joh as their local member. 'Joh would have fixed this easily,' they say to me. I can't help but agree with them, because he would have. But in the time that is left to me in public life, I hope that I can achieve just a small fraction of the respect and the esteem with which Sir Joh is still held by the people he represented in this parliament. I express my personal sympathies to his family and I support the condolence motion before the House.

Hon. KR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (10.13 am): The history of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen has been clearly outlined by previous speakers. Joh had an amazing ability to polarise the vote. When he had 55 per cent on side and 45 per cent against, he would continue to attack that 45 per cent. Clearly, what he was doing was shoring up that 55 per cent so that they stayed with him during election time. That is why, quite obviously, he went through 41 years without being beaten by the public.

Joh had some amazing escapes. In 1983, three days before the election, on the Wednesday, the paper came out with massive headlines saying that the ALP would win in a landslide. On the Thursday it carried the story about how the shadow cabinet ministers had gone to all of the departments to have a look at them and to make sure that the transition to government was smooth. It took a comment from one person that his department had some shabby carpets for Joh to work out on the Friday the total cost of replacing all of the carpets in that department and the total cost of replacing all carpets in all departments. On the Saturday the ALP was beaten, and beaten badly.

So we went into 1983 and 1986. In 1983, when we came into government in our own right, Joh continued to belt the Liberals, the ALP and the unions. He continued to belt committees, saying that they only result in bureaucrats and backbenchers travelling the length of Queensland and never coming up with anything worth while. He thought it was better for backbenchers to go out into their electorates and win votes. He continued to belt sex education in schools. He continued to belt condom machines in toilets and anything to do with random breath testing because he said that it took away personal rights.

He continued to belt Sunday trading because it took away the rights of a family. But people should not forget that he also belted the National Party. We were a government with a majority of only one. We had people like Lindsay Hartwig, who was an independent, and Joh would not accept the fact that he might come back. Members should not forget that in 1983 there were some members who, having won their seats, were not endorsed for 1986. That was extremely controversial within the National Party.

I think the greatest decision was Expo. I clearly remember half an hour before parliament sat one morning being giving notice that an urgent meeting was to be held in the party room, which was on level 6 in those days. We went into that room not knowing what was on. Joh made the comments that the night before he had been contacted by the Prime Minister and Australia had been given the chance to run Expo. He said that New South Wales would not do it, Victoria would not do it and South Australia would not do it. He said, 'I agreed with the Prime Minister that Queensland would do it. We will knock down those old buildings on the south bank and redevelop them after Expo. That is where we will hold Expo. Does anyone have any comments?' Before anyone gained their breath he said, 'Thank you. I take that as unanimous support.' He closed the meeting. Outside were 10 cameras. We did not have 10 cameras in Queensland at that time, but there were 10 cameras that day. He took the story of Expo to Australia. He then came in here and made the announcement. We were gone if we opposed it. You, Mr Acting Speaker, being the member for South Brisbane at that time, might remember that.

It was that style that obviously led to divisions within the party system and within the National Party. Coming on top of that was the 107-storey building to be built in Brisbane which people opposed. There was also the Fitzgerald inquiry and the fact that Joh wanted to do 20 years as Premier. Three colleagues of his wanted to be Premier. He openly admitted that he would not support any of those three. Quite obviously the divisions occurred.

The Premier talked about the fact that the National Party voted Joh out. He should not forget that when the motion was put Joh was not in the room. Joh was not in the room for those votes, nor was he in the room for the vote for the next Premier. The next Premier decided that we were going to go a different way and we were not going to do the same things as old Joh did. He said that it was going to be a democratic party system. We were all going to have a say. Yes, we did have a say. We said things for about six hours. At the end of that time we did not have a decision. There were no decisions made. That Premier lost his place within two years because he could not make decisions. Such is the story of politics.

Joh dominated the media at that time. The Premier at that time said to the party room, 'I can't do anything without having to answer questions about Sir Joh.' Someone stupidly said, 'Forget about Joh. Do not even mention his name. In your next talks do not say his name.' Three days later his name was removed from the opening of Expo. Members know the public's reaction to that.

Joh had his idiosyncrasies. Mick Veivers followed Tom Veivers into this parliament. One day Mick cornered Joh down the alleyway. Mick espoused a theory to Joh which Joh did not agree with. Joh said, 'Yes, thank you, Tom. That is a good idea, Tom. Thank you, Tom.' Mick's attitude to that was that he knew he was not going to be in the next cabinet.

The Joh speak was common. During the 'Joh for PM' campaign we remember him going to Perth, where the America's Cup was being run, and his famous speech in which he said, 'It is great to be in Perth for the Melbourne Cup.' There were many sayings that he used within this particular chamber.

The fights between Joh and Ed Casey and Tommy Burns were legendary. When Joh redesigned this parliament the microphone was put on the right-hand side of the desk and it extended out into the aisle. He used to stand with his back towards the Speaker and harangue the troops. The only way I could fix him was to move the microphone to the other side, which I did, which made him face the Speaker. I am sure the Premier will see the mark on the right-hand side of the desk where the microphone was. That is where Joh had his microphone until I finally removed it. That was the only way I could ever control him in parliament.

If one had Joh as a guest at a function one could be assured the hall would be full. There were never enough tickets. On he would go about the development of Queensland. Members should not forget that this was a magnificent period—and not just for Joh. Ron McAuliffe was running State of Origin football. Clem Jones was running soccer. Ballymore was running Rugby Union and the Aussie Rules was starting. It was a magnificent period when they all talked about the development of Queensland.

It is a privilege to be a member of parliament. I have now seen 250 people go through this parliament. The one who has had the most massive impact, as far as I am concerned, is Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. I consider it a privilege to have served, for a short time, in that period of government.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (10.21 am): It with great sadness that I rise today to talk of a great Queenslander—someone who put Queensland first and himself second. Sure, he was strong, but he had to be. One does not remain Premier of this state or any state for 19 years without being strong.

I am one of two MPs left on the conservative side of politics who served with Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. I was fortunate that I knew the workings of government, having been a chairman—now called a mayor—of a shire council before I became an MP in 1986.

We all have our own memories of Sir Joh. I recall a time when Joh came to Cunnamulla during an election campaign. Neil Turner, the previous member for Warrego, was there as well. Neil suggested to Sir Joh that he should shout the bar. Joh was not a great drinker and did not really approve of that sort of thing. He said, 'I'm not sure whether I have enough money.' He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a few notes and Neil reached over and, quick as a flash, plucked out $50 and said, 'This will do.' In those days $50 was a reasonable amount of money and would go a fair way. The people of the bowls club enjoyed some hospitality on Sir Joh.

I will tell another story that I recall being told. Many would know that during his career Joh had up to 16 crop-dusting planes and other planes in his fleet and that he employed numerous pilots. One day he was taking a flight on a commercial airliner. The captain asked him to go up to the cockpit. He duly went up. To his horror he found that the captain was someone he had recently sacked from his own airline operation. We can just imagine old Joh. They say that this strong man of Queensland politics gingerly went back his seat, strapped himself in and said nothing for the rest of the flight.

Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen was a strong man. He had a presence wherever he went. I recall the arrangements in the dining room that are similar to what we have now. The government sits on the uni side of the Members Dining Room. Sir Joh used to sit at the end of the table where the bain-marie is now. Nobody sat on that end seat because that was where he used to sit, especially for breakfast. The only ones likely to sit in that seat were new members. They did not do it after they had done it once. Usually he would come down between seven and 7.15. By 7.30 anyone could sit in that seat. That is the way it was.

You do not spend 40 years in politics without making some mark on society. Sir Joh did that. He was the founding father of our modern age and he built the foundations of our present society. He connected with average Queenslanders, and many academics and people in the media could not understand or fathom how he did that. It was fairly simple: he could connect, he could communicate and he could listen, but he would not make a big thing of it. It is disappointing that the opponents of Sir Joh are reinventing history in their statements and writings. I hope they get a life and get on with it. I offer my most sincere condolences to the Bjelke-Petersen family and their descendants. A great man was laid to rest. May he rest in peace.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (10.25 am): It is indeed a privilege to speak to this condolence motion about one of Queensland's greatest, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. I met Sir Joh when I was the manager of the Toowoomba showgrounds. Through the assistance of his government of the day, we were able to transfer the little old showgrounds in the middle of town out to a 250-acre site on the western side of the city. We invited Sir Joh to inspect the site in the course of our early development where we had bulldozers, scrappers and all sorts of machinery working on that massive development. Unfortunately we made the mistake of taking Sir Joh up to the hill at the back of the showground as the first part of the visit for a panoramic view. There we had seven 30,000 gallon concrete tanks that had been built at a wonderful price by a local contractor. For the rest of that tour around the showgrounds, Sir Joh kept asking me the name and phone number of the guy who built those concrete tanks.

A year or so later he came back to open the first Toowoomba Royal Show at those magnificent grounds in 1986. We had a huge crowd, and at different times both the Premier and the primary industries minister have undertaken the role of opening the show and would know how we could have a massive crowd on the grandstand in front of the main building. That year there was a huge crowd—absolutely massive. We had very carefully prepared the acknowledgments for the Premier, Sir Joh, because we had built the showgrounds just over the border in the Jondaryan shire. We wanted to make sure that not only was the Toowoomba mayor recognised but also the mayor of Jondaryan shire was recognised because they had helped us so much. Sir Joh started on the acknowledgements. He got the mayor of Toowoomba in. Then someone in the crowd yelled out, 'Tell us about Canberra, Joh!', and then for the next five minutes there was a tirade about Canberra and the socialists down there and so forth. He promptly forgot the Jondaryan mayor and everybody else on the acknowledgment list.

For my wife, Helen, and I, it was a marvellous experience in recent years to privately visit Sir Joh on a couple of occasions at Bethany, and there I met quite a remarkable man. To sit with someone in the advanced stages of Parkinsons and hear them talk for an hour and a half on the last 50 years of politics in Queensland—names, places, what they did, what they did not do, who were enemies, who were supporters—was quite amazing. I will never forget that experience. It really made me understand who Sir Joh was.

Queenslanders saw someone who rose from being a 12-year-old farm boy living in a dairy and sleeping on the ground beside equipment and machinery at night, to developing his own contracting business with large numbers of major machines across the state with chains between them clearing the great brigalow lands of this state, to developing an aerial spraying business of 16 aeroplanes, to moving into local government, to then being a member of parliament for 41 years and Premier for 19 years and Treasurer for four years and to overseeing the development that occurred during that time in this state. This was truly a most remarkable feat, the likes of which we may never see again.

I think we see a different era of parliament now. In the era of Sir Joh, many of the members of parliament who came in were self-made men and women. They did not have the chances that many of us have had of going to school or university. They were self-made. They left school early because their family had lost their major breadwinner or because of the Depression. People like my predecessor, Clive Berghofer—the former mayor of Toowoomba and then the member for Toowoomba South who ran the biggest hotel in Queensland and ran one of the biggest subdivision businesses in Queensland; a busy man, a man who could make decisions—were so similar in many ways to Sir Joh and so fond of Sir Joh. It was people like Sir Joh who came from an era of 95 per cent action and five per cent process. Things are so much different today.

Other speakers and the media have commented on the massive array of developments that Sir Joh produced throughout this state. I look also at the fact that he travelled the number of national parks in this state and that he provided the Aboriginal communities with the deed of grant in trust to provide them security of land tenure. He opened some of the universities here in the city and in north Queensland and hospitals and schools. The development just goes on and on. It is all recorded. Importantly, the thing that he should be remembered for is his contributions to the state in terms of getting rid of death duties and his promotion of tourism. He always put Queensland first, and they were two very practical ways in which he did that.

The life of politicians can be hard, particularly those who are leading the state. On one occasion during the 1980s Sir Joh was on the road during an election campaign for 43 days before he returned home to Bethany. When he did return home to Bethany after the election, his favourite labrador dog bit him. It was that long since he had seen the dog! Despite that, he had a wonderful love of his family and it was a great example to all Queenslanders of faith and loyalty to family. He really is survived by a most remarkable and loving family.

I do not think today is the time to go through many of the controversies that Sir Joh was involved in, because he was a strong leader. If he said black was white, he stuck by it and people respected him for that. Despite all of those controversies, he has done so much for this state that the words today that I would like to say come from the Slim Dusty song *Leave Him in the Longyard*. Those words are—

He's entitled to some kindness for all that he has done ...

Sir Joh has been a great man—a great Queenslander. I would like to pass on my condolences to Lady Flo, to his children Meg, John, Ruth and Helen, to his 13 grandchildren and to his three great-grandchildren. On behalf of all Queenslanders, I want to thank Sir Joh and his family for a job well done.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (10.31 am): In rising to speak to the late Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen's life this morning, I want to put on record my sincere condolences and those of my wife, Robin, and those of the people in the electorate of Gregory to Lady Florence, Meg, John, Helen, Ruth, their spouses, their children and their great grandchildren. It has all been canvassed here today, but from the outset I want to thank the Premier for the way in which he allowed Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen to be buried with dignity. I do say that to the Premier today, because there was a lot of controversy leading up to this funeral. I believe that we must at all times respect our bereaved, and that was certainly identified in Kingaroy last week and I really thank the government for it.

Speeches by the Premier, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition signified exactly and precisely what Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen achieved and did for Queensland over all of those years. As the Leader of the Opposition said this morning, he was born the year that Joh became Premier. I was born the year Joh became a member of parliament. When I look back over the years, I joined the National Party in 1972 because of the leadership and the decisiveness of that man. When I listened to some of the contributions made in this House this morning, I reflected on the words of the Leader of the Liberal Party, Bob Quinn. He canvassed very well many of the icons that Sir Joh has left in this state and many of the life features that he has given to many people in this state. He did it in an unselfish way.

In his stewardship we saw the coalmining industry develop. We saw the elimination of death duties. We saw the electrification of our rail lines. We saw the boom in the mineral industry and growth in ports, roads and rail infrastructure. As a result of the abolition of death duties, as a previous speaker said, we saw mass migration from other states and later on other states had to follow suit because they would not have had any population left. On top of that we saw the boom in the tourism industry. We can go on and talk for days about the great work that he did, but the thing that really touched me at Kingaroy last week was the great strength and the Christianity in the Bjelke-Petersen family and the cohesiveness of that family. It proves that a family who prays together does stay together. It also proves that that family will always be together.

On behalf of the people of my electorate, the other people of Queensland and myself, I thank Lady Florence for the sacrifices that she and her family made over all those years and for giving us something that many of us would never have had: the quality of life that we have today and the benefits we received from the governments that were under the stewardship of that great man and under his leadership. To Lady Florence and Joh's family, my thoughts and prayers are with you. Sir Joh, may you rest in peace. May God bless that family forever and a day.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.35 am): The passing of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen at Kingaroy on Saturday, 23 April was an extremely sad occasion for Queensland. Sir Joh made a profound and enduring contribution to Queensland. To Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen and the Bjelke-Petersen family, my thoughts and prayers, and those of my wife, are with you. Also, the prayers of the people of Hinchinbrook and all other Queenslanders are with Joh's family during this difficult time.

Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen was a legendary figure in Queensland politics. Sir Joh transformed Queensland's vast landscape by covering it with roads, connecting it with bridges, opening it up with airports and seaports, electrifying it with power stations and enriching it by founding universities such as James Cook University and Griffith University.

Sir Joh had an amazing ability to get things done. I recall one occasion when Sir Joh attended the annual general meeting of the Development Bureau of Hinchinbrook and Cardwell in Tully. At the time the bureau was working on a proposal to construct a turning lane off the highway to provide easier access to the newly established Tully Information Centre. During his inspection of the site Sir Joh turned to a number of the staff and said, 'I can certainly see why this is necessary. Fix it up immediately.' Within six months both the planning and the roadworks were completed.

Sir Joh certainly made a major contribution to Queensland. He was a strong believer in the family as the basic unit of society. Despite cries and objections, he single-handedly abolished death duties in Queensland, forcing the other states to fall into line. Sir Joh was responsible for keeping state taxes off fuel in Queensland. This encouraged the state's development and decentralisation. Sir Joh was constantly the subject of criticism from capital city media and the academic and cultural elite. However, he achieved his extraordinary political success by appealing beyond the experts and directly to the people.

National Party governments under the leadership of Sir Joh achieved a notable list of firsts. The first Aboriginal to be elected to Queensland parliament was Eric Deeral, a former National Party member for the state seat of Cook. The first woman to join a Queensland cabinet was appointed by Sir Joh to the National Party cabinet. Sir Joh said of himself—

> If I was different from others, it would be because I was always positive. I planned ahead. I stood by what I believed in and if I said I would do something I did it. This would be my first advice to anybody going into politics today: decide what is the right thing to do and then do it at once without hesitation or without wavering.

In short, Joh's motto was, 'Say what you think, then do what you say.' It was that simple.

The passing of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen brings to an end one of the most remarkable lives in Australian political history. Sir Joh is truly the father of modern Queensland. As I said, my thoughts and prayers, and those of my wife, are with Lady Flo and the Bjelke-Petersen family.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.39 am): Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen's time as Premier of Queensland was overwhelmingly good for this state. It is a powerful legacy when nearly all of the major infrastructure was built by Joh and the Nationals within the 19 years of his premiership.

The abolition of death duties has been mentioned, but it is a personal issue for my family. My father moved this motion in the party room, but it was Sir Joh who knew that it was good for Queensland, who carried it forward and who saw it adopted. Many members do not realise what a cruel tax death duties was. My mother's family suffered the death of two breadwinners within a very short period and also the double whammy of death duties. It was an iniquitous tax that brought real hardship to people. It meant that on many occasions people were paying tax on property from which there were no profits and they were paying tax when they had lost breadwinners. Death duties was a tax that was felt not only in Queensland but also throughout Australia. When Joh and the Nationals abolished death duties, we saw that death duties right throughout Australia were abolished, and quite rightly. The abolition of death duties started a population drift to Queensland. There was a realisation that if people wanted to get things done then Queensland was the place to be. That was reflected in all the other major projects that were occurring in this great state.

As has been mentioned, Joh had a strong family and a strong faith. Many people used to lampoon him for that faith but, as we have seen in the past few days, his family's great dignity and their faith have carried them through.

One of the things that I was not looking forward to with Sir Joh's passing was not the fact that he would be going to a better place but that some people do not know when to give up the hate. They do not realise that political differences are one thing but hate that lasts for generations is a thing that creates civil wars. It is not healthy in a society. We must understand that there are differences in philosophy. I believe that that kind of black hate eats away at the soul and does not enhance democracy.

There was a wonderful array of people at Sir Joh's funeral, but I want to acknowledge in particular Eric Deeral, the first and only Aboriginal who has been elected to this parliament. Also at the funeral were representatives from the Torres Strait Islands, including George Mye, a well-respected Torres Strait Islands elder. Gough Whitlam tried to give away part of the Torres Strait Islands. This very important group of people did not want their area to become part of Papua New Guinea. They wanted to remain

with Australia. Those people have a wonderfully rich culture. I think we all agree that it is important that, as Australians, we appreciate them and support their aims and aspirations.

Lawrence addressed the gerrymander myth—the electoral weight system that did not keep Labor out of power in Queensland. It was just an excuse for the Joh haters for why they were not in power while Joh was so popular—and he was popular. It was only when Labor won more than 50 per cent of the vote that it won government.

Also, some so-called civil libertarians and some older journalists who hated Joh and who still hate him today called him corrupt. That is interesting to note when we understand the extensive legal process undertaken by the Fitzgerald inquiry and afterwards. There has never been such a ferocious process of going back through people's financial records. Joh was not prosecuted for corruption. He was left with a hefty legal bill, which proved to be a great penalty for defending his name, but he was not prosecuted for corruption. To those civil libertarians who want to brand people, convict them and put them in jail when the evidence does not stack up, it must be remembered that, in terms of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen's record, that is not part of his history.

I want to conclude my contribution by giving recognition to Joh's family. We really see the mark of a person by those who are closest to them, particularly their children and their other closest relatives. I have a great deal of respect for the Bjelke-Petersen family. I know some of Joh's children better than I knew him. They are the finest of people. They are great contributors to their community, like their father was. Not surprisingly, Joh's children are not so much in the public arena, because it is a brutal arena. They have known better than any that politics is brutal on families. I want to acknowledge Joh's family and pass on my condolences to them. I also want to pass on my condolences to Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen, who is a wonderful lady. She is incredibly strong and incredibly dignified. As well as being a lady in her own right, she represented this state for 12 years as a senator. I give my condolences to Joh's family. May Joh rest in peace.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (10.44 am): Many words have been spoken about Sir Joh, the vision he had for Queensland and the way in which he was able to single-handedly bring about his vision without having to rely on others to do the hard work, especially when we look at the number of staff he had to support him in office compared to the ministerial and departmental staff who are currently employed. There can be no doubt that the challenges he encountered as a boy made him the man he was. As a boy, Joh knew only poverty and hard work, supporting his family because of his father's ill health and a sickly brother. His hardship continued when he contracted polio at the age of 12. Even though he mostly recovered, he carried this disability for the rest of his life.

Many stories have been told about Sir Joh rounding up dairy cattle at dawn and endeavouring to harness huge—huge from a boy's perspective—draught horses to plough the paddocks. There were also many firsts for him because he made things happen. He had one of the first tractors in the district; he did contract work; he built a peanut thrasher and contracted that out; he provided contract scrub pulling; and, as has been said in parliament today, he pioneered aerial spraying and seeding. The list goes on.

There is no wonder that when the opportunity arose for Sir Joh to do something for Queensland he was able to provide leadership and fearless vision and he implemented projects across Queensland that have become mostly the infrastructure that underpins Queensland's wealth and prosperity today.

There can be no doubt that the life Sir Joh experienced as a young boy shaped and tempered the man whom we had the good fortune to lead us as Premier of Queensland. 'Don't you worry about that!'

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (10.46 am): Like the Leader of the Opposition I was born in 1968, the year that Joh Bjelke-Petersen became Premier of Queensland. The first state election I voted in was held on 1 November 1986, and Sir Joh was still Premier of Queensland. His leadership of our state literally lasted a generation of voters, and his legacy to the state has lasted, and will last, much longer.

I met Sir Joh only once, and I have very clear memories of it. I met Lang Hancock the same day. In the early 1980s, when my father was chairman of Taroom shire and I was in my early teens, Sir Joh flew into Taroom airport to open a new oil exploration drilling rig to the west of Taroom that Lang Hancock's company had invested in. While waiting for the government's plane to arrive and being a fairly shy young fellow, I sat talking to a very pleasant older gentleman sitting in a small shed at the airport. Unbeknownst to me that gentleman happened to be Lang Hancock. Sir Joh arrived and we proceeded to the rig for the formalities. We had the most amazing lunch, sitting with Sir Joh, Beryl Young and Lang Hancock in a marquee in the middle of a paddock. Sir Joh took an interest in me that was a clearly genuine interest, as he did with every other person he met that day, and it was that personal touch that many people remember Sir Joh for. He struck me as a humble and a gentle person. He clearly left a lasting impression on me.

He had vision, imagination, determination, and he recognised the need to attract capital to Queensland. He developed our state at a pace unequalled at any other time by any other state, and we live with those benefits today. Sir Joh certainly has his detractors, but he has many more friends and

admirers right around the country. He was a giant of politics on the state and national scene. Over Sir Joh's last days and at his state funeral we saw that he was still able to capture the attention of the nation.

My wife, Rae, who knew Sir Joh far better than I did, joins with me in passing our condolences to Lady Flo and to the Bjelke-Petersen family. In the past few weeks Lady Flo has been nothing short of amazing, and I think the dignity with which she has conducted herself has gained her the admiration of all Queenslanders. As one mourner in the huge crowd at the funeral put so aptly, 'We love you, Flo.' We all pass our condolences to Flo and to the Bjelke-Petersen family.

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (10.48 am): It gives me great pleasure to be in a position to stand in this House and deliver my condolences not only to Lady Flo but also to the whole of the Bjelke-Petersen family. I would like to touch on a few personal issues that relate to my family as well as my late father in relation to Sir Joh.

Firstly, I remember in about 1973 my primary school came for a tour of Parliament House. I guess it was not a lot different from what happens today with the tours. However, I clearly remember that the one thing we wanted to see was Sir Joh in action. I remember that we saw part of question time, and we were certainly not disappointed.

In relation to listening to the Premier speak, as a child I spent many a cold night in the Cooranga North Hall listening to the farmers debate at the monthly Country Party meetings. At that time my parents were heavily involved in the political matters of the day. There was to be an election the following year. This was just after the Country Party had changed its name to the National Party. Little were we to know that the coalition, led by Sir Joh, was to win 69 of the then 82 seats.

To be brief, I would like to quickly mention a few more things. In 1985 I was a dairy farmer on the same small family property that I own today, and Sir Joh was to come to Bell to address the community. No doubt this was quite an event for our small community. I clearly remember that night that my wife and I and a few of my friends were standing up the back of the hall, and when Sir Joh had finished answering the usual hard questions from some irate people he made his way straight to my wife and me and started talking. That was exactly what Sir Joh was like. He was always interested in the youth of the nation. I remember that at the time the Japanese were buying a lot of Queensland. The media was full of the fact that Sir Joh was allowing this to happen, so I myself asked him why this was so. His answer was swift and direct: we need their money. At the time Sir Joh borrowed massive amounts from the Japanese to put the infrastructure in place to see Queensland the strong and viable state that it is today. Take, for instance, the Bowen Basin and the train lines to get our coal to port. Today we live off the fruits of this man's vision.

The point I bring out is that he was not scared to be abrupt because he knew that he knew, and what he knew was good for Queensland. A few years ago my dad released a book and it was Sir Joh who launched it. That was a great day for the family and I know it was one of the proudest days of my late father's life. I remember another time when Sir Joh was travelling and had trouble with a tyre, and there are no service stations out where we live. I was at a cattle sale at the time, so he called in home and used my gear. With the help of my dad, he then stayed for a lengthy cup of tea with my mother. That is the one cattle sale I wish I had stayed away from.

The one thing Sir Joh told me was that at the end of every day he and Lady Flo would kneel beside the bed and commit the next day to the Lord. Sir Joh, on my family's behalf I wish you well.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (10.51 am): On behalf of the people of the Burnett, I rise to express my sincere condolences and those of the local community of Kingaroy to Lady Flo and the Bjelke-Petersen family on the passing of Sir Joh. I did not personally know Sir Joh, but he was undoubtedly a towering political figure and I unabashedly admire his magnificent contribution to Australia as this state's longest-serving Premier.

Sir Joh was a man who believed in God, his son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit and was a man who lived his life knowing that one day we will all face a judgment day, when we will stand before our maker, our soul laid bare, and that our only hope of eternal life remains in Jesus Christ's love, his forgiveness and God's grace.

I think it appropriate that this place hear directly the voices of some of my constituents. Letters to the editor in the Bundaberg media featured some of the following thoughts. Noel Bowman of Bargara writes—

As someone who has had a passing and much valued acquaintance with Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, I would in the twilight of his great life pass tribute to his indomitable spirit. Additionally I would note the belatedly recognised progress his long term in office brought to all residents of this powerhouse state of Queensland. Yes, his term had flaws; yes, his attitude to others with less lofty goals was at times confrontational and intolerant; yes, he made mistakes. However, was he working for his ideals which saw the greater good and improved wealth of all participating Queenslanders and did both they and even the non-participants collectively benefit? Here again the answer must be a collective and loudly proclaimed yes.

J Brandt of Bundaberg says—

The major change he made was abolishing death duties. Young people today cannot imagine what it was like back then. On the death of a parent or parents, the tax inspectors would come into your home and value everything in the house from beds and cupboards down to the last knife and fork to work out the tax bill you then had to pay. When Joh abolished this evil tax, it started the boom on the Gold Coast and Brisbane as people moved in droves to Queensland from other states to escape the tax.

Joh's funeral had many highlights: eloquent and moving addresses from Sir Joh's son, John, the Prime Minister, the Premier and the National Party leader, Lawrence Springborg. I have to comment on the angelic singing from the choir of St Peter's Lutheran College. But for me the most moving and inspiring sight was witnessing Lady Flo's graceful and stoic presence. As mentioned by the member for Cunningham, as Joh's hearse was about to leave for Bethany, a shout of 'we love you, Flo' came from the crowd, and never a truer word was spoken. Today I stand before this House to convey my truly sincere condolences to one of Australia's greatest state premiers. Queensland is yet to see another Premier fill his shoes.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (10.55 am): Sir Joh and Lady Flo were frequent visitors to the Burdekin electorate, and Sir Joh is mourned by many north Queenslanders. He made many friendships in the area, and the pride held by so many of those people who met him is still very evident today. In paying tribute to Sir Joh, we have to look only to his myriad achievements in infrastructure development, his insistence on developing a sound economic base for future expansion and his undoubted, and might I say unequalled, passion for his chosen state to understand why he was regarded as one of Queensland's finest statesmen.

Sir Joh related to people, and his essential humility concealed a fierce determination to achieve what he believed was right for Queensland. He was a passionate Queenslander and no-one worked harder or longer to promote the economic success of Queensland. Standing as testimony to his drive and tenacity are daily reminders of his legacy such as the Burdekin Dam and other facilities within the electorate such as the Collinsville Power House, the mining industry and the Burdekin Agricultural College to name but a few.

Throughout his tenure as Premier and while meeting the increasing demands of his job, Sir Joh still found and made time for the most important things in his life—his family and his faith. I firmly believe that it was these twin influences that gave him the strength to persevere and the strength of his convictions. Unfortunately, many people today are unaware of the deep and lasting impact Sir Joh had on Queensland, its record and its prosperity. History is written by those who come after. It is difficult to accurately convey now to those who were not present the sense of pride and achievement felt by many at how much was achieved in such a remarkably short time. Whatever else history may record about Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, we will do ourselves no favour and Sir Joh no honour if we fail to recall and record those achievements that have made us and our state what we are and who we are today.

I am aware of many constituents who would like to pay their respects to the Bjelke-Petersen family, and I would like to do this on their behalf as well as express the condolences of my husband, Ray, and me. To Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen and her family Burdekin residents extend their sincere sympathy, love and prayers.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (10.57 am): I would like to extend my sympathy to Lady Flo and her family on the passing of Sir Joh not only on behalf of Ann and me but also on behalf of the people of the Lockyer electorate. I would also like to extend condolences on behalf of the Lockyer Valley Lutheran parish and all Lutherans in Queensland. Joh did have a very strong faith in the Lutheran tradition, and as Luther was a great reformer this could be said about Joh. Like the rest of us, Joh was only human, although some of his achievements went almost beyond that. Once again, I express my condolences to the family.

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (10.57 am): It is my great honour to speak here in parliament today in memory of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. It is also my great honour to be here in the same House in which the late Premier governed Queensland for almost 20 years. Without a doubt, Sir Joh will be known as the greatest Premier of our time. Consecutive governments now and in the future will ride on the back of his vision that can be clearly seen across the state today.

Sir Joh was a nation builder who made decisions. He opened Queensland's coal reserves for mining, put water infrastructure in place, built power stations, developed industries, abolished death duties, was responsible for keeping state taxes off fuel and provided an efficient, free hospital system. Sir Joh was a strong believer in the family, and it was for this reason that he opposed Sunday trading. The former Premier was a solid leader who stood by his words, and for this reason the people of Queensland knew where they stood with him during his time in power. Because of Sir Joh, Queensland was the envy of all states and his legacy will be remembered for generations.

Sir Joh was an inspiration. His actions inspired me to enter the political realm, and I believe I can say that for many of my fellow colleagues. My condolences go to Lady Flo and family, and may his legacy be an everlasting legacy.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Office of the Speaker

Mr SPRINGBORG (11.00 am): My question without notice is to the Premier. I table a copy of the May 1997 guidelines for the financial management of the Office of the Speaker which, in section 5.9, requires the Speaker to seek the Premier's approval for any overseas trips and to submit a written report on such travel undertaken. Premier, did these guidelines apply to the current Speaker of the House at the time he undertook overseas travel?

Mr BEATTIE: I have not had a chance to study what the Leader of the Opposition has tabled, but I recently sent to him and to the CMC proposed changes to the guidelines. I am determined to strengthen them. In a general sense, I think the point he is trying to get to—and he can correct me if I am wrong—is whether the Speaker needed my approval for overseas trips. Is that the thrust of what the member is saying?

Mr Springborg: In accordance with the guidelines.

Mr BEATTIE: In accordance with the guidelines. Let me confirm to the House that the guidelines did require that and, yes, under those guidelines he would have needed to seek my approval. I think that answers the member's question.

Mr Acting Speaker, I might just draw to your attention that on Friday the Crime and Misconduct Commission issued a news release relating to matters involving the Speaker. In relation to the issue of travel, however—I think it is appropriate that I advise the House of this—it says—

In relation to Mr Hollis's overseas travel, the Commission has found that his conduct does not raise a suspicion of official misconduct.

For the conduct of a member of parliament to constitute official misconduct, the conduct must be capable of amounting to a criminal offence, not a mere breach of official guidelines.

That is what the CMC has indicated. At the end of my question, I will table that release for the information of the House.

Mr Acting Speaker, you will recall that when these matters were drawn to my attention, because a report was commissioned, both the Clerk and I referred these matters to the CMC, as we should have done. I will await the CMC's findings in relation to these matters. There have been some matters referred to the DPP. It would be inappropriate for me to comment in relation to those.

On issues pertaining to travel or any other matters, bearing in mind that I have referred the guidelines to the CMC and I have asked the Leader of the Opposition for his view—I did receive a copy of his letter to Rob Needham, but I would still be interested in his view—I say to the Leader of the Opposition that at the end of this I still have to make the decision. I will look at what the CMC advice is, but I still would be grateful for his view, and I offer that again to the Leader of the Opposition today.

The position is very simple. If the CMC wants to make any further recommendations about how the travel of the Speaker is handled in this House in terms of those guidelines, bearing in mind recent behaviour, I am happy to examine that, and the guidelines will be improved appropriately.

Office of the Speaker

Mr SPRINGBORG: My second question without notice is also to the Premier. I now table a copy of the Code of Ethical Standards for the Legislative Assembly in full and refer him to section 3.5.4 entitled 'Consequences of a breach of the handbooks or guidelines', which says—

A failure to comply with the handbooks or any guidelines may require the member to reimburse an expenditure not falling within the handbooks.

Will the Premier uphold the ethical standards of this House and require the Speaker to repay the expenses that he has incurred in contravention of the guidelines?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. I just reiterate what the CMC has said in relation to this. It says—

In relation to Mr Hollis's overseas travel, the Commission has found that his conduct does not raise a suspicion of official misconduct.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I am going to make a comment there, because I have to. I am here to support the standing orders of this House. Standing order 115 states that questions shall not be asked which reflect on or are critical of the character or conduct of a group of people which includes the Speaker. So we have to be very careful. I suggest to the House that we cannot discuss conduct. I thought the first question was fine; it was not discussing conduct. I warn the Premier and members that the only way this can be discussed is through a substantive motion of the House. That can be done on Wednesday night or at another time. That has been a longstanding standing order that applies in all parliaments.

Mr BEATTIE: I table that news release for the information of the House. As I have indicated, I have referred these matters to the CMC. I would be interested in its view in relation to that. To specifically answer the Leader of the Opposition's question, I am happy to seek the guidance of the CMC in relation to that matter. The reason I would do that is very simple.

An opposition member: Can't you make a decision?

Mr BEATTIE: I have referred these guidelines issues to the CMC. It has made a determination that there has been no official misconduct by the Speaker. I am happy to seek its advice in relation to this matter and to act accordingly.

I notice that the Leader of the Opposition, nevertheless, has made public some reference to what happened in the past in relation to Mr Lingard. I just want to highlight to the Leader of the Opposition that, while I think it is appropriate that we deal with these issues with some sensitivity, there are very significant differences between what happened on that occasion and what happened here. Out of courtesy to Mr Lingard I have not sought to pursue them publicly, and I do not intend to do it here unless the Leader of the Opposition wishes to pursue it. I just say to the member that there are very clear differences in relation to Mr Lingard. My view about life is that we will move on.

In terms of what the CMC will do here, it will wait until the DPP makes a determination. I will wait until I hear its advice in relation to the guidelines, and I will seek its view in relation to whether there should be any recovery of funds.

Federal Budget

Mr BRISKEY: I direct my question to the Premier. The federal budget will be brought down tonight, and we all know that there is much that should be done to improve Commonwealth infrastructure, like National Highways in Queensland. Can the Premier say what Queensland projects deserve to be supported in the federal budget?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Cleveland for his question. Let me be very plain about tonight's federal budget. It will be a fiasco unless it includes a massive boost for infrastructure in this state similar to what is planned by my government under the plan launched by the Treasurer and myself recently. I table for the information of the House the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2005-2026.

The Prime Minister and his federal Treasurer have halved real funding on infrastructure such as roads, rails and ports. Compare that to the material that I have just tabled for the information of the House. We have a vision for the future. As the heaviest taxer since Federation—that is, the federal government—it has scooped up Australia's hard-earned dollars but it has failed to use that money wisely. That is a pathetic legacy. Tonight the federal government must make amends.

As well as investing seriously in services such as health, education and housing—and, indeed, let us hope the federal government has some money for the orchestra as well—it must plan and invest in infrastructure to build the nation for our children. Tonight is the night for the Prime Minister and his Treasurer to show Queenslanders they care about the future by committing to these projects: $870 million for full funding of the Ipswich Motorway upgrade in line with previous federal government commitments; $1.05 billion for the road component of the Gateway upgrade project; matching funding for work we are doing on the Pacific Motorway upgrade; $220 million for the Brisbane Urban Corridor Study recommendations; $50 million for the Warrego Highway-Brisbane Valley Highway interchange; funds for the extension of very high speed broadband to all regions in Queensland by 2010; funding for the Bundaberg Groundwater Rescue Feasibility Study and Preliminary Design; funds for the Mackay waste water recycling project, a scheme to recycle most of Mackay's waste water to better protect the Great Barrier Reef; funds for a pilot program to reduce water loss through leakage and pipe bursts in the Gold Coast's reticulated water supply system; a financial commitment to continue the Natural Heritage Trust; the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality programs beyond 2007; continued commitment to clean coal technology demonstration plants; a commitment to fund Queensland's projects under the Solar Cities trial announced in the federal election campaign; and funding for the full roll-out of the Bush Light program to all small Indigenous communities in Queensland not currently supplied with electricity by Ergon Energy.

The Queensland government's 20-year $55 billion infrastructure blueprint for south-east Queensland is a model the federal government could follow and I urge it to do so. Yet Canberra would not even commit to funding the Ipswich Motorway. Amongst other things, Queensland will also be scanning the federal budget papers for these: more resources to increase the number of medical training places in Australia; more aged care places for Queensland; and a commitment to jointly fund the transitional care program beyond 2006-07 to enable provision of therapy and rehabilitation of people with postacute and subacute care. Queensland deserves a better deal.

Erglis, Ms W; Bundaberg Base Hospital

Mr SEENEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the ongoing vilification of whistleblower nurse Wendy Erglis, who, because she made Queenslanders aware of mismanagement, bullying and patients dying on waiting lists, is now being persecuted by the minister's department for half a million dollars in legal costs. How does the minister reconcile his department's efforts to financially break Wendy Erglis with his encouragement for whistleblowers in the health department to come forward in the wake of the tragic circumstances surrounding Bundaberg Hospital?

Mr NUTTALL: The decision in relation to the costs was a decision by the Supreme Court; it was not a decision by me, my department or this government.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr Nuttall interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member for Callide and Minister, I have a member on her feet to ask a question and you are having a conversation. Order!

Ethanol

Ms JARRATT: My question is for the Premier. The state government has for years now been at the forefront of the nation's push to develop an ethanol industry. Can the Premier inform the House if this nation-leading effort is being continued?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question and I start my answer by also thanking Tony McGrady, the Minister for State Development and Innovation, for the strategy that he has pursued on behalf of the government to expand the use of ethanol in Queensland. It is a great story. I know the member for Whitsunday is as passionate about the future of ethanol as we are. Yesterday I had the pleasure of opening Australia's first international ethanol conference, which was organised by the minister. In doing so I launched my government's $7.3 million Queensland Ethanol Industry Action Plan 2005-07, and I table copies of those plans and the program from that conference for the information of the House.

The objectives of the plan are these: to raise public awareness of and confidence in ethanol blended fuels; increase domestic demand and export capacity; create links between industry and the Queensland government to promote a market for ethanol; and assist the development of retail and distribution networks.

The world's most experienced ethanol producers are from countries like Brazil and the United States and that is why we invited five international speakers to participate in the conference from Brazil, the USA and Korea. Organising the conference was a commitment we made in our Queensland ethanol industry blueprint last year. For more than 100 years—this is important for the economy—our sugar industry flourished and until the 1990s our exporters were able to obtain a premium price for their high-quality product on most world markets. But in recent times international industry has undergone a seachange and producers in countries like Brazil have caught up with us. The resulting increase in competition has meant sugar prices have plunged and the owners and workers on the state's 6,500 sugarcane farms are at risk, as are the communities they serve. The world sugar price last Friday was US8.23c a pound. By comparison, in May 1998 it was US10.27c. I am advised that our cane farmers need to get about US9.5c a pound to get anything close to a fair return. The price has dropped as low as US5c a pound at times over the past seven years and it is one of the reasons why we are seriously exploring the development of an ethanol fuel industry.

Together with the minister I announce today that Mr Peter McCarthy has joined the department's ethanol team as the government's myth buster. Peter has vast experience in government, as a senior media advisor in ministerial offices across a range of portfolios and has a broad career in television. He knows how to communicate and promote difficult issues to industry and the community.

This plan is working. Let us take one outlet: BP. It has doubled the amount of ethanol sold between January this year and March this year. I table for the information of the House the E10 sales for the Mackay promotional sites. You can see from this graph that the amount of ethanol being consumed is dramatically improving. I say to our federal counterparts: now is the time to mandate.

Dairy Farmers Toowoomba

Mr HORAN: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to the announcement yesterday that 163 workers at the Toowoomba Dairy Farmers factory will lose their jobs as a direct result of the state government's deregulation of the dairy industry.

Government members interjected.

Mr HORAN: The members opposite were the ones who deregulated it. We voted against it.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I cannot hear the member speak.

Mr HORAN: I will start again. I refer to the announcement yesterday that 163 workers at the Toowoomba Dairy Farmers factory will lose their jobs as a direct result of this government's deregulation of the dairy industry. The Premier would be aware that the Queensland Nationals opposed and warned against this deregulation, correctly predicting that hundreds of farmers would leave the industry, thereby limiting supply, and all negotiating strength would shift to the supermarket chains. As the government has pocketed $98 million in competition payments for this reckless deregulation legislation, will the Premier now use some of this $98 million to provide significant new projects for the Toowoomba region to provide new jobs for these soon-to-be-sacked workers?

Mr BEATTIE: I will deal with the positive things that we are going to do to assist these workers, because the nonsense in the question is just that—nonsense. Deregulation was led by Warren Truss and the National Party federally. It was approved by the federal government and we fought the federal government every step of the way on deregulation.

The only reason why we were intimidated and bullied into accepting it in the end was to make sure that the farmers could get some money. That is the only reason we did it. I am not going to accept that nonsense. The opposition knows that it did it. I say to the people on the Darling Downs and the people in Toowoomba: you know what happened here. This was a federal government deregulation. And why? Because there was oversupply of milk out of Victoria. That is what happened. The Victorian National Party dominated the day and made the federal coalition and the National Party toe the line. Let us not have any more nonsense. Let us talk about what we are doing because the question is just nonsense and members opposite know it is nonsense.

The state government as quickly as possible has swung into action to assist the more than 150 retrenched workers of the Dairy Farmers milk and cheese processing plant in Toowoomba. I understand the company's decision, which is a national decision and not a local one, will affect 163 workers—124 permanent and 39 casual. Dairy Farmers say that their decision follows a significant fall in milk volumes. What have we done? A senior Department of Employment and Training officer has been despatched immediately and will be available to talk to workers and the company. The member for Toowoomba North, Kerry Shine, has already spoken with at least two major employers on the downs seeking their assistance to help place affected workers. The Dairy Farmers Queensland consolidation decision will impact, as we all know, on the Toowoomba region. Further, my government is working to assist these employees back into the work force as quickly as possible. The government will immediately provide a response group. It will be offering up to $2,000 a worker for worker assistance. This will be made up of $1,000 each in job preparation assistance and vocational training assistance. The company's decision to give nine months notice means that we do have time to prepare and work with and support these workers. This is a decision beyond our state but we will work hard to ensure that there is minimum impact on affected workers and their families. We will do our best.

We have started preparations for this assistance already; we have work being done. Once all the details of the Dairy Farmers decision are known the government could be in a position to offer a comprehensive package built around the immediate response plan. The immediate response plan is a blueprint for action for the Queensland government and communities to help mitigate the impact of business closures and cutbacks in areas where a significant proportion of the population is employed by the affected business. The immediate response group is chaired by the Department of State Development and Innovation and comprises senior officers of relevant Queensland government departments.

Activation of the immediate response plan is made on a case-by-case basis and requires relevant agencies to deploy resources outlined within the plan. We will do everything we can to help these workers and their families.

Road and Rail Infrastructure, Western Corridor

Ms NOLAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Can the minister please inform the House about plans to improve road and rail infrastructure in the western corridor?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for her question. The honourable member, together with our other powerhouse Ipswich based members, is a great advocate for one of the greatest parts of south-east Queensland. I am an unabashed fan of Ipswich. I think it is a great place. It has people who are top workers. It offers a wonderful lifestyle. It has a council that is working harder to capitalise on that lifestyle. I take great pride in the work that the Deputy Premier in particular has undertaken in relation to the infrastructure plan and what it provides for western Ipswich. I would happily live there but, as good as it is, it is still not as good as Wynnum.

Mr Johnson: Are you going to live there?

Mr LUCAS: My son often runs around Limestone Park doing cross-country and the like.

The Beattie government is investing more than $4¾ billion in Brisbane's western corridor over the next two decades under the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and program. Massive investment will transform the area, making it one of the most dynamic regions in south-east Queensland.

It is vital to get that transport infrastructure right given the expected 27 per cent population growth by 2014 in Ipswich alone. We need to look at the needs of the integrated community. One of the wonderful things about this plan is that it is not just about transport links to and from Ipswich; it is about economic development in the Ipswich area, such as in the Ebenezer and Swanbank areas. It is about being integrated.

I am delighted that the Premier announced some time ago the extension of the Cunningham Highway all the way to Yamanto. We have alternatives in relation to the Ipswich Motorway. While the federal government is still dithering, the Queensland government is delivering in relation to those road projects, construction of which will start next year.

Perhaps one of the most exciting and major announcements of all is a rail line to Springfield. This plan sees three new rail lines and two new busways. The Springfield one will be wonderful. Some $300 million will be spent on a rail line to Springfield. It will connect to the Ipswich line at Darra by 2011. We need also to improve the capacity on the Ipswich line. So the plan provides triplication of the line from Corinda to Darra and then Darra to Redbank. It will allow people who live in Ipswich's traditional areas to get better access to public transport. Thirteen kilometres of track will be built. Springfield is expected to grow from 6,000 people now to 25,000 in 2010 and 55,000 when it is fully developed.

$290 million will provide a third rail track from Corinda to Redbank. The plan also provides for building 15¾ extra kilometres of track, 11 new rail bridges and upgrades to Darra and Oxley stations, with potential upgrades to a number of other stations. Additionally, $250 million has been provided for the construction of bus priority and transit lanes on the Centenary Highway from the Ipswich Motorway to Toowong, with planning to start next year.

As the Premier indicated, we look forward in the budget tonight to real, serious dollars being put on the table by the federal government when it comes to infrastructure. I will mention only two today, although there are many more. One is the second range crossing at Toowoomba. We have asked repeatedly for the $10 million for the public-private partnership business case study. I want the federal government to come up with the money. It can even come up with that money and do the rest of the funding in the second round of AusLink. We need action on it now. We still see accidents happening on the range and in surrounding areas. Secondly, we need the money to be allocated to the Ipswich Motorway.

Time expired.

Health

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Can the minister advise of any medical evidence that suggests 'a person certified as too ill to attend work' is more likely to make a better recovery in New Zealand than at his home, say, in Redcliffe?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I was distracted. I ask the member to repeat his question.

Mr QUINN: Can the minister advise of any medical evidence that suggests that 'a person certified as too ill to attend work' is more likely to make a better recovery in New Zealand than, say, at his home in Redcliffe?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I think that question is hypothetical and is therefore out of order.

Interruption.

PRIVILEGE

Further Answer to Question

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.25 am): I rise on a matter of privilege. Earlier I was asked a question by the Leader of the Opposition about section 3.5.4 of the *Members' Entitlements Handbook*. I have now had a chance to read it. Let me draw to the attention of House—

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Acting Speaker, this relates to a matter before the House. I want to completely inform the House of my answer so that there is clarity and certainty. I draw to the attention of the House that section 3.5.4 relates to the *Members' Entitlements Handbook* and *Members' Office Support Handbook*. It does not relate to the office or expenses of the Office of the Speaker. The provision has been wrongly referred to by the Leader of the Opposition.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Resumed.

Export Awards

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: My question is for the Minister for State Development and Innovation. The opposition recently attacked funding from the minister's department being used for regional export awards. Can the minister inform the House what the reaction to this attack has been?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question. Last Thursday the Premier, my ministerial colleague the member for Townsville and a number of our members from the Townsville area attended a function in Townsville. This function was attended by many hundreds of people. The purpose of the function was to launch the Premier's Export Awards and the Townsville Regional Export Awards.

As we walked into the WMC's massive complex I was inundated by many businesspeople who were quite angry about some of the comments that had been made by the Leader of the Opposition. He claimed that these awards were simply photo opportunities for the Premier. They were absolutely astounded that any person who aspires to be the leader of this state should treat small business in this way and make a joke about business houses trying to export.

I seldom use opportunities such as that to be political. I had to inform people that the facts are that the Leader of the Opposition had accused the Premier and his department of raiding the funds of the Department of State Development and Innovation. The reality is that the department of state development is responsible for the promotion of Queensland and the economic health of our state. We were using the Premier's good name to promote exports in this state.

After the function finished I explained to them that I well understood their concerns about what the Leader of the Opposition said. They all told me that he was polling eight per cent in the polls. They accepted the fact that it will go further and further down.

Mr Mackenroth: I thought they would have said, 'Who is he?'

Mr McGRADY: Some of them did. The reality is that we have a person who aspires to lead this state pouring scorn on the efforts of businesspeople who are trying to export and, therefore, improve the economy of our state. I think it was a disgusting statement made by the Leader of the Opposition. It went right across all of those people who are trying to promote Queensland overseas. Little wonder the people of this state—92 per cent of them—do not want a bar of the Leader of the Opposition.

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Personnel

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. I understand that in a few weeks, just prior to the Treasurer bringing down this year's budget, the minister proposes to trial the use of casual staff as replacement for full-time, professional firemen in seven stations in the non-government electorates of Gympie, Tablelands, Caloundra, Toowoomba and Nicklin. I ask: how does the minister justify his department's failure to ensure a sufficient number of full-time firemen are available to perform this important, life-saving duty without having to rely on the proposed casual staff who, with respect, are not as qualified and as skilled as our full-time professional firemen in Queensland?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! One minute.

Mr CUMMINS: I thank the member for the question. I think everyone in this House would take umbrage at the member suggesting that our great auxiliary firefighters up and down the length and breadth of Queensland are not up to the job, as he has implied in that question. Our auxiliary firefighters are fine workers in Queensland, and the member should be ashamed of what he just said. We have delivered on one and three 97 per cent and 98 per cent of the time right across Queensland. With regard to the inference that anyone bar the department is trying to come up with a better model to deliver—I do not care what electorates it is—we are going to abide by the experts, and that is the best fire commissioner in Australia and the Industrial Relations Commissioner. They have come up with a better model they suggest we try. If the member thinks we should go against the Industrial Relations Commissioner, he should be ashamed of himself.

Time expired.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The minister's time has expired.

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—

22 April 2005—

- Discussion paper titled Options for future community engagement in regional natural resource management, April 2005
- Report on the implementation of the Multicultural Queensland Policy 2003-2004

27 April 2005—

- ANZ Executors & Trustee Company Limited and its Controlled Entity—Financial Report for the year ended 30 September 2004
- National Australia Trustees Limited and its Controlled Entity—Annual Financial Report for the year ended 30 September 2004
- Permanent Trustee Company Limited—Consolidated Financial Report for the year ended 29 February 2004
- Perpetual Trustees Australia Limited—Annual Report 2004
- Tower Trust Limited- Financial Report for the year ended 30 September 2004
- Trust Company of Australia—Annual Report 2004
- Response from the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines (Mr Robertson) to a paper petition presented by Mr Wellington from 828 petitioners requesting the House to retain the Moreton Mill Weir at Nambour
- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Mr Fraser from 440 petitioners and to an e-petition sponsored by Mr Fraser from 1428 petitioners request the House to provide funding for pedestrians and cyclists crossing at the Toowong roundabout in the forward capital works program
- Response from the Minister for Health (Mr Nuttall) to a paper petition presented by Ms Nelson-Carr from 1944 petitioners requesting the House to preserve the hydrotherapy pool and associated facilities at the James Cook University Campus at Vincent in Townsville

28 April 2005—

- Erratum to the Explanatory Notes for the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005 tabled on 19 April 2005
- Response from the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women (Ms Boyle) to a paper petition presented by Ms Reilly from 510 petitioners requesting the House to offer Lot 2, Registered Plan 219164 to the Gold Coast City Council to hold in trust to manage and maintain for active and passive recreational purposes for the people of Queensland

29 April 2005—

- Response from the Acting Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (Mr Palaszcuk) to a paper petition presented by Mr Hoolihan from 2171 petitioners requesting the House to establish a branch of the Queensland Police Citizens Youth Welfare Association (PCYC) on the Capricorn Coast at Yeppoon
- Response from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr Welford) to a paper petition presented by Mr Rowell from 1464 petitioners requesting the House to adopt more stringent laws to stop criminal negligence occurring

3 May 2005—

- Erratum to the Explanatory Notes for the Building Amendment Bill 2005 tabled on 19 April 2005
- Response from the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Cummins) to a paper petition presented by Mr Mackenroth from 244 petitioners requesting the House to relocate proposed construction of an ambulance station at the junction of Wiles Street and Ferguson Road to a more appropriate area

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Chiropractors Registration Act 2001, Dental Practitioners Registration Act 2001, Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Registration Act 2001, Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001, Occupational Therapists Registration Act 2001, Optometrists Registration Act 2001, Osteopaths Registration Act 2001, Pharmacists Registration Act 2001, Physiotherapists Registration Act 2001, Podiatrists Registration Act 2001, Psychologists Registration Act 2001, Speech Pathologists Registration Act 2001—

- Health Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2005, No. 63

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991—

- Uniform Civil Procedure Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2005, No. 64

Foreign Judgments Act 1991 (Cwlth), Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991—

- Uniform Civil Procedure Amendment Rule (No. 2) 2005, No. 65

Place Names Act 1994—

- Place Names Regulation 2005, No. 66

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

- Workplace Health and Safety (Codes of Practice) Amendment Notice (No. 1) 2005, No. 67

Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2004—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 68

Casino Control Act 1982, Gaming Machine Act 1991, Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, Keno Act 1996, Wagering Act 1998—

- Gambling Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2005, No. 69

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

- Workplace Health and Safety Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 70 and Explanatory Notes and Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 70

Private Employment Agents Act 2005—

- Private Employment Agents (Code of Conduct) Regulation 2005, No. 71

Health Legislation Amendment Act 2005—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 72

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—

- State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2005, No. 73

Legal Profession Act 2004—

- Legal Profession Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 74

District Court of Queensland Act 1967, Jury Act 1995—

- District Court Regulation 2005, No. 75

Fair Trading Act 1989—

- Fair Trading Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 76

Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994—

- Consumer Credit (Firefighter's Benefit Fund) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 77

Local Government Act 1993—

- Local Government (Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 78

State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971—

- State Development and Public Works Organisation (State Development Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 79

Building and Construction Industry Payments Act 2004—

- Building and Construction Industry Payments (Postponement) Regulation 2005, No. 80

Local Government Act 1993—

- Local Government Regulation 2005, No. 81

Local Government Act 1993—

- Local Government Finance Standard 2005, No. 82

Parliament of Queensland Act 2001—

- Parliament of Queensland Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 83

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—

Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2004

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title, amended—

omit—

'Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2004'

insert—

'Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2005'.

Vocational Education, Training and Employment Amendment Bill 2004

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title, amended—

omit—

'Vocational Education, Training and Employment Amendment Bill 2004'

insert—

'Vocational Education, Training and Employment Amendment Bill 2005'.

Police and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title, amended—

omit—

'Police and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004'

insert—

'Police and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005'.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (11.31 am): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 5 of 2005*.

OVERSEAS VISIT

Report

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 am): I wish to table for the benefit of the parliament a report of a trip I undertook recently to New Zealand between 10 and 12 April 2005.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Hon. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen; Office of the Speaker

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 am): I want to make a couple of comments following on from the condolence motion in this parliament this morning for the late Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen. In particular, I refer to the Premier's comments regarding the potential construction of a statue to remember Sir Joh. The belief and the view of the Nationals is very strong, and that is that he was Queensland's longest-serving Premier. He spent 41 years as an MP, with 19 of those years as Premier. Other state premiers have been recognised by way of statues in Queensland. The Premier himself referred to that this morning. It is fitting in our view that such a statue be placed on government land in the capital city of Queensland, Brisbane.

In addition, there was a recent announcement from the state government that it was moving to restore and to protect the Tree of Knowledge at Barcaldine. We know that the Tree of Knowledge has a significant connection to the Labor Party and the union movement in Queensland, and rightly so, because it is very significant. Regardless of one's political beliefs, they must recognise that that in itself gave birth to what has been a very strong and a very powerful political movement in the state of Queensland, that of course being the Labor Party and, by and large, the union movement.

We feel exactly the same way about Sir Joh. If that sort of involvement and that sort of commitment can go towards the Tree of Knowledge, then a similar commitment surely can go towards a statue of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen to be placed somewhere on government land in Brisbane. Certainly if this government refuses to do that and we make a reasonable plea, then that is something that the Nationals will do when we return to government in Queensland.

We heard from the Premier earlier when we asked questions regarding the guidelines for conduct of members of parliament in this place, including the Speaker. Our issue has never been one of the CMC's jurisdiction over guidelines in this parliament. The Nationals have a very strong view, and that is that the parliament by and large should be generally in control of its own guidelines and the enforcement of its own guidelines and its own code of ethical standards. That is something which the ethics committee recommended to this parliament, and recommended for good reason, because MPs need to understand the dynamics of this place and the enforcement that needs to go with that.

But there are matters of course which are external to that where there may be potential criminal breaches for misuse of one's allowances and those particular matters which the CMC or other law enforcement jurisdictions in Queensland have quite appropriate authority over. We have no argument with the Premier's contention about those particular guidelines that cover MPs and cover the Speaker of this parliament. Our issue is the compliance with and the enforcement of particular guidelines. I want to read through the guidelines of this place, and I will let members of parliament make their own conclusions. The one in relation to guidelines for the financial management of the Office of the Speaker simply says that in relation to overseas travel—

5.9.1 Approval

All overseas travel must have the prior approval of the Premier. The submission for approval must incorporate the objectives of the visit, the countries to be visited, the approximate length of travel, full details of accompanying persons whose costs are to be met from public funds, total estimated cost, the Parliamentary Service or other program or activity expected to benefit from the visit.

Section 5.9.2 relating to administration says—and I will not quote it all because members can look for themselves—that, in addition to complying with the standards for documentation contained in section 5.4, the Speaker needs to comply with things and be aware of certain things. But it goes on to say—

... table in parliament within one month of return or the next available sitting where the parliament is not in session at the time of the Speaker's return a written report on the overseas travel undertaken. Such report shall contain in addition to the benefits obtained from such travel the detail contained in section 5.9.1.

That is the submission which the Speaker is required to place with the Premier in order to seek approval. All we are saying is that they are the rules of the parliament. We are saying to MPs that we do need some capacity to be able to oversee those rules.

We also heard an interpretation of the *Code of Ethical Standards—Legislative Assembly of Queensland* enforcement guidelines. The Premier said a moment ago that those particular guidelines do not apply to the Speaker; they apply to other MPs. I simply say this: section 3.5.2 states—

Other guidelines

The Speaker, or the Clerk of the Parliament (as the Accountable Officer for the Legislative Assembly) may from time to time issue guidelines and determinations to clarify or assist members in interpreting their allowances and entitlements—such as, for example, the Speaker's determinations of July 2000 regarding mobile phones ... Members should ensure that they adhere to such guidelines and determinations.

Clearly, what we are talking about here are the guidelines which are issued by the Speaker and also by the Clerk of the Parliament which apply to all members of parliament—any such guidelines, not just those that are exclusive to non-office holding MPs of this place. It goes on, and section 3.5.3 states—

Assistance

If members have any doubts about the application of the handbooks or any guidelines they should seek assistance from the Speaker or the Clerk of the Parliament (or their delegates).

Section 3.5.4 then goes on to deal with consequences of a breach of the handbooks or guidelines. It is not exclusive; it is talking about all guidelines of this parliament that apply to all members. Section 3.5.4 states—

A failure to comply with the handbooks or any guidelines may require the member to reimburse any expenditure not falling within the handbooks.

That is what we have been saying all along. The rules of this parliament of course need to be adhered to by members of this parliament. The guidelines need to be adhered to by all members of this parliament regardless of the office that they hold within this place. We know that there is external jurisdiction for certain bodies such as the CMC, but a lot of what we do as MPs in whatever position we hold is judged by our fellow members of parliament. That is why the guidelines are put in place. That is why those particular enforcement guidelines are also put in place. That is what we are saying. In some ways having the Premier go out there and seek to abrogate the responsibilities that this parliament has separated for itself and to use the CMC as some sort of justification front for an action is quite wrong.

There are very clear reasons why this place should maintain a capacity to be able to judge its own affairs—as you do, Mr Acting Speaker, when it comes to applying the standing orders of this parliament or the sessional orders. Mr Acting Speaker, you need to make judgments on the behaviour of members in this place and what they are saying. No-one outside this place can impugn your responsibility to do that. If there is any doubt about that, then we refer to the guidelines of this place and the parliament as a whole makes its decision on how to enforce its own guidelines. That separation is historic. It goes back over centuries of Westminster democracy. But that does not mean that any member of this place should operate above the guidelines that this place sets for itself and which this place is ultimately responsible for upholding and enforcing.

In the time left available to me, I want to comment on the ongoing problems of this state's health system. Last week in Bundaberg the shadow cabinet met and had the opportunity to meet some of those individuals who continue to be traumatised, both physically and mentally, by the butchery of so-called Dr Patel. Despite the fact that we are a month down the track from when the initial assessments were carried out, these people have been left suffering and to date none of those people have had any corrective surgery. I understand that the first lot of surgery may be undertaken later this week.

As we have said, we think what has happened at Bundaberg Base Hospital is the tip of the iceberg in terms of what is going on in Queensland's health system. We support Tony Morris in his endeavours, but we are mighty concerned about the duplication of inquiries that we now have in this state. We have the Forster inquiry; we have the inquiry being conducted by Tony Morris; and we have the police undertaking separate investigations. People could be excused for being confused about which inquiry they should go to. We are also concerned about reports that Forster himself has been told that he cannot make recommendations that might impact upon the overall cost of running the Queensland health system.

Multiculturalism

Ms STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (11.41 am): On 30 April at Annerley in Brisbane the Rwandan community invited me to help celebrate their cultural festival. This date marked the 10th anniversary of a major period of genocide that had occurred in their traditional homeland. The Rwandan community in Brisbane is only very small. About 40 Rwandans attended the festival and I was told that nearly every member of the Rwandan community, including the children, was there.

Many Africans are setting up home in and around my area. They are a small population with huge spirit and obviously immense resilience. I pay tribute to their courage and fortitude. Each year hundreds of cultural festivals and celebrations are supported by the Beattie government. The Rwandan festival received $4,500 in funding through the Multicultural Communities Arts Program.

I was also delighted to attend the 11th annual Italian festival in Ingham on the weekend and to attend the media launch of this year's Paniyiri festival yesterday at the Greek Club. Where would we be without our Greek and Italian friends and brothers and sisters! Both of these important cultural celebrations have been supported with new and increased three-year funding through the Multicultural Assistance Program. This new three-year funding arrangement was introduced to enable major festival

organisers to better plan and coordinate their events and was a direct result of Labor's election commitments.

Election commitment funding of $1.75 million is also enabling the employment of 12 new multicultural community workers across the state. Currently, we have seven workers based at organisations including Multilink Services at Logan; the Multicultural Development Association, Queensland; the Queensland Council of Social Services; the Townsville Multicultural Support Group; and the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland—all great organisations doing great multicultural support work. These workers are increasing the participation of migrants and refugees in government decision making, ensuring that multicultural community needs are being communicated to government and non-government service providers.

Over the past year some of the achievements of these workers have included regular gatherings of Logan's ethnic community leaders, known as the ethnic community leaders forum. One of the Multicultural Development Association workers convenes and resources a community health action group. The Princess Alexandra, Royal Brisbane and Mater mothers hospitals have invited this group to provide input into service delivery policies and procedures to ensure that they are more sensitive to the health needs of migrants and refugees.

The QCOSS worker has coauthored an outstanding report that examines child care issues affecting families and communities of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The Townsville worker has improved the level of participation by members of ethnic groups in community renewal programs in Townsville. In particular, in partnership with Vincent renewal in Townsville, she has developed and delivered a leadership training program for Vincent residents from non-English speaking backgrounds. The workers' achievements are many and varied. That is why we have put the bulk of our multicultural election commitment funding into employing more community workers on the ground.

Today, Peter Costello delivers the federal budget. What goodies can we expect from the highest taxing government of all time in Australia for the multicultural community? With the great influx of migrants and refugees, there is an ever-increasing need for support for these people. Many of them are desperately needing more appropriate housing. Many are desperate for jobs, for better health care and for more support in schools. For instance, it is estimated that the Sudanese community in Brisbane has an unemployment rate of about 90 per cent. But those people have used their initiative. They have worked with government agencies to set up some employment strategies. They are very keen to get federal and state support for these. So will the federal budget deliver increased funding to improve services and support for migrants and humanitarian, including refugee, entrants? Will it increase funding for health services for refugees and promote employment and training initiatives for refugees? Will it provide an increased allocation of resources to build interpreting and translating capability?

Importantly, more funds are needed urgently to set up community support networks so that all children can be released immediately from detention centres. More funding is needed urgently so that all adults in detention can experience more rapid and thorough health and security checks so that they, too, can be released into the community and supported well in the community. The Howard Costello government is the highest taxing and most mean-spirited government this nation has ever seen. In fact, it is the most un-Australian government we have ever seen in this country.

Law and Order

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (11.46 am): Recently there has been a lot of community and media interest in the issue of law and order. I welcome a healthy and open debate about the issues that impact on crime in our society. This morning, I would like to contribute some personal observations and comments to this debate.

I have a lovely daughter who is six years old. I love and care for her deeply. I endeavour to provide as much support as I can for her. I also understand that for her to grow into a healthy adult, she needs to hear the word 'no'. I will do many things to help my daughter learn and one of those things is to provide her with limits. This means that on occasions I will not grant her her particular request.

During my daughter's development many people and organisations will contribute positively and negatively to her development. It is fair and reasonable that I, as a parent, expect some of these institutions to have a positive impact. People and organisations such as her school, her teachers, her friends, the police, doctors, her sports clubs and, of course, I as her father should all contribute to her growth. I hope and pray that my daughter grows up to be a law-abiding, caring, contributing member of our society.

If, heaven forbid, she does not, then a range of people and organisations may have contributed to this failure. However, it is too simplistic to identify one of these people or organisations in isolation and blame them. As the saying goes, success has many parents, but failure is an orphan. Many factors contribute to a person's growth and development. One should not isolate just one factor when praising a successful person. The media should not try to isolate one factor and try to blame it for aberrant behaviour.

When discussing the causes of positive and negative behaviour, we should not ignore the issue of individual choice. As a parent, I teach my daughter to be responsible for the decisions that she makes. I am keen for my daughter to learn that there are consequences for her actions. This lesson appears to be lost on members of the media and many other people in today's society. In the hope of generating sensational headlines, the media identifies one factor alone and preaches a simple solution. Real life is not that easy. Not often is there an easy solution.

Recently, there has been some discussion about police officers pursuing vehicles. I assume that many of us in this House have been intercepted by police to undergo a random breath test, for the speed we may have been doing, for some defect in our car, or maybe for a casual look at our licence. It does not matter why the police intercepted us, but when those blue lights on the top of the police car went on, or when the police officer walked out in front of us with a torch or a stop sign, we had a choice. We could comply with the instruction to pull over and stop, or we could accelerate and try to evade the police. The driver of the vehicle at that time has a personal decision to make. There is no other person behind the wheel of the vehicle, only the driver. No matter that person's position, no matter what that person may or may not have done, that person has a decision to make: to comply with the police officer or to risk their life and the lives of other road users and try to outrun the police.

We have seen examples of the media criticising the light penalties that are handed down for both traffic and criminal offences. We have to ask the question: why would any rational person risk his or her life and other road user's lives by evading what the media describe as light penalties? Do the media ask that question? No. The media will then quite happily change positions and vilify the police for pursuing the suspect. It is not normal for a person to risk his or her life and other people's lives to avoid a traffic fine.

Parliament has seen fit to pass laws that create offences such as unlawful use of a motor vehicle, dangerous driving and driving under the influence of liquor. We quite rightly expect our police to enforce those laws. Police are highly trained and have strict policies and procedures to comply with when pursuing offenders. I know there are many occasions when pursuits have been terminated because the public risk outweighs the public benefit.

I have no problem with the media or any other organisation commenting on or reviewing police operations. All public servants, members of parliament included, must be accountable for their actions and so must the police. I am concerned, however, that in the media's search for cheap headlines and simplistic solutions they ignore one of the most important factors—personal responsibility. Whatever other factors are at play, the driver of a vehicle has a decision to make when intercepted by police—to pull over or run.

The media often comment that suicide is an irrational decision. It is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. The media should apply the same analysis to a driver's decision to run from police. The responsibility must stay with the driver of the vehicle, and people should not try to shift responsibility from the driver of the vehicle to the police. To contemplate killing oneself and others over a traffic fine is an appalling decision and should be condemned as such. Drivers who run from police should be condemned for the decisions they make and the subsequent consequences.

Roma College

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (11.51 am): I want to bring to the attention of the parliament a proposal by the state government to change the structure of education in Roma. Seventeen years ago an innovative structure for education was put in place—a P-3 junior school, a middle school from years 4 to 10, and the Roma College from years 11 to 12. The Roma College includes a senior program delivered by TAFE.

Over the years the education structure in Roma was refined and Roma now has excellent education facilities. No complaints have been made to my office in relation to the education structure in Roma. Recently the government has stated that it wants the structure changed to a P-12—that is, incorporate the three campuses into one administration and scrap the Roma College. I have been advised that the reason for the government's action is to have a seamless, better coordinated experience for students and smoother pathways.

The consultation period has commenced with parents, teachers, students and the community. There has been very little support for change expressed in that consultation process. Students have submitted a petition to me, signed by 464 people. I will be delivering that to the Clerk today for official tabling. Students from the Roma College have also signed their own unofficial petition, which states—

RE: The proposal that a P-12 school be established in Roma from 2006 to take over the current operation of the junior school, middle school and the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE.

Dear minister,

We the students of Roma Tafe year 11, 12 ask you to leave the system alone. The environment we now enjoy to learn in is perfect, why change something if it aint broke why fix it?

Yours sincerely,

Students of the Roma Tafe

Both sides of this piece of paper have been signed by students. There are probably over 100 signatures, which in itself is quite significant. I seek leave to table the petition.

Leave granted.

Mr HOBBS: An innovative student, Johanna Dore, who is doing a communications course at Roma College, put together a video which shows strong support for the college from existing students. That video was shown at the consultation meetings that were held recently. It was shown at the meeting I went to, and I believe it was shown at the meeting before that and at some other meetings as well. That video showed a lot of the students and their reaction to what is being proposed. Quite frankly, I was surprised at the depth of feeling about the proposed change. They did not want the system changed. They really believe that the education system they presently have, which is unique in Queensland, is in fact one of the better systems. The students, and in particular Johanna, did an excellent job with that video. Other students have been quite active as well signing petitions and supporting Roma College.

There is no guarantee that TAFE will be there in its present form beyond two years. They are saying that for two years all the courses will go through. But the reality is that, when three-quarters of the income of that TAFE is taken away, there will be only a shell left. As it is now, the Roma TAFE is supporting Charleville, St George, Cunnamulla and other areas. It really does not have the resources. It is quite clear from talking to people out there that nobody is at all convinced that the TAFE will continue and will be a strong force under this proposal. It will be decimated. We believe one of the reasons for this change is to try to save some money.

Consultation was very short, and in many instances it was very, very short. Roma parents have good education options. St John's has a P-12 and the state runs a junior and a middle school as well as Roma College. I had a meeting, fortunately, with the deputy director-general, Jenny Cranston, and I asked her what would happen if the Roma people did not want this P-12 as proposed. She said to me, 'If they don't want it, they don't have to have it.' That is important because at this stage, as far as I can see, they certainly do not want it.

In the time I have left, I would like to quickly read a letter that was sent by a lady from Roma, Mrs Lyn Garvie. I will read just one paragraph. The letter states—

I can assure you that I am not an antagonistic person nor am I a radical, my time is precious and I could be doing many other things than sitting down writing letters—

Time expired.

Australian Oil Reserves

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (11.56 am): The Howard government has many failings but in no area has its lack of attention to detail and planning for the future left Australia more exposed than in the vital national concern of energy policy. Last June the Howard government produced a white paper on energy that was not only a cop-out on confronting the energy supply needs of this nation but was also within 12 months rendered utterly irrelevant by a 30 per cent increase in the price of crude oil from $US35 to $US50 a barrel upon which the paper was based.

All commentators now expect the price of crude oil to push towards $US70 a barrel during the coming Northern Hemisphere summer, again rendering the white paper increasingly out of touch. As Alan Fels and Fred Benchley pointed out in the *Australian Financial Review* last Thursday, Australia currently has sufficient oil reserves for just nine years and four months. Without imports and significant new discoveries, by 2014 the national transport sector will have ground to a halt. These figures should be cause for urgent action and even alarm by the federal government, because as dangerous as they are for national security and living standards the trend line is even worse.

This nine-and-a-bit year figure for Australian oil reserves produced by Geoscience Australia compares most unfavourably with the previous estimate of 11.1 years worth of reserves. Australia's reserves of oil have peaked and everyone knows it except the Howard government and, in particular, resources minister Ian Macfarlane. On 29 April 2005 BHP reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that oil production out of Australia's oil production mainstay, the Bass Strait, dropped by 18 per cent in 2004. Let me repeat that: BHP has confirmed that, due to 'natural field depletion' or postpeak oil production rundown, production in Bass Strait has dropped by 18 per cent in a single year.

In February 2005 the *Oil and Gas Journal*, which is the industry's bible, noted bluntly that oil production in non-OPEC countries, excluding the former Soviet Union, would peak in 2005-06. That includes Australia and that is now. I note in passing that Indonesia's continued membership of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries is in severe doubt because, as was reported in the *Australian Financial Review* of 15 April, it is now an oil-importing country after its oil production dropped six per cent in 2004.

The importance of Australia's production of oil now being in steep decline is that, according to the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association, on current trends in 10 years Australia will be producing only 280,000 barrels of oil per day while consuming around 1,030,000 barrels of oil per day. That will mean that we would be 78 per cent dependent on oil imports compared to only 30 per cent now.

On the most optimistic assessments of the federal government of oil at $US30 a barrel, these extra imports will add $US24 million per day or $US76.4 billion over 10 years to our current account deficit. As Treasurer Peter Costello rises tomorrow in Canberra to deliver his 10th budget, he should consider that further inaction regarding support for exploration alternatives and renewables will consign Australia to intolerable foreign debt, inflation and rising interest rates, yet the white paper ignores this problem and federal policy is actually exacerbating it.

The Howard government is encouraging the use of imported diesel by developing a fuel excise regime that makes off-road diesel excise-free while not supporting the use of locally produced LPG. The white paper actually states that pursuing alternative fuels like LPG as 'a large scale replacement for oil derived petrol and diesel would weaken Australia's competitiveness and its energy security position'. This is an unbelievable position for the federal government to adopt—to suggest that developing alternative fuels would be a threat to our energy security when our domestic oil production is in fact dropping like a stone. It suggests that the federal cabinet has been sniffing petrol rather than looking for ways to preserve it or find it.

The Queensland government is doing much to encourage investment in biofuels research, in hydrogen energy and exploration for carbon fuels, but we need a national commitment to deal with our looming energy shortfall. We need urgent national action and leadership to avoid an energy-led economic disaster. Even if the peak of international oil production does not happen, as the *Oil and Gas Journal* suggests, until 2015, the fact is that Australian oil production is now in free fall and the Howard government's approach is to say, 'Nothing to see here, folks. Move along.' Failure to confront this issue by encouraging both increased energy supply and oil demand restraint will be a betrayal of this nation's future. The time for action is now. The International Energy Agency has noted that biofuels such as biodiesel and ethanol need time and government encouragement to develop.

Time expired.

Overseas Trained Doctors

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.01 pm): Concerns have been expressed to me in relation to the health clearances of overseas trained doctors. In placing these concerns before parliament, I acknowledge that there are many fine overseas trained doctors who provide excellent health services to our communities, and particularly to our rural and remote communities. However, within the Gladstone electorate, and I am sure other electorates, there is a heightened sensitivity, awareness and concern in relation to overseas trained doctors and the adequacy of checks done by both Queensland Health and the Queensland Medical Board.

The current commission is limited in its scope and many in other areas of Queensland remain concerned. Questions have been asked as to what procedures are in place by Queensland Health to screen overseas doctors before they commence practice in our hospitals. Indeed, what health checks are done by the Queensland Medical Board? Australian registered doctors must fill out a statutory declaration each year as part of their renewal process which states that, to the applicant's knowledge, there is no reason to prevent the applicant from providing health services.

The question that was put to me was: do overseas trained doctors go through a similar process? This is critical when doctors come from areas where there is a high incidence of HIV or hepatitis B. I am told that often these doctors are practising in countries such as those in the African subcontinent where the incidence of HIV can be as high as 30 per cent. One could expect that doctors working in such conditions would be persistently exposed to HIV, and the question put to me is what checks are done on those doctors' HIV or hep B status not only for the protection of our community but also for the protection and, if necessary, treatment of the individual if they are found to be positive. Additionally, I am advised that there is no quarantine period for people working in high-infection areas prior to their commencement of work in rural or regional Queensland hospitals and no checks for doctors who work here on temporary resident visas or as temporary residents. I would certainly be interested in the minister's clarification on this issue.

It was stated to me that it would be a shame if an inquiry regarding Dr Patel simply used the Bundaberg superintendent and hospital manager as scapegoats to cover up the broader issue of government policy regarding overseas trained doctors and the culture of silence that pervades Queensland Health. Concerns regarding Dr Patel should have been expressed directly to the minister by the Chairman of the Bundaberg District Health Council. Unfortunately, the councils have been used by the bureaucracy in Queensland Health as a measure of how effectively such concerns have been hidden from the community and, more importantly, from the minister.

I have been told that when health councils inform the minister of their concerns the minister passes the information to the senior bureaucracy, and those bureaucrats then make it known to the district health managers that such concerns should not be allowed to surface again. It is not surprising that the current Minister for Health felt at the time when many of these revelations were exposed that he was not across the issues. The consequence is that the minister is deliberately kept uninformed, the senior bureaucracy remains unaccountable and the culture of silence is maintained within Queensland Health.

The problems that are being experienced by Bundaberg Hospital are a product of the system. That same system operates throughout rural Queensland. We may expect—but hope it is not true—that there are more Dr Patels to be uncovered. I think the community expectation is that this commission of inquiry would be set up to ensure that there are no other instances. However, I am not convinced that the terms of reference are sufficient for that check and balance to be properly achieved. Rumours abound.

The Medical Board of Queensland cannot be trusted to assess the qualifications of doctors practicing in Queensland. Their deliberations have been compromised by linking a consideration of qualification and competency to area of need status and federal government funding. The question that they possibly inevitably ask themselves is this: is a particular doctor good enough to practice where no Australian doctor would go in circumstances where the doctor will receive federal government funding? There appears to be a double standard with rural Australians being delivered a potentially lower standard of care.

These are all questions in our community, in greater or lesser detail, that have to be responded to by the commission of inquiry. Unless people's minds are set at ease, and unless they know that the inquiry has been extensive and effective, there will remain questions in the minds of people in our community as to how effective and how appropriate medical services in rural and regional Queensland are. I believe all doctors—overseas trained and Australian trained—deserve to have the confidence of the community, and this commission of inquiry is an opportunity for that confidence to be re-established.

Electricity Supply

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (12.06 pm): I rise to speak about the importance of maintaining the electricity supply in south-east Queensland in the coming months and years. I will particularly refer to the visit I made on 23 March this year, along with the honourable John Mickel, the Minister for Energy, to oversee trials under way in Greenslopes. The trials are part of the state government's implementation plan, which is to improve the reliability of power supply, improve communication systems and provide better energy service. These Energex trials are for alternative cross-arms on power poles. This is very important, especially with the shortage of hardwood timbers today; those timbers being a scarce and important resource.

The trial of more than 1,000 cross-arms across south-east Queensland is a national first. The benefits of these cross-arms are that they are hollow, they are made from glass fibre impregnated with tough plastic resin, they are lighter, they are resistant to moisture, they are resistant to fire, they are resistant to insects and pests, they have a life span of 40 years compared to that of 20 years for hardwood type cross-arms, they will bend rather than break under high stress and they have good insulation properties which should reduce electrical outages.

Mr Shine: It's great stuff.

Mr FENLON: Indeed. I take the member's interjection. He has a great interest in this matter because the cross-arms are sourced in his electorate from a Toowoomba firm called Wagners. That is technology that is developed in that area. As I said, they have good insulation properties that should reduce electrical outages. During my visit I was informed very clearly by the workers at the Greenslopes depot how these cross-arms will be far more suitable for installation in terms of their lightness, their capacity to be moved around and to be fitted. You certainly do not get splinters!

This is a great innovation. We went out and looked at some of those cross-arms installed on power poles. Power poles have been of great interest to me over the years. I have campaigned heavily over the years—certainly right through the nineties—to ensure that our power poles are well maintained and that we do not have white-ant ridden power poles. Perhaps one day we will see entire power poles constructed out of alternative materials or see a venture toward more undergrounding of electricity in the future, which I have always strongly supported.

This trial is set against a background of major reforms in the energy industry. Queensland is facing major demands in the future as the second largest energy consuming state in Australia. Over the past 10 years Queensland has experienced a 53 per cent increase in Queensland consumption. Over the next 10 years energy growth is forecast to outstrip that of our southern counterparts. As we have heard, the Somerville report is being implemented. As I have said, the plan is to improve the reliability primarily of power supply, improve communication systems and provide better energy service. Of the 44 recommendations, 14 have been fully implemented, 11 are on schedule for completion and the other 19 recommendations are long term and will be monitored and continuously improved through the annual network management plans that are required under the new Electricity Industry Code.

Apart from the trial that I have mentioned, there is also a new substation at Holland Park. Energex is in the detailed planning stage for the establishment of a new substation at Holland Park. This will service the residents more reliably in Camp Hill, Holland Park, Holland Park West and the adjoining area of Mount Gravatt. Work is going on locally. I am very pleased to see the real capital commitment to ensuring that the overall infrastructure is in place to guarantee continuity of power supply in the local area.

The Somerville report is certainly a watershed report in terms of the electricity industry in Queensland. The report provides an overview of Queensland's distribution network for the 21st century.

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fraser): Before calling the member for Toowoomba South, I acknowledge in the gallery staff and students from Coolangatta State School in the electorate of Currumbin.

Drought

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (12.11 pm): Today I want to speak about the scourge of drought that is starting to creep across Queensland again and which is impacting very heavily on many of the farming families in electorates right across the state. In parts of central and southern Queensland, in western and south-western Queensland, around the Stanthorpe and Inglewood area, and particularly around the Darling Downs and the South Burnett, this drought is becoming of massive proportions. We often hear people say, 'It's the worst I've ever seen', but so many people are now saying that this is the worst they have ever seen that we really have to sit up and take notice and bring some urgent action to bear to try to help these people through what is shaping up as a dreadful disaster. We can all hope and pray that this influence that is possibly coming down through the north-west of the state, and has been predicted since about last Friday night, does come through and bring substantial rain. Many of these places need about eight or 10 inches of rain because the dams are dry, the creeks are not running and there is no moisture profile in the soil for the planting of winter crops. We need a huge amount of rain to bring about some form of assistance for people who are at the end of their tether.

I recently received a letter from a lady in the Inglewood area. Her situation is typical of what has happened. Some parts of that area got some reasonable rain before last Christmas, but in her case the property that she, her husband and family run missed out on those rains. What has happened virtually across the Darling Downs is that from about mid January on there has been no rain but there have been heatwave conditions and unbelievably hot and dry winds. When any little rains came they were sprinkles of one or two millimetres.

It has been an almost unprecedented type of drought coming on top of dry years virtually since 1991. I have been driving down to parliament since 1991, and only in 1996 did I see a substantial and proper flow of water in Lockyer Creek. That is how bad these years have been for the last decade and a half.

About half of Queensland remains drought declared by the state government. Some 50 shires, 140 individual properties and eight part shires are drought declared at the moment. A large part of Queensland is exceptionally circumstance declared by the Commonwealth government, particularly in western Queensland.

There are a number of areas of Queensland where people have come out of or are due to come out of exceptional circumstances and because of the strict rules that apply to the granting of exceptional circumstances by NRAC, the National Rural Advisory Committee which has to apply these rules, some very difficult situations can arise. What I am calling on the state government to do, through the minister for primary industries, is to put on sufficient staff to help bring about some new EC applications. New applications can be based on changed boundaries; new applications can be based on smaller regions rather than larger regions. There is a definite need for this to be undertaken. It is urgent and needs to be done straight away.

The drought has not ended. There are concerns in areas where EC assistance is coming to an end, particularly in parts of southern Queensland, the Stanthorpe/Inglewood area and the central Queensland coast. This applies also to the Darling Downs. When these areas are considered as a large region, NRAC assesses farmers as eligible or ineligible for EC assistance. However, where there are smaller pockets and individual farmers have missed out on rain that neighbouring areas within the larger area have received, they can apply as that smaller pocket. That is why I have called on the primary industries minister to submit new EC applications on behalf of these farmers.

When the DPI makes new EC applications there is a need for the boundaries to be restructured to take into account these smaller pockets. Cuts that have been occurring in the Department of Primary Industries drought unit have to be reversed to ensure that there are enough staff to make applications. In the past it has been left to farm groups, such as Agforce and QFF, to do all the work on EC applications as there simply were not the staff or resources in the DPI.

It is also time for the Beattie government to start providing some real drought assistance rather than relying on the federal government to shoulder all the financial load. The Drought Relief Assistance Scheme has benefits, particularly for livestock farmers, but those involved in grain, horticulture and intensive industries are basically left with the pathetic Drought Loan Scheme which has seen only 110 farmers receive assistance last financial year, despite the minister's claim that 50,000 properties in 111 shires would be eligible.

By contrast, the federal government so far has paid out more than $171 million in income support and interest rate subsidies to about 8,650 drought-affected Queenslanders. The drought is not over for Queensland; it is becoming worse by the day. We need action right now from the minister so that these people are not left in the lurch.

Caboolture Rugby League Club

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (12.16 pm): In February this year the Sunshine Coast Rubgy League Division decided not to admit the Caboolture Rugby League Club to its competition. The Caboolture Rugby League Club has a proud history in the Sunshine Coast competition. Over a period of time during the 80s and, of course, before that, it won many premierships, but in recent years the club had fallen on difficult times and had not been involved at a senior level for many years. Under the new leadership of the club an application was made to be readmitted to the Sunshine Coast division. That admission was refused and it was done on the basis of four clubs voting for their admission and four clubs against their admission. I understand that the issue not to admit Caboolture was decided on the casting vote of the chair of the Sunshine Coast Rugby League Division.

Graciously, the Caboolture Rugby League Club accepted this decision. All sorts of reasons were given as to why the club should be excluded. One of the reasons presented was that there should be no bye in the competition because admitting Caboolture would have expanded it to nine clubs. There was an argument put forward that there was a shortage of players available to the club and, of course, there was the old argument that there was a lack of finance to support the club in the area.

Essentially, the decision could be compared with asking an existing Coles store and an IGA store if they want a Woolworths in the same area. What happened before the season started on the Sunshine Coast? Firstly, Bribie Island indicated that they would be unable to field an under-21 side. Then the Maroochydore club could not field a reserve grade team. Suddenly, after being assured only weeks before that every team would have a full line-up, two teams had to be found. So the Caboolture reserves and the Caboolture under-21s came to the rescue. The good news is that both teams are running second in their respective competitions. Caboolture filled the gap with an under-21 and a reserve grade team in the competition but no A-grade team. The problem with that is that there are no home games in order to generate club revenue. I know that the member for Glass House, who is a very strong supporter of the club, has been concerned about this issue as well.

It gets worse. Last week for the second time this season Gympie Rugby League Football Club, which is again a club within the Sunshine Coast division, forfeited the A-grade game. In the very early seventies the member for Toowoomba South played Rugby League in Gympie at a time when there were four club teams within the Gympie area. I think the member played for the club Suburbs. The situation is that Gympie have been unable to field an A-grade team to represent the whole town.

Before the season started all clubs assured the Sunshine Coast hierarchy that they were capable of complying with the requirements of the competition and accordingly voted to exclude Caboolture. Two weeks after that the problems started. The officials of the Caboolture club and I do not want to see other clubs fall on hard times to ensure that Caboolture enters the competition next year. My view, which I know is the view of the members for Pumicestone and Glass House, is that the competition should be expanded; I would sooner see the competition grow. The Sunshine Coast, and Caboolture in particular, is a growth area for population. It is an expanding population, one of the fastest growing areas in Australia, and as a consequence of that junior Rugby League is expanding. Junior Rugby League clubs are very strong in the area, particularly the long-term clubs at Caboolture, Burpengary and Deception Bay and, of course, very recently a new club has been formed at Narangba. The purpose of that club is to get young people in that area to play the sport of Rugby League. It has teams in the under-7s, under-8s and under-9s in its first year.

The biggest problem facing Rugby League in Caboolture at the moment is losing players to other codes, as other sports have a pathway for their junior players to senior status. The lack of a senior presence in the Caboolture area is detrimental to keeping players in the sport. It seems to me that greater due diligence of the capacity of the existing clubs to meet their commitments should have been undertaken. I know it is easier to be wise after the event. As I said before, when you ask existing clubs whether they should admit another club the answer you are bound to get is no.

I think that the 'nine teams competition so there is a bye' argument, which was the argument against admitting Caboolture, is ridiculous. Many competitions have a bye. Even the National Rugby League competition has a bye. Not admitting Caboolture was a mistake. I think what occurred was that club rivalries reared their heads in an unfortunate way. The result has been to the detriment of the game of Rugby League. I look forward to the situation being rectified in 2006 so that Caboolture can once again compete and become a major force in Sunshine Coast Rugby League.

South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (12.22 pm): I rise today to express some comments in relation to the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan released by the government nearly two weeks ago. I do so because it is a plan that in concept the Liberal Party supported. The Liberal Party outlined in the run-up to the last election a similar framework to deal with the massive population growth expected in this part of Queensland over the next 20 years.

In the run-up to that election campaign we put forward the concept of an office of urban development under Treasury and that was a policy component picked up by the government when it established its OUM. The second part of our policy was, of course, to put forward the idea of developing and implementing a regional urban development master plan for the south-east corner and again that was a policy initiative we saw the government pick up and put into place. The third and most critical part of it, of course, would be the need for a comprehensive and coordinated infrastructure plan to integrate with the development plan and to make sure that infrastructure was delivered in the most timely fashion.

Of the three components the government has put in place today, we agree with the framework, if you like, of that; we promoted that during the election campaign and we were pleased to see that come into place after the election campaign. We believe that without that identification and coordination the necessary infrastructure simply would not support the future growth within the south-east corner.

We were also concerned that it had to be a real plan of some substance, not a symbolic gesture by the government. Unfortunately, when you look at the infrastructure plan put forward by the government two weeks ago you see more symbolism than substance. We are seriously concerned about the sheer lack of new infrastructure in the plan. It underlines whether or not the government is really committed to actually delivering more infrastructure given its track record to date.

We only have to look at roads for a snapshot of what has gone on in the south-east corner over the past 10 or so years. The Queensland division of engineers released a report which gave Queensland state controlled roads a C in its assessment. It said that the government needed to improve transport announcements within the transport infrastructure plan.

The reason I outline our concerns is that when one looks at the details in the plan one finds some astounding statistics. For instance, closer scrutiny reveals that of the 98 transport projects listed in the infrastructure plan a total of 53 or 54 of them are already under way or have already been announced by the government. If we stop to think about this for a moment, we get some idea of the reason for concern. It means that the government really only has sufficient vision to provide an additional 45 projects within the transport sector over the next 20 years. On the Gold Coast there are only an extra eight projects planned over the next 20 years. On the Sunshine Coast only an extra 11 projects are planned over the next 20 years.

This really was not a visionary statement as the government tried to sell it to the general public. It is an amalgamation of many projects which are already in the forward plans of the various developments along with their funding base. The notion that this is an extra $25 billion of new money is simply false because all of that money is in the forward estimates. It was not this huge infrastructure plan that everyone expected it would be. It is a composite plan of projects already outlined, and the associated money, and a few additional ones.

Road infrastructure is our greatest concern. We are concerned not only about the number of projects and the funding of them but also about the types of projects. For instance, when one examines the projects in the greater Brisbane area one finds that some projects have been put in simply to boost the numbers—for example, the inclusion of the Redland Bay Road project, which is the widening of the existing road to four lanes.

There is no mention of other major projects which are sorely needed such as the Kenmore bypass of Moggill Road. The government has put in the four-laning of an existing road but out in the western suburbs, in the Kenmore area, where Moggill Road is in desperate need of relief, there is no such program.

Time expired.

Water Recycling

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (12.27 pm): Water recycling is a vitally important public policy issue for the Australian community. Water recycling is an example of the global village thinking globally and acting locally. There are many reasons we have to get better at recycling water. The world is facing a water crisis. The current six billion people on the planet will grow to almost 10 billion in the lifetimes of our children. Water wars are occurring now and are likely to increase.

Two billion people, a third of the world's population, do not yet have access to safe water. Sixty million people, mostly children, die each year from water related illness. This is both a moral issue and a market opportunity. Australia is a large continent with a small population to manage its land and

water. Most rainfall soaks into the ground. Only 12 per cent of rainfall runs off into rivers. Much of this is in the tropics, where there is sparse population and development. About a quarter of Australia's surface water and a third of its ground water is fully or overallocated—that is, extraction cannot increase or must be reduced. In 1997, Australia used 26,000 gigalitres of water—that is about 60 Sydney Harbours—75 per cent for irrigation, 20 per cent for urban and industrial purposes and five per cent for stock and domestic purposes.

The water crisis is not so much about supply as inefficiency—that is, wastage. Increasing efficiency has the potential to solve many apparent water shortages, and water recycling will be a major component of this. Israel leads the world in water recycling at around 60 per cent, sometimes using the water for up to eight different uses before discharging it. Australia generally recycles less than 10 per cent and, as the driest inhabited continent, we obviously have a long way to go. Queensland recycles about eight per cent of its 340,000 megalitres—that is just under one Sydney Harbour—of sewage effluent each year. The recycled water is mostly used at golf courses and the rest is dumped into rivers and estuaries.

Water is growing in value in Australia as growth in the USA, China and India drives demand for Australia's exports, most of which require substantial water inputs to produce. For example, coal must be cleaned in water so mining communities also need water. They are competing directly with rural towns and farmers.

Many existing dams are inefficient. They cost a lot to build and operate but do not provide anywhere near as much water or social benefit as expected, while creating enormous problems for fish and other wildlife in the rivers and estuaries. With continuing droughts affecting Australia, people are calling for new dams and weirs. The Queensland government ensures that new dams are built only after very careful economic and environmental assessment and planning.

The damage caused by sewage effluent being discharged into oceans, rivers and estuaries is now widely recognised. Sewage treatment plants are increasingly required to meet higher environmental standards. The costs and impacts of sewage give us yet more reasons to recycle water.

The local authorities are now facing increasing difficulty in stabilising urban potable water demands in the face of continued population growth. Attention has increasingly turned to the potential of water recycling as an additional and substitutable water resource for our cities. Desalination of sea water is also expensive and has serious environmental impacts to manage. All this means is that we have to accept that future growth depends on our ever greater efficiency of use rather than new dams and water resources. We must come to recognise that in a dry country waste water effluent, stormwater and rainwater are complementary additional water resources rather than disposable problems.

It is clear that we have no choice but to make better use of our recycled water, stormwater, rainwater and additional water resources. The Queensland government's water reform program and recycling strategy have set up favourable parameters for encouraging recycling at a local and state level.

Recently, I had the pleasure of opening the office of a new water recycling business in my electorate—GBG Project Management Pty Ltd. I was pleased to be joined by my colleague the member for Greenslopes. The company is set to do some remarkable work in this area. I congratulate Graham, Brendan, Geoff and the other directors for their initiative. I wish them and all other businesses in the waste water recycling area great success in this crucial area.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Male): Order! The time for matters of public interest has expired.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Trade and Investment Mission

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.32 pm), by leave: On 19 April I presented an outline report on the trade and investment mission I led to Indonesia, Vietnam and Japan from 4 to 16 April. I have now completed a full report on the mission, which was extremely successful. I table it for the benefit of all members along with a report by my wife on the activities she undertook. I also table a box full of detailed material and associated information related to that report. I seek to incorporate more details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

One of the most noteworthy results of the mission was the decision of the Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai to visit Queensland for two days with several of his Ministers.

The fact that Mr Khai visited Queensland on Friday and Saturday of last week, less than a month after I had invited him, augurs well for an increase in trade and jobs.

When I met Prime Minister Khai in Ha Noi on April 8 he had already arranged a visit to New Zealand and Australia and I didn't imagine he would be able to come to Queensland.

I was, therefore, pleased that he visited Queensland immediately after his meeting with Prime Minister John Howard in Canberra.

Vietnam, with a population of 81 million and gross domestic product growth of about seven per cent a year, can be an important trading partner for Queensland.

Demand in Vietnam for imported products has increased by a third in recent years

Tom Burns, Special Trade Commissioner, has been creating opportunities for Queensland exporters and has already been responsible for major exports of dairy and beef cattle and other agribusiness.

I believe we should also attract more Vietnamese students to Queensland and that we should work with the Vietnamese Government in co-operating on biotechnology research.

We arranged a program for Mr Khai in which he visited the University of Queensland to see the excellence of our teaching facilities and our research capabilities and went to the Gold Coast the day after for a presentation by Griffith University.

Our climates give Queensland and Vietnam great biological diversity and I feel sure that we can collaborate on biotechnology research, development and commercialisation.

Prime Minister Khai inspected the Queensland Bioscience Precinct and the Institute of Molecular Bioscience to gain an appreciation of our capabilities in biotech research.

Vietnam is anxious to develop its tourism industry so the Prime Minister was shown a small part of our expertise in tourism development in Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

I hosted an Official Reception and State Dinner for Prime Minister Khai on Friday and I hope that my visit to Vietnam and Prime Minister Khai's visit to Queensland lead to many years of co-operation and mutual benefit.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Horse-Riding Trails

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.32 pm), by leave: Today the government unveils the first in a network of trails and tracks that will build Queensland into one of the world's great horse-riding destinations. As a series of maps I will table shows, horse riders will be able to enjoy 236 kilometres of continuous, picturesque, varied tracks in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. The new Noosa-Tewantin network will be almost four times greater than the existing 66 kilometre system. I want to stress that the new Noosa-Tewantin network will be almost four times greater than the existing 66 kilometre system. The full length will be in safe, beautiful surroundings away from cars. The system will be permanent.

In November last year, the minister for environment, Desley Boyle, and I met with representatives of the Sunshine Coast horse-riding community here at Parliament House. At that meeting I, along with the minister, gave a commitment that we would work hard to deliver a new, secure network of horse-riding trails. Today we start delivering. The new tracks are almost exclusively on water reserves, easements and other public lands. The majority of the network will be complete in 12 months, while some sections may take a little longer to secure.

Work has begun in Tuchekoi Forest and Tewantin Forest reserves and minor works such as slashing, low branch removal and creation of barriers for safe riding will soon begin on other tracks. This will be the first of similar horse networks in south-east Queensland. Sections of track are on lightly used gazetted roads that will traverse state forests earmarked to become national park. The rides will be scenic, at times breathtaking. Riders and horses will enjoy a variety of woodlands and forests and have views of Mothar Mountain, Mount Cooroora, Mount Cooroy, the Cooloola coast and Lake Cootharaba. The new tracks or trails will meet the tributaries of the Six Mile Creek system, and the creek crossings will offer inviting, cool, shady rest areas.

The new network will consist of the following: a 66 kilometre existing network; new tracks through Yurol and Ringtail bordering Tuchekoi and Tewantin Forest reserves; trails linking Lake Cootharaba to the Noosa Trails Network; and the development of a trail along the northern boundary of Tewantin Forest reserve. The trails will cross Noosa shire from east to west and north to south, joining pony clubs at Cooran, Cooroy, Pomona and Tewantin and the villages of Kin Kin and Boreen Point and linking with the north of Maroochy shire. The Noosa-Tewantin network—and I stress this—will be followed by similar networks in the Gold Coast hinterland, Mapleton, Bellthorpe and western Brisbane, and work is being done on those at the present time. Of course horse riders in south-east Queensland—that is, Noosa to the Tweed River and west to the Darling Downs—will continue to have access to 150,000 hectares of state plantation land, 9,000 hectares of conservation park and 36,000 hectares of our new national parks for up to nine years while the government finalises the new secure trail networks.

The local riding community has been calling for a network of trails that will be available forever. No-one has been more vocal on their behalf than the member for Nicklin, Peter Wellington, and supported by the member for Noosa. I am pleased to be able to tell the member for Nicklin today that he

has had a win. I also thank Noosa Shire Council and the member for Noosa, Cate Molloy, for working with us. The people of the Sunshine Coast will reap the benefits because this will be another tourism drawcard as well as a great asset for Sunshine Coast riders.

I table three maps for the information of the House. The first map sets out the existing trail network—the one that I made reference to before; that is, the 66 kilometres of existing network. The second map relates to the area that is currently being determined, an area that is already available from today and some that need a little bit more work. The third map is what the final package will be incorporating—what is currently the position, what has been determined today and what will be worked on; that is, the future full plan. I seek leave to have more details incorporated in *Hansard* for the information of all members.

Leave granted.

236km of continuous, picturesque, permanent tracks in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.

New Noosa-Tewantin network will be almost four times greater than the existing 66 kilometre system.

- 170 kilometres of new track,
- 66km of existing network
- new tracks through Yurol & Ringtail bordering Tuchekoi & Tewantin Forest Reserves
- trails linking Lake Cootharaba to the Noosa Trails Network, and the development of a trail along the northern border of Tewantin Forest Reserve.

168 km is available TODAY. A further 21 km requires only minor work, with the remaining 47 kilometres to be completed over time.

New tracks are almost exclusively on water reserves, easements and other public lands.

The majority of the network will be complete in 12 months, while some sections may take a little longer to secure.

This will be the first of similar horse networks in South-East Qld—in Gold Coast Hinterland, Mapleton, Bellthorpe and Western Brisbane

Sections of track are on lightly used gazetted roads that will traverse state forests earmarked to become national park.

Riders in SEQ (Noosa to the Tweed River and west to the Darling Downs) will continue to have access to—

- 150,000 hectares of State plantation land
- 9,000 hectares of Conservation Park, and
- 36,000 ha of our new National Parks for up to 9 years while the govt finalises the new secure trail networks.

A tourist drawcard as well as great for riders in SEQ.

Mr BEATTIE: I also table a brochure that has been distributed as part of this information for local residents. I should highlight again that this Sunday is a community cabinet day. By releasing this today, the minister and I are giving people in the Sunshine Coast and that community an opportunity to study the detail and come and talk to the minister and me on Sunday. We are releasing this as part of consultation with the community. I will ensure that any member who is interested such as the member for Gympie, the member for Noosa and any other members, including the member for Ferny Grove, who I see is interested will receive a briefing. For all of those members, the minister will arrange for appropriate briefings.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Lockhart River Plane Crash

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.38 pm), by leave: A community memorial service for the victims of Saturday's Lockhart River plane crash will be held in Cairns tomorrow. It will be at St Monica's Cathedral in Abbott Street at 11 am. The Minister for Police and Corrective Services, Judy Spence, the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women and member for Cairns, Desley Boyle, and the member for Cook, Jason O'Brien, will represent the government. Saturday afternoon's crash was a cruel reminder of the realities of living and working in a state of 1.74 million square kilometres. The people involved were wonderful people. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those grieving and also to those working in the most difficult of conditions to gather the remains for loved ones and to also determine the possible cause. The police minister will have more to say on this as things develop, but I am sure that all members of the House will join with me in extending sympathy to those who have lost loved ones. This afternoon I will be moving an appropriate condolence motion, and that will be supported by the minister for police and the member for Cook. I table for the information of the House a police media advisory from yesterday which set out the names of those who were tragically victims of this crash who lost their lives. Again, our sympathies go to their families.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Illegal Fishing; Cane Toads

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.39 pm), by leave: Last Saturday, 7 May 2005, I travelled to Darwin to hold discussions with the Chief Minister, Clare Martin, about a range of issues of importance to both Queensland and the Northern Territory. I am pleased to inform the House that Ms Martin and I signed a cooperative agreement to jointly tackle illegal fishing in northern Australian waters. Although protecting Australian waters from illegal fishing is a Commonwealth responsibility, there is much that the Northern Territory and Queensland can do to help detect foreign fishing boats. Twenty boats were caught in the Gulf of Carpentaria and off the Arnhem coast in just one week last month—and that is illegal boats, of course. Commercial and recreational fishing are important industries in both Queensland and the Northern Territory and they need to be protected. The illegal fishermen had destroyed their own waters, and they must be prevented from destroying ours. I table a copy of that agreement. I also table a copy of various media stories covering my visit. I also table a copy of a letter from Clare Martin inviting me to go to the Northern Territory.

I also highlight to the parliament that one of the other announcements we made while I was in Darwin related to tackling the cane toad. As members would understand, there is a great deal of sensitivity in the Northern Territory about the cane toad. I am delighted to announce today that as part of the Territory's collaboration with Queensland in fighting the cane toad Clare Martin announced when I was in the Northern Territory that her government will contribute $100,000 towards the cost of research at the University of Queensland's Ecology Centre to identify a toad-specific pathogen. I am pleased to have that partnership. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This will also involve a partnership agreement between the Charles Darwin University and the University of Queensland.

The Territory-funded research will also examine the effects of four potential long-term control methods on cane toad populations:

- A toad-specific pathogen;
- Release of sterile males;
- A cane toad specific toxin; and
- A genetically-modified organism that would interfere with the development of the cane toad.

I particularly wanted to discuss progress in the development of gas fields off the coast of the Northern Territory and the potential for that gas being piped to Queensland.

We were joined for this briefing by Andy Andrejewskis, Director of Petroleum Development in the Office of Territory Development.

I also wanted to learn how the Northern Territory was dealing with feral animals and other pests.

Ms Martin and I were joined for this briefing by David Ritchie, the executive director of Conservation and Natural Resources in the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and the Environment.

We also discussed ways in which we can co-operate in attracting more tourists to northern Australia.

On Saturday evening I talked to business leaders from the Northern Territory and from South Australia at a formal dinner and gave a speech on how the Smart State and the Northern Territory could benefit in the development of northern Australia.

I thank the Chief Minister for helping to make this a very successful day.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal Budget

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.41 pm), by leave: Tonight the federal budget will be brought down, and I am concerned that Queensland is not getting a fair go out of this federal government. I have set out in a ministerial statement the details of what we need in order to be given a fair go by the Prime Minister and Peter Costello. I seek leave to have those details incorporated in *Hansard*. I hope it is acted on tonight.

Leave granted.

The Federal Budget will be a fiasco unless it includes a massive boost in infrastructure funding.

The Prime Minister and his Federal Treasurer have halved real funding on infrastructure such as roads, rail and ports.

As the heaviest taxers since Federation, they have scooped up Australians' hard-earned dollars but failed to use that money wisely.

That is a pathetic legacy.

Tonight, they must make amends.

As well as investing seriously in services such as health, education and housing, they must plan and invest in infrastructure to build the nation for our children.

Tonight's the night for the Prime Minister and his Treasurer to show Queenslanders they care about the future, by committing to the following projects:

- $870 Million for full funding of the Ipswich Motorway upgrade in line with previous federal government commitments
- $1.05 Billion for the road component of the Gateway Upgrade project
- Matching funding for work we are doing on the Pacific Motorway upgrade
- $220 Million for the Brisbane Urban Corridor study recommendations
- $50 Million for the Warrego/Brisbane Valley Highway interchange
- Funds for the extension of very high speed broadband to all regions in Queensland by 2010
- Funds for the Bundaberg Groundwater Rescue Feasibility Study and Preliminary Design
- Funds for the Mackay Wastewater Recycling Project—a scheme to recycle most of Mackay's wastewater to better protect the Great Barrier Reef
- Funds for a pilot program to reduce water loss through leakage and pipe bursts in the Gold Coast's reticulated water supply system
- A financial commitment to continue Natural Heritage Trust and National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality programs beyond 2007
- Continued commitment to Clean Coal technology demonstration plants
- A commitment to fund Queensland projects under the Solar Cities Trial announced in the Federal election campaign.
- Funding for the full roll-out of the Bushlight Program to all small Indigenous communities in Queensland (not currently supplied electricity by Ergon Energy)

The Queensland Government's 20-year, $55 Billion infrastructure blueprint for South East Queensland is a model the federal government could follow.

Yet Canberra will not even commit to funding the Ipswich Motorway.

Among other things, Queenslanders will also be scanning the Federal Budget papers for:

- More resources to increase the number of medical training places in Australia
- More aged care places for Queensland and a commitment to jointly fund the Transitional Care Program beyond 2006-07 to enable the provision of therapy and rehabilitation to people in post-acute and sub-acute care
- More funding for cancer prevention and screening programs
- An increase in Commonwealth funding to Queensland state school students of at least $150 million this year, rising to $180 million per year by 2008
- More equitable funding for English as a Second Language students, Indigenous students, and students with a disability
- Administrative funding for States and Territories for Investing in Our Schools capital infrastructure program
- Funding for a National Student Destination Survey to track education and labour market status after secondary education
- Tax concessions for emergency services volunteers
- Additional funding, through the Schools Funding Agreement or the Vocational Education and Training Funding Agreement, to recognise the additional costs of providing Vocational Education and Training in schools
- An increase in R&D expenditure in Queensland. The Commonwealth currently commits only $38.46 expenditure on R&D per capita into Qld, compared to a national average of $76.54
- An increase in tax rebates and other incentives for research and development investment to increase drastically low expenditure on R&D
- More funds for Indigenous groups to facilitate Native Title negotiations for major projects and developments
- Creation of a National renewable fuels credit trading scheme
- Increased funding for the new Commonwealth State Training Funding Agreement
- A broader approach to workforce participation than welfare reform—for example, increasing the level of adult skilling through a broad range of Vocational Education and Training programs
- More concern about the productivity of people on welfare who enter or re-enter the workforce. Training and pre-vocational training to assist these special need groups to productively join the workforce needs more consideration
- Increased funding to better resource customs operations at all international entry points—sea and air—to safeguard against biosecurity incursions into Queensland primary production
- Increased funding for the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and Biosecurity Australia to better protect our primary industries from exotic pest and disease incursions
- Increased funding for border protection agencies that detect, intercept and apprehend vessels illegally fishing in Queensland waters
- Additional funding for the Co-operative Research Centre process to enable the establishment of a CRC for Climate Risk Technologies
- $20 million for the National Livestock Identification Scheme; and
- Increased support for drought affected primary producers.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland-Smithsonian Fellowships

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.42 pm), by leave: Later today I will be announcing the three 2005 Queensland-Smithsonian Fellowships. The fellowship program is one of the original initiatives under the memorandum of understanding we signed in 2000. I am pleased to advise the House that the Smithsonian Secretary, Lawrence Small, and I have agreed to extend this important relationship for another five years. It is a very significant agreement with the Smithsonian and it is an important one for the state. The Smithsonian is not only one of the world's leading museums; it is also one of the leading research institutes. The fact that it has this wide-ranging collaboration with Queensland is further proof that we are achieving our aim of being recognised as the Smart State. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

So far, 12 Fellowships have been awarded in areas such as biodiversity, reef and rainforest research, Indigenous knowledge management, art and folk culture.

Many Fellowship projects have led to further scientific collaborations.

The Third International Canopy Conference, held in Cairns in 2002, fostered a better understanding of the role of forest canopies in relation to biodiversity and climate change.

It was the first time this gathering had been held outside the United States and our scientists now continue to collaborate with their American colleagues through the Global Canopy Program.

Our collaboration on reef fish research has also led to a number of other major international scientific research programs.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bundaberg Base Hospital; Patel, Dr J

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.42 pm), by leave: As members would know, Anthony Morris QC will lead a commission of inquiry into wide-ranging issues arising from the appointment of Dr Jayant Patel to the Bundaberg Base Hospital. Apart from issues involving Dr Patel, the commission will also investigate whether improvements can be made to the way the Medical Board of Queensland works, what can be done on a statewide basis to ensure complaints and allegations are dealt with, how overseas trained doctors are dealt with from appointment right through to supervision, and what can be done to make more doctors available for hospitals across Queensland.

In addition to that commission of inquiry, the government, as a result of submissions from the AMA, has agreed, following consultation between Gordon Nuttall, the health minister, and I with our cabinet colleagues, to ask Peter Forster of The Consultancy Bureau, a man of great experience and reputation in reviewing government bureaucracy, to also carry out an assessment of administrative systems within Health. To ensure that the House is fully informed, I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* my ministerial statement as well as the commission of inquiry's terms of reference and the terms of reference for the Queensland health system review so that anyone can access both those terms of reference and that detail on the Hansard web site.

Leave granted.

The Commission and an additional Review of Queensland Health Systems will amount to the most significant and far-reaching examination of Queensland Health in living memory.

I still believe that we have one of the best health systems in the world but we can always make improvements and I am determined to restore the faith of Queenslanders in Queensland Health.

We have a wonderful team of doctors, nurses, allied health care workers and other dedicated workers in Queensland Health and the Government owes it to them to ensure they have the best support possible.

Anthony Morris is much respected in the legal world and there can be no doubt about his integrity and independence.

He will be assisted by Sir Llew Edwards, who has degrees in medicine and surgery and is a former Minister for Health in a Queensland Coalition Government, and by Margaret Vider, Director of Mission, Holy Spirit Northside, a former Director of Nursing at Holy Spirit Hospital, Wickham Terrace, and Nurse Surveyor on the Australian Council on Health Care Standards.

The Chairman has authority to allocate responsibilities between himself and the two Deputy Commissioners.

Sir Llew Edwards' is a fiercely independent, objective and skilled deputy.

He was Liberal Deputy Premier and Treasurer in the Bjelke-Petersen Government between 1978 and 1983.

Importantly, he is a medical doctor, holding a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of Queensland, and is a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators.

He was also Health Minister before becoming Deputy Premier and Treasurer.

Margaret Vider is Director of Mission, Holy Spirit Northside, was Director of Nursing at Holy Spirit Hospital, Wickham Terrace, from 1983 to 1995, and Nurse Surveyor on the Australian Council on Health Care Standards from 1991 to 1995.

She was a member of Queensland Nursing Council from 1993 to 1999 where she was Chair of the Registration Committee and a member of the Professional Conduct Committee.

Ms Vider was a Board Member of the Australian Catholic Health and Aged Care Association from 1988 to 2003 and is currently on the boards of Centacare Council, Holy Spirit Care Services Ltd and ACU National-McAuley at Banyo, Queensland Chapter.

As well—my Government will go further than holding a Commission of Inquiry into matters arising from the appointment of Dr Jayant Patel by also holding a major review of Queensland Health's administration, management and performance systems.

It will be headed by Peter Forster of The Consultancy Bureau, a man of great experience and reputation in reviewing government bureaucracy who played a key role in the Fitzgerald Inquiry into corruption and was responsible for ensuring the implementation of the recommendations of the Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry into child abuse.

The review was suggested by the AMA and its objective is to review administrative and workforce management systems to see if we can provide even better results for patients.

The review of administrative systems will examine whether improvements can be made to provide better results for patients by focusing on:

- District and corporate organisational structures and layers of decision making;
- Corporate planning and budgeting systems;
- Cost effectiveness of services compared to relevant jurisdictions;
- Effectiveness of performance reporting and monitoring systems;
- Risk management systems;
- Quality and safety systems; and
- Clinical audit and governance systems.

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Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950

COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ORDER (NO. 1) 2005

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Short Title

1. This Order in Council may be cited as Commissions of Inquiry Order (No. 1) 2005.

Appointment of Commission

2. Under the provisions of the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950*, Her Excellency the Governor, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council, hereby appoints Mr Anthony John Hunter Morris QC to make full and careful inquiry in an open and independent manner with respect to the following matters:-

(1) The role and conduct of the Queensland Medical Board in relation to the assessment, registration and monitoring of overseas-trained medical practitioners, with particular reference to Dr Jayant Patel or other overseas-trained medical practitioners.

(2) The circumstances of:

a. the employment of Dr Patel by Queensland Health; and

b. the appointment of Dr Patel to the Bundaberg Base Hospital.

(3) Any substantive allegations, complaints or concerns relating to the clinical practice and procedures conducted by Dr Patel or other medical practitioners at the Bundaberg Base Hospital.

(4) The appropriateness, adequacy and timeliness of action taken to deal with any of the allegations, complaints or concerns referred to in (3) above, both:

a. within the Bundaberg Base Hospital; and

b. outside the Bundaberg Base Hospital.

(5) In relation to (1) to (4) above, whether there is sufficient evidence to justify:

a. referral of any matter to the Commissioner of the Police Service for investigation or prosecution; or

b. referral of any matter to the Crime and Misconduct Commission for investigation or further action; or

c. the bringing of disciplinary or other proceedings or the taking of other action against or in respect of Dr Patel or any other person.

(6) The arrangements between the Federal and State Governments for the allocation of overseas-trained doctors to provide clinical services, with particular reference to the declaration of "areas of need" and "districts of workforce shortages".

AND, as a result of any findings in respect of the above matters, to make recommendations in relation to:

(1) Appropriate improvements to the functions, operations, practices and procedures of the Medical Board of Queensland, in particular in regard to the assessment, registration and monitoring of overseas-trained medical practitioners.

(2) Any necessary changes to the Queensland Health practices and procedures for:

a. the recruitment and employment of medical practitioners (particularly overseas-trained medical practitioners);

b. the appointment of medical practitioners (particularly overseas-trained medical practitioners) to regional and remote hospitals; and

c. the supervision of, and maintenance of the standards of professional practice of, medical practitioners, with particular reference to:
   i. overseas-trained medical practitioners; and
   ii. medical practitioners (particularly overseas-trained medical practitioners) appointed to regional and remote hospitals.

(3) Mechanisms for receiving, processing, investigating and resolving complaints about clinical practice and procedures at Queensland Health hospitals, particularly where such services result in adverse outcomes, both:

a. within the hospital concerned; and

b. within Queensland Health generally; and

c. through other organs and instrumentalities of the Queensland Government, including the State Coroner, the Health Rights Commission, the Medical Board of Queensland, the Queensland Police Service, and the Crime and Misconduct Commission; and

d. otherwise.

(4) Having regard to any unacceptable situations or incidents revealed in evidence, whether at the Bundaberg Base Hospital or at other Queensland Health hospitals, any systems of accountability necessary or appropriate to prevent the recurrence of such situations or incidents.

(5) In reference to (6) above, measures which could assist in ensuring the availability of medical practitioners to provide clinical services across the State.

(6) Any other action which should be taken properly to respond to the findings of the inquiry.

AND directs that, in conducting such inquiry:

1. without limiting in any manner the generality of the above, the Commissioner may have regard to and take account of the functions of:
   a. the State Coroner;
   b. the Health Rights Commission;
   c. the Medical Board of Queensland;
   d. the Queensland Police Service;
   e. the Crime and Misconduct Commission; and
   f. any Queensland Health investigation under s.55 of the Health Services Act 1991.

2. the Commissioner shall liaise and co-operate with the parallel Queensland Health Systems Review, and may refer to such Review any matter which, in the opinion of the Commissioner:
   a. has implications for the broader public health system; or
   b. can more conveniently or effectively be considered and dealt with by such Review.

AND directs that the Commissioner make full and faithful report and recommendations concerning the aforesaid subject matter of inquiry and transmit the same to the Honourable the Premier and Minister for Trade by 30 September 2005.

Applicable Act

3. The provisions of the "Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950" shall be applicable for the purposes of this inquiry except for section 19C – Authority to use listening devices.

Deputy Commissioners

4. Under section 27 of the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950*, Her Excellency the Governor, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council approves the appointment Sir Llewellyn Edwards AC and Miss Margaret Vider as Deputies to the abovementioned Commission.

Conduct of Inquiry

5. The Commissioner may hold hearings in such manner and in such locations as may be necessary and convenient. The Commissioner may:
   a. hold hearings constituted by the Commissioner, whether sitting alone or with one or both of his Deputies; or
   b. authorise his Deputies or either of them to hold hearings or exercise powers pursuant to section 28 of the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950*.

Ministerial Directions

6. The Honourable the Premier and Minister for Trade is to give the necessary direction herein accordingly.

ENDNOTES

1. Made by the Governor in Council on 26 April 2005.
2. Published in an Extraordinary Gazette on 26 April 2005.
3. Not required to be laid before the Legislative Assembly.
4. The administering agency is the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Queensland Health Systems Review

Terms of Reference

Objective:

To undertake a review of the performance of Queensland Health's administrative and workforce management systems with a focus on improving health outcomes for Queenslanders.

To specifically review:

1. Existing administrative systems and recommend improvements to support health service delivery, focussing on:
   - District and corporate organisational structures and layers of decision making;
   - Corporate planning and budgeting systems

- Cost effectiveness of services compared to relevant jurisdictions
- Effectiveness of performance reporting and monitoring systems
- Organisation and delivery of clinical support services
- Risk management systems;
- Quality and safety systems; and
- Clinical audit and governance systems.

2. Clinical workforce management systems to deliver high quality health services, with a particular focus on:
   - Recruitment;
   - Retention;
   - Training;
   - Clinical leadership; and
   - Measures to assist in improving the availability of clinicians.
3. Performance management systems including as they relate to:
   - Asset management and capital works planning and delivery
   - Information management
   - Monitoring health system outcomes

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disability Services

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.45 pm), by leave: Many people with disabilities are highly dependent on their carers and service providers, most of whom are committed, compassionate and extremely responsible. However, bitter experience, especially involving the now-defunct Care Independent Living at Bribie Island, has highlighted the need for tough measures to protect vulnerable people. That is why cabinet decided yesterday to introduce a stringent new regime to protect people with a disability from abuse and neglect. We also determined to look at further tightening the system to make it Australia's toughest. I seek leave to incorporate those details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Warren Pitt, Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, made a commitment to strengthen protection after the Adult Guardian's report concerning serious issues of abuse & neglect at Care Bribie—which remains under police investigation.

It became apparent after the Adult Guardian's report into Care Bribie that the Government did not have enough power to intervene.

I thank Warren, acting Minister Henry Palaszczuk and also the previous Minister, Judy Spence who began work on some of the reforms.

Significant changes will include criminal history checks for all staff of non-Government organisations funded by Disability Services Queensland.

Disability Services Qld staff already undergo criminal history checks.

New legislation, to be introduced this year and to take effect no later than July 2006, will require all services to meet quality & governance standards & be approved providers before they can receive disability funding.

Govt & non-Govt services will be subject to new monitoring & investigation powers & penalties, including the power to enter and search premises at any time with a warrant and during business hours without a warrant.

Deficient services will face penalties including loss or suspension of funding and the sacking of their management committee.

In an Australian first, the legislation will set out the Queensland Disability Service Standards, so funded services will be required by law to comply with the Queensland Disability Quality System.

Disability Services Queensland will be able to step in as soon as a suspicion arises of mismanagement or breach of standards.

Importantly, people with disabilities will also have the backing of legislation if they complain to their service.

These reforms will give unprecedented protection to 13,000 Queenslanders with severe or profound disabilities who receive a service or funding from the Queensland Govt through Disability Services Qld.

The new legislation will also honour an election commitment to protect people with a disability and to enhance their rights.

One of the challenges for the government as we strive to safeguard people with disabilities is that some services fall beyond the Disability Services Act.

In some instances, there is no regulation of these private services for people with a disability.

The new legislation will address this and—to take it further—we will implement a public benefit test.

This will explore whether we extend the criminal history checking regime to cover staff and volunteers at services and facilities which do not receive State Government funding.

That would be a national first.

The public benefit test will also examine other ways of improving the safety and quality of disability services, whether delivered or funded by Government or in the private sector.

This work will proceed separately from the new disability legislation.

This reform package will buttress the government's funding of disability services, which—under the 2004-05 budget—will be more than 240% higher in 2007-08 than when we came to office.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Curragh North Project

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.45 pm), by leave: The Friday before last I officially launched a $290 million unique central Queensland coalmining project. The Curragh North project offers up to 100 new jobs and is one that will play a role in keeping electricity prices down. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Curragh North creates jobs, earns export income and financially benefits all Queenslanders through royalties and rail freights paid to the State.

This unique venture also offers a pricing structure for the State-owned Stanwell Power Station that enables it to keep electricity costs at a minimum.

The Curragh North Project, 200 kilometres west of Rockhampton, and 14 km north of Blackwater, is a $290 million expansion, operated by the Wesfarmers group—under an arrangement with the original leaseholder—the Stanwell Corporation.

Production is being increased from five million tonnes of export coking coal—to seven million tonnes of export coal when completed which is expected to be end of 2006.

In addition, Curragh will continue to produce 2.5 million tonnes of thermal coal a year for Stanwell power station.

Stanwell benefits from this project through its entitlement to a rebate on its thermal coal purchases when Curragh's export coal price exceeds about $60 a tonne.

The rebate will be equal to 25% of the price per tonne above $60, multiplied by Curragh's total export tonnage—that's Smart business—by a Smart corporation in the Smart State.

Coking coal prices more than doubled on April 1 to around $166 a tonne—the benefit to Stanwell, as well as Wesfarmers, will be very significant at those levels in years to come.

The expansion extends the life of the Curragh Project to 2026. It began in 1983 with a 20-year life span.

Apart from being a major expansion the Project offered more new jobs and security of employment in Blackwater.

It will be great for the economic stability of Blackwater.

The Project is now in a position to ultimately be expanded to produce 10 million tonnes of coal a year.

Thiess has won contracts for both civil construction and mine pre-stripping with 100 workers on civil works and 130 on the pre-stripping.

When complete the Project means 75 to 100 new full time jobs.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ethanol

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.45 pm), by leave: As members would know, the government is fanatically committed to developing an ethanol industry. The focus is again on ethanol and renewable fuels and for all the right reasons. In early March I told the House that ethanol production in the United States increased 21 per cent between 2003 and 2004, rising to 3.4 billion gallons last year. That highlighted that it is a massive industry and getting bigger. However, there are some problems. I seek leave to incorporate more details in *Hansard* so that members can work with us to see this industry develop.

Leave granted.

I made the point then and remake it now—imagine that sort of impact in some of our regional communities!

We must do the same.

As I said here in late February and again in March my government has for years been calling for a bipartisan approach for a national 10 per cent ethanol blend in fuel.

In recent times we are heartened that Queensland Nationals Senator-elect Barnaby Joyce has joined our call—as has Queensland Nationals Senator Ron Boswell, however we have always been frustrated that the Liberal dominated Federal Government was so obstinate, but I now believe that is waning.

Yes—our sustained pressure is paying off.

Last week in The Financial Review Michael Baume—the former Liberal MP and one-time John Howard staffer—made some interesting observations.

Apart from outing Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson as not agreeing with a CSIRO 2003 anti-ethanol report, Baume's view is that the PM was willing to change his mind on ethanol if the scientific and other evidence coming from government were to change.

This follows John Anderson recently telling The Financial Review that Australia risked falling behind the rest of the world in the development of its biofuels industry.

Well its about time and Baume would not be committing pen to paper in a national forum if he did not think there was the possibility of change.

This is an issue beyond partisan politics and there must be change.

I look forward to those opposite joining my government in pushing for a national E10 position.

There is however one issue in Baume's article that did worry me.

He noted and supported a Victorian union leader's comments that the politics should be taken out of the issue.

Baume said that Bill Shorten's wish will come true only if the critics stop regarding ethanol as another Nationals scam to divert taxpayers' money to its rural constituency.

When such a well placed person like Baume writes of another Nationals scam I am worried—but on this issue we want it known that we want this to progress to benefit all struggling rural and regional economies.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Exports

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.45 pm), by leave: Queensland continues to power as the nation's export engine room, with overseas sales rising by almost $5 billion in a year. In the 12 months to the end of March, Queensland exports rose by $4.8 billion to a record $24.1 billion. This is the best 12-month export period on record. In the March quarter alone, our overseas merchandise exports soared by 30.6 per cent to total $5.5 billion. Without Queensland, Australia's $2.7 billion trade deficit would be even more of a shocker. Queensland coal led the charge with a 53.9 per cent increase to $2 billion. This is our future and I seek leave to incorporate more details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Processed minerals and metals (predominantly non-ferrous metals) picked up $29.9% to $620 million.

The merchandise category that is largely sugar rocketed by 31.5% to $939 million, and meat and meat preparations sales rose by 16.9% to $631 million.

Exports of 'other manufactures' such as machinery and transport equipment rose by 6.9% to $419 million.

These numbers are a resounding endorsement of Queensland exporters, who are growing jobs as well as profits.

Exports mean jobs.

It's no accident that at the same time as our exports were soaring, unemployment was diving—as low as 4.4% in March.

The best customers for Queensland products are markets where the government is applying Smart State trade strategies—including trade and investment missions by Ministers and myself.

The value of merchandise exports to Japan in the last three months rose strongly (up 31.3% to $1.5 billion), driven by a 52.8% increase in the value of coal sales to Japan.

North-East Asia (excluding Japan) was up 35% to $1.4 billion and South-East Asia rose by 9.8% to $366 million.

Exports to the UK rose 35.3% to $173 million and the EU also increased by 20.0% to $573 million.

Exports to New Zealand were up 13.3% to $199 million and sales to the United States rose by 8.1% to $219 million.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education and Training Exports

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.46 pm), by leave: New advice to me from Queensland Education and Training International highlights the imperative for us to continue innovating or risk losing our globally competitive edge in export education. It appears that some of Queensland's traditional source markets for overseas students are becoming our competitors. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This is not unique to Queensland—it is a national trend.

January enrolments from countries including Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand and Indonesia have fallen when compared to January 2004.

Malaysia and Singapore are emerging as serious competitors for international students.

There are also signs that Thailand, China and India are becoming educational hubs in Asia.

Queensland is still the Smart State, and in 2004 we recorded a 32% increase in Chinese students and a 27% increase in Indian students.

The value of our education exports has grown by 82% since we established Queensland Education and Training International in late 2001, and the sector now employs about 9000 people.

However, factors such as the strong Australian dollar and rising tuition fees are impacting on Australian education and training exporters.

An overseas student's annual living expenses here are between $15,000 and $18,000, whereas in Malaysia the cost is about $3,000 and in Singapore expenses range from $7,000 to $18,000.

Malaysia is promoting itself as a quality, affordable regional education centre through road shows, seminars and exhibitions by the government and private sectors.

It has education promotion offices in the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Vietnam and China.

Malaysia can boast of a multi-ethnic and trilingual society, where Bahasa Melayu, English and Mandarin are spoken. English is the primary education language.

It is perhaps instructive that 24 Malaysian students arrived at QUT in March to study English-language teaching, as part of Malaysia's push to improve the quality of its English teachers.

Meanwhile in Singapore, government policies will create a series of new university campuses focused on recruiting internationally.

Hong Kong and China are also working to quickly build their abilities to service overseas students.

This industry is a case in point for why we must continue to innovate, or else we will stagnate.

In March I informed the House of almost $800,000 in government funding to help 16 education and training organisations and clusters vigorously promote Queensland to overseas student markets.

Queensland Education and Training International is continually working with the industry.

It is building our reputation, and also diversifying by casting a wider net for source countries and attracting students from Queensland's traditional source markets to sectors such as vocational education and training to meet skills development needs.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Premier of Queensland's Export Awards

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.47 pm), by leave: Last Thursday in Townsville I launched the statewide 2005 Premier of Queensland's Export Awards. These awards recognise achievements by Smart State companies that are generating jobs and wealth for Queensland through the sales overseas of their goods or services. I invite members to encourage people to nominate. To assist to achieve that, I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Our regional exporters have been big supporters of the export awards with 80 percent of last year's nominations coming from regional Queensland. That's why I decided it was appropriate to launch this year's awards in a region.

In a new innovation this year, Queensland companies will be able to nominate online.

Queensland is the first state to implement an internet-based nomination system for its Export Awards program.

The Export Awards are a key part of the Queensland Government's strategy to encourage exporters and showcase our globally competitive industries.

One in five jobs depends on exports, a figure that rises to one in four jobs nationally.

Queensland trades with 187 countries around the world and new markets are opening up to us.

Japan, Korea and the USA remain our top three markets, but the export profile is changing dramatically, most notably the ever rising importance of China.

Queensland exporters have also responded to increased opportunities in our region, particularly in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

As political situations change and economies grow, we are also looking further afield to market in parts of Africa, Russia, the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe.

In 2003–04 Queensland's exports of goods and services totalled nearly $27 billion, an increase of more than 27.6 percent since 1998-99.

The Premier of Queensland's Export Awards were created to publicly recognise and celebrate the achievements of our exporters and to encourage more companies to take up the export challenge.

Anything we can do to encourage more exporting by Queensland companies is worthwhile because it generates more jobs for Queenslanders.

Online applications for the 2005 Premier of Queensland's Export Awards can be made by visiting www.exportawards.qld.gov.au, by contacting the Awards Secretariat on 3224 4548 or emailing exportawards@premiers.qld.gov.au.

Entries close on Wednesday 27 July 2005.

The winners will be announced at a gala black tie dinner at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on Thursday, 27 October 2005.

All state winners automatically become finalists in the Australian Export Awards to be held in Sydney in December.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Wine Industry

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.47 pm), by leave: More than 150 delegates from Australia's leading wine regions attended the nation's first wine export conference, which I had the pleasure of opening in Brisbane last Wednesday. The two-day conference was another milestone in the development of our industry as it demonstrated that Queensland is serious about its role in the Australian wine industry. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard* to encourage Queenslanders to drink more of our wine.

Leave granted.

Australian wine exports have more than doubled in recent years, from 35 million cases in 2000 to 71 million cases in 2004.

Wine exports are worth more than $2.74 billion and, outside Europe, Australia is the largest wine exporter in the world.

Wine has been produced in Queensland from the earliest days of European settlement.

In the late 19th century, we even exported wine to Europe.

Our oldest winery, Romavilla, dates back to 1863.

Queensland is a relatively small wine producer when compared to other states, accounting for only about $1 million in export earnings.

However, the industry is experiencing strong growth. In 1993 we had only 21 wineries that sold some of their output at their cellar doors. Today there are more than 150.

Australian wines have an excellent reputation in more than 100 export markets and Queensland stands to benefit from that good reputation.

Last December, we released a development strategy for the industry, which aims to ensure that Queensland produces a quality product that's recognised in Australia and overseas.

It also includes plans for marketing Queensland wines internationally, and clearly the rest of the Australian industry stands to benefit from that initiative.

We've set some ambitious goals. But, as I told delegates at the conference, we are determined to see the Queensland industry develop.

At every overseas function organised by my Government, we will serve Australian wines and, whenever possible, Queensland wines will be included.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Boating Industry

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.48 pm), by leave: The Queensland boating industry is increasing significantly. In a recent mission to China, this was evident. I wish to advise all members that seven Queensland companies have recently returned from a very successful trade mission to China. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The seven companies exhibited at the Shanghai International Boat Show from 8-11 April 2005, and then participated in a series of promotional activities arranged jointly by the Queensland Government Trade and Investment Office in Shanghai and Austrade.

Private briefings and business meetings were held with major Chinese marina development companies, and site visits were arranged for the trade mission members to projects in the greater Shanghai region, including Hangzhou.

Immediate boat sales were secured by some Queensland companies during the Shanghai International Boat Show, and further negotiations are under way with Chinese companies to sell more boats and designs.

Gold Coast based company, Mustang Cruisers, received orders for five boats with a combined sales value of $1.2 million.

Quintrex, a manufacturer of aluminium boats based on the Gold Coast, sold all of its display boats at the Show, and is following up on enquires with an agent in China.

I congratulate these companies on securing sales which will lead to the creation of jobs in Queensland.

To follow-up on the excellent work done with the Queensland boating mission to China, the Queensland Government Trade and Investment Office in Shanghai is currently making arrangements for a Chinese boat buying mission to visit the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show from 19-22 May 2005.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bundaberg Base Hospital; Patel, Dr J

Hon. GR NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Health) (12.48 pm), by leave: Ensuring that the former patients of Dr Patel are cared for in the most appropriate way is one of the highest priorities of this government. A patient liaison team has been established in Bundaberg to provide assistance and reassurance to former patients. This team of seven highly trained staff includes three nurses who formed part of Operation Foxtrot, Queensland's response to the Asian tsunami earlier this year. A hotline has been established to allow any former patient of Dr Patel who has concerns about their care to contact the patient liaison team. As at the close of business yesterday, approximately 500 people had contacted the patient liaison team. I encourage any former patients who have concerns and who have not yet contacted the patient liaison team to do so by calling 41502777.

Every effort has been made to ensure that former patients of Dr Patel and the Bundaberg community are aware of the assistance that is available to them. Over 900 patients have received a letter outlining support that is available if they have concerns about their treatment. Local general practitioners have also been contacted on a number of occasions outlining the procedures and processes they should follow when dealing with patients. This has been followed by a number of advertisements in the local paper and the production of fact sheets. A follow-up letter for patients who

wish to access their local GP has also been produced. The follow-up letter has been distributed by the patient support group.

I seek leave to table copies of the letters that have been sent to the patients and GPs, the fact sheets and the advertisements that have been printed in the local paper.

Leave granted.

Mr NUTTALL: A number of initiatives have been put in place to provide whatever assistance is necessary. In addition to the patient liaison team, a local private surgeon has been contracted to assist in reviewing and treating former patients of Dr Patel. Approximately 52 patients either have seen or are booked in to see this surgeon.

A panel of surgeons has been established in Brisbane for those patients who need more specialised assistance. Arrangements have been put in place for any patient who wishes to access their local GP for review or treatment to be able to do so at no personal cost. Dr Barry O'Loughlin, Director of Surgery at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, has travelled to Bundaberg on two occasions to review patients and talk them through their treatment. A further group of surgeons will travel to Bundaberg in the near future to assist with this task. From this clinical review, we can then determine what further assistance, if any, is necessary for each patient.

To date, approximately 25 patients have seen Dr O'Loughlin, with a further eight patients booked to see another surgeon travelling to Bundaberg. A team of counsellors and staff support specialists have also been sent to Bundaberg. The patient and staff support team are providing counselling services to former patients, their families and staff at the Bundaberg Base Hospital. The government will continue to offer whatever support is necessary to ensure that the former patients of Dr Patel have access to the best doctors and the very best medical advice.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fishing Industry

Hon. H PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (12.51 pm), by leave: The Queensland government is set to introduce a range of reforms that will slash red tape for Queensland commercial fishers and make fishing licences and fees more equitable and competitive. The proposed changes are contained in a 43-page regulatory impact statement that I am releasing for public discussion today. These proposed changes would also bring Queensland into line with other Australian jurisdictions.

The fees currently charged for access to Queensland's commercial fisheries are, in general, only a fraction of those applying to similar fisheries in other states. For example, trawl fishery fees in other states are at least 10 times higher than they are in Queensland. While the proposed changes will see the total value of fees in Queensland rise, they will still be considerably lower than those charged for access to other Australian fisheries. But any fee increases will be balanced by new streamlined arrangements that will reduce time, cost and frustration by fishers. For example, the multiple licences required for most commercial fishing operations will be streamlined into a single licence. Under the proposal, fees will be determined using a rights based model and those licence holders with the higher-valued rights will pay higher fees. That means those with the most valuable fishing entitlements will pay the most.

Probably the most significant benefit to commercial fishers from the proposed amendments is a more secure fishery access right for licence holders. This will be achieved by issuing licences for an indefinite period as opposed to the current system of one-year licences. All money raised from fees will be reinvested in fisheries management. The trawl industry has seen the total value of licences jump from $78 million to $150 million since 2000 because of management changes introduced by the government. For reef-line operators the total value of licences has risen from $23 million to $84 million during the same period.

The RIS does not propose any new fishery management arrangements, reduction in fishing effort, removal of fishing rights, or loss of fishing access to any sector. Anyone who holds licences, permits or other authorities issued under fisheries legislation will be affected by the proposed changes. Whilst the commercial sector, which consists of both commercial fishers and seafood marketers, would be most affected by the proposed changes, it also stands to gain the most benefits.

The proposed commercial licence restructure will remove redundant licence types and barriers to entry into the commercial fishing sector which will make the Queensland market more competitive. The proposed licence structure is also relevant to the recreational fishing sector as it provides simplicity and clarity to charter fishing businesses. A small increase in the contribution of the recreational sector through the private pleasure vessel levy is also proposed. Comments on the RIS close on 1 July 2005. I table a copy of the discussion paper.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Horse-Riding Trails

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (12.55 pm), by leave: As the Premier has already told the parliament, today is the day on which we as a government deliver on our commitment to Sunshine Coast horse riders. We said we would create a secure network of trails that are available to horse riders in perpetuity, and that is what we are well on our way to doing. Over 100 kilometres of this magnificent new trail network is being made available to horse riders right now, today. That is over and above the existing 66 kilometres of trail. A further 21 kilometres of track requires only minor work and then with the remaining 47 kilometres the track will be completed over the next year.

This new network is the product of work we have done with the assistance of a high-level implementation team established by the Premier and me as a direct result of our November meeting with horse riders. The team's work was assisted by the employment of a consultant, Mr Paul Summers, a well-known and accomplished GIS and mapping specialist. He has worked with riders, the EPA and local governments to cooperatively identify new recreational trails for horse riding outside of national parks. Mr Summers is focusing on the areas of Noosa, Tewantin, the Sunshine Coast hinterland, Brisbane Forest Park, the Gold Coast hinterland and the Caboolture-Kilcoy area.

I especially want to recognise the work and contribution of the Noosa Shire Council. In particular, Councillor Ray Kelly has been a strong supporter of the horse riders as well as a positive force in developing these additional trails. We are fortunate, too, to have the help of Annie Warmbrunn, who developed the original 66-kilometre Noosa Trail Network on which we are building the additional trails announced today. I look forward to working further with both of them as we finalise the last few links.

I am proud to tell the parliament today that our combined efforts have been an outstanding success. The Sunshine Coast's new trails will travel through a diverse range of landscapes, a key demand of horse riders. They will move through open woodland areas characterised by blackbutt trees and palms, and through wet schlerophyll vine and melaleuca forests—as I said, all in all a magnificent riding experience. With these new trails uncertainty will be gone forever. Horse riders will have access to these trials in perpetuity. They will be secure. They will be safe. They will be world-class, and I have no doubt they will be a major tourist attraction for the Sunshine Coast. The Noosa solution to the horse riding-trail network gives reassurance to horse riders across the region, from Noosa to the New South Wales border, that alternative trails can and will be found and that horse riding, both recreational and endurance, has a healthy future in Queensland.

Sitting suspended from 12.58 pm to 2.30 pm.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Freedom of Information Legislation

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.30 pm), by leave: I wish to advise the House that today I have provided to the parliamentary Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee an advanced draft of a bill that I hope to introduce this week. The bill will introduce amendments to the Freedom of Information Act 1992. As members may be aware, the Goss government introduced the accountability mechanisms of that act 13 years ago, and since that time the act has played a very important role in promoting better government decision making and better communication between government and the community in relation to public participation in government processes. The amendments address a number of the issues that were first raised by the parliamentary committee in its comprehensive report in 2001—a report into freedom of information in Queensland. The report followed an inquiry lasting almost three years and was the first public review of the FOI Act since it was introduced.

As I say, today I have provided a draft of the legislation to the parliamentary committee in accordance with an undertaking to that effect given in a letter by me to the parliamentary committee chair on 30 June last year. I had hoped to provide a copy of the report earlier than this. However, late drafting by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel prevented me from doing so. I have advised the committee that I will attempt to introduce the bill later this week so that relevant provisions of the bill that require enactment before 30 June can be passed by the parliament by that date. I note that, pursuant to the undertaking I gave in my letter of 30 June last year, I have received an undertaking from all members of the committee to maintain the confidentiality of the draft bill pending its introduction later this week.

EDUCATION (ACCREDITATION OF NON-STATE SCHOOLS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (2.32 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend acts administered by the Minister for Education and the Arts. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (2.33 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill will amend the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001, which establishes a regime for accreditation, funding and ongoing monitoring of non-state schools in Queensland. The bill also includes minor amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 and the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002. The amendments will clarify that non-state schools in receipt of government funding must be operated on a not-for-profit basis.

With emerging trends in corporate governance arrangements in the non-state schooling sector, there is a real concern that governing bodies of non-state schools that receive government funding may enter into arrangements with commercial entities that enable the deliberate reduction of money available to their schools. By way of example, a governing body may pay a related commercial entity exorbitant management fees for the provision of services to the school or above fair and reasonable market prices for goods or services.

Last year on 15 November I announced the government's intention to amend the act to ensure that government funded schools are not operated for profit and to clarify the matters that the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board may consider when assessing the suitability of the governing body of a non-state school. The amendments will apply to all applications to the board made on or after 15 November 2004 for accreditation or government funding and to applications to change an existing non-state school's governing body.

The primary intention of the bill is to ensure that government funding does not go to non-state schools if those schools are being used as a vehicle for making and distributing profits to shareholders rather than for the benefit of schools and their students, as originally intended by the parliament. The bill meets this objective in a number of ways. First, the bill requires the governing bodies of non-state schools that receive government funding to deal with external parties on an arms-length basis. The bill also ensures that these schools do not have a connection with a for-profit entity that could reasonably be expected to compromise the independence of the governing body when making financial decisions. While I acknowledge that most governing bodies of non-state schools in receipt of government funding would already meet these new requirements, the amendments are essential to ensuring that government funding continues to be used for the benefit of schools and their students rather than any other purpose.

Companies with shareholders will also be ineligible for government funding. This will make it difficult for governing bodies to be established in a way that enables the distribution of revenue or profits to shareholders rather than the school. The bill clarifies the powers of the accreditation board to assess the suitability of a governing body. The act does not limit the matters to which the board may have regard in making a decision as to suitability. However, the bill provides guidance for the accreditation board and non-state schooling sector by setting out a number of matters the board may have regard to when assessing suitability, including the governing body's relationship with other entities as well as the conduct of the governing body or its directors relevant to the operation of the school.

The accreditation board may also consider whether the school's governing body has appropriate procedures for identifying, declaring and dealing with any conflict of interest a director of the governing body may have relating to the operation of the school. The functions of assessors, appointed under the act by the accreditation board, when considering applications are being widened to enable them to investigate and report to the board on the suitability of a governing body and whether a proposed or existing governing body meets the new requirements for eligibility for government funding.

I wish to make it quite clear that the bill does not prevent a governing body that proposes to operate a school for profit from being accredited provided the governing body is considered by the board to be suitable to be the governing body and meets the accreditation criteria under the act. These important changes to the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001 are essential to

maintaining the integrity of our schooling system and ensuring that all schools, including non-state schools, continue to operate in the best interests of students.

The bill amends the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 to clarify when a mature-age student is required to have a positive notice issued by the Director-General of Education and the Arts. A positive notice declares that a person is suitable to be a mature-age student at a state educational institution. In 2004, this act was amended to provide that a person who wishes to enrol as a mature-age student in a state educational institution, other than a state school of distance education or special school, does not need to have a positive notice if the person was previously enrolled in a state educational institution or a non-state school and the person's last day of attendance was not more than 12 months prior to the first day of attendance as a mature-age student. The bill clarifies that this exemption only applies to a person who was a child at the time of their previous enrolment. This amendment will further enhance the child protection measures this government has implemented in schools.

The bill also amends the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002 to allow the Queensland Studies Authority to engage casual employees for the purpose of assisting it to perform its functions of testing, assessment and moderation. The amendment ensures that these employees can continue to be engaged by the QSA and remunerated at an appropriate rate. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Messenger, adjourned.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. TA BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (2.38 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991. 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) (2.39 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

It is my privilege today to introduce legislation that is going to ensure that the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund has the capacity to respond to the industry's training needs with new or expanded programs and activities that address the skills shortage currently facing building and construction.

The Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Bill 2005 and subsequent amendments to the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Regulation 2002 will bring about much-needed reforms to the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund. They will double its funding base and enable the establishment of a separate training levy, which will provide for more transparent collection arrangements through the QLeave authority. Additionally, the bill will introduce a range of minor amendments of a housekeeping nature to simplify and maximise the legislative intent of the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991. Currently, this act allows for the funds of the QLeave authority to be allocated for the training of persons in the building and construction industry. Under these arrangements, an amount equivalent to 0.05 per cent of the cost of building and construction work valued at $80,000 or more is provided to the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund as a grant. As the building and construction industry states in the submission, the proposed increase will ensure that the BCITF can keep pace with the industry's current and future demands for skilled workers.

The increase would also serve to bring our arrangements into line with other states and territories that have similar fund arrangements to address the skilling needs of the industry. In four other jurisdictions, for instance, levies range from 0.18 per cent to 0.25 per cent, or up to five times that of Queensland. While the current BCITF structure has been effective in allocating available resources to the building and construction industry, the enormous growth in the sector means more must be done.

The critical skill shortages confronting the industry need to be seen in the context of expected high levels of construction in Queensland through to 2007 and the effects of retirements from an ageing work force. According to demographic trends, retirements are likely to increase over the same period.

These factors clearly are going to maintain pressure on the need to increase the level of industry training.

A restructuring of the training fund is needed at this time. This will ensure funding can be prioritised in a transparent way. A restructuring of operational and governance arrangements will broaden the organisation's representative base and establish a more comprehensive management structure for the funds received. The restructured board arrangements will ensure that, both strategically and operationally, activities of the BCITF accord with the priorities of the Queensland government and industry.

Aside from greater transparency in how it operates, the changes will optimise the fund's effectiveness in responding to industry requirements on such issues as skill shortages and make it more flexible to respond to community and regional training needs. It is anticipated that the increased funding to the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund will realise approximately $24.3 million in 2005-06. This will provide for some additional 2,000 new entry level apprenticeship commencements and additional skills development and training for over 1,000 existing workers who are not trade qualified to gain trade qualifications. This means the expanded fund is a critical initiative in meeting the skill needs of Queensland employers. The upskilling of existing workers will also provide mature-age workers with opportunities to gain access to and remain in the work force, to prevent further skills drainage and to support the continued growth of the industry.

Overall, there is widespread support for an increase to the quantum of the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund across all sectors of the industry. There was also recognition that revision of the operational and governance arrangements would allow for greater representation from the major industry sectors and increased levels of accountability. The expansion of the fund is a win for the industry and for all Queenslanders as it will assist in providing a skills base to support the industry's present and future work force demands. All regions of the state will benefit from increased employment through higher apprenticeship uptakes and more readily available skills to support local building contractors. The proposed bill will provide for a robust building and construction industry, increasing employment opportunities and boosting Queensland's economic prosperity. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

TOURISM, FAIR TRADING AND WINE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (2.45 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend particular legislation administered by the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development, and for other purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (2.45 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill seeks to amend several acts administered by my portfolio to achieve three main aims. In particular the bill:

- amends Queensland's classifications legislation to reflect recent legislative changes to classification types in the Commonwealth's Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995;
- contains an amendment to subsection 28(1) of the Land Sales Act 1984 to facilitate major property development in Queensland; and
- amends the Tourism Queensland Act 1979 to provide greater flexibility to Tourism Queensland in the way that it may perform its functions.

The Queensland classifications legislation to be amended to reflect recent legislative changes to classification types in the Commonwealth's Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 are:

- the Classification of Films Act 1991; and

- the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995.

In addition, the bill makes some consequential amendments to the Criminal Code to reflect the changes made to the classifications types in the Queensland classifications legislation. The bill also amends the definition of 'publication' in the Classification of Publications Act 1991 to make it the same as the definition of 'publication' in the Commonwealth act. The Queensland classifications legislation and the Commonwealth act form a National Classification Scheme shared between the Commonwealth and the states and territories for the classification of publications, films and computer games.

The Office of Film and Literature Classification is the Australian government agency that administers the National Classification Scheme. Classification decisions are made by members of the Classification Board who are representative of the Australian community. Every film, video and computer game legally available in Australia, whether produced locally or overseas, has to be classified by the Classification Board before it can be made available to the public. Some publications also need to be classified. These classifications decisions may be reviewed by the Classification Review Board. When making classification decisions, both the boards are bound by the Commonwealth act and classification guidelines.

The classifications given to materials, represented by symbols such as G, MA15+ or R18+, which are included, for example, on video or computer game covers, are designed to help parents and other members of the community make informed decisions about what they or their children watch, read or play.

Under the National Classification Scheme, the states and territories are responsible for the enforcement of classification decisions. Therefore Queensland, like the other states and territories, has its own classification legislation to complement the Commonwealth act. This legislation sets out how films, publications and computer games can be sold, hired, exhibited, advertised and demonstrated in each state or territory.

In 2004 the Commonwealth amended its legislation to introduce new standard classification types for films and computer games based on well-known film classifications. This also created a more effective distinction between those classification types that are advisory in nature, such as G, PG and M, and those to which legally enforceable restrictions apply, such as MA15+, R18+ and X18+.

The amendments aim to create a uniform and more easily understood classification system for films and computer games. Research by the Office of Film and Literature Classification indicated less than half of the population is aware of the computer games classification scheme and that consumers are very confused about the existing MA classification. Therefore, renaming the computer games classifications to mirror the well-known film classifications will assist parents in choosing appropriate games for their children.

While the bill renames the classifications it does not affect the material permissible within them. For example, consistent with the previous agreement of censorship ministers, the bill does not introduce an R classification for computer games. Queensland's legislation is being amended to reflect changes made to Commonwealth legislation.

I turn now to the amendments of the Land Sales Act 1984. The bill contains one amendment to the Land Sales Act 1984, namely an amendment to subsection 28(1) of that act. Subsections 27(1) and 29(1) of the Land Sales Act 1984 address a specific consumer protection issue, namely the delay between the date when a purchaser enters into a contract to purchase a building lot and the date when that purchaser is able to have their interest in that lot registered.

These sections provide that if a purchaser invests money to purchase an 'off-the-plan' unit and the vendor does not give the purchaser a registrable instrument of transfer within 3½ years of the date of contract the purchaser may void the contract and recover the money paid under the contract together with interest earned, if any, on that money. Subsection 28(1) of the Land Sales Act 1984 provides for an extension of that 3½ year period by regulation for a further 12 months to 4½ years. The amendment to the act which is before the House provides for the extension period to be increased from 4½ years to 5½ years.

This is not the first amendment of the act to extend the period within which a registrable instrument of transfer must be provided to purchasers. Historically the act has been amended several times in response to changes in building construction and technology. This amendment is a result of Vision (Brisbane) Pty Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Austcorp Group, receiving in early March of this year development approval from the Brisbane City Council for a mixed-use development within three separate buildings in the Brisbane CBD. This development will comprise residential, commercial, retail and tourist components.

The proposed residential component is located in the 72-storey main tower of the development. Residential units in the Vision development are targeted at more sophisticated investors and the average price will be around $1 million. The estimated construction cost of the project is $300 million, while the overall value of the project is estimated at $650 million. It will employ up to 2,700 people during construction, with up to 350 to 450 workers on site at any one time.

Due to the size and complexity of the development, the existing one-year extension under subsection 28(1) is unlikely to be sufficient to ensure completion in time to provide purchasers with a registrable instrument of transfer as required under subsection 27(2) of the act. The purpose of the proposed amendment is to provide for the extension period to be increased from 4½ years to 5½ years.

To maintain protection of the rights of purchasers it should be noted that the granting of such an extension is at my discretion as minister. Each request for extension will be considered in light of its own individual circumstances. In addition, all other protections for purchasers encompassed in the act remain unaltered; namely, the requirement for developers who are granted an extension to give written notice of this extension to purchasers before any money is invested in the project, and the requirement that any money invested by a purchaser is held on trust until the expiration of the 3½ years or longer period.

I turn now to amendments to the Tourism Queensland Act. The bill seeks to amend the Tourism Queensland Act 1979 to provide greater flexibility to Tourism Queensland in the way that it may perform its functions. These amendments are facilitative only and decisions about the best way to achieve Tourism Queensland's objectives will always be made on a case-by-case basis, giving proper consideration to the interests of all relevant parties.

Tourism contributes $6.3 billion to the Queensland economy each year and accounts for 6.4 per cent of gross state product. The industry employs more than 150,000 Queenslanders, being nine per cent of all persons employed in this state.

Under section 13 of the Tourism Queensland Act 1979, Tourism Queensland's primary objectives are to promote, market, develop and arrange tourism and travel to and within Queensland. The role of the commercial division of Tourism Queensland is to provide access to, and distribution of, Queensland tourism products through Sunlover Holidays and the Queensland Travel Centres.

Since the commercial division's creation in the early 1980s, the market for tourism services and travel advice has changed dramatically due to the rise of the internet, airline deregulation and the increasing number of tourism wholesalers. The commercial division's market share has also decreased during that time from somewhere near 30 per cent in the mid 1990s to around 11 per cent currently. This makes consideration of an alternative way to deliver these services timely.

Tourism Queensland is considering arrangements to license the operations of the commercial division to a private tourism operator, which will allow Tourism Queensland to concentrate its resources in particular on primary marketing and destinational management activities for Queensland. These are vital functions for continuing to grow Queensland's important tourism industry. Negotiations for the proposed licensing arrangements are continuing.

There are a number of key objectives underpinning these negotiations, including ensuring a favourable outcome for the government and Tourism Queensland, growing the Queensland tourism industry and protecting the interests of Tourism Queensland staff. As part of this, Tourism Queensland has put in place a robust consultation and liaison process with a range of interested parties, including the Queensland Tourism Industry Council and the tourism industry more broadly, the Queensland Public Sector Union and Tourism Queensland staff. This process is an important element of the negotiations and will continue throughout.

The proceeds from licensing the commercial division will be used to expand the current international marketing efforts. This will further benefit Queensland tourism and build on the fine work already being done by Tourism Queensland.

The Tourism Queensland Act 1979 does not currently provide the power for Tourism Queensland to facilitate the performance of its functions other than directly. This unnecessarily constrains Tourism Queensland's ability to manage its operations to ensure that it can continue to remain relevant in a rapidly changing business environment.

These proposed amendments provide flexibility for Tourism Queensland to carry out its functions but do not limit or otherwise prescribe how this may be done. Tourism Queensland's functions may continue to be performed directly, may be performed through a combination of direct and indirect effort or may be fully facilitated through another party on behalf of Tourism Queensland.

In summary, amendments to the Tourism Queensland Act 1979 do not bind Tourism Queensland to any particular transaction, either now or in the future. Decisions about what is best for Tourism Queensland and the Queensland tourism industry will continue to be made on a case-by-case basis, after full consideration of all relevant issues. The amendments to the Queensland classifications acts will not change standards in Queensland in relation to the sale, distribution or possession of publications, films or computer games. However, they will make the classifications system easier to use and understand and are essential to maintain the integrity of the National Classifications Scheme. The amendment to the Land Sales Act 1984 represents a minor extension of existing policy and will help facilitate major property development in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hopper, adjourned.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Lockhart River Plane Crash

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (3.00 pm): I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its shock and sadness at the tragic loss of life caused by the crash of the Aero-Tropics Metroliner aircraft at Iron Range near Lockhart River on Saturday morning 7 May 2005.
2. That Mr Acting Speaker be requested to convey to the families of the deceased the above resolution, together with an expression of the profound sympathy and sorrow of the members of the parliament of Queensland, for the loss they have sustained.

On behalf of the people of Queensland, we express our deepest condolences to the grieving families and friends of the 15 people killed in the crash. All 15 have their own unique stories to tell and all 15 leave behind loved ones who need our support and prayers at this tragic time. As we all know, this was one of the worst aviation crashes to happen in Queensland. In fact, it is the worst civilian aviation accident in Australia since the 1960s. It is a terrible tragedy.

Just before midday on Saturday, the 19-seater, fixed-wing Metroliner had been on approach to land at Lockhart River. But it never arrived. At 1.28 pm search and rescue in Canberra officially advised that the aircraft was missing. The wreckage was located by a helicopter at about 4.30 pm on Saturday in steep terrain, 11 kilometres north-west of the Iron Range airport. Police have established a major incident room at Cairns and are working with the Australian Transport Safety Bureau in the investigation.

The plane's black box recorders have been retrieved and, hopefully, they will provide investigators with valuable insight into the cause of the crash. This morning, 10 police officers and a team of Transport Safety Bureau officers were back at the crash site. I am advised that a preliminary report into the investigation will be published by the Transport Safety Bureau in about one month's time. Six months after the release of this report an interim finding will be made available.

The people tragically taken in this crash came from all walks of life and from a variety of backgrounds. Nobody can ease the pain of those who are grieving the loss of a loved one or loved ones, but I can say that the Queensland government will do everything it can to help those who have been affected by the tragedy. All possible resources have been made available to police and emergency services to ensure retrieval of the victims as soon as reasonably possible.

Disaster victim identification teams are at the crash site. It will take them a couple of weeks to complete their work. I thank them for the work that they do. It is difficult and hard work. It is the sort of work that only a very specialised group of people can do. I also want to commend all of the police and various emergency service personnel who have been involved in dealing with this tragedy. It is a very difficult job and it is being handled with great care and professionalism.

In accordance with the wishes of some of the families and for cultural reasons, I will not be naming the 15 people killed in this tragic accident. I will table for the information of the House a release issued by the Queensland Police Service in relation to those whose families have agreed, as I understand it, for their names to be released. It is the best information that we can release publicly in relation to the flight manifest.

I became aware of this accident on Saturday afternoon. I had gone to Darwin on business to deal with a number of things involving the Northern Territory government. I had a couple of discussions with Judy Spence, the minister for police, who had the responsibility to look after these things. I thank Judy for keeping me informed and taking the appropriate action on behalf of the government.

When these sorts of things happen there is an initial shock. Many of us in this House, if not all, have flown in light aircraft due to the size of this state and the need to service our constituencies. The member for Gregory and the member for Cook would be in that position. They would do it on a regular basis as part of their day-to-day activities serving their constituency. In a sense we have been through the experience but, luckily, none of us has been through the experience of these 15 people.

It is important that, as a parliament, we acknowledge the nature of this tragedy and do what we can to try to ease some of the pain. Grieving is a terrible process. It is a very personal process. If there is some community support then I think the grieving, whilst it will never be easy, will be a little easier. That is why tomorrow the police minister and the minister for local government will be representing the cabinet and the whole government at the service at St Monica's. The member for Cook, as the local member where this crash happened, will also be there. I think members would understand that leave is appropriate in those circumstances.

I hope that if it is possible the member for Cook will pass on the condolences of the government and all members of this House to the families who are left in those communities. One of the saddest stories that came out of this—every life is important and the 15 losses are sad—was that of the young police officer whom Judy spoke about at the news conference on Sunday. She was a young police

officer in the prime of her life. She was a very talented young lady. She was obviously very intelligent. She was off to get additional training and skilling. To lose her life in that way is a tragedy not only in terms of the loss of life itself but also in terms of the loss of potential to the Police Service. Those sorts of qualified, competent, lovely people are very important for the future of the service. I thought it was important that we pass this motion. I know it will be carried unanimously by all members and I thank them for that.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.07 pm): I join with the Premier in passing on the condolences of members of the National Party to the families of those people who tragically lost their lives last Saturday morning. It would be impossible for us to imagine the feelings of personal remorse and grief that the families of those 15 people tragically killed are going through. Whilst we may try, I do not think that we would personally know.

It is true that many of us in this place, if not all of us, have tragically lost family members in accidents in the past. The grieving process, the process of asking why and searching within oneself and wondering what might have happened, could it have been different and was there anything that could have been done to have made it any different is something that people often challenge and beat themselves up about from time to time.

No doubt many of those families will be challenged in facing the process of remorse and grief. Those killed were somebody's husband, somebody's partner, somebody's father, somebody's mother, somebody's uncle, somebody's aunty, somebody's grandfather, somebody's son, somebody's grandson, somebody's granddaughter, somebody's daughter. They all have very close connections within the family and community environment.

I also understand that there are a number of members of this House who knew individuals who were tragically killed last Saturday. Fortunately, aircraft accidents involving loss of life of such a tragic scale are something which are relatively rare in our country. We need to consider in context that flying is still relatively safe. However, one loss of life is too many from any accident. As the Premier indicated a moment ago, this is the largest loss of life in some considerable period of time in an aircraft accident in our country—some 40 years or thereabouts, as I understand it.

There will be a lot of investigations. There will be a lot of searching for answers. There is a lot of rough terrain in that part of the world. I was reflecting on the weekend on the fact that if one looks at the number of lives that have been lost in north Queensland in the last two to three decades in smaller passenger aircraft involving the loss of life of maybe 10 people or more there has been a disproportionate number in that part of the world. That is the challenge that comes with flying in that sort of terrain together with the weather conditions that are experienced in north Queensland. That does not in any way take away from the skills of those people who are involved in flying in that part of the world, because not only are they usually very good at instrument landing but they are also very good visually at knowing what is going on. They understand that terrain and they understand the weather conditions. But, unfortunately, accidents happen. Things go wrong. Unfortunately for these people and their families, that is exactly what did happen.

I also join with the Premier in passing on our appreciation for the emergency services personnel who have done so much in the last few days in reaching the site of that tragedy and trying to put the pieces together to give some sort of effective closure to the families in searching for those answers. The police have been absolutely outstanding in the job that they have done. Our other emergency services workers and no doubt the air safety investigators will be spending some time at the site over the next few weeks, months or maybe even a year or more in putting all of the pieces together.

I was reflecting on some of the media coverage, and there has been a lot. I saw the picture of the flight data recorder—the black box. I just think what a remarkable piece of equipment to have been able to survive that and then hopefully be able to provide some answers. That is an Australian innovation. Again, I join with the Premier and other members of this place in passing on our condolences, our prayers, our thoughts and any assistance we can provide to the families and friends of those people who have been left behind as a consequence of this tragedy, a tragedy which we all hope will not be repeated in any way in the future.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (3.12 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the Premier and supported by the Leader of the Opposition. It was a tragic accident last Saturday in which 15 people were killed. It is a fact of life that Queensland is a large, diverse state. We depend not only on our timetabled jet services linking the major capital cities but also on a network of light plane services around this state. Many of us have been on those services in the course of our duties over a period of time and we know what it is like to fly in sometimes adverse weather conditions. It is not a very pleasant experience. But, as has been pointed out, those who do fly the aircraft are extremely skilled and professional people and deliver us quite safely. So it is extremely rare that in fact one of them does end in tragic circumstances.

This one of course is the largest loss of life in some 40 years. I pass on to the families and friends of those people who tragically lost their lives the sympathies of the Liberal Party. We also join with the

government and the opposition in expressing our strong support for them and hopefully, as we said before, we will not see another tragedy such as this for a long, long time.

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (3.14 pm): I join the Premier and indeed all members of parliament and all Queenslanders in extending my sympathies to the families and friends of the 15 people killed in Saturday's air crash. This indeed was a tragic loss of so many lives. I will be travelling to Cairns tomorrow to represent the state government at a community memorial service which has been organised by police. The member for Cairns, Desley Boyle, and the member for Cook, Jason O'Brien, will also accompany me. The memorial will be held at 11 am at St Monica's Cathedral in Abbott Street and will be open to anyone who would like to attend and remember the 15 victims of the plane crash.

The victims were mums and dads, sons and daughters, friends, students, a scientist, a service station manager, pilots, apprentices, a mechanic and a sport and recreation manager. As police minister, I want to take some time to reflect on the life of one victim, Constable Sally Urquhart. Constable Urquhart had been serving at Bamaga and was on board the plane on her way to undertake police training in Townsville. She had previously worked in Aurukun and Cairns and was highly regarded by colleagues and members of the community who came in contact with her. She chose to be a police officer after graduating with honours in law and science from Griffith University in 2000. She was a dedicated student and won the university's family law prize in 1999 and supplemented her studies with a variety of sports at state and regional levels.

Policing in far-north Queensland is sometimes a difficult assignment, but from what I have been told of Sally she had that special ability to be a successful officer in remote communities. In fact, she was one of the pioneers of female policing in these remote Aboriginal communities and volunteered for these positions. Sally was engaged to marry Senior Constable Trad Thornton, who was also stationed at Bamaga. Senior Constable Thornton has been flown to Cairns. He is receiving support and counselling and two officers from Thursday Island have been deployed to Bamaga station. Far Northern Region police chaplains and human service officers are helping staff with grief and loss counselling in the aftermath of this terrible accident.

Sally's loss just adds to the impact of this tragedy on all Queenslanders. The state government is doing everything it can to deal with the aftermath of this accident and all possible resources have been made available to police and emergency services personnel. I would like to pay tribute to the many police who are working tirelessly in the retrieval and identification work of the victims. On Saturday, once an emergency situation was declared, police set up an major incident room in Cairns and a major incident support room in Brisbane. Detective Sergeant Erin Eyres of Weipa CIB was contacted to overview the investigation, and on Saturday afternoon he drove from Weipa to Lockhart River. On Saturday the police Air Wing arrived from Cairns in Lockhart River carrying two scenes of crime officers and one scientific officer. They joined the staff of Lockhart River police—Sergeant Michael Musumeci and Constable Mark Beattie. The Citation jet was also sent on Saturday from Brisbane carrying three disaster victim identification team members. Three additional officers and four Tactical Crime Squad members were also sent to Lockhart River on Sunday.

Due to difficult access at the plane crash site, for the first two days disaster victim identification unit officers had to be winched from an emergency services helicopter into the area. Poor weather conditions only added to the difficulty of the task ahead of them. Four special emergency response team officers who were sent to Lockhart River worked hard to provide access to the remote air crash site, clearing an adjacent area so that a helicopter could land there and cutting through bushland to provide an access path from the landing area to the crash site. This is now helping transport investigating officers to and from the scene.

The disaster victim identification process is a meticulous job, and it is a time-consuming one. Accuracy is critical to ensure no mistakes are made. Police have indicated that this process could take weeks. Police and emergency services personnel are doing everything they can to ensure retrieval and identification of the victims as soon as is reasonably possible and also to provide support and information to relatives. There are many officers such as Acting Superintendent Mike Keating in Cairns who have played a vital role in the police response to this tragic event. It is impossible to recognise the efforts of every individual. However, we know this is a massive task and is only possible with the assistance of dozens of personnel.

Assistant Commissioner Peter Barron, Acting Superintendent Keating, Regional Crime Coordinator Detective Inspector John Harris, the Far Northern Region's human services officer Tim White and police chaplain Doug Foster have all visited Lockhart River in the past couple of days and will attend tomorrow's memorial service in Cairns. Finally, I thank the Lockhart River council for its generous offer of assistance to police in the form of accommodation, swags, meals and vehicles during the investigative period.

Similarly, the logistical support provided by the Weipa State Emergency Service has been appreciated by the emergency services personnel at Lockhart River. Queenslanders will remember Saturday, 7 May as a dark day in this state's aviation history. However, it will also serve as a reminder of

the vital role that police and other emergency services play in incidents such as this—in working closely with the community and in providing information and assistance wherever possible. My greatest sympathies go to the families and friends of all of the victims.

Hon. TA BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (3.20 pm): It is with great sadness that I confirm that five TAFE students are believed to be among the 15 victims of Saturday's air disaster. The students were on their way to the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE campus in Cairns for training. They were all young people who made great contributions to their communities and who were studying to be able to make even greater contributions.

The air crash is a terrible tragedy. As the minister responsible for TAFE colleges, I extend condolences to the families, friends and communities of the people who lost their lives. Students and staff of the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE are understandably very shocked and distressed, but I am assured that the TAFE community is banding together in a strong spirit of mutual support. Trained counsellors are on hand to help them cope with the tragedy and my thoughts—and I am sure the thoughts of every member of this House—are with them during this very difficult time. The government is very grateful to the counsellors for the difficult but marvellous job that they do in these trying times. Again, I join in passing on the condolences of TAFE and the Department of Employment and Training to the families, friends and fellow students.

Hon. RJ MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (3.21 pm): I wish to record my condolences for those who have lost a friend, a colleague or a family member in the weekend's plane crash. As we have heard, 15 people lost their lives. The accident has left the cape communities in shock. Whilst it is not culturally appropriate to name all of those who died, every member in this House today and everyone on the cape will feel the impact of such a tragic loss.

As we have been reminded in all the speeches so far, the words of the English poet John Donne are very much to the fore, because they remind us that no man is an island. The death of any individual has an impact on all of us and we are all diminished by the loss of any one person, and so it is in far-north Queensland. In communities such as Bamaga, which has only about 890 people, and Injinoo, which has 440 residents, the loss of respected members of a community is widely and deeply felt. There were people on board who will be sadly missed by the communities of Bamaga, Injinoo, Seisia, New Mapoon and Umagico. In Lockhart River, the site of the tragedy, there will also be grief.

As the minister for police reminded us, we have heard about Constable Sally Urquhart and her love of the cape and the love of her life. We have also heard about the three Aero-Tropics staff who will be sadly missed and the two fishermen who will not make it back.

Although our respect for culture means that we cannot name the people who made a difference, these people contributed with pride to their communities. They made contributions to sport and recreation, contributions to the economic development of their communities, and contributions to family and community life. There are many facets to life in each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We have been struck by these people's deep pride and their deep commitment to family. Each and every one of them will be missed. Each of them leaves a gap—a gap, as I said, because no man is an island. Today, tomorrow and beyond there will be children, teachers, police and community members who will pause to remember those 15 people whose lives were tragically and suddenly snuffed out on Saturday morning.

I want to thank the people who are coping with the work that must be done and has to be done after a tragedy such as this. We must also remember them, because it is difficult for them in difficult terrain in difficult circumstances. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the cape are in mourning. On behalf of my department, in this great time of sadness I send my support to them all. I have requested that my department provide any appropriate assistance to the bereaved families.

In view of the fact that the remembrance ceremony is tomorrow, on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities I wish to appeal to the media reporting on the crash to go about their work with utmost sensitivity. The publication of the name or photos of an Indigenous victim breaches both the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols. I am afraid that the reporting to date has caused great distress to families. Community members have asked the media to respect their sorrow and leave them to grieve their loss and to be aware of cultural sensitivities pertaining to the names of the deceased and the showing of images. The Cape York and Torres Strait Islander communities are already facing a difficult time. Their plea, and my plea on their behalf, is for the media to recognise this and allow them to mourn. There are concerns that the presence of cameras and journalists in the community may exacerbate the distress of family members and lead to friction.

I offer my sincere condolences to the families of those who were on board. My thoughts go out to those who are struggling to understand why this has happened. Although the shock and sadness of this accident will continue, I support the efforts of those to remember the 15 people aboard the flight and, above all, to continue to recognise and acknowledge their significant achievements. We have already heard of stories of an outpouring of support for the families of these people. I am sure that the strength of family and friends and the community gathering tomorrow will assist these people during this difficult

time. I ask for the member for Cook to convey on my behalf, and I know on behalf of all members, the condolences of this House to those grieving families.

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (3.27 pm): There are no words that can be said in this House—or anywhere else for that matter—that can really provide condolences to the people who have lost family and friends in the tragedy that occurred on Saturday near the Lockhart River airport. No words can bring those people back. No words can alleviate the grief. No words can help explain why these people were chosen at this time.

Some people turn to their faith to help them at times like these. Other people find their faith severely tested. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a strong sense of family, and the loss of one member of a family is felt throughout all families in the communities. Generally speaking, people from Bamaga and Injinoo struggle to survive every day and every week.

No doubt the people who boarded that plane to travel to Cairns would have relied on other family members to help provide for the air fare and for incidental costs while they were away. Unfortunately, that will only add to their families' sense of grief and responsibility. That is just the way it works up there. When a family member needs help, the family pitches in and finds the money no matter what contributing to that occasion may cost them. Money is not the imperative. The imperative for those people is to support their family.

The northern peninsula area is made up of five communities. The traditional owners are mostly from Injinoo and the historical people are from Bamaga. It is fair to say that people in Bamaga and Injinoo do not always see eye to eye. If there is any silver lining from the tragedy that occurred on Saturday—and I am struggling to find one here—it is that it shows that the fate of those two communities is entwined. Although they do not share a common history, they share a common fate and the fact that both communities have lost people in this tragedy starts to give them a common sense of history and, hopefully, a common sense of purpose.

I have flown on the Metroliner between Cairns and Bamaga on many occasions. The tragedy is certainly brought home to me when I have been on the plane that now lies in ruins. It is also brought home to one when one knows the families of the people who have died in the crash. I know Ric Lippmann and Ross Britten from Aero-Tropics. I have been flying with Ric for many years, since his days at Wingz North. I know that they will be devastated by this tragedy and that they take their professionalism and their service to those communities very seriously and will continue to do so.

While it is too early to speculate on the cause of the crash, having flown to Lockhart River on many occasions I know it is always a bit of a bumpy ride flying in. There are a lot of thermals coming off the ranges, and that certainly throws the aeroplane around on some occasions. As I said, I have flown in the Metroliner and I fly in small aircraft all the time. It is not everybody's cup of tea. I still believe that air transport is safe. I believe it is safe in far-north Queensland. I certainly believe that it is safer than driving on the road, and there are statistics to demonstrate that. But the statistics are unimportant. These families have lost their loved ones and that is the important thing that we contemplate here today. My heart goes out to the families of those people who died on Saturday.

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (3.30 pm): Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this condolence motion moved by the Premier. I wish to pass on my condolences at this very sad time to all of the families who lost loved ones in the terrible tragedy that occurred on Saturday. What I want to say—and I have spoken to others about it here today—is that we often read about these terrible tragedies in the newspapers or see them on television but we are not always personally affected because we do not personally know the people involved. In this case I know the Urquhart family very well.

Shane and Elizabeth Urquhart, who were Sally's parents—and the police minister spoke so well about Sally's history and her commitment to the Police Service—live in Narangba close to where my wife and I live. They are well-known people in the district. Shane, Sally's father, is the principal of the Narangba State School and is currently acting as principal of the Morayfield East State School because of illness of the principal of that school. I have known Shane personally and professionally over a long period of time and I know he spoke, as everyone would speak about their sons and daughters, very proudly about his daughter and her achievements.

As the Premier, the opposition leader and other speakers have said today, one can ask why these things happen but there is no answer. All I can say to Shane and Elizabeth is that the condolences of my wife and me, of both school communities and of the district of Narangba, where they are loved and respected, go out to them at this terrible, terrible time.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (3.33 pm): I, too, offer my sincere condolences not only to the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives in the tragic Lockhart River plane crash on the weekend but also to their work colleagues and the many, many friends who will be grieving. Our hearts go out to the northern peninsula area communities of Bamaga, Injinoo, Umagico, Seisia and New Mapoon and the depth of the loss they must be feeling. At Lockhart River where the crash occurred the shock and sadness of this accident is also being felt. This loss will go beyond the cape and the Torres

Strait to surrounding communities and to those who knew and loved the people aboard that flight. As we have heard from the member for Kallangur, this loss touches our local communities in south-east Queensland as well.

As we are hearing, the victims of this tragic accident come from a number of backgrounds and from different walks of life. There were many people who made a difference, whether they were people whose passion was community life, sport, flying, fishing, science, police work or their families. They will each be sorely missed, as will be their efforts and the work they did in helping to build and progress their own communities and the wider community.

Hundreds of people across the cape are shocked and bewildered, and I offer my condolences to those people. One person can make such a difference in a small community. It is hard to imagine the depth of the loss of so many. I support residents in their efforts to come to terms with this accident through their prayers, ceremonies and small remembrances. It will be a time of mourning for many. Wherever you are, the loss of life is always so hard to understand. I hope the small communities of the cape can pull together in this time to support each other and continue the work of those who have lost their lives in this tragic way. My greatest sympathies go to the families and the friends of all of the victims.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (3.35 pm): I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in providing my condolences as the shadow minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy and police and corrective services to the bereaved families. There is no doubt in the world that air travel, regardless of where it is, always has its moments. Air travel in the gulf areas and the cape areas is always very difficult and very hazardous. My sincere condolences go to those cape communities. I join with the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy in asking the media and asking the people to respect the cultural protocols of those people of the cape region. I also join with the member for Cook in recognising just how close those communities are. Being the representative of a remote electorate myself, and having Aboriginal communities in that electorate, I know how close and how hurtful these tragedies can be to the wider community and to the families in question.

At this time I ask the minister for police and also the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy to convey my sincere respect and condolences to those communities, especially to the police in losing that young officer. This young woman was on duty. There is no doubt about that. She was going away for extra training. I acknowledge the comments of the member for Kallangur about the calibre of this young lady. These are the sorts of people who give our Police Service the great direction and drive that it has today. Without any further comments, my sincere sympathies go to all of those who have lost loved ones at this tragic time.

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (3.37 pm): I rise today to join others in endorsing the condolence motion for all of those who have suffered as a result of this terrible tragedy. This tragedy I think is felt more keenly by those of us here who have had to travel to remote parts of Queensland and who understand some of the risks attached to it. It is a great reminder of the reality of the vastness of Queensland and the reality of what it takes to provide good quality services, whether it is policing or teaching or any other form of public service, into all parts of the state and particularly into the most remote parts of the state. It is also a reminder of the risks and hardships faced by those Queenslanders who are so willing to go and serve in those parts of the state.

I, along with others, express my condolence and my compassion for all of the victims and the families of this terrible accident. I rise today particularly as minister for education to extend my condolences and my sympathy to Shane Urquhart, his wife, Elizabeth, and their family for the terrible loss that they have suffered with the death of their daughter Sally. Shane Urquhart is a long-serving, very well-respected principal in Education Queensland. Shane is known as a committed and dedicated teacher and is a strong principal and leader in his schools.

As someone who has served for so long in Education Queensland, Shane Urquhart, like so many other teachers who serve in so many different parts of Queensland, is well known among literally hundreds and thousands of Education Queensland staff. I know that the Education community of Queensland will be deeply touched by the loss experienced by Shane and his family. As minister for education, I offer his family particularly my best wishes and my sympathies along with those of the Education community and so many of the teachers and staff of his school and the other schools in which he has served. Their thoughts and my thoughts are with his family today. I conclude by also offering my sympathies to all of those who have suffered as a result of this accident.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.40 pm): I rise on behalf of the Independents and the member for Tablelands in endorsing this condolence motion. For rural and remote communities of Queensland, and western Australia in particular, travelling is an absolute necessity. To have such a tragic event occur makes the prospect of having to travel that much more difficult for small communities.

It has been said earlier by speakers, and particularly the member for Cook, that those communities are very dependent on one another. They are close-knit communities and it makes the loss of family members that much greater to cope with. In large places like Brisbane, tragedy can occur and the rest of the community is hardly touched by it. But in small areas where the township is 500 or 800

people everybody is affected to a greater or less degree, and it is very unsettling for those communities for some time to come. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families who have lost loved ones; with the rescue workers and the workers' families who have to deal with such tragic circumstances and who have to find closure and reasons for what happened; and with those like the member for Cook and others who will have the sensitive job of dealing with problems that arise within those communities when community members come to him and to other elected people for support, care and direction.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all of those affected. Tomorrow will be a very difficult day and for the weeks ahead there will be a great deal of soul-searching, sadness and tears, but I believe the community up there can be assured that the best wishes, the thoughts, the support and the prayers of all those in this House are with them for now and also for the future.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

DEBITS TAX REPEAL BILL

First Reading

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (3.43 pm): I present a bill for an act to repeal the Debits Tax Act 1990, and for related matters. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (3.43 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Debits Tax Repeal Bill 2005 repeals the Debits Tax Act 1990, abolishing debits tax in Queensland from 1 July 2005. Debits tax applies to certain debits to accounts with cheque-drawing facilities held with financial institutions in Queensland. This bill delivers on a commitment announced in the 2004-05 state budget to abolish debits tax from 1 July 2005 and marks another instalment in Queensland meeting its obligations under the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Reform of Commonwealth-State Financial Relations on time.

The IGA is signed by the Commonwealth, and all the states and territories made the following provisions in relation to state taxes—

- From 1 July 2000—Bed taxes (Queensland did not impose bed taxes).
- From 1 July 2001—Financial Institutions Duty (Queensland did not impose this duty).
- From 1 July 2001—Stamp duties on marketable securities listed on the Australian Stock Exchange or other recognised exchanges (Queensland abolished this duty on time).
- From 1 July 2005—Debits tax, subject to review by the ministerial council (this bill delivers on our debits tax commitment).

The IGA also provided that by 2005 the ministerial council would review the need for the retention of a number of other stamp duties. To this end, as I have previously advised parliament by ministerial statement, I have written to the federal Treasurer proposing the removal of certain duties over the next six years. They are 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 arrangements and rental arrangements; stamp duty on cheques, bills of exchange and promissory notes; and stamp duty on business conveyances other than real property such as goodwill, supply rights of a business and intellectual property. I again remind the House that Queensland does not have stamp duty on cheques, bills of exchange and promissory notes and has already abolished credit card duty. Under this proposal Queensland will forgo tax revenue starting from an estimated $42 million in 2005-06 to $558 million in 2010-11.

As usual when a tax is abolished there will be a period of ongoing operation to wind up outstanding matters. The Acts Interpretation Act 1954 and the Debits Tax Repeal Bill 2005 make provision for the continued operation of the Debits Tax Act 1990 to finalise these outstanding matters. This would ensure that debits tax liabilities incurred before abolition are discharged despite abolition. It also means that rights in relation to pre-abolition debits can continue to be enforced after abolition such as a right of objection, appeal or the right to a refund.

To facilitate this winding up the bill confers upon the Commissioner of State Revenue the power to delegate his functions under the act to officers of the Office of State Revenue. This power is a usual feature of taxation legislation but was inadvertently omitted from the Debits Tax Act 1990 by the Taxation

Administration Act 2001 from 1 March 2002. The bill also retrospectively validates any delegations purportedly made by the commissioner from 1 March 2002 and continues those in force immediately before that date. The winding-up period is not expected to be protracted given that debits tax liability is incurred immediately a relevant debit is made to an account and that the tax is payable monthly. This period will also allow for a sufficient time to enable any audits to be completed. The changes in the bill to the Freedom of Information Act 1993 are consequential on repeal of the Debits Tax Act 1990 and continue the current freedom of information arrangements for debits tax despite repeal of the Debits Tax Act 1990. There is no policy change.

It is estimated Queensland will forgo tax revenue of over $1.6 billion over the next six years if the Commonwealth accepts our proposal to abolish further taxes. Our government's demonstrated commitment to tax reform, through the abolition of debits tax and the proposed abolition of other taxes, further underpins our strong economy and maintains Queensland's proud low-tax status. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Messenger, adjourned.

UNIVERSITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 19 April (see p. 893).

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (3.49 pm): I rise to comment on and support the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2005—a piece of legislation consisting of 165 clauses and nine parts. It is legislation driven by the Howard government's Commonwealth higher education reforms, called the national governance protocols, which were promulgated under section 33-15 of the Higher Education Support Act 2003. The national governance protocols are aimed at improving the governance arrangements of Australian universities.

To qualify for increased Commonwealth funding all states, including Queensland, must make legislative amendments to those acts that establish universities. In Queensland there are seven universities and therefore seven establishing acts that will require amendment. The seven universities in Queensland include James Cook University, the University of the Sunshine Coast, the Central Queensland University, the University of Southern Queensland, the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology and Griffith University.

At the outset, I would like to commend the minister's department on the consultation that has occurred with the relevant universities and the student unions or representative councils. Some of the bills that come into this House have not been subject to adequate consultation, and I believe that this is a serious failing on behalf of the government. Given the important contribution made by Queensland universities to our economy and to our development as a state, I believe these amendments give effect to essential reform, and I am proud to offer my support today.

These amendments have arisen from a Commonwealth review of higher education in 2002. The national governance protocols are designed to improve funding, governance and accountability of Australian universities. These reforms are an important step in the federal government's charter of improving the legislative framework that universities operate within. Reforms such as these, which improve the accountability and responsibility of our universities, can only be regarded as a positive initiative, and I congratulate the federal government for taking on and tackling tough reforms.

The national governance protocol 3 outlines the functions and duties of members of a university governing body. The responsibilities of members, according to the protocol, include (a) always act in the best interests of the higher education provider as a whole, with this obligation to be observed in priority to any duty a member may owe to those electing or appointing him or her; (b) act in good faith, honestly and for a proper purpose; (c) exercise appropriate care and diligence; (d) not improperly use their position to gain an advantage for themselves or someone else; and (e) disclose and avoid conflicts of interest with appropriate procedures for that purpose similar to those for public companies. These duties will be inserted in each university act to ensure that members of governing bodies discharge their duties with the highest degree of accountability and due diligence. The insertion of such requirements upon members of the university governing bodies is an important proactive step by the federal government to ensure that universities uphold the high standards expected by our community.

I note that members may be removed from office if they are believed to have failed in discharging these duties. However, I have a particular concern that members can only be removed by a two-thirds majority of the council. If a member has failed in any of these duties it would constitute a very serious breach. Hypothetically, a member may improperly use their position to gain an advantage for themselves or a number of other members of the governing body. The member could then potentially lobby members of the governing body and avoid being removed because he or she has gained the support of those members or because those members have also benefited from the improper dealings.

I would be extremely concerned if the two-thirds majority rule was improperly used in this manner. I seek assurance from the minister that serious breaches by members of a governing body can be appropriately dealt with and not subject to undue influence.

Whilst I have concern that the two-thirds majority rule has the potential to be abused, I also believe that any members who are removed have the right to reasonable avenues of appeal. I note the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's concerns that the removal of an elected, appointed or additional member can occur with very limited redress. I am concerned that a member could potentially be unfairly targeted and ousted from a governing body and yet there is only a limited avenue for an appeal of this decision. I therefore seek further advice from the minister as to what consultation has occurred with universities regarding improving the right of appeal in relation to the removal of members.

I also read with concern that the chancellor, vice-chancellor or president of the university can be removed from the governing body despite their existing employment contract. Obviously, if this were to occur a university would find itself in an extraordinary predicament. I therefore seek further information from the minister regarding the reason for this particular provision, as it appears to me that this provision could prove unworkable should such an unfortunate situation occur.

In accordance with the requirements of national governance protocol 5, the bill also introduces a requirement to ensure that university governing bodies have a maximum of 22 members with a majority of external independent members. Most councils will have their total numbers of members reduced under these reforms. However, the representation of each constituency on university bodies remains at proportional levels. Whilst the size of many councils and governing bodies will decrease under these amendments, it is important to note that these amendments are able to be applied in a model that best fits each individual university.

Amendments also require that university councils must consist of official, appointed, elected and additional members. For instance, the University of Queensland senate has always consisted of a number of ex-officio members, some of whom never exercise their right to attend meetings but have maintained their position for many years. These additional ex-officio members will now be removed to streamline and improve governance arrangements.

I also note that some acts, such as the University of Queensland Act 1998, have been amended to remove the requirements for members of the Legislative Assembly—this House—to be part of a university governing body. National governance protocol 5 removes the requirement for any member of parliament to sit on a governing body, except where that person was elected by the university governing body. I am aware that universities are still able to appoint members of parliament if they believe that they are the best person for the job. However, this amendment has removed the capacity for members to be appointed on status alone and not the value of their contribution. I believe that this is an important requirement as it ensures that university governing bodies are able to appoint people on merit and assist in removing potential 'lame duck' political appointments.

The terms of office for council members have been increased from three to four years and, in accordance with national governance protocol 6, members may now serve a maximum of 12 years. I am aware that Sir Llew Edwards in his current position on the University of Queensland senate will be affected by this new provision relating to maximum terms.

The bill also contains significant amendments relating to convocation or graduate appointments to university councils. The University of Southern Queensland, Central Queensland University, James Cook University and the Queensland University of Technology are currently able to allow executives of student unions or convocation associations to appoint student or graduate members without an election. I am aware that these provisions were provided to these universities so that an appointment could be filled in the event that an election could not be conducted. The national governance protocols require all members of governing bodies to be appointed or elected, with the exception of official members.

I believe that these are important reforms as they prevent the potential misuse of discretionary powers and ensure that representation on governing bodies is truly representative. I am also aware that many universities have expressed concern regarding the elections for convocation appointments because the sheer size of many graduate bodies holding elections can be extremely onerous and often the level of response to elections has been rather lacklustre.

I understand that universities are undertaking further investigations as to how to improve and streamline their respective convocation elections, and I believe that this is also an improvement. Casual convocation vacancies must be appointed by the university council rather than the executive body of the student union, in line with the Commonwealth requirements that members must be appointed or elected.

I also note that there have been further amendments circulated because the bill that is before the House does not fully comply with the federal government's requirements. I would only say to the minister that these reforms have been in the pipeline since 2002 and this parliament should not be subject to last-minute amendments being shoved through parliament without proper scrutiny. In her role

as Leader of the House, I am certain that the minister is aware that this is not an ideal situation and I trust that my comments today will be taken on board in a constructive manner.

A number of amendments are contained in the bill relating to the checks and balances upon appointments to governing bodies. Members of governing bodies must vacate office if they become disqualified from acting as director of a company or managing a corporation under the Corporations Act or convicted of an indictable offence. I welcome these provisions, but I have a concern that the onus is on self-reporting. I ask the minister what mechanisms are in place to alert universities if any of these instances should occur.

The bill also contains amendments to allow government and university appointments to governing bodies to have information regarding their criminal history checked by the Queensland Police Service. I am aware that these amendments are essential to ensure that universities can be confident that only individuals with the highest moral standards and personal conduct are appointed. However, I have a concern that criminal history checks can only be carried out at the consent of the potential appointee, and I would like the minister to clarify for the parliament what process would occur if the appointee refused a criminal history check. Is that person still eligible for a position on the governing body?

As I stated earlier, this legislation will have a huge impact on the governance and accountability of university governing bodies. I am unsure if many people realise the important work undertaken by these governing bodies and the incredible impact that a university has on a local economy. To give the minister and this House some idea of how many people are involved in universities that will be potentially affected by this legislation I would like to make this House aware of the contribution of each of our seven universities to both their local economies and statewide.

At James Cook University there were approximately 13,587 students enrolled in the previous academic year, with an average enrolment rate of 65.5 per cent. James Cook University offers not only young Queenslanders and Australians a place to study; a number of overseas students are also taking advantage of the excellent facilities offered by this university.

Overseas students enrolled at James Cook originate from over 98 countries and totalled 1,138 students or approximately 11.7 per cent of the entire student body, which is a rise of about 1.5 per cent on the previous year. Out of the 13,587 students enrolled at James Cook University 2,016 students graduated in 2003. James Cook University currently employs approximately 1,272 full-time equivalent staff members and returns approximately $191.8 million per year in revenue. This is great news for north Queensland.

Central Queensland University has five campuses in central Queensland to service students in Rockhampton, Gladstone, Mackay, Emerald and Bundaberg. There are also campuses in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Melbourne, Sydney and Fiji which cater to international students. I can proudly testify that the Bundaberg campus offers small class sizes with very individually focused, high quality educational service provision across a wide range of university study programs.

CQU currently employs approximately 1,194 staff members, including academic staff, general staff, support staff and principal research staff. There were approximately 4,778 students enrolled in postgraduate courses and a further 15,819 students enrolled in undergraduate courses at CQU in 2003. That figure includes 1,430 international students.

The University of Queensland has a total of 33,946 students enrolled, which is a 1.8 per cent increase from 2002-03 and followed a continuing trend towards full-time study. The University of Queensland's international student enrolments for 2003 included 4,617 students from 114 different countries. Out of those students enrolled in 2003 approximately 8,637 students graduated in that year. The University of Queensland currently employees 4,865 staff. That is a three per cent increase from 2002-03, which is an enormous contribution to our local economy.

The University of the Sunshine Coast was first established under the Sunshine Coast University College Act 1994 and was opened in 1996. The University of the Sunshine Coast has a total student population of 3,556, which is an increase of three per cent on the previous year. The University of the Sunshine Coast's total revenue reached $39.9 million in 2003, which is an admirable achievement considering its relative infancy.

Griffith University student numbers have increased every year, reaching 32,258, including 6,268 international students, in 2003. Griffith University employs a total of 3,392 academic and non-academic staff members. The University of Southern Queensland, USQ, employs 1,385 academic and general staff members. The University of Southern Queensland has a total of 22,923 students enrolled. Approximately 3,640 students completed their courses in 2003. The University of Southern Queensland is a significant contributor to the economy of Toowoomba and the surrounding regions with revenue of $119.9 million raised in 2003.

The Queensland University of Technology, another of Queensland's major universities, has three Brisbane campuses at Gardens Point, Kelvin Grove and Carseldine and a multipartner campus at Caboolture. There are almost 40,000 attending QUT and more than 5,000 of those are international students.

As I have just outlined, universities not only educate our future professionals but also contribute to local economies and bring new cultures to our state. Good governance and the long-term wellbeing of universities is important to us all. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (4.13 pm): Australian universities are confronting a period of enormous upheaval and profound change. In part, this is arising because universities are by their very nature institutions at the intersection of social and economic change in a society. There can be no doubt that the Australian society is rapidly changing.

In other instances the upheaval is the result of shifts in international conditions, such as movement in the source of countries from which Australia draws international students. The other pressure on universities arises from the policy directions of the federal government. In some cases the federal policy direction is reasonable, albeit not particularly necessary, and, in other cases, the direction is nothing more than ideological nonsense as evidenced by the resurgence of the attack on student unionism.

The University Legislation Amendment Bill before the House provides members with the opportunity to canvass the myriad issues which come before the governing structures of Queensland universities. These structures are being reformed by this bill to generally reduce the size of their membership and improve standards of corporate governance. These measures are worthwhile and reflect the size and complexity of universities as multimillion-dollar organisations which play a pivotal role in community wellbeing.

For several years I had the honour to serve on the governing council of the Queensland University of Technology. I held this position by appointment of the Queensland government. I understand that only two members of parliament previously held that position. They were none other than the Premier, Peter Beattie, and, of course, our minister for education, the Hon. Anna Bligh. Following me as a Queensland government representative on the QUT council is the member for Glass House. She will follow me in this debate. I am sure that, since her appointment, the member for Glass House, Carolyn Male, is finding it a most interesting position to hold, as I did.

While good governance reforms initiated by the Commonwealth are a good thing, the same cannot be said about other Commonwealth changes. As I mentioned earlier, the federal parliament has before it a bill which effectively destroys student guilds or student unions operating at our universities. This has been done in the name of freedom of association. The reality is that student unions are major providers of student services on Australian university campuses. These services extend from the provision of sports and recreation clubs and facilities to high-quality, low-cost child care, to career and study support and advocacy to students.

It is true that over the decades student bodies have been engaged in political debates and that student unions have had the temerity to organise protests against the government of the day, both conservative and Labor alike. Can I say what a petty and narrow view of the world the Howard government has to destroy these organisations because they have been at times politically active. If people cannot be politically active when they are at university then there is no other time in their life when they can be.

Surely governments can take a bit of criticism even if we think at times the criticism is a bit unfair or even wrongly motivated. Even if we took the view that a compulsory fee should never go towards a political activity which might be contrary to the view of the individual paying the fee, that part of student union activities is very small compared to its provision of services. It is here that the mindless vandalism of the federal position becomes clear as the proposed federal legislation precludes universities filling the gap by charging compulsory service fees to students.

The impact of the destruction of student unions and student services will be felt most profoundly in regional centres where the university will often be a major employer and provider of community facilities. I am pleased to hear that Senator-elect Barnaby Joyce, the National Party senator, has stated his opposition to these Liberal Party led changes, but the silence of the Leader of the Opposition in this parliament has been deafening. The Leader of the Opposition should use this debate to state where he stands on this question.

Mr Rickuss: Is it relevant?

Mrs LAVARCH: One has to ask: is he a supporter of the loss of student services or does he have the strength to speak out and oppose the madness of the Howard government? The member is asking me whether this is relevant. These are the very issues that the governing bodies of our universities in Queensland will have to consider once the changes go through. Will the Leader of the Opposition lobby his National Party federal colleagues to have some balance restored to this debate, or will he once again sell out Queensland and Queenslanders?

A further change being pursued by the Commonwealth is the apparent de facto reinstitution of the binary system of higher education. In this system there would be only teaching institutions and research intensive institutions. This reflects in some respects the system that existed prior to the amalgamation of universities, institutions of technology and colleges of advanced education in the late 1980s and early

1990s. While it would be fair to say that not all aspects of the amalgamation process went smoothly, overall the outcome has been a major expansion in university places and a general improvement in standards. We have seen between the years 1990 and 2003 the number of university places in Australia increase from 485,000 to 930,000. It would be a major retrograde step if this fundamental feature of the higher education system was to be wound back.

It is appropriate that the Commonwealth be concerned about the quality of teaching and research, but this would be best achieved through adequate resourcing of the system and comprehensive performance measures. At present the Commonwealth is seeking to develop a quality framework for research, but it is chronically underfunding our universities. In fact, this year has seen for the first time the federal government providing more funding to private schools in Australia than to our universities. Most recently the federal education minister announced that the Commonwealth will not index its funding to universities. This decision will place pressure on universities to pursue alternative funding avenues, particularly in fee-paying courses.

While I do contend that there is a place for full fee-paying places at Australian universities, there are also a lot of dangers attached to that. A number of universities, including Queensland universities, are highly reliant on international students. Changes in the Australian exchange rate and shifts in international conditions have led to significant falls in student numbers in the last 18 months. This has placed some universities under considerable financial stress and this in turn has caused issues with administration standards and academic standards.

It is a credit to the Premier that he has been such a strong supporter of our state's universities. This support through Smart Queensland, encompassing the Smart State strategies, has seen a massive state financial contribution to the research agenda. Amongst the states, Queensland has led the way in financial support to the state's research sector. In conclusion, I echo the words of the minister in her second reading speech. She said—

> Our universities are entering a period of extraordinary change driven by relentless and, at times, conflicting and contradictory demands from the Commonwealth Government and the challenges emanating from operating in local, national and international environments.
>
> The demand for good governance in our institutions has never been greater.

I echo those sentiments and commend the bill to the House.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (4.18 pm): We are living in an era of huge change and reform, and our universities need to be at the forefront of that advancement. Our universities are where our brightest young minds are nurtured and stimulated, where leading research is undertaken and where often a great deal of comment emanates which helps to inform and sometimes shape public opinion. Thus, it is essential that the governance and administration of our universities continues to serve their institutions well.

This legislation will amend seven university acts, being those for the Central Queensland University, Griffith, James Cook, the University of Technology, the University of Queensland, the University of Southern Queensland and the University of the Sunshine Coast. Following a national review by the Commonwealth government, universities are obligated to adopt new national governance protocols for public higher education institutions. This act will put in place guidelines for the composition of university councils while leaving flexibility to allow for the diversity which is essential within our tertiary sector.

The size of councils will be reduced to between 14 and 22 members, with the average being approximately 19 members. The Governor in Council will gain one-third of the total representation along with staff representation and students and, importantly, graduates of the institution, who are often their most enthusiastic advocates. The term of office has been increased to 12 years, or four terms, to allow for consistency and continuity in what is now a very complex position. It is noted that students will serve a maximum of two years.

The opportunity to attend a tertiary level institution has in times past been a remote dream to many of my constituents and even something many had never contemplated. However, the establishment of a Logan campus of Griffith University and the links that have been forged with local schools and the Logan Institute of TAFE have now meant that many attend and are the first in their family to obtain a tertiary level qualification. The university is very proactive in the local area, and here I wish to pay tribute to Mr Phil Rowan, who has been the visible, public face of the university since before its inception. Phil would be at functions, community gatherings, planning meetings, forums and anything that would lead to increased education, skilling, employment and training, be it for the young or those not so young who are given a second chance in life to improve their education. Phil has recently retired after 31 years of service to Griffith. He held the position of campus administrator, but he has been so much more than that. He added the Mount Gravatt campus to the university and was responsible for the planning and building of the Logan campus and the early establishment of the medical school.

One of Phil's last tasks has been to assist Professor Sharon Bell to establish a Logan Campus Development Advisory Board, of which I am part. This committee is comprised of people who have an interest to see the university increase its enrolment from the local area and to be responsive to the

needs of local employers and offer courses which will fulfil the aspirations of local students. Phil's whole association with the university has been his passion, and his warmth and enthusiasm will be greatly missed. I wish him a happy and fulfilling retirement. I know that he will find somewhere to use his considerable talents in a voluntary capacity and also be able to spend more time with his family.

I would also like to pay tribute to Griffith University on the Gold Coast, where the first intake of medical students commenced their course at the end of January. It was my privilege to be part of the steering committee, and I was tremendously impressed by the focus of that committee. Professor Judy Searle, Dean of the Medical School, has a strong sense of social justice and has led the way in ensuring the focus of this school will be on exceptional community service. A number of students are already active in the Logan area, where they will gain tremendous experience which will hopefully enhance the practical focus of their training. I have much pleasure in supporting this bill.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (4.23 pm): I rise to support the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. As the Gatton campus of UQ is in the centre of my electorate and is an important part of our community, I read the bill with great interest. The bill is following the recommendations of the 2002 Commonwealth government review and universities are now required to abide by the national governance protocols for public higher education institutions. I support the good governance protocols. These should deliver good corporate governance and assure the public that universities are accountable.

University bodies will have a maximum number of 22 members on their boards with the majority of them being external, independent members. Some other commonsense amendments are for members to have four-year terms, with an overall maximum term of 12 years, and two-year terms for students.

For a person to become a member of the board, a criminal history check is required. Members are disqualified from a board if they are acting as a company director or are convicted of an indictable offence. I support any legislation that will make the university system better managed and stronger. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (4.25 pm): I rise to support the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. The bill has as its core objectives to amend the seven acts that establish universities in Queensland to the extent necessary to achieve consistency with the requirements of the Commonwealth's national governance protocols for higher education providers. These acts are the Central Queensland University Act 1998, the Griffith University Act 1998, the James Cook University Act 1997, the Queensland University of Technology Act 1998, the University of Queensland Act 1998, the University of Southern Queensland Act 1998 and the University of the Sunshine Coast Act 1998. This bill will also enable the minister to seek criminal history information about persons the minister is considering recommending to the Governor in Council to be appointed as a member on a university governing body. It also makes other miscellaneous amendments to the authorising legislation of Queensland universities.

In 2003, the Commonwealth government approved significant reforms to the higher education sector, which related to university governance arrangements, funding, delivery of services and industrial relations arrangements. The Commonwealth has made the provision of additional funding to universities conditional on universities implementing agreed national governance protocols and the universities have to demonstrate compliance with this by 31 August this year.

Firstly, I want to talk about the ongoing pressure that the federal government is placing on our universities. In my eyes the federal government is using the threat of withholding funding from our universities to achieve its short-sighted, politically driven ideology. The Commonwealth's proposed industrial relations reforms, where it is attempting to link funding to the introduction of individual agreements, is one instance, not to mention the voluntary student unionism legislation, which is an attack on services, an attack on unions and an attack on students. Financial penalties would apply to universities that did not implement VSU at their campuses.

This federal government is not interested in well-resourced campuses with facilities for local, regional, interstate or overseas students. It is interested only in silencing the critical voice of our student bodies. When will the federal government learn that our universities are the heart of learning? The federal government should be providing adequate funding for universities, which is indexed and increased; it should be providing adequate funding for research and other grants; and it should be increasing exponentially the number of student places available to Queensland's youngsters.

As I said earlier, these amendments are being put in place to fulfil Commonwealth requirements. At this juncture, I should declare that not only am I a proud graduate of the Kelvin Grove campus of QUT; I am also on the QUT council. It is a rewarding position to hold and I am pleased to be able to contribute to the policies and processes of one of our major universities. The council is ultimately responsible for the management and operation of the university and I know that all members who are elected or appointed work in the best interests of the university and the students. Being able to work with the Chancellor, Major-General Peter Arnison, and the Vice-Chancellor, Peter Coaldrake, has heartened me, especially with their interest in research and innovation.

The amendments to the university acts will provide for the revised composition of members for each university governing body, ensuring that each governing body has no more than 22 members and that the majority of members will be external to the university. The amendments will provide clear directions to members of a university governing body regarding their functions and responsibilities, including matters that may disqualify them from being or becoming a member, and the process for their removal. The amendments also give the minister the power to extend the terms of appointed, elected and additional members for not more than one year and the power to obtain a written report about the criminal history of a person that the minister is considering recommending to the Governor in Council to be appointed as an appointed member.

The amendments also give the councils of Central Queensland University, James Cook University, the University of Southern Queensland and the University of the Sunshine Coast the ability to delegate the approval of expenditure of funds available to the universities by way of bequest, donation or special grant if the expenditure is not more than $100,000 and it gives the QUT council and the UQ senate the ability to delegate the approval of expenditure of funds available to the universities by way of bequest, donation or special grant if the expenditure is for a prize or scholarship funded by bequest, donation or special grant.

The amendments in this bill will change the make-up of most of our university councils, but the basic principle of full and open representation from across all interested sectors will be maintained. Our universities are dynamic institutions that fulfil a vital role in the lifelong learning ideals that we espouse. I believe that this bill will assist them to continue in this manner. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (4.29 pm): I want to make a short contribution to this debate because near my electorate is located the University of Southern Queensland, a notable tertiary educational facility. I have had the honour of serving on that university's council for a couple of years.

This bill reflects the national governance protocols being introduced and required by the Commonwealth. That is the major point of this legislation. It also enables criminal checks to be made on members of the various governance bodies. The bill also contains a raft of miscellaneous provisions.

As I said, the bill relates particularly to the size and make-up of the university councils. Nowadays, one of the requirements is that members of state parliament are not encouraged to be members of the councils. That is a federal government policy.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr SHINE: The honourable member for Lockyer wants me to talk about compulsory unionism. I do not know the relevance of that in this instance.

The councils that are set up to provide governance of the universities have to deal with a range of issues. A current issue is whether universities should be involved fully in research and teaching or just be involved in teaching alone. That is a debate that is being encouraged by the federal government. This issue will have enormous consequences for the University of Southern Queensland.

Recently, the federal government released an issues paper on that very subject and poses the question: should universities be all things to all people or be primarily a teaching organisation? The issues paper states in part—

Currently, our universities aim to combine teaching, scholarship and research to achieve the education of persons ... the creation and advancement of knowledge; and the application of knowledge and discoveries to the betterment of communities in Australia and internationally.

I found it interesting that this issues paper refers to establishing the link between teaching and research. This is important in the light of this current debate. The paper states further—

Many argue that there is indeed a strong link between teaching and research and that each enriches the other to the benefit of teachers and students. The idea that there is a nexus between research and teaching originated in ... the nineteenth century. At the time, this was a new idea, as universities were primarily places for teaching.

Further in this issues paper various authorities on tertiary education identify a number of arguments for a nexus between teaching and research to the benefit of both. It states—

Teaching ensures researchers keep in touch with their wider subject area and builds on their ability to communicate and clarify their thinking; being at the cutting edge of the field enables academics to bring elements of excitement and enthusiasm to their teaching ... research contributes to shaping of the climate of ideas ... the nexus opens opportunities for future researchers to be taught by academics who themselves are researchers; research informs academic's teaching; students benefit from being part of an academic culture that includes both teaching and research.

For those reasons, generally speaking I support the idea of both research and teaching taking place at universities.

I suspect that the general idea of Dr Nelson's strategy is to encourage research to be conducted by the big eight universities in Australia, which in Queensland would mean the University of Queensland, to the disadvantage of universities such as USQ. That would be terrible because at the USQ, quite apart from the excellent teaching programs, an enormous amount of important research is being done. I have spoken about fibre composites, for example. Again today the member for Greenslopes spoke in this House about fibre composites in terms of Energex's use of cross arms.

In addition to that research, very important work is being done by the University of Southern Queensland in the biomedical area. For example, in the area of muscular dystrophy, Professor Hoey, a world-renowned practitioner in that area, has been doing tremendous work. Important work is also being carried out by the university in areas such as whooping cough, gastric disease, shock caused by car accidents and in a range of other areas over a number of years.

If the reforms mooted by Brendan Nelson are proceeded with then the fear is that the moneys and encouragement will go to the big eight universities to the exclusion of universities such as USQ. This sort of research will not be done in the regions. That will have a bad effect on regions such as Toowoomba and the Darling Downs. I urge the federal government and the federal minister to reconsider that approach which I think will have a negative effect on regions Australiawide.

Finally, I am very concerned about the trend that is happening in Australia in relation to access to universities due to growing HECS fees. It is far more difficult for young people to go to university now than it was five or 10 years ago. We seem to be reverting to the situation that applied when I was young in the sixties, when those who could go to university, by and large, were the children of people who were well off. We will get back to a situation in Australia of exclusivity of access to education based on wealth. Quite apart from equity reasons, that cannot be good. Despite what the member for Lockyer says, that cannot be good for the economic welfare of this country. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to go somewhat beyond the strict confines of the legislation.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (4.37 pm): I am pleased to speak on the University Legislation Amendment Bill and, in doing so, I thank the minister and the staff from the department of education for providing members with an informative session detailing the provisions in the bill and the reasoning behind those provisions. After that session and on reading the bill, I am pleased to say that the Liberal Party will be supporting this legislation in full.

As we have heard, this bill puts in place provisions that were required to be in place by 31 August so that universities could receive an extra 2.5 per cent in funding in 2006 and then another increase of 2.5 per cent in funding in 2007 as a part of the national governance protocols for university providers. To indicate just how significant this is, let me take the example of QUT—an institution that receives $200 million in Commonwealth funding each year. This extra 2.5 per cent in funding makes a $5 million difference in 2006 and a $10 million difference in 2007. I am sure QUT will put this money to good use.

The bill forces universities to comply with corporate governance laws. The Liberal Party will always support ways in which statutory bodies can become more strictly subject to the ethical obligations imposed on other entities engaged in corporate governance. I am particularly pleased to see two provisions in the bill that deal with this. Firstly, all positions on boards will be elected—that is, apart from the one-third which are by appointment. It seems only right that, as much as possible in a democratic society, fundamental principles of that underlying philosophy extend to all aspects of the corporate and governance sphere. I am pleased to see that there will no longer be earmarked provisions. Secondly, it is pleasing to see that members of parliament will be removed from governing councils for all but rare appointments. Removing these reprobates will no doubt clean up governing councils. In all seriousness though, this provision does go a long way to ensuring that there is a minimal chance of conflicts of interest. I am sure that the members for Glass House, Toowoomba North and Moggill would never have let such conflicts of interest interfere with the carrying out of their duties.

It is also important that those who breach their ethical obligations are punished appropriately. There is provision in the bill for the removal of a member with a two-thirds majority if they have breached one of the ethical standards set out. I know that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee raised the question that there is no recourse through merits review if the person feels aggrieved by that decision. This is of particular importance to ensure that if a person makes comments decidedly unpopular to two-thirds of the council yet does not breach an ethical standard they may still be removed in almost an unpopularity contest. I do not think that the absence of merits review—if in fact that is the case—will inhibit the ability of a person sufficiently aggrieved to seek the correct outcome under judicial review. In fact, it is probably more appropriate that judicial review comes up with a more definitive look at the issue of breach of ethics than that which would be provided by merits review processes.

So, to answer the question of review with relation to this legislation as proposed by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, I feel that this bill does satisfy the criteria set out in the normal principles of natural justice and that an aggrieved person does have sufficient avenues to contest a decision. With those few comments, I commend the bill to the House.

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (4.40 pm): I have pleasure to rise to support the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. This bill will amend the acts relating to seven universities including the James Cook University Act 1997. In 2002 the Commonwealth government undertook a national review of future funding, governance, industrial relations and delivery of higher education in this country. Stemming from this review, universities are required to adopt new national governance protocols for public higher education institutions. This bill will give effect to the core requirements of the protocols, particularly those dealing with the size, composition and responsibilities of university councils, and will further strengthen the state legislative framework within which public universities operate in Queensland.

Collectively, the measures contained in this bill will further streamline governance arrangements for public universities in the state and help ensure that university governing bodies operate in accord with publicly recognised standards of good corporate governance, accountability and reporting in overseeing the operations of these invaluable state assets.

I would like to make particular mention of governance amendments proposed in this legislation, in particular the membership and size of councils. Universities of Queensland have diverse and distinctive institutions, and their governing arrangements need to be similarly unique to their individual needs, interests and aspirations. This bill provides for a diversity of approaches to university governance and rejects firmly the notion that the one-size-fits-all view should predominate in this area.

In accordance with the requirements of national governance protocol 5, this bill includes amendments to ensure that university governing bodies in Queensland have a maximum of 22 members and a majority of external independent members. James Cook University has in fact already adopted this provision and reduced the size of its council to 22 members. Whilst absolute numbers of council members have been reduced, in the main decreases in particular categories of representation have been proportional. It is intended that students, staff and other constituents will continue to enjoy strong levels of representation on these bodies. I note, however, that the union for tertiary education staff has raised concerns about the adequacy of staff representation on the JCU council, and the minister might make reference to this in her response to the bill.

Also, unfortunately, it has meant that students have only one representative on the JCU council and it is no longer possible for the Cairns campus to have its own representation. I say 'unfortunately' because at present—and at times in the past and no doubt in the future—there are differences between the Townsville campus and the Cairns campus in relation to particular issues and with regard to the current campaign with respect to voluntary student unionism. In fact, the Cairns campus has very strong views opposed to the federal government's position, and the irony is probably not lost on people that it is the Liberal dominated Townsville students union that is advocating and supporting the federal government's policy that will in fact reduce the voice of students. That is very disappointing, and I commend the Cairns campus association for its active role with regard to the VSU campaign.

I, like other members in this debate this afternoon, also commend the National Party's Barnaby Joyce for his stand. From my discussions with the universities I know that they recognise only too well the impact of these changes on regional universities and they would very much like to be able to collect the fee on behalf of students and put those moneys towards the provision of student services and sporting facilities. I am just amazed that the federal government will not even countenance that kind of change, which seems to me to really confirm that it is purely ideology and not the interests of universities or students that is driving that particular legislation.

Returning to the general issue of the composition of the councils, in recognition of the state's significant interest in higher education and the nature of universities as state assets, Governor in Council representation on the governing bodies of these institutions will be at a minimum of one-third of total membership. Certainly regarding JCU I am pleased that Lindy Nelson-Carr has retained her place on the council and continues to do very good work there representing our interests.

I personally have had a long association with JCU since 1987, when I was appointed as the foundation education lecturer on the Cairns campus of JCU, which at that time was located on the Cairns TAFE campus. Following my election as a state member of parliament, I served on the JCU council for two terms and was a member of the Cairns campus consultative committee under its director, Philip Courtney. I have continued my strong support for JCU and the Cairns campus, which now has almost 3,000 students and offers a wide range of courses across all faculties.

The Cairns campus continues to grow under the dynamic leadership of the recently appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Scott Bowman, and this year a new degree has been offered in sports and exercise science. Courses in computer games technology and criminology are also offered for the first time this year, and secondary education can now be studied entirely on the Cairns campus throughout the whole course. Next year it is hoped to have the first year of a veterinary science degree and also agricultural science at the Cairns campus. Our international student numbers are growing, admittedly from a very low base, but there are now approximately 200 students and some 50 attending the new English Language Centre that has been established on campus. JCU does have other international links through its campuses in Singapore and Fiji, and I believe there is another one planned in Shanghai. There is a great partnership with the hospitality college in Hong Kong.

Last year the university purchased from the state government an additional 28 hectares of land located adjacent to the campus, and this strategic purchase is in fact the culmination of a long personal campaign to ensure that the university has sufficient land to expand to meet the needs of the far-north Queensland region into the future. I commend Vice-Chancellor Bernard Moulden for his vision and commitment to the Cairns campus and look forward to its further expansion and the involvement of the Cairns community in charting that future growth and development.

The state government has a record of providing multimillion-dollar financial support to develop the Cairns campus, and I look forward to the opening of the Australian Tropical Forest Institute next year,

made possible by a loan of some $7.5 million from the government's Smart State infrastructure fund. James Cook University is a world leader in tropical research, and its reputation will no doubt be further enhanced when the research centre to replace the rainforest and reef CRCs is established with Commonwealth funds later this year. I hope this will indeed provide the opportunity to confirm the Cairns campus as the premier campus for rainforest research.

The Cairns campus undoubtedly has great potential, and I commend Professor Bowman and his staff for their commitment to excellence in higher education for our region and urge them to continue their efforts. Finally, I would like to put on record my continuing support for the concept of a senior secondary school campus to be established on the JCU site in the future. This concept received local support during community consultations as part of the Cairns education renewal project. I note that one of the initiatives in the recently released Smart Queensland strategy is the establishment of two academies of excellence for school students in south-east Queensland. I commend the minister for education on this significant initiative and hope that it may be extended to regional Queensland in the future. The development of such an academy on the Cairns campus of JCU would make a significant contribution to the Smart State vision and provide a facility that would play an important role in fostering the talents of young people in far-north Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (4.49 pm): I rise to support the University Legislation Amendment Bill that is before the House today. There can certainly be no quibble with much that is contained in this bill to improve standards of governance in universities. The question of improved governance in organisations, both public and private, has been on an inexorable march in recent years. This bill does many things to improve the standard of governance by aligning qualifications with the Corporations Law and also spelling out the duties and obligations of members of governing bodies in terms of diligence and the proper use of the office of members of governing bodies of universities.

I might also somewhat cheekily remark upon the fact that from listening to the debate so far it seems clear that all sides of politics will be voting for a bill that says it is appropriate for a governing body to have a term of four years as opposed to three years, which is currently the case, on the basis that this provides the ability for these governing bodies to more properly discharge their obligations in meeting the complex challenges that face our universities. Nevertheless, I do not want to dwell on the point lest I incite a five minutes to midnight strategic arrest of direction.

I did want to comment, however, on the member for Burnett's second reading contribution in which he led off for the opposition. He sought to comment on the fact that the parliament will also be considering amendments. He thought that this somewhat detracted from the proper standards of the best practice legislative model that we might employ as a parliament. I might say that the ability to pass amendments is something that has always remained within the power of most parliaments and quite properly so. It is certainly within our capacity to provide an amendment.

Nevertheless, I might say beyond that perhaps gratuitous commentary that the real issue here is not the fact that we have to consider an amendment; the issue is that we are considering an amendment because of an executive discretion exercised by a Commonwealth minister and not a member of this parliament. It might be a stronger comment on the nature of parliamentary sovereignty and the legislative practice that the reason for the amendments is that the consultation draft that went back to the Commonwealth minister did not meet his standards. It did not go back to the Commonwealth parliament but to the Commonwealth minister. I think that if people want to look at what is proper legislative practice and best practice for parliaments then that might be a more insightful commentary rather than a suggestion that the mere fact that we have amendments before us somehow reflects on anyone else's discharge of their responsibilities.

It is the case that the Queensland parliament is obliged to pass this legislation. Why are we obliged to do that? We are obliged to do that because it is the only way to unlock the increments that are available to our public universities. On the balance of considering our obligations as members, it is a bill that we must pass. I cannot help but think, however, that the day after this legislation is proclaimed and it passes through this parliament and we thereby provide access to the increments for our public universities, the mere fact that the governing bodies of our universities will be somewhat differently constituted will not actually change the nature of campus life immediately. It will not make the sun shine brighter. It will not go any way towards meeting the tremendous challenges that our public universities face. The fact that the governing bodies of our universities are somewhat tinkered with by this legislation will not enhance the learning and it will not enhance the outcomes. Nevertheless, we must pass this legislation because it is the only way that our public universities can access these funds. The increments have been ransomed by the federal government to effect these changes.

I cannot help but think that that provides a rather desultory commentary on the nature of our federalism; that this parliament is being obliged to spend its time passing these changes to unlock funding access for our public universities. In saying that, in just over two and a half hours time in another place someone else will stand up in a parliament with an opportunity to discharge their responsibilities to public universities not just by changing the way that the governing bodies are constituted but perhaps by more fulsomely meeting those obligations.

So far we have heard a lot about what the federal budget might contain. If members believe everything they have heard so far, it sweeps across a broad range of government affairs. But so far I have not been able to pick up a breath about public education. I cannot help but think that someone else's efforts in another place in a parliament today might do so much more for our public universities rather than merely changing the constitution of the governing bodies of the universities in Queensland.

I know that because I was at university when Vanstone mach 1 arrived at the universities. The hallways in the lecture theatres filled up with people sitting on the stairs when the tutorials were held fortnightly. Receptionists and the administrative staff disappeared to be replaced by bar codes and stapling machines that never quite worked or never properly recorded when someone's assignment was handed in. If we are going to deal seriously with the issues that confront our universities then the No. 1 issue is not the way that their governing bodies are constituted. The No. 1 issue will always be that our universities need to be supported and funded properly to unlock the great potential of the students who attend them. This is not just for those students and it is not just to provide the workers or the professionals of tomorrow; it is because the experience of education that universities provide sustains the ballast of our society. It means that we are a civilised society that will always have the foundations for economic growth and the ability to conduct ourselves in a civil manner.

I cannot help but think on a day like today—a federal budget day—that as we contemplate this unlocking of funding increments for our universities the time could be so much better spent. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (4.55 pm): I rise to participate in this debate on the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. The primary policy objectives of the bill are to amend the seven acts that establish universities in Queensland to the extent considered necessary to achieve consistency with the requirements of the Commonwealth's national governance protocols for higher education providers and make other miscellaneous amendments to the authorising legislation of Queensland universities.

I will not go into much detail about the bill; it has been widely canvassed by members on both sides. But I think we all recognise the need for good governance in our universities. The difficulties that the Newcastle university has found itself in in recent times have served to highlight that. I was listening to the new Vice-Chancellor being interviewed on radio. His comments indicated that he thought that it was some of the management practices in recent years that have directly contributed to the problems that are being experienced by the Newcastle university. That serves as a timely warning to all of our universities because I know that in my own electorate the University of Southern Queensland is a major contributor to Toowoomba, the city that I live in. If it was to get into problems it would have real consequences for the economy and the cultural experience within Toowoomba city. The member for Toowoomba North has already spoken about the University of Southern Queensland. I am glad that he is very proud of a facility that is in my electorate, as I also know the member for Toowoomba South is, because Toowoomba is a small enough town that we all do have significant exposure to that facility. All three of us have a lot of dealings with that university, and all three of us are quite rightly proud of the work that it has done. As I said, it plays a very significant part in the life of Toowoomba. It is a regionally focused tertiary institution with its main campus located in Toowoomba. It provides programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels via on-campus study, off-campus study or online study. In 2004 the university had 26,174 enrolments. Of that number 7,400 were international students. So it is making a significant contribution to our export earnings as well.

USQ is a valuable provider of education not only to Australians but also to people from overseas. I know that from time to time universities get criticised for giving places to overseas students. But rather than taking away places from Australian students, the fees that international students pay actually enable more Australian students to study at our universities. I think that is a great thing. Overseas students not only provide income for our universities to be able to provide education to many more Australian students; having international students adds to the cultural life of university. That is certainly true of the University of Southern Queensland.

The university began its existence 32 years ago and over the years it has gone ahead in leaps and bounds. It is recognised nationally and internationally as a leader in tertiary education, particularly in the online delivery of tertiary education. Last year USQ received the Commonwealth Learning Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement, which I am sure everyone will agree is a very impressive accolade. That follows on from just a few short years ago when it got the Australian University of the Year Award from the *Good Universities Guide*—I think it was in 2000-01 that it received that award—particularly for the work that it had done in online and e-learning. USQ is a world leader in online learning technologies and pedagogy. It has strong research programs in a lot of areas. Fibre composites is getting the most exposure at the moment. Not only is it very exciting research but also it has very exciting commercial potential for both the university and for Wagners, who are in partnership with the university on that project.

It is already delivering that technology into the US. Wagners has just won an award in the US for work it has been doing on fibre composites. That is a really exciting department within USQ. We must

pay tribute to Professor Gerard Van Erp, who is involved in that and is a specialist in that area. Given his specific technological expertise in the area, USQ has been able to make such big leaps in that particular area.

It is not just restricted to fibre composites. The university has research programs in e-business, e-commerce, biotechnology, agricultural and environmental engineering, sustainable land use, the design and development of fibre composites, numerical modelling and simulation, school leadership, literature, regional history, children's literacy and theatre studies. It has a very broad-ranging area of expertise.

The main campus of USQ in Toowoomba is situated on 75½ hectares of grounds only 10 minutes drive from the centre of the city. It really is a very attractive campus. It has a wide range of academic facilities including a state-of-the-art library, performing arts theatre, concert hall, television studios, sciences and engineering laboratories, lecture theatres and computer laboratories with 24-hour access.

It also has a range of sports facilities including a very impressive recreational centre. The Deputy Speaker and I were both given complimentary membership of that facility for six months. I was not there very regularly, but I did not see the member participating there at all. The campus has an archery range, tennis court, multipurpose courts and various sportsgrounds. They are a very important part of university life for the students who attend there.

In addition, USQ boasts Australia's largest and most traditionally designed Japanese garden. It has become a tourist destination in Toowoomba, given the Carnival of Flowers. It is one of the major gardens in Toowoomba, probably ranking with Queens Park, Newtown Park, Laurel Bank Gardens and Picnic Point. Certainly the Japanese garden is way up there.

There are three co-ed colleges at USQ. It really is a significant facility in our city. Should that university experience trouble, it would have a significant effect on the city of Toowoomba. As at 2004, student enrolment stood at 26,174. There were 601 academic staff and 1,396 full-time equivalent staff. It is a major employer within the city of Toowoomba. In recent days we have been seeing how the loss of approximately 160 staff from Dairy Farmers will affect Toowoomba city. When one considers that 1,400 staff are employed at USQ and it had revenue of $120 million in 2004, one realises that it is a very big operation. We need good governance of our universities to ensure their long-term sustainability and their health so that they can continue to provide a very important service.

It would be remiss of me not to briefly touch on the voluntary student unionism bill currently before the federal parliament. Various comments and various criticisms have been made by members. That is understandable, given the nature of the bill. I have had ongoing talks with members of the University of Southern Queensland Student Guild. It is very concerned about the effect the bill will have on its operations and its ability to provide significant services and infrastructure to continue to develop the USQ campus. I share its concerns.

When I attended the University of Queensland, I was violently opposed to compulsory student unionism because I saw the wastage that occurred. There was absolute hypocrisy in the funding of different organisations, particularly those organisations that were philosophically different from the powers that be within the student guild. It is that sort of thing that has brought us to the point where the federal government is considering voluntary student unionism. There is no doubt in my mind that wastage of funds and problems have occurred within student unions, particularly at the major metropolitan campuses. That is a real pity, because it has brought us to the point where all of our campuses will potentially be disadvantaged because fees will no longer be able to be charged.

As the member for Cunningham, which encompasses the University of Southern Queensland, I have seen the very good work that the guild does. It is completely apolitical, very well managed and very well run. It has developed a range of services and infrastructure. Should some of its income stream become unavailable it may be unable to continue to service its debts and provide facilities such as the Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre. What is more, it is very difficult for small campuses to get external providers to provide services like cafeterias. Campuses such as the University of Queensland, the University of Sydney and QUT have the sheer numbers to attract private enterprise to step in and fill the breach. What is more, most of those campuses have already been fully developed. They have very impressive facilities and they can probably survive without further development. However, for a campus such as USQ and for other regional campuses it will have some effect.

I have argued for a number of years now that universities should be able to charge a compulsory services and infrastructure fee. However, that must go hand in hand with good governance regulations for student guilds or unions, because they are large organisations with high turnovers, particularly on the larger campuses. We need to ensure that the money which is raised is spent only in the interests of students and the development of their services and facilities so that there is no repeat of the abuses that have occurred in the past which have caused us to reach this point.

I know that some members have a significant difference of opinion from me, but I think it is appropriate that I put my concerns on the record. I have written to the Deputy Prime Minister and to the federal minister for education regarding those concerns. I hope that some amendments can be made to their bill. I understand completely the spirit of the legislation and wanting to abolish compulsory unionism. That is something I have supported in the past. However, we need to recognise that if student

guilds, unions or even universities are unable to charge fees there will be a very sizeable shortfall in the revenue required to provide services and infrastructure for our students. This is a difficult issue that I think we will be facing for some time to come. However, given my conversations with members of the USQ Student Guild, it is an issue that I wanted to place on the record.

Ms STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (5.07 pm): The amendments contained in the University Legislation Amendment Bill implement the new university governance arrangements required by the new federal government funding arrangements. It is disturbing that the federal government is tying strings more and more to every aspect of its funding at the state level. For instance, road funding and training funding are being tied to industrial reform. In my local area, funding for a major rail project is being tied. In fact, residents are being held to ransom by the federal government. Funding will not come from the federal government unless its good friend Chris Corrigan fulfils his desire to have a bigger piece of the Queensland rail action.

It is very disturbing that this is the direction the federal government is moving in. It is the highest taxing, most controlling and most mean-spirited federal government we have ever had. Among other things, the changes in this bill will implement the federal government's requirement that university governing bodies have a maximum of 22 members and a majority of external independent members.

The changes create some uncertainty around representation on councils by members of parliament. It seems as though members of parliament may not have a future on governing councils. The Commonwealth has required that there not be positions on councils designated for members of parliament, as there are at the moment, even though a minimum of one-third of representatives will be appointed by Governor In Council. As a current member of the Griffith University council, I am aware of the Howard government's proposals to considerably reform or transform the Australian higher education sector. I also have some disappointment at the prospect of not continuing as a Griffith University council member.

I want to revisit the Howard government's ideological drive to transform universities. First, I will take the opportunity to applaud Griffith University on its continuing outstanding achievements. Its medical and pharmacy schools and its graduate dental school are the first in decades in Australia at the Gold Coast. The Griffith Asia Institute, a research institute at the Nathan campus, is augmenting Griffith's long tradition of leadership in Asian languages and studies. In February this year the institute hosted an important and timely conference on the future of democracy in Iraq and the Middle East.

The Vietnamese Prime Minister and senior Vietnamese government officials met with Griffith researchers last week to build international links even further. It is a concerning time for Queensland and, indeed, all Australian universities as well as student bodies. Once again the Howard government is embarking on an ideological drive to abolish compulsory student unionism in this country. Once again, John Howard's ideological zeal is blinding him to the reality of student life and student survival on campus.

Welfare, counselling, child care, sport and recreation facilities and programs, legal assistance, travel and employment services and advocacy services are all under threat. These are important services and ones that are needed. It is very concerning that they may be under threat under these proposals. This impact is compounded in Queensland where decentralisation means many students studying at our universities are dislocated from their usual support structures, families and homes. The safety net provided by student union services is of critical importance. Students have already been hard hit with massive increases in HECS fees. Many students are now facing $50,000 and $60,000 bills to get their degrees.

I know the member for Bulimba, sitting in front of me at the moment, has some words about union membership on his wall. They are—

For a worker to refuse to belong to a union is not to exercise a democratic freedom. It is to accept benefits that others have worked for, without contributing to the cost. Democracy flourishes only when freedom is accompanied by responsibility.

I think these words of wisdom can be applied to students as well as workers. Students are very hard workers in an academic and intellectual sense. Membership of a student union is like membership of Medicare—everyone pays so that everyone is protected. It is irresponsible of the Howard government to pursue this voluntary student unionism strategy. The Howard government tried it on in 1999. Then shadow higher education ministers from Western Australia and Victoria, where voluntary student union legislation was introduced by conservative governments, said student services in their states had been severely compromised by VSU legislation, with job losses across the higher education sector and a major loss of facilities and amenities.

I commend the student union leaders who have campaigned hard to show the public the absurd and cruel nature of the Howard government's higher education policies. The Commonwealth agenda has also driven universities to generate more external income, including putting pressure on state governments to provide more support. A major source of external revenue, namely the export of education to overseas students, will also be placed under threat if universities are unable to offer the comprehensive range of student union services. The Howard government seems very happy for universities to take good money from international students but is not interested in providing the much needed services to these full-fee paying students.

The threat to this important source of income has ramifications not just for the universities but for the Australian economy as a whole which benefits from the spending power of overseas higher education students in this country. It is estimated that the value to the economy of Australia's export of education is $6 billion a year. The value to Queensland is estimated to be in excess of $900 million a year. An ideological drive to force voluntary student unionism is another example of the mean-spirited core of the Howard government. I urge all members of this House, especially those opposite, to lobby federal members on this important issue.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (5.13 pm): I rise to support the University Legislation Amendment Bill, which will amend the acts of seven universities in line with new national protocols. Governance amendments will include reducing the membership and size of councils, increasing the term of office for all council members and listing the duties and functions of members. Criminal history checks may also be sought.

As a council member of James Cook University I have been involved with the discussions and changes from day one. I feel that the amendments can only strengthen and streamline the operations and the accountability of these collectives, making them more efficient and effective. There are many demands on universities these days and they must keep up with change in order to remain viable and competitive. We need to move away from the concept of one size fits all as a model. As a graduate of James Cook University and now a council member I see first-hand the differences in regional universities compared with their city counterparts.

This brings me to an exciting project which James Cook University is progressing as best it can—and I might add—without the support of the federal government. In fact, with every passing month the list of broken promises made by the Howard government before the last federal election continues to grow. Its about-turn on the Medicare Plus safety net stands out as the most blatant of all the broken promises, but it is shameless on that issue and so many more.

Let me return to James Cook University and its council. Before the election there was much fanfare in Townsville about how the federal coalition, if re-elected, would establish a tropical science and innovation precinct at James Cook University. A media release issued under the Prime Minister's banner on 21 September 2004 announced $65 million for the project. In the release it said that operating under the umbrella of this precinct would be a marine and tropical sciences research facility to support important research relating to the Great Barrier Reef and the tropical rainforests. That would be at a cost of $40 million.

However, the government's executive summary of the project gives its contribution to the marine and tropical sciences research facility as $20 million. Those figures—$65 million, $40 million and now $20 million—that were bandied about seem very rubbery. To give the benefit of the doubt, perhaps the amounts of money were just not explained very well. Now there is a fear that the Howard government is looking for an escape route on funding altogether, the excuse being that there is enough federal money going to universities as it is.

The CSIRO and James Cook University have joined forces to work towards the creation of the tropical science and innovation precinct. In a joint statement they said that its centrepiece would be a purpose-built, world-class research facility which they hoped to see operational by 2008-09 to accommodate 260 researchers and associated support staff. The expectation was that the Australian Institute of Marine Science and several state government departments would join forces within the precinct with the objective of research outcomes bringing significant economic, environmental and social benefits to Townsville and the wider north Queensland community.

The joint CSIRO-JCU statement describes the tropical science and innovation precinct as playing a crucial role in positioning Australia as a pre-eminent provider of knowledge based services to industries and communities in the world's tropics, particularly those in the Asia-Pacific region. The precinct is seen as underpinning the sustainable management of northern Australia's internationally significant terrestrial and marine ecosystems and its national vital beef, sugar, tourism, fishing, horticulture and mining industries.

The CSIRO's Davies laboratory in Townsville is housed in a building that is well past its use-by date. It makes sense to colocate the CSIRO a short distance away at James Cook University. Although they are presently close to each other in terms of location, they might just as well be at opposite sides of the city. However, the level of scientific interaction in the one complex has the potential to prove outstanding. Support is being sought from the Queensland government under the Smart State Research Facilities Funding Scheme. I sincerely hope that that support will be achieved. The onus for the bulk of the money is on the federal government.

Pre-election mumbo jumbo notwithstanding, I urge the federal government to acknowledge the prospective value to north Queensland and Australia of a dedicated tropical science and innovation precinct in Townsville. The 2004 federal election is history. But there remains a raft of commitments and election sweeteners that are still very fresh in our minds. It is with much anticipation that I wait to see whether any of these commitments will be honoured in tonight's federal budget.

I congratulate James Cook University and its council on its vision and leadership. Vice-Chancellor Bernard Moulden and his team are always looking at ways to promote the university's standing. This project is doing just that. This bill is a balanced attempt to bring all universities into line with all good corporate governance and innovation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (5.19 pm): This bill proposes a number of amendments which deal with the governance arrangements of public universities throughout Queensland, in particular matters dealing with the size, composition and responsibilities of university councils. In the context of this bill, I want to make a few general comments about tertiary education and its importance to the economic and social development of Queensland. Much has been said about the importance of young people considering careers in the trades, particularly the traditional trades which form the backbone of our productive economy, and I agree with that proposition. Skills shortages in a range of trade and trade related areas are a significant problem for some sectors of industry and one which the government is devoting considerable resources to overcome.

It is important, however, to also acknowledge the importance of tertiary education and the role it plays in developing and expanding our economy and enriching our lives. We need to regularly promote within the community the notion that learning is not something which ends once a student has completed high school, a trade or their first degree. Continuous learning is a pursuit that we should be encouraging as a lifelong commitment. Our message to young students should be to continuously look for opportunities where knowledge and understanding can be improved and expanded, and indeed these issues are key elements of our Smart State Strategy.

From a purely selfish point of view, there is plenty of evidence which shows that people who acquire higher levels of education and training generally earn higher incomes, achieve higher levels of employment and have more satisfying careers. This of course applies equally to the tradesperson who undertakes additional technical or management studies, the student who commences tertiary studies straight from school or a white- or blue-collar worker who pursues additional tertiary studies as a part of their career advancement. But there are benefits as well from a whole-of-society perspective. A society which has a good supply of individuals who are well informed and well educated is better equipped to take advantage of the economic and social opportunities available in a dynamic and ever-changing world. It also enhances our ability to create a more harmonious society which enriches the lives of its citizens.

Our tertiary institutions play an important role in providing this important source of social and economic capital for our communities, and it is important for us to recognise this fact and to reinforce this message in the community. We can do this alongside and complementary to the important message we promote about the importance of the trades and the need for students to view this avenue of employment as just as important for our economy and community's wellbeing.

In my electorate my constituents are fortunate to have two universities on our doorstep—the Australian Catholic University's McAuley at Banyo campus and QUT's Carseldine campus. ACU's McAuley at Banyo under the leadership of Professor John O'Gorman has a fine tradition of providing high-quality graduates and educational outcomes in the fields of the arts; business; education; information systems; nursing; psychology, which is a new addition; social science; and theology. The university currently has around 2,700 students, which makes it a relatively small university in the scheme of things. However, approximately 50 per cent of its beginner students come from state and independent schools. Some 180 of the students are currently from overseas, and that is a threefold increase over the year 2003.

The *Good Universities Guide* for 2005 continues ACU's consistent five-star rating for its staff-student ratios and the high standard of qualifications of its academic staff. ACU is situated on the former St Pius Provincial Seminary at Banyo, which has a rich history that extends back to 1863. It is a beautiful site with a rich history, as I have said, encompassing aspects of both Aboriginal history and white settlement of the area. ACU is a progressive university which is continually looking to enhance its offerings to students. Recently I had the pleasure of attending a ceremony where the minister for education officially launched the new school of psychology at McAuley at Banyo. The Australian Catholic University's new school of psychology was initially established at the university's Melbourne campus. However, the Queensland campus will now offer 100 places each year to students studying Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Social Sciences degrees with majors in psychology.

As we all know, the success of any institution is largely determined by the people who work within it and also, in the case of a university, the achievements and contributions of its students. I would like to list just a few of the achievements of some of the students of ACU Banyo for the information of the House. Christian James, a nursing student at McAuley at Banyo, travelled recently to Sri Lanka in early January to assist tsunami victims and is currently engaged in fundraising activities on campus for the Galle Nursing School in Sri Lanka. Julianne Eisemann, an Indigenous student who graduated with a diploma and then a bachelor's degree in business at ACU National, is currently studying for her MBA. Julianne is this year's recipient of the Pratt Scholarship.

Students from McAuley at Banyo also won the 2004 Rookie Award in the Students in Free Enterprise competition which has students participating from universities from all over Australia. Students from the School of Business and Informatics won the Best Australian Business Week program in 2004. Maree Ruge, ACU National Bachelor of Nursing student, is one of three finalists in the Australian Nursing Awards. Anne Carr has won a $5,000 scholarship to teach in Armidale from the Catholic Education Office in Armidale. Shawn Walker, the Student Association President, is currently organising the ACU National social justice youth forum where close to 200 Brisbane secondary school students will meet on campus on 27 May to engage in social justice workshops and discussions.

I list those achievements just to highlight the great achievements of some individuals at that university and also to recognise the contributions that the staff make to those students' achievements. These examples of individual effort are an inspiration to other students at the university and indeed the broader community. They are also tangible evidence of the quality outcomes achieved at Australian Catholic University at Banyo and the university's commitment to adding value to the communities in which it operates. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (5.26 pm): Education in Australia through our universities has become a large export earner for the country, and as such the need for stronger governance and public accountability is required. The federal government's national governance protocols will deliver good corporate governance and assist universities in delivering high standards of accountability to the public. This will reduce any financial risk to ensure that they remain competitive and viable in the global society. The amendments in this bill will ensure that Queensland universities are able to receive additional federal funding necessary to address a frightening shortage of specialists in rural and regional areas.

Events of the past few months have highlighted the problems when the state is overreliant on overseas trained specialists. We need to improve the quantity and maintain the quality of Australian trained professionals. It is very important that universities such as JCU in Townsville have the opportunity to increase placements, particularly for students of medicine. I call on the state and federal governments to increase funding and to provide the resources so that extra placements can be offered to train students which will provide more qualified doctors and specialists to work in rural and remote areas of our state. The only way we can do that is to ensure that our universities have the necessary funding to cater for the increase in the number of professionals. It has become a heavy burden on people when they have to travel 900 to 1,000 kilometre round trips to seek specialist medical treatment. I support this bill and I hope that funding continues to flow from the federal government to Queensland universities. I commend this bill to the House.

Hon. NI CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (5.28 pm): I rise to support the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2005 which amends the acts relating to Queensland universities to address concerns raised by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, to make consequential and technical amendments and to provide consistency, particularly in relation to the appointment of members to the universities' governing bodies.

I can relate to these amendments because I was appointed to the council of the Central Queensland University for a period of eight years until I had to resign because of my election to this parliament. Those eight years were a time of change for the university, which changed from the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education to the University College of Central Queensland to the Central Queensland University. It was also the time of expansion of this university into Bundaberg, and I am very proud of its growth. The land that the Central Queensland University is established on in Bundaberg was identified by me as the then mayor of Bundaberg. It was then transferred from the Crown by the Goss Labor government and the first building, also funded by that Labor government, was officially opened by the then minister for education, Pat Comben.

The Bundaberg campus has been the fastest growing regional campus of Central Queensland University and today has 1,000 students studying 30 different degree programs. The impact that a member of the university's governing body can have was clearly evident in those years when I was fighting hard for a campus at Bundaberg. Students in Bundaberg were being deprived of a tertiary education because they lived too far away from universities in Brisbane and Rockhampton. Families were faced with the additional costs of funding units or full-time accommodation on top of the already high cost associated with receiving a university education. Consequently, the cost almost doubled for Bundaberg students and was simply out of the reach of many families.

My argument for a campus in Bundaberg was upheld when at the first graduation ceremony at the Bundaberg campus of Central Queensland University the largest proportion of the graduates were the first in their families to ever receive a tertiary education. It was a proud moment for them and for their families. It showed the value of having members on university governing bodies who will stand up for their areas. It was another great achievement for education and for regional Queensland by a Labor government. Today, the Bundaberg campus of CQU makes a significant contribution to the Bundaberg community both socially and economically, generating some $30 million of economic stimulus each year.

These amendments before the House are mostly technical in nature, but they are another example of how this Beattie Labor government is addressing the needs of education in Queensland. They are just a small part of the extensive changes to the education system that are being driven very successfully by our government and by the minister, Anna Bligh. I support the bill.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.31 pm): I rise to speak to this legislation and, as have other speakers, commend those who operate the CQU Gladstone campus, which operates at the marina. The university has been a stimulus in the region, although the region still suffers from the problem of first-year courses being offered and the students, after completing that year, then having to travel to Rockhampton, Townsville or Brisbane to complete their degrees. In a great many cases those young people do not return to Gladstone. They establish careers and friendships in the places where they finish their university courses and do not return home. So I look forward to the time when the Gladstone campus of CQU can offer more complete courses.

Currently, the Gladstone campus offers an education course and a couple of IT courses. Most of the engineering courses offered at that campus are postgraduate courses. Professor Warren Thorpe looks after the light metals faculty. He does an excellent job. The campus also offers environmental courses. Something like 30 or 40 students who are studying nursing at that campus have to travel to Rockhampton to attend their lectures. That is not only a hugely time-consuming exercise but also a safety concern. I would certainly like to see a full nursing course being considered for the Gladstone campus.

The reforms contained in this legislation are linked very much to the Commonwealth's protocols and reforms that are required for the supplementation funding. These reforms have to be in place before 31 August for the 2006-07 funding round. I hope that in the mind of the Commonwealth government there is a clear picture of benefit to the universities and that it is not just a toeing of the line by the universities to suit the Commonwealth government's political and philosophical agenda. After all, the group of people who are most affected by changes to tertiary education availability and quality are those people who are being educated for their future and for our future. A university education or a trades education is not just for now; it is for the future. Our decision making in relation to the future for so many in our community will pay dividends—either positive or negative—in just a few years time.

The National Tertiary Education Industry Union wrote to me—and I am sure to other members as well—outlining some issues that it has in relation to this legislation. Its letter states—

The Union believes that effective staff representation on a Senate/Council is a central feature of universities and is an expression of intellectual autonomy of a university and a commitment to collegiality.

The NTEU is more than disappointed that the State Government is not only doing the Federal Government's bidding, but is kowtowing to their demands by disproportionately decreasing staff representation on University Senates and Councils.

UQ is Queensland's most prestigious research and teaching institution. Yet under these changes there will be only one elected academic on Senate. This is a major regression.

The NTEU does not understand why the University of Sunshine Coast, the University of Southern Queensland and Central Queensland University are all having their councils decreased when they currently meet the Federal Government's National Protocols of having 22 members.

I believe that that question is deserving of a response. If those universities currently comply with the number of members required on councils, why are the numbers on their councils being decreased even further? The letter states further—

The NTEU is angered that the State Government continues to make the assertion that the decreases in Governing Bodies are proportional when the numbers show that staff are losing representation in a disproportionate way.

The Commonwealth has recently issued its second discussion paper about the distribution of responsibilities for higher education. This paper reopens issues about the size, composition and functions of University Governing Bodies. Accordingly, the NTEU considers it appropriate for the State Government to re-examine the assumptions underlying the current legislation.

The letter closes by stating—

The NTEU supports the Government's Smart State Strategy. Universities and their Staff are vital to this, however decreasing staff representation is anything but smart.

I would be interested in hearing the minister's response. I am sure that the union has raised these issues with her. Given that I received the letter on 9 May and it was written on 5 May, I can only assume that those issues of concern are continuing. Had I received the letter some time ago there would have been the potential for the union to have more negotiation with the minister. However, it is a recent letter. Therefore, I seek the minister's response to the matters that are raised in that letter.

I reiterate the importance of a university education. However, it should not be regarded in isolation from other areas of expertise in which our young people can achieve their potential. It is important that there is a cross-section of education in our community. That is, those who cannot or do not want to aspire to tertiary education can achieve their potential as tradespeople. There are those people who achieve excellence by going to university. Irrespective of the choice of future our young people make, I know that everyone in this chamber is supportive of them achieving their goals. I look forward to the minister's response to my comments.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (5.37 pm): Universities are more than places in which people get a degree—just getting the bit of paper that formally qualifies them to do a particular job or profession. Universities are part of learning for life. It is equally important for students during their university life to sit around talking with a group of fellow students into the late hours exploring their identities and asking the big questions of what life is about. It is unfortunate that the federal government, particularly under Brendan Nelson as education minister, is trying to make universities just factory fodder—churning out degrees for business and industry. Universities have to be more than that.

It is acknowledged that changes are needed at universities, but not many of the changes proposed by the federal coalition. One of the negative aspects of the federal coalition's activities is the loss of staff tenure, which has meant a loss of academic independence. We are seeing staff members being forced to guarantee pass marks for full fee-paying students even when they know that the student is not up to the mark. Those academics across Australia who have taken a stand have had retribution taken against them. The message has been clear that if a student pays the full fee they are given a pass no matter what. It is a disgraceful situation. A number of cases have been identified by university staff associations across Australia. That is one of the negative changes that has been brought about through the loss of staff tenure.

All societies need to be renewed, and the universities, through student activism, are where the core changes occur in our society. Brendan Nelson is again using his ideology of social control by attacking student unions and trying to legislate for voluntary student unionism. This will particularly harm members from the rural and regional areas. I would be interested to hear members of the National Party in particular express their views on this. For students from regional and country areas, university colleges are not only their home but also their village, their sporting, cultural and recreational home. If voluntary student unionism is implemented by Brendan Nelson, those students will lose out and country members will be the most adversely affected.

I support the proposed changes in this bill with some reservations. I think tying the funding growth to forced changes in governance is using a stick. Brendan Nelson could have worked with the universities and the councils to reach consensus; he chose not to. That is typical of the arrogance that the Howard government is becoming more entrenched in. I do have a concern about the reduction in the percentage of staff on the governing bodies. As was stated by the member for Gladstone, who spoke prior to me, the reduction in staff percentages can be a problem, particularly in universities that have research facilities and where the academic independence is vital. But I am sure the minister and the Office of Higher Education will be monitoring how that goes. I support the practices that will ensure better governance throughout the universities.

In conclusion, I express my reservations about the manner in which the federal coalition government is trying to turn universities from a place of discussion, social change, social learning and learning for life into a place where students are controlled and the payment of fees becomes the most important factor. The imposition of HECS means that students are working 20 or 30 hours a week as well as studying for their degree. They are not being given a chance to grow as they should be. With those reservations, I support the bill before the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (5.41 pm): I rise to speak on the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. This bill has been created to bring our state legislation into line with the Commonwealth national governance protocols. If our higher education providers—that is, our universities—do not meet these protocols, they will not be able to access increased Commonwealth funding. The Commonwealth is running around fiddling with the numbers of people who should or should not be on a university's governing body when it should be making more and more university places available for young Queenslanders and young Australians.

The federal government is waving a big stick—that is, the money it has collected from taxpayers—over the heads of the states and telling them how to do it Howard's way or miss out on the cash. It is our cash. It belongs to each and every taxpayer in the country, and it is collected so that the federal government can provide us with defence and trade and other national services, not so that it can play merry hob forcing the states to jump to its tune. Perhaps in the musty corridors of Canberra it has forgotten that, while it has a mandate on federal issues, each state parliament has a mandate as well.

It is no secret that this federal Liberal-National coalition has no interest in the future of our young Australians. How can it be that with a growing population and a supposedly powerhouse economy we have not seen any increase in university places for doctors in something like 30 years? There are towns and entire districts without a GP now. Some are lucky enough to have a visiting clinic, but for more and more Queenslanders the lack of properly trained Australian doctors means that they are forced to travel hundreds and hundreds of kilometres just to see a GP.

I have been a staunch critic of Queensland Health when I have felt it was required, but I have always stood by the professionalism and dedication of the vast majority of staff in that department. I firmly believe that it is up to this state government to do whatever it takes, including paying whatever it costs, to address the crisis caused by the doctor shortage. That is surely more important than funding electorally appealing sporting and cultural projects in the south-east.

It must be acknowledged that the crisis exists largely because our federal government has deliberately decided not to train our young as doctors. As a result, the ill go untreated and sometimes they die. Yet what do we see here in this legislation? How many board members there should be, how long their terms should be, who is disqualified from membership and so on—this while the young from my electorate, and probably from many electorates in Queensland, often have to travel interstate to take up a place in university, if they are lucky enough to get one at all.

Those in my electorate who want tertiary education can look to the Cairns campus of James Cook University. It is not so far away, yet it is an hour or more by road in a region with very limited public transport that is certainly not scheduled frequently enough to match the demands of lecture attendances. So even our very closest campus means people have to move to Cairns, adding yet more stress and economic burden to the academic demands of attending university. This state government has to stand up for Queenslanders. It has to tell the federal penny pinchers to loosen the purse strings and deliver. Do not give us 'how to do it' instructions for setting up administrative boards. For heaven's sake, give us doctors.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (5.45 pm): The University Legislation Amendment Bill amends seven acts relating to universities in Queensland. In particular, I have a strong interest in the University of Southern Queensland, which is based in Toowoomba but which has a campus at Hervey Bay and a smaller campus overseas in Germany. It is an outstanding university in what it has been able to achieve, particularly in the area of distance education. Over the years the University of Southern Queensland has pioneered distance education, particularly throughout South-East Asia but also throughout the globe. It has been quite outstanding and has won an award for the best e-university in Australia and also for being Australia's leading university.

This legislation that we are debating tonight is a direct consequence of the Commonwealth government's review into the funding, governance and accountability of Australian universities. I think all of us here want to see every possible opportunity for young people to be able to attend a university, for courses to be practical and relevant, and for taxpayers' funds to be well used within those universities in terms of accountability and governance. As a result, we are debating this bill, which makes some changes to the governing councils and senates of the universities as part of this overall review and part of an increase in funding, which other members have spoken about.

There are a couple of issues that I wanted to speak about which are relevant, and I seek indulgence to do so. The previous speaker spoke about the issue of doctors. I wanted to speak on this issue because I think it is something that this parliament must consider, particularly in view of some of the matters that have arisen out of the Bundaberg Hospital, and that is the system of postgraduate education that the University of Queensland has for medicine. These are the sorts of issues that senates and governing councils have to make decisions on. I think it is a very important issue when looking at how much funding comes to a university, how that funding is best spent in providing an education of excellence and how much it is, as a result, then providing to the community. Is the community actually losing out and not receiving good value for money for the funds that have been spent on that particular course?

As I have mentioned, the University of Queensland has a postgraduate system of medical education. While I have no doubt that it is turning out absolutely outstanding graduates, we must all understand that they first of all have to undertake a university course before they can study medicine. So the average age that they are entering into medicine is probably 25 to 28, and they are graduating mostly in their late twenties to early to mid thirties—and in some extreme cases they are even older than that. So for those graduates from our major university in Brisbane, UQ, Queensland is losing probably the best 10 years of their working life.

Compare that to the James Cook University. I had the pleasure of helping to establish its medical school when I was the minister for health. We determined, in consultation with the people of the north, that it must be an undergraduate course. I often use the example that someone could leave Hughenden High School at year 12 aged 17, go straight into James Cook University and do their five years—it is an excellent course but it involves tropical medicine, Indigenous health and so forth—and then be out at age 22 or 23 and into the work force as a young doctor, hopefully staying in north Queensland. We would have 10 more years of work for the community and the society from graduates of that university compared to the graduates of the University of Queensland.

Another flow-on effect from the postgraduate course at the University of Queensland is that many people looking to get into medicine have to do an undergraduate course first. So they are doing physiotherapy or pharmacy. When they study medicine we lose those people from physiotherapy and pharmacy. That is one of the reasons for some of the shortages in those two particular professions alone. I think it is very important for councils and senates to look at accountability to the taxpayer in the federal funds that they are using on their courses. There is no course more important to our society than medicine. I believe what is being offered at James Cook University provides young people with every opportunity to get in and do their medicine straight out of school. It means that at age 22 or 23 they can go out into the work force when they are young and enthusiastic. They will still have the opportunity to

move on in later years to undertake specialist training and so forth, but we are losing the best 10 years of young medical graduates in the postgraduate course at the University of Queensland.

We are chasing overseas doctors because we do not have enough ourselves. Part of our medical work force problem—part of it, not all of it—could be solved by making medicine at the University of Queensland an undergraduate course. There are something like 240 students per year undertaking this course, all taking another 10 years before they are out in the work force. That is a big loss in terms of working years and availability of doctors in our system. I hope that through this system of accountability, governance and so forth issues like that are looked at. All of us know doctors who have gone through UQ in the earlier years who are absolutely outstanding specialists and doctors throughout Queensland who undertook the previous undergraduate course and have served our state well and served our public hospitals well.

I also want to speak about the issue of student union fees. The university in my area is a regional university. It is a very young university and it does not have the access to the alumni funds. It does not have access to a bigger, older university institution which has many facilities that have been developed over the years. Our university started basically as a college in the early nineties, and in 1992 or 1993 it became a fully accredited university. It has been the student union at USQ that has done so much in terms of the facilities that were needed at our university—major indoor sports facilities such as the Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre; the purchase of the southern suburbs Rugby League ground, which was next to the university; and the provision of various counselling services and other services for the students which are very important.

I wrote to Brendan Nelson and others about this matter. I do realise that there are many students throughout Queensland who have serious problems in meeting their union fees. Just recently I have been endeavouring to help some people who had this particular problem in Toowoomba, and I am grateful to the university for endeavouring to help us with it. Students have financial difficulty in paying their student fees, but regardless the student unions at regional universities like the USQ have been able to provide some wonderful services. Our student union is more aptly described as a guild. It does not provide for the political on-campus activities that have made universities like Sydney, Melbourne and others infamous, where students compete for one political side or the other to get control of the union and to spend the money perhaps in line with the political philosophy they believe in. The student union or guild at the USQ has been there solely as a non-political organisation to provide services for the students at a young university.

I think the Commonwealth government should put in place a way in which universities like USQ can provide within their structure a service fee which they can then use to assist the student guild to continue providing sporting facilities, recreational facilities, and counselling and support services.

Universities have changed dramatically. The member for Stafford spoke about the fulsome and whole education people get at a university. It would be lovely for all of our young people to be able to attend university and go to lectures, play sport and take part in the gamut of social activities that are available at university, but times have changed greatly. Some people are still able to do that, but many other people need to obtain their degree quickly; hence, the development of a university like Bond University. It is a full-fee paying university but it provides some courses, I think particularly in areas such as law, as a two-year course instead of a four-year course. It does not have semester breaks, but students get their degree in the shorter time frame. That is one of the changes that have occurred in universities.

The other change is electronic education. Earlier in my speech I mentioned the excellence of the University of Southern Queensland and the award that it won for its electronic and distance education. People are getting their education from a university of their choice whether they live in Hong Kong, Singapore, Germany or a distant part of Australia. Large numbers of people are undertaking masters of business administration, which many people involved in business and careers are undertaking. Many of those are done by systems of e-education or distance education, with students attending a week or two here or there for a very concentrated course at the university.

Things have changed dramatically. In some universities a large percentage of people no longer play sport at the university or take part in the cultural or recreational activities of the university. I think the federal government rules will make things very difficult for student guilds like the one at USQ, because we have a large percentage of students who are from overseas, but normally arrangements can be made whereby they pay some sort of fee. I believe that there should be a reasonable, moderate service fee that means that facilities are there for those who like to use them. A broad spectrum of facilities have been provided by the student guild at USQ.

I think the issue of governance is very important. Tonight I have spoken about things such as the postgraduate medical degree. I hope these sorts of issues are taken up by university councils and senates in a very responsible way, to look at how their particular university best fulfils the charter it has—the charter of spending the public money in the best possible way. We are seeing young people from Queensland go to interstate universities and overseas, to places such as Ireland, to undertake studies in medicine because the biggest medical school in Australia, which is at UQ, has a postgraduate degree system. Imagine the uncertainty in a young person's life. They might study science,

physiotherapy, pharmacy or veterinary science or get a PhD but still may not get into medicine, even though they have aimed at that and are 27 or 28 years old. I think we need more certainty. We need to understand the brilliance of young people. We need to understand that those who undertake an undergraduate course in medicine are outstanding doctors and they are giving us, on average, about 10 more years of their working life.

Medical education has been a big issue. We have had to bring in overseas doctors. I think universities should look at the system of OPs. While people who get an OP1 are absolutely brilliant, it has often been said to me that anyone with an OP higher than 5 would make an outstanding doctor. I think we need to look at the issues of suitability—people who are prepared to work in the public health system as well as the private system, people who have that type of commitment and ideal, people who are prepared to move to the regional areas of our state and people who are prepared to give one or two years of their life to become a specialist. These are the sorts of issues that are important. I think governing bodies have to look at that not only in medicine—I have concentrated on that tonight—but also in other areas of university education.

I think this bill is bringing about a greater degree of accountability. It is part of the quid pro quo of the universities in conjunction with the review and the additional funding that is being provided. I would like to congratulate Mr Don Stevens, who has been Chancellor of the University of Southern Queensland for a long time. Recently he took up another five-year term. He has provided great continuity, experience and wisdom to our university, as have the other members of the university council. I hope that this legislation can assist them and other university councils throughout the state to provide good quality education, value for money for the taxpayer, real accountability and good governance.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (6.00 pm): I rise to speak in support of the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. In doing so I must pledge my great interest in the importance of the governance of our universities. For seven years I served on the Griffith University council as a Governor in Council appointee. That was one of the most fulfilling experiences I have had in public life. To be involved hands on at that level of the university was a great privilege.

It is important to see this bill in the context of the changes that have occurred in the universities, particularly in the past 15 years, and to see where these further reforms fit in. We have to really look at the changes, particularly in the sense of the size of our universities, that we have assented to in these years and also at the sophistication and the interface with commerce that has been achieved in recent times. Through the nineties we saw major changes in terms of the amalgamation of universities. Even though this was generally forced on us by the federal governments of the time, I think these were very positive changes because we have seen great economies of scale achieved. Also, within each university we have seen the capacity for greater interactiveness and interface between various disciplines. I think those changes have been incredibly positive.

On the other hand, those changes in terms of scale have meant a sheer quantum leap in the level of high standard governance that is required for those institutions, that is, the level of professionalism that is required to make sure that those universities are well governed. I think that in Queensland we have been very privileged to have had a high level of sophistication and guidance provided by our chancellors and vice-chancellors, over the last decade in particular, to steer this process, because it has been very difficult in some circumstances. I think that, overall, the changes that are proposed in this bill to provide some certainty and some regularity are positive and will ensure that these professional standards are maintained.

I think the interface with commerce is the other very major change that is part of the general sophistication that our universities are achieving today. We are seeing our universities move, to a far greater degree, to having major research components that have a direct interface with industry, development and export in particular.

This is indeed a very significant change in the sense that universities are now dealing with intellectual property as one of their major assets and concerns in terms of development and the research development facilities that are now attached to our universities are becoming one of the prime elements of their focus. More and more we have to be conscious of our universities having a decent balance between the people from within the universities and those outside. The people from outside our universities must come more and more from industry and be able to bring those insights to our universities to ensure that this interface with industry is really working, because that is the future. That is the future not only of our universities but also of our Smart State and our smart country. Unless we have this generator really working solidly within the universities then those wider industry development aspirations will not be achieved. I commend any sense of trying to address that balance and ensure that the highest levels of expertise are now achieved in terms of contributing to the debate within our university councils.

Finally, the issue of criminal history information being obtained in relation to Governor in Council appointees is also very important. People should recognise not just the work that is done directly on the council but also the work that is done by way of such appointees working on subcommittees within the

university. As to my experience, I sat, for example, on an audit committee, one of the careers committees of the university and also on a committee dealing with disciplinary issues pertaining to students. In those circumstances, I have certainly felt the great responsibility and burden of those appointments, and I think that anyone occupying those positions has to bring the very highest standards of integrity to that particular task.

In my view, having ready access to criminal histories for those people is simply fundamental. I support the minister in taking this action. This is an important piece of legislation. Our universities will be more and more the central focus not only of our society and our enlightened education sector but also of our industry in the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (6.07 pm): I rise to speak in support of the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. The object of the bill is to amend the seven acts that establish universities in Queensland—those being Central Queensland University, Griffith University, James Cook University, Queensland University of Technology, University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland and the University of the Sunshine Coast—to achieve consistency with the requirements of the Commonwealth's national governance protocols for higher education providers and to make other miscellaneous amendments to the authorising legislation of Queensland universities.

As a result of the 2002 Commonwealth government review into the funding, governance and accountability of Australian universities, they are now required to abide by the new national governance protocols for public higher education institutions. The Queensland Nationals recognise that the federal government's national governance protocols will deliver good corporate governance and assist universities in delivering high standards of accountability to the public. The federal government has made additional funding to universities conditional on university councils, with the assistance of state governments, implementing the governance protocols. To achieve this, some legislative amendment is required to give effect to the governance protocols. This bill is the result of those required protocols and amendments.

In accordance with the national governance protocol 3, this bill lists the duties and responsibilities of all members of governing bodies. In accordance with the national governance protocol 5, this bill includes a requirement to ensure that university bodies have a maximum of 22 members and a majority of external independent members. Any decrease in representation on governing bodies has been proportional, with students, staff and Governor in Council maintaining a proportional representation.

The terms of office for all council members have been increased from three years to four years, and elected members may serve a maximum of 12 years. Student members of councils will serve a two-year term of office in recognition of study commitments and the length of many university courses.

The bill also introduces requirements for criminal history checks to be conducted, at the consent of the potential appointee, by the governing body. Members must also vacate office if disqualified from acting as a director of a company or convicted of an indictable offence. This bill institutes change in the membership and composition of all seven university governing bodies, which will necessitate all except the council of the Queensland University of Technology being reconstituted within one year after the commencement of the bill.

I am proud of my relationship with the Central Queensland University in Mackay, which is in my electorate. I am a member of the Central Queensland University students association and I sponsor an annual award in support of the achievements of students who attend the Mackay campus. In recent years, great achievements have been made under the auspices of Professor Phillip Clift.

During the recent federal election campaign, an allocation of $8 million was announced for a science and technology precinct to be located at the Central Queensland University, Mackay campus. This has drawn some flak from the political opponents of the member for Dawson, De-Anne Kelly. However, I accept that the concept has great merit. Our local coalmining industry leads the world in technological expertise. However, maintaining this position will require extensive research and development commitments and this could be suitably provided at the Central Queensland University, Mackay campus under the technological precinct that has been mentioned.

The continuing endeavours of the sugar industry to generate additional income from biodiversity with products such as ethanol, biodegradable plastics and so on would also fit suitably within the Mackay campus of the Central Queensland University. It is with pleasure that I support the bill.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.12 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the consideration of the University Legislation Amendment Bill before the House tonight and to raise some issues about the operations of universities in Queensland which have a direct effect on my constituents.

As previous speakers have outlined, the amendments contained in the bill arise from a Commonwealth review of higher education in 2002. The national governance protocols are designed to improve funding, governance and accountability at Australian universities. The reforms contained in this bill are an important step in meeting the federal government's charter of improving the legislative framework within which universities operate in Queensland. Reforms such as these, which improve the

accountability and responsibility of our universities, must be regarded by every member of the House as a positive initiative. I certainly support the remarks made by members in that regard.

The national governance protocol outlines the functions and duties of members of a university governing body. The responsibilities that are outlined, according to the protocol, include always acting in the best interests of a higher education provider as a whole, with an obligation, to be observed in priority, to any duty a member may owe to those electing or appointing them. It is that responsibility or that obligation that I would like to make some comments about, the obligation to act in the interests of the higher education body as a whole. We have a situation in our higher education institutions in Queensland that is crying out for change. It needs to be revised in the interests of the higher education institutions, the people who seek to attend them and gain the qualifications that they offer, and the communities right across Queensland that need qualified people.

The member for Toowoomba South raised the issue of doctors gaining qualifications in Queensland. I would certainly like to add my support to the issue that he raised. It illustrates quite clearly the problem I want to bring to the attention of the parliament tonight. The selection of candidates for courses offered at universities is based solely on a single OP score. It is based solely on an ability to achieve an academic result at the end of secondary schooling. The OP number becomes the sole determinant of entry into those courses.

There are many other attributes that successful candidates should have not only to complete their course successfully but also to serve the community in the role in which they become qualified. The community has an interest in this. This is not just an issue between the applicant for the position and the university. As a community, we make a very large contribution to universities, and so we should. I do not say that in any way as a criticism of the public contribution that is made to the cost of providing university degrees. However, because of the fact that as a community we do make a contribution, we have an interest in the end result that the universities provide.

In the case of medical degrees, it is beyond doubt that many young secondary school graduates would make wonderful doctors. They have the keenness, the drive, the ability and the personality to be great doctors and they could provide a great service to the Queensland community. However, they are denied that opportunity simply because they cannot get the OP1 score that is required. In terms of being able to complete the course, it is beyond doubt that anybody who gets an OP2, OP3, OP4 or even an OP5 could successfully complete the medical course and provide great service as a doctor, but they are denied that opportunity because of the limited number of available places and the policy that the university boards adopt of selecting candidates simply on the basis of OP scores. I urge those university boards to reconsider that stance, and not just in respect to medical degrees.

Another example relates to veterinary science, where the same scenario is played out. Unless one is able to achieve an OP1, it is almost impossible to gain entry into a veterinary science degree course. That eliminates a large number of people who would be great in that profession and who could provide great service across Queensland to communities that require people skilled in that field. For a long time some of the smaller rural and regional communities that I represent have had a problem attracting qualified doctors. Of course, we have seen the end result of such a situation played out in the tragedy that has engulfed the Bundaberg district hospital, which services a large regional centre. For a long time many smaller rural communities have found it difficult to attract trained doctors to serve in the communities. Increasingly, that problem is extending to other professions and fields, and veterinary science is a classic example of that.

Many young people who grow up in rural communities would like to go to university and become qualified veterinarians. Obviously, because of their background, they have a keen interest in the field. However, they are unable to do that because the selection criteria focuses wholly and solely on OP scores. Growing up in rural communities and having lifelong contact with animals and animal based industries mean nothing when they apply for entry into a university, yet it should. Entry requirements into veterinary courses should recognise the skills, abilities and inherent understanding that comes with growing up in an environment that provides contact with animals and animal based industries. Heaven knows that animal based industries need such people because it is becoming increasingly difficult to find graduates who are willing to move to rural and regional areas. However, people who have grown up in rural and regional areas are more likely to want to move back to those areas. They can very successfully practise in and provide the services to those communities that so badly need it.

The consideration of this legislation provides us with a good opportunity to call the attention of the university boards that are the subject of this legislation to the very great need of looking at the whole process of awarding university places. There is always an issue with the number of places available. We would all like to see many more places become available at universities throughout Queensland so that more of our young people have the opportunity to gain the qualifications to enter the professions that we are discussing. While we have to accept that there will always be a restricted number of places, we need a system that will ensure that, as a community, we get the best value out of the university places that we help to fund. The current system of allocating places based simply on an OP score, rather than taking into account other inherent qualifications and qualities that an applicant may have, will not provide the best value to us as a community. That needs to be looked at and considered quickly, so that change can be implemented.

Two of my children have attended the University of Queensland at St Lucia and they have certainly enjoyed the experience. I know a lot of young Queenslanders find it a very enjoyable stage in their lives. I used to say in jest that my eldest son was studying economics and commerce, and majoring in nightclubs. That encapsulates the combination of study and having a good time that is so much a part of that stage in many young Queenslanders' lives. So might it always be. I hope that those opportunities are available to a great many more young Queenslanders in the future. I hope that, in providing those opportunities to young Queenslanders, as a community generally we can get the maximum value out of the money that we make available to higher education. I commend the legislation to the House.

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (6.23 pm), in reply: Most bills that are brought into this House are introduced because they are designed to improve service delivery, to facilitate a new program of activity or to remedy or prevent a problem or a mischief of some kind. This is not the case with this bill. This bill is here because the federal minister for education, Dr Brendan Nelson, believes in magic and he is prepared to use blackmail to enforce his own faith in mysticism.

The federal minister, in his zeal to reform Australian universities, has somehow become enamoured of the number 22. He has an almost charming faith in the idea that there is a direct correlation between the size of a university council and the quality of its decision making. He formed this view on the basis of no known research. He formed the view that 22 is the magic number above which councils cannot function effectively. Having plucked 22 out of the air, he has become embarrassingly besotted with the number and has set about imposing it onto every university in the country—imposing it by using nothing less than financial blackmail.

This bill is before the House for one simple reason: it is here because the federal government will withhold annual funding to our universities if the federal minister does not get his way and this House does not pass the bill. I want to take the opportunity this evening to place on record that our government does not believe that there is any problem with the governance or operation of any Queensland university. In fact, I am pleased this evening to congratulate our university councils and governing bodies and their members for their excellent stewardship of our institutions. I want to thank the staff representatives, the student representatives, the industry and business representatives, representatives from the community and political representatives from all sides of politics who for more than 100 years have given their time and their commitment to ensure that our universities enjoy a very well deserved reputation for excellence both nationally and internationally.

Given the funding ultimatum that is tied to compliance with the federal minister's whims, the Beattie government will not jeopardise the financial security of our universities. However, I will not stand here and pretend that we believe that the changes in this bill will bring any significant improvements to university governance and I will not pretend that we believe that this legislation is in any way representative of the serious issues confronting our universities. I commend the member for Tablelands for her recognition that there are many issues facing students and their families and those who run our universities and that governance is a very long way down the list.

Throughout the Commonwealth review I advocated the Queensland government's view that in a state like Queensland a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate, and members will see this reflected in the bill. I thank members for their contributions to the debate and I am happy to answer some of the questions that were raised. There were some questions raised about the provisions relating to the powers of councils to dismiss a chancellor or a vice-chancellor with a two-thirds majority vote. This issue was raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, and I have had an opportunity to respond to the committee's concerns. I table a copy of the letter for the information of the House.

Firstly, the national protocols imposed by the federal government require that any member of a council can be removed by a two-thirds majority. This is a new provision and it is a requirement of the national protocols. I would say to those members opposite who have a problem with it in principle that they take it up with the federal minister. Universities are self-governing bodies, and the bill provides that each body will have the power to make a statute in relation to the issue of removing members. I have every confidence that our university councils are more than capable of putting in place a statute which will ensure that all due processes are undertaken.

In addition, the decision will be subject to judicial review which, while it is not a merits based review, does require that natural justice is provided to any member in that circumstance. I also note in relation specifically to the employment conditions of a vice-chancellor that with regard to the vice-chancellor that person is an employee of the university and the bill does provide that a university governing body may remove the vice-chancellor by the required number of members despite the vice-chancellor's terms of appointment. However, the bill also inserts a provision into each act which provides that, whilst the governing body may remove the vice-chancellor from his or her position, the removal does not affect the vice-chancellor's right to claim compensation or other entitlements under his or her terms of appointment which applied when the appointment ended. This provision clarifies that removal by the university governing body does not necessarily affect the rights of the vice-chancellor under their terms of appointment, and I have spelt that out in detail in the letter to the scrutiny committee. The members who raised this issue might like to have a look at that.

I note the concerns raised by a number of members about the effect of this bill in reducing the numbers and, in some cases, the proportion of staff and/or student representatives to university governing bodies across Queensland. I have been asked to make some defence of that. I do not intend to make any defence of it simply because these decreases in my view are not desirable. They are not of the making of the state government. I, as I have said earlier, have absolutely no problem with the current size of our university councils. In fact, it is my observation that they all work exceptionally well. If I had my wish, we would not be reducing the size of those councils. The Commonwealth in fact made it a requirement that a maximum of 22 had to prevail. That opened up the doors for some universities to have less, and they have taken that opportunity. The unions have raised the issue with me. I believe that I have given them every opportunity to put their case to me. I have made every reasonable attempt to ensure that wherever possible the same proportions have been maintained. But in some cases such as academic representation the representation has been lowered because the national protocols required by the federal government also prohibit any ex officio members such as the president of an academic union.

There were questions raised in relation to the criminal history checking. The provisions of the bill in relation to criminal history checking are not a requirement of the national protocols, and I do believe that this is an exception to my view that the bill will make little change to the quality of governance because I think this will see a genuine improvement and has been put in there at the instigation of the state government. Any refusal to submit to a criminal history check will result in the nonappointment of a member. Consent is required so that the person has the opportunity to withdraw their nomination so that they are not forced to have a criminal history check if there is something in their past that they do not want to be put in the public arena.

Just quickly in terms of the timing of the amendments, the Commonwealth was provided by the state with an ample number of opportunities to comment on various drafts of the bill. As recently as 23 December, the federal minister replied to me outlining that the draft bill largely complied with the Commonwealth requirements with one or two exceptions. Those exceptions were addressed in a subsequent draft. That draft was forwarded to the federal minister. He was advised in March that those concerns had been addressed. It was not until 8 April that the federal minister advised me formally that he had further concerns with the bill. So I concur with the shadow minister that it is better where possible to avoid extensive amendments, but again I recommend that he talk to the federal minister. I was very disappointed that, given that the federal minister and his officers had two opportunities to look at a draft of the bill, they raised concerns at such a late hour given that the federal minister knows that the bill has to be passed by August in order to avoid any financial penalty.

Like others, I wish that we were here tonight debating something that would make a real difference to students and a real difference to the operation of our universities. I am very pleased to have seen how many members commented on the importance of universities in general and to the local economies in regional Queensland. As I said, it would be a great opportunity if we were here tonight debating something that would see them being able to take their standard of excellence one step further. Unfortunately, that is not the case. We are here simply complying with the whims of the federal minister. But to do so has required considerable time and resources from a number of officers in Education Queensland, predominantly those in the Office of Higher Education. I thank them for the efforts that they have made. It has also required the deliberation and consideration of all of our university councils, and I thank them for their assistance and all of the other stakeholders who made a contribution, including academic and staff unions and student unions. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 6.32 pm to 7.30 pm.

Consideration in Detail

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): I believe the minister intends to move the amendments en bloc.

Clauses 1 to 165 and schedule—

Ms BLIGH (7.31 pm): I move amendments 1 to 24 including the new amendment 19A—

1 Clause 6—
At page 18, lines 19 to 24—
omit, insert—
'(6) Section 15(4)—
omit.'.

2 Clause 10—
At page 19, lines 19 and 20—
omit, insert—
'(2) Section 19(2) (a), 'or reappointed'—
omit.
(3) Section 19(1A) and (2)—
renumber as section 19(2) and (3).'.

3 Clause 12—

At page 20, lines 3 to 8—

omit, insert—

‘(1) Section 20A(5)—

omit, insert—

‘(5) Despite subsection (4), if the elected member was a student, the council may appoint a student to the office.’.’.

4 Clause 13—

At page 20, lines 11 to 19—

omit, insert—

‘13 Replacement of s 21 (Failure to elect or appoint elected members)

Section 21—

omit, insert—

‘21 Failure to elect elected member

‘(1) If an entity permitted to elect an elected member does not elect a person as the elected member by a day fixed by the council by notice given to the entity, the Minister may appoint a member of the entity as the elected member.

‘(2) The council may, if asked by the Minister, nominate a person for appointment under subsection (1).

‘(3) A person appointed under subsection (1) is taken to have been elected by the entity under section 15.

‘(4) This section applies to the periodic election of members and an election required because of a casual vacancy.’.’.

5 Clause 27—

At page 35, after line 6—

insert—

‘(3) Schedule 2, definition *elected member*, ‘or appointed’—

omit.’.

6 Clause 53—

At page 54, lines 4 to 9—

omit, insert—

‘(4) Section 15(4)—

omit.’.

7 Clause 57—

At page 55, lines 8 and 9—

omit, insert—

‘(2) Section 19(2) (a), ‘or reappointed’—

omit.

(3) Section 19(1A) and (2)—

renumber as section 19(2) and (3).’.

8 Clause 59—

At page 55, lines 16 to 21—

omit, insert—

‘59 Amendment of s 20A (Dealing with casual vacancy in office of an elected member)

(1) Section 20A(5)—

omit, insert—

‘(5) Despite subsection (4)—

(a) if the elected member was a student—the council may appoint a student to the office; and

(b) if the elected member was a member of the convocation—the council may appoint a member of the convocation to the office.’.

(2) Section 20A(7), definition *member of the convocation*, ‘(b) or (c)’—

omit, insert—

‘(b), (c), (d) or (e)’.

59A Replacement of s 21 (Failure to elect or appoint elected members)

Section 21—

omit, insert—

‘21 Failure to elect elected members

‘(1) If an entity permitted to elect elected members does not elect any or enough persons as elected members by a day fixed by the council by notice given to the entity, the Minister may appoint to the council as many members of the entity as necessary to comply with section 15.

‘(2) The council may, if asked by the Minister, nominate a person for appointment under subsection (1).

‘(3) A person appointed under subsection (1) is taken to have been elected by the entity under section 15.

‘(4) This section applies to the periodic election of members and an election required because of a casual vacancy.’.’.

9 Clause 71—

At page 69, after line 23—

insert—

‘(3) Schedule 2, definition *elected member*, ‘or appointed’—

omit.’.

10 Clause 76—

At page 71, after line 10—

insert—

‘(3) Section 15(4)—

omit.’.

11 Clause 79—

At page 72, lines 3 and 4—

omit, insert—

'(2) Section 19(2) (a), 'or reappointed'—
omit.
(3) Section 19(1A) and (2)—
renumber as section 19(2) and (3).'.

12 After clause 80—
At page 72, after line 10—
insert—

'80A Amendment of s 20A (Dealing with casual vacancy in office of an elected member)
Section 20A(5)—
omit, insert—
'(5) Despite subsection (4)—
(a) if the elected member was a student—the council may appoint a student to the office; and
(b) if the elected member was a member of QUT Alumni (the ***alumni***)—the council may appoint a member of the alumni to the office.'.

80B Replacement of s 21 (Failure to elect or appoint elected members)
Section 21—
omit, insert—

'21 Failure to elect elected members
'(1) If an entity permitted to elect elected members does not elect any or enough persons as elected members by a day fixed by the council by notice given to the entity, the Minister may appoint to the council as many members of the entity as necessary to comply with section 15.
'(2) The council may, if asked by the Minister, nominate a person for appointment under subsection (1).
'(3) A person appointed under subsection (1) is taken to have been elected by the entity under section 15.
'(4) This section applies to the periodic election of members and an election required because of a casual vacancy.'.'.

13 Clause 90—
At page 82, after line 6—
insert—
' '(2) A person who, immediately before the commencement, was an elected member appointed under section 15 of the pre-amended Act is taken to have been elected under that section.'.

14 Clause 91—
At page 83, after line 26—
insert—
'(2A) Schedule 2, definition *elected member*, 'or appointed'—
omit.'.

15 Clause 100—
At page 87, lines 17 and 18—
omit, insert—
'(2) Section 19(2) (a), 'or reappointed'—
omit.
(3) Section 19(1A) and (2)—
renumber as section 19(2) and (3).'.

16 Clause 115—
At page 102, after line 5—
insert—
'(3) Schedule 2, definition *elected member*, 'or appointed'—
omit.'.

17 Clause 120—
At page 103, lines 25 and 26, and page 104, lines 1 to 5—
omit, insert—
'(5) Section 15(4) and (5)—
omit.'.

18 Clause 124—
At page 105, lines 5 and 6—
omit, insert—
'(2) Section 19(2) (a), 'or reappointed'—
omit.
(3) Section 19(1A) and (2)—
renumber as section 19(2) and (3).'.

19 After clause 125—
At page 105, after line 12—
insert—

'125A Amendment of s 20A (Dealing with casual vacancy in office of particular elected members)
Section 20A(5), from 'council'—
omit, insert—
'council may appoint a student to the office.'.'.

19A Clause 126—
At page 105, lines 13 to 21—
omit, insert—

'126 Replacement of s 21 (Failure to elect or appoint elected members)
Section 21—
omit, insert—

'21 Failure to elect elected member

'(1) If an entity permitted to elect an elected member does not elect a person as the elected member by a day fixed by the council by notice given to the entity, the Minister may appoint a member of the entity as the elected member.

'(2) The council may, if asked by the Minister, nominate a person for appointment under subsection (1).

'(3) A person appointed under subsection (1) is taken to have been elected by the entity under section 15.

'(4) This section applies to the periodic election of members and an election required because of a casual vacancy.'.'.

20 Clause 138—

At page 119, after line 12—
insert—
'(3) Schedule 2, definition *elected member*, 'or appointed'—
omit.'.

21 Clause 149—

At page 122, lines 25 to 27—
omit, insert—
'the council may appoint a student to the office.'.'.

22 Clause 164—

At page 137, lines 4 and 5, 'or appointed'—
omit.

23 Schedule—

At page 141, line 15, '**21(1),**'—
omit.

24 Schedule—

At page 142, line 14, '**21(1),**'—
omit.

Ms BLIGH: I table the explanatory notes to the amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 165 and schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Bill, as amended, read a third time.

WATER AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 19 April (see p. 898).

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (7.34 pm): On behalf of the opposition I rise to make a contribution to the consideration of the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. This bill seeks to make quite a large number of amendments to the Water Act 2000. When the Water Bill 2000 was introduced into this House some five years ago, it was a major change to the administration of water and it was a major change for water users throughout Queensland. Obviously, the water industry is still grappling with the extent of that change. The Water Act 2000 was a major change, and I do not think that it can be said that that change has been well handled by the government. The fact that again tonight we are in this House debating a bill that contains so many amendments to that Water Act 2000 is itself an illustration of the very poor way in which this major change to the administration of one of Queensland's major natural resources has been handled.

It is worth considering the Water Act 2000 and the changes that it brought about—and this bill seeks to make changes to that act. The Water Act 2000 had three objectives: firstly, to establish a new system for allocating, managing and trading water to balance competing user demand while providing for environmental flows; secondly, to put in place a new regulatory framework for public and private water service providers covering asset management, customer standards and dam safety; and, thirdly, to put in place a new governance regime for statutory authorities that provide water services.

For most water users, the most significant part of the act revolved around its primary objective of introducing comprehensive new planning management and allocation frameworks. The Water Act 2000 provided for a statutory based water resource planning process in the form of water allocation and management plans. Originally they were called WAMPs. They are now called water resource plans, or WRPs. They were designed to assess at a strategic level the water required to meet environmental needs and to assess the water available for consumption.

The Water Act 2000 provided for the development of resource operation plans, or ROPs. To implement the objectives established under each water resource plan, existing water licences were then to be converted to water allocations that were separate to land and tradable within a defined set of rules. The act provided for the regulation of water use to ensure that it was used sustainably through regional water use plans and land and water management plans for individual properties. I think that intent was

broadly supported by all water users. The concept was certainly supported by the National Party and the opposition at the time, because we have always been very strong supporters of the principle of sustainable development and putting in place administrative structures that ensure that development is sustainable and that sustainable development can proceed with the minimum of interference from government.

Unfortunately, when we consider what has happened under the Water Act in the five years since its inception, we realise that the implementation of many of those concepts has been painfully slow. Each year at the estimates committee hearings I ask the minister about this matter. I know the minister's staff almost expect such a question to be asked. No doubt each year at the estimates committee hearings I will continue to ask about the extent to which the government has fallen behind in the implementation of that water reform process.

I asked the minister a question on notice about this matter and he provided me with a little chart that I would like to share with the House. I asked him that question on notice on 9 July 2004, which I appreciate is a little time ago now. But I do not think that in that time any great progress has been made. This chart shows the 17 main river systems in Queensland where the water resource planning process is envisaged to be put in place. The government is claiming that it completed that process in two catchments, but even that claim is misleading and dishonest.

The truth is that this process has not been completed fully in any of those catchments. In the Burnett catchment, which is always touted as one where the process is completed, the water reform process applies to a fraction of the catchment—a small portion of the catchment—rather than to the whole catchment. Yet the government loudly trumpets to people who do not understand that the Burnett catchment, along with the Fitzroy catchment, is a catchment in which this process has been completed. The process has not been completed in either of those catchments. It has been completed in a small proportion of both of those catchments but certainly not in the whole of those catchments. The minister is shaking his head. The evidence is there for all to see.

The water reform process in the Burnett catchment applies from the mouth of the river to the central Burnett. The water reform process has not even begun for the major tributaries of the Barker, Barambah and Three Moon creeks and others. They are not listed as separate river systems. If the government lists the Burnett River catchment as a river system and then claims that the water reform process has been completed in that river system, the government is deliberately misleading people about the extent to which it has been able to advance the water reform process. It is exactly the same situation for the Fitzroy River catchment. In other major catchments such as the Burdekin River catchment—which is probably one of the state's major irrigation areas—the water reform process is way behind any of the planning targets that the minister has indicated in answer to questions I have asked him over the years.

The point I have been making about the water reform process for some years now is that it is woefully underfunded by a department that is also woefully underfunded. It simply cannot achieve the planning targets that are continually trotted out each year. There is no commitment within this government to advancing the water reform process. There is no commitment to ensuring that this whole process advances at a speed which will allow water users in Queensland to develop their assets and to sustainably use that great natural resource. The water reform process that was touted in the water legislation in 2000 is probably one of this government's greatest failures, although there are many others that would rank alongside it. A huge failure of this government is that it has not been able to advance the water reform process. We come in here tonight to debate legislation which seeks to make a very large number of amendments to the Water Act 2000 even though the essential and inherent processes of that 2000 legislation are falling dramatically behind any of the planning targets that were indicated at the time.

The other great failure that this government cannot avoid when it comes to a debate on water legislation is the provision of water infrastructure. That needs to be brought to the attention of this parliament every time water legislation is debated in this House. The provision of infrastructure is critical to ensure that there is a supply of water and that water users, who are affected by the Water Act and the amendments that we will debate tonight, actually have some water to use. When I was first elected to parliament, water was an issue that only irrigation farmers were interested in. When someone spoke about water in this parliament, it was an issue for irrigation farmers. Now water is an issue for all Queenslanders. Just about every Queensland community is facing water restrictions. Just about every Queensland community is facing the reality of the lack of investment in water infrastructure that has become a hallmark of this Labor government. There is only one piece of infrastructure that this government has built in the six years it has been in power—that is, the Burnett River Dam—and the government was trapped into doing that. I have spoken about this in the parliament before. The government was caught in a political trap that ensured that the Premier was not able to go back on a promise and was forced to provide water infrastructure in the Burnett River catchment.

It is interesting to see in the bill before the House tonight that a number of amendments are being made to the Water Act 2000 to ensure that that water infrastructure provided in the Burnett is able to be

brought to fruition to provide the water allocations that are so badly needed there. They are water allocations that are so badly needed in so many other parts of the state. There should be a range of such projects under construction and completed right throughout the state. The fact that there is not is a great indicator of the failing of this government.

The problem that confronted Queenslanders with the electricity system, where money was not invested in the industry into infrastructure, is also being repeated in the water business. It will confront Queenslanders in the same way because, when that investment in infrastructure is ignored for a number of years, as it was in the power industry and as it has been in the water industry, a day arrives when the effect of that lack of investment hits home and hits home very hard. There is a lead time with the provision of such infrastructure, and it takes many years to correct such a failure on behalf of a government to invest in that essential infrastructure. Unfortunately, I think the provision of water to our major urban centres just as much as our major industries is an emerging problem that will only get worse because the state government continues to avoid and deny its responsibilities to invest in infrastructure.

We are already seeing that in urban centres right up and down the coast. We are already seeing it in places like the Bowen Basin, where major coalmines are struggling with water supply, where major projects are being hampered by a lack of water and where the water that coalmines need has become a real problem.

Mr Robertson: Name a project.

Mr SEENEY: Let us talk about the millions of dollars that are currently being allocated to the pipeline to the northern Bowen Basin.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr SEENEY: That is new infrastructure that is being provided by the coal companies themselves, not by the state government.

Mr Robertson: That's not true.

Mr SEENEY: It is exactly true. The coal companies have had to provide that infrastructure because the government has failed to invest in infrastructure. It has failed to invest in the infrastructure that was traditionally the role of the state government, that traditionally provided infrastructure for those industries to grow and develop. That is the great failure of this Labor government.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr SEENEY: The minister talks about the railways. It is exactly the same with the railways and the missing link railway that would give the coal industry access to the Abbot Point port. The minister raised the issue of the railways, but I would think that he should be embarrassed, as should anyone on that side of the House, to talk about the rail infrastructure in the Bowen Basin coalfields. Would the minister like to talk about the ports or Dalrymple Bay? How many ships are anchored off Dalrymple Bay this week? It is the same issue. It is this government's lack of responsibility and failure to invest in infrastructure. It continues to live off the investment that previous governments have made in infrastructure. There is absolutely no acceptance of the responsibility that a state government has to invest in that sort of infrastructure so that those industries can provide the great economic contribution that they have to the Queensland economy for so long.

Let me turn to the specifics of the bill. There are a number of wide-ranging amendments that this bill makes to the Water Act, as I said at the beginning of my contribution. The amendments contained within this bill are very diverse in their effects. Some of them the opposition will be only too pleased to support. Some of them are very worth while and probably long overdue. A lot of them are fixing up problems that have emerged since the Water Act was introduced and, given that it was such a major change in the administration of the water business, it is probably understandable that there needs to be some finetuning and tinkering with the specifics of that legislation. But there are some amendments within this bill which we simply cannot support and which we will be opposing, and I will deal with those first.

Probably the first and most repugnant amendments—and this should come as no surprise to anybody in this House—are the changes to the enforcement provisions for authorised officers within the department of natural resources. Those amendments are contained within clauses 127 to 133. These provisions will make changes to bring the enforcement provisions in the Water Act in line with those in the Vegetation Management Act. It will give the authorised officers who control the administration of the Water Act the same repugnant enforcement provisions that the Vegetation Management Act gave officers who were charged with administering the details of that act.

When the Vegetation Management Act was debated in this House, we saw those authorised officers, as they are referred to in the act, given the name of tree police. Since that act was debated and passed through this House, we have seen a great number of incidents which have certainly justified that name and which have certainly justified the concerns that we expressed in this parliament about the way that those powers were open to abuse and open to misuse, and so they have been. What this bill does

tonight is give those repugnant powers, those draconian powers, to another group of people, and I fear that we will see the same misuse and abuse of those powers as we have seen demonstrated by the compliance officers who are employed to administer the provisions of the Vegetation Management Act.

We opposed those provisions very strongly when they were introduced in the Vegetation Management Act, and it should come as no surprise to anybody that we will oppose the extension of those enforcement powers tonight when they are introduced in this House as part of the amendments to the Water Act. Those provisions deal with the seizing of evidence and what steps officers must take when seizing evidence. They give powers to 'authorised officers' within the department to seize evidence and to seize evidence in a way that is not available to a range of other enforcement officers in our community who work under other acts. They are quite extraordinary powers. They give powers to the department to obtain the criminal history of a person they intend to visit to allow officers to assess—supposedly, in the minister's words—whether they are putting themselves at risk by going on the property. This was a particularly repugnant part of the provisions of the Vegetation Management Act because of all of the connotations and the implications that it contains. It implies that somehow land-holders—and in this case water users—are criminals or are likely to be criminals or somehow constitute a threat to officers of the department.

As I have said many times in this House, it is a great pity that the relationship between a government department and the people it is supposed to serve is reduced to such low levels. That is the reality of the situation. The relationship between the department of natural resources, with all its arms, and the people it is supposed to serve has reached an absolutely all-time low. There is not a state government department in history that has become so despised and so hated by the people it is supposed to serve as the department of natural resources. That is simply because of the attitude and the approach that has been taken by successive ministers in relation to the administration of natural resources in this state.

Very clearly, it began with the way the Vegetation Management Act was implemented and the way the political game was played prior to the introduction of that act wherein land-holders were demonised and attacked as some sort of environmental vandals who had to be stopped at all costs. We saw a lot of nonsense in here as part of the political effort to introduce that legislation. Now we see within this bill the same provisions and the same approach. It can only further erode—if it is possible to erode it further—the relationship that exists between the users of natural resources in Queensland and the department that should be serving them.

That is a great shame, especially for those of us who have spent our lives working with the state's natural resources. We can remember when there was a very cooperative relationship and a very trusting relationship between the people who rely on Queensland's natural resources—the people who operate in natural resource based industries—and those people who work for the community generally, the public servants in the department of natural resources. Tonight we again see the result of that when the minister feels that there is a necessity to have within this bill a provision that allows for a criminal history check to be done on a person whom an officer of the department is going to visit. That is a very sad state of affairs.

The explanatory notes say—

This provision may be considered to be a breach of privacy.

Dead right it is a breach of privacy—absolutely. It is not strong enough to say that it may be considered a breach of privacy; it is a breach of privacy. A person's criminal history has nothing at all to do with their activities as a water user and should have no bearing on their interaction with an officer from the department of natural resources. There is no need and there is no necessity for this sort of provision to be put in the act. It is simply there to try once again to reinforce this notion that somehow people who work with and depend on natural resource based industries are somehow irresponsible, cannot be trusted, present a threat to the community generally, and present a threat to departmental officers and authorised officers from within the department. That is rubbish. It is garbage, and it will be opposed by the opposition.

These clauses that deal with the enforcement provisions also make new provisions allowing the department to obtain documents even if they are self-incriminating. Currently, as in so many other situations, an individual can claim protection if a document is likely to incriminate them. They can exercise that right not to incriminate themselves. This bill takes away the right that exists in so many other situations in our community and in so many other statutes within our community that should exist. It cannot be supported by anybody who has any sort of an appreciation of civil liberties or fair play.

The explanatory notes state that this is to remove the ability of the employees of a company to decline to provide documents which then makes it difficult to obtain evidence against corporations. The department states that any evidence obtained cannot be used in subsequent criminal or civil action but only for the offence that DNR is investigating. That certainly does not justify the erosion of basic civil liberties and the erosion of those rights that other members of the community enjoy.

We are also concerned about the issues surrounding clause 4, which is about interfering with overland flow water. I will be seeking clarification from the minister and a detailed explanation of that in the consideration in detail stage of the bill. It goes to the heart of a concept that we argued very strongly in 2000 when the Water Act was first introduced. That concept is the protection of the right of land-holders to access stock and domestic water, to ensure that stock and domestic water were not subject to the same administrative provisions—the same draconian provisions in many instances—that apply to bulk water users such as irrigation water users and industrial water users. I think we were successful in winning that argument in the run-up to the debate on that piece of legislation in 2000. We were successful in convincing the government that stock and domestic water users should be exempt from these provisions. But I know, with absolute certainty, that there is a philosophy within certain sections of government that would like to revisit that argument; that there is a philosophy within the department of natural resources and within the EPA that would like to attack that issue from another direction.

I fear that the changes that are being proposed in clause 4 of this bill give the opportunity for that to happen. That clause will be opposed unless those concerns can be allayed in the consideration in detail stages of this bill. Clause 4 relates to the interference with overland flow water. It allows the interference with overland water, as distinct from the taking of overland flow water, to be an assessable development and therefore controlled by development applications through town planning processes.

The great problem is that the definition of taking of overland flow water is currently restricted to water that is subject to a water allocation and therefore is basically bog water. It is water that is used for irrigation or water that is used for urban uses or industrial uses. However, there are a significant number of instances where small quantities of water are taken from overland flow situations for stock and domestic purposes. The government seems to regard that as interfering with overland flow rather than taking it and seeking to control that interference, as it is termed, with overland flow by making that assessable under the town planning provisions. We will be seeking a detailed explanation of that point, and the government's intention of that point, in the consideration in detail stage of the bill. We will be reserving our right to oppose or not oppose that clause based on the explanation that we are able to engender from the minister.

There has also been considerable concern expressed about clause 66, which introduces a new section 178(a). This has aroused a degree of concern from a number of water boards across the state. The situation with water boards is one that I know they have been concerned about. A number of water boards have been concerned about how their activities are going to be impacted on and controlled by the new water legislation since it was introduced in 2000.

Five years down the track, those concerns are still being expressed and those issues are still not resolved. The Pioneer Valley Water Board has expressed particular concern about the changes contained within the legislation. Water boards within the Burdekin irrigation scheme do a great job and are at the forefront of the management of that particular resource. Without any exaggeration, members of those water boards have a lot more expertise and far greater knowledge of that particular water system than the department officers will ever have, because they have lived there for generations and have managed the resource and the infrastructure in that water catchment area. Their knowledge is very detailed and very exact. However, they have been unable to find within the Water Act 2000 the resolution that they need and the security that they deserve to continue to operate their enterprises and businesses in the admirable way they have done until now. We will certainly be pursuing with the minister the impact of this bill and its various amendments on the activities of those water boards.

I am concerned about the part of this bill that grants resource operation licences and water allocations for the Burnett Basin infrastructure. That infrastructure, which I referred to earlier in my contribution, comprises what is now referred to as the Burnett River Dam—it used to be called the Paradise Dam—and the associated upstream infrastructure at the Eidsvold Weir. Both of those pieces of infrastructure are within my electorate, so I know the situation well.

The Burnett River Dam will provide water for people who live within the electorates of Burnett and Bundaberg, where the major benefits of that infrastructure will be felt, even though the infrastructure is further upstream. The existing situation with the Eidsvold Weir is certainly causing growing concern among local water users. Given that this bill deals with the granting of resource operation licences and water allocations for that infrastructure, it is an opportunity to seek reassurance and firm answers to a range of questions that are exercising the minds of those who will be affected by the completion of that infrastructure.

The infrastructure at Eidsvold is basically complete. It has not yet started to produce the water allocations that are the subject of this bill. I know that some initial negotiations have been going on between SunWater and the water users there. I can only say that the expectations of SunWater are far removed from the expectations of the potential water users. I see a major problem looming. The major problem, of course, relates to the sale of the water to be generated by the infrastructure in terms of both quantity and cost.

There are some basic concepts which the government has to get right which I do not believe it has even begun to consider. This infrastructure has been built on a system where, for quite some time,

announced allocations have been considerably less than nominal allocations. In my view, it would be reasonable to expect that, with the provision of such infrastructure, the announced allocations could be expected to be higher than they would have been without the announced allocations.

For the benefit of members of the House who do not understand the details, water users have a nominal allocation, which is the amount of water that they are entitled to use. However, each year the operators of the resource determine what percentage of that allocation will actually be available. In the Burnett system, it is a long time since 100 per cent of that allocation has been available throughout the season. Most of the allocation holders, even though they hold an allocation for a specified number of megalitres of water, have been able to use only 40 per cent, 60 per cent or 80 per cent of that amount. It becomes even more unfair once one appreciates that the water tariff system is structured on a water user paying 75 per cent—referred to as the part A tariff—of their nominal allocation. They pay for 75 per cent of this amount of water, but all too often they are allowed to actually use only 40 per cent or 60 per cent.

Any fair-minded person would expect that when new infrastructure is provided that makes more water available the percentage of allocation available to those people would be greater than it otherwise would have been. They would expect that instead of having access to 40 per cent of that allocation they would have access to 60 per cent or 80 per cent and they would expect to benefit from the provision of that infrastructure. That is not the case with the Burnett Basin infrastructure. The government is seeking to maximise the amount of water that it can sell as new allocations, even though the existing allocations are not supplied to their full entitlements. It is seeking to maximise the number of allocations that it can sell, obviously to maximise the amount of capital that it can raise. It is all about money. It is all about selling the maximum amount of allocation at the maximum price. The prices being discussed by SunWater will not be paid by current water users. There will have to be a reassessment of the government's expectations with regard to the sale of water allocations from the Burnett Basin infrastructure.

This bill allows for Burnett Water—the company put in place by the government to construct the infrastructure—to be purchased by SunWater and for the allocations that are owned by Burnett Water as part of the contract to construct that infrastructure to be used by SunWater, and the licences that Burnett Water holds are effective in meshing in with the licences that currently exist in the Burnett Valley.

The department has advised me that the changes do not affect trading as separate entities—that Burnett Water will not trade as a separate entity but will be absorbed into SunWater. That is sensible and as it should be. For quite some time it was suggested that there would be two operators within the same river system. I believe that would have been a ludicrous situation. I welcome what appears to be a move in the right direction in terms of the amendments this bill makes to the statutes to allow those allocations and those resource operations licences to operate in a sensible and commonsense way.

However, there is the huge issue of the allocation of water—how it will be allocated and the price at which it will be allocated—that the minister has not yet addressed and must address. I have written to the minister twice about this issue. I received in reply a bureaucratic, gobbledegook letter which indicates that the people in the minister's office who reply to the correspondence certainly do not understand the complexity of the issue. In all fairness, the local departmental officers certainly understand the issues and are trying to achieve a solution but are being hamstrung by the government's commitment to maximising the amount of water it can sell for the maximum price. That is also an issue I intend to pursue in the consideration in detail stage of this bill.

There are a number of elements of this bill which we will not oppose and which in fact we will be supporting wholeheartedly. A major element of the bill deals with guaranteeing the financial interests in the entities when land is separated from water—when water becomes a separate asset and legal entity. Obviously, the challenge is what to do to protect those who have a financial interest. In laymen's terms, usually a bank or a financier takes a mortgage over the land asset. The value of that land asset is very much determined by the water rights and entitlements that are attributable to that land.

When the provisions of the Water Act 2000 separated the water entitlements from the land asset, a very real issue arose about protecting the rights of the holder of the mortgage. Unless one recognises that the value of the asset that is the subject of the mortgage is very much determined by the water allocation, it is easy to envisage a situation where, once the water allocation is separated from the land asset, the value of the asset could fall so as to endanger the rights of the mortgagee. This bill seeks to address that issue. It is a complicated issue because a number of different connotations can exist and a number of different situations have to be covered by any provisions of the bill.

The amendments deal with how mortgages are managed when water licences are converted to water allocations under the provisions of the Water Act 2000 and land titles are separated. Currently there is no simple process under the act for dealing with banks or financiers' interests when this change occurs. Problems also arise when different names appear on the titles. Constituents in my electorate are battling with problems that have been caused because the people who own land are not the people whose names appear on the water licence. A range of issues such as that have to be addressed.

This issue came to light following a review of how the two current resource operations plants are operating. So far, some 2,500 water allocations have been created. That means that there are a possible 2,500 situations in which this issue may have to be considered. It is high time that the issue was addressed. It is past due that this parliament passes a resolution to guarantee the interests of both groups in the argument.

The department established a working group with the Australian Bankers Association and a group of Queensland irrigators, including the Queensland Farmers Federation, to come up with a system that would address the needs of both the land-holders and the financiers in a fair and equitable manner. There was also a very real issue about seeking to minimise transaction costs because, as most people would realise, if a new mortgage had to be implemented things such as stamp duty and legal costs could have quite a financial impost.

The provisions of the bill mean that there can be a simple transfer where the owner of the land also has the water entitlement and there is consent between the water user and the bank. That is the simplest solution to the simplest scenario. Basically, there is an agreement to allow the existing mortgage to cover the separated asset. The bill provides that option and I agree with that. I support the notion that the bill should provide that option. The bill also provides an option for the separated asset—that is, the water allocation—not to be covered by the existing mortgage and, once the water allocation is created, allows a 60-day period to allow financiers or anyone else with an interest to claim that interest and to use the legal processes to ensure that that interest is protected. It is a good solution to what was a difficult problem, because it ensures that the creation of water allocations is not held up but can proceed to the benefit of everyone in the catchment. The allocations can proceed given the molasses-like slowness of the government that I referred to at the beginning of my contribution. Even within the slow progress that the government is making, the creation of the water allocations can proceed and the interests of both parties can be protected.

Tonight I wish to flag with the minister another issue that is not addressed in this bill because it will also have to be sorted out. It is the effect that will stem from the separation of the two assets, that is, the water allocation and the land base, on the unimproved capital value of the land asset. Once again, the unimproved capital value is very much like the market value as it is determined by the access to water, the water entitlement and the position of land in relation to access. Once the land and water assets are separated and one of those assets is traded—and we support that concept—not only does that have a major effect on the market value and, therefore, the financial security of a mortgagee, but it also has a profound effect on the unimproved capital value of the asset. The department has to grapple with that and local councils will have to grapple with it, because local councils base their rates upon unimproved capital value. That issue will have to be addressed in the future.

The bill contains some licensing arrangements for multiple water service providers in the water supply scheme. They are dealt with in division 3, clauses 18 to 42. The amendments contained within clauses 18 to 42 provide for new licensing arrangements for operators of infrastructure involved in distributing water within a water supply scheme. The bill creates a distribution operator's licence or DOL. The water business is full of acronyms. These particular clauses create a DOL. I am not sure what that will be referred to in the business world, but tonight I will refer to it as a DOL for the purposes of the debate.

We support the concepts behind the creation of the distribution operator's licence, because it will protect the interests of water boards and the operators of infrastructure who are involved in distributing water within particular water catchment areas. It will protect the water boards that I have mentioned briefly as having done a great job in managing the particular requirements of their catchments. I spoke about the boards within the Burdekin Valley, but there are other boards such as that of the Pioneer Valley, even though it has expressed a deal of concern about some parts of this legislation. I will be seeking clarification on its behalf. A range of other water boards deal with the relationship between SunWater as the resource operator and its customers, and the relationship between the water board and its customers.

The explanatory notes state—

> For example, an owner of infrastructure that diverts water from a watercourse and distributes that water through its distribution network, for example, off stream channels, will be granted a DOL.

That licence will allow the holder of that licence to enter into a commercial arrangement with the water user for the distribution of that water and thereby protect the water board from being left with a stranded asset—where the water is traded out of their area and the operators of that infrastructure are left with insufficient water to distribute and therefore become unviable. It is a complicated area and it is one that we will deal with in some detail in the consideration in detail stage, but it is certainly a concept that I support. It is, again, a fair solution to what has been a complex issue that has been worrying people who are closely involved with this area ever since the introduction of the act in 2000.

The bill also seeks to manage the risk associated with water trading away from authority areas, and that is the principle I was talking about earlier with regard to stranded assets. Clause 50 deals with protecting stranded assets where there have been water trades—meaning that water moves away from

the infrastructure that has been traditionally used to distribute it. Water allocations under a distributions operations licence that are held by the water authority will be able to charge exit fees if an allocation moves away. The concept is known in the industry as retail water tagging under the National Water Initiative. It was suggested by Queensland rural water boards to the department of natural resources in early 2004 as the preferred option for managing stranded assets in water board areas.

Retail tagging was not recognised by the department until a second version of the discussion paper on managing stranded assets was released in 2005. So it has taken a while for the department and the minister to accept what is obvious—that is, the people who are involved in these situations are the best placed to find a solution to the complex issues that have arisen since the introduction of the Water Act 2000. All of the water users in those areas realise that the changes that were put in place in 2000 are a reality and they are keen to find solutions to the particular impacts that those changes have on their particular situations. This is a great example of where the solution to what was a problem came from the people themselves—from the owners and the operators of those water allocations who understood best the impacts of the Water Act on their particular situation.

The department advisors have said that the aim is to protect both the board and its customers, but the legislation does not state how this exit fee or obligation is satisfied. It is a matter for the board and its customers to decide, and that is a concept that, once again, I certainly support and is a concept that should provide fairness to water allocation owners who want to trade their allocation and the members of the water boards who want to protect their assets—their collective asset—in the water board's distribution systems.

The bill also puts in place provisions to allow the acceptance of industry developed farm management systems as land and water management plans. This, too, is a concept that I believe is overdue. It is one that we are only too pleased to support and one that I congratulate the Queensland Farmers Federation on, because I know that it has been at the forefront in developing this concept and it has convinced the government and the department that this is the way to go. This is a good way to ensure that the interests of what are sometimes competing stakeholders within the industry are met.

The bill allows for the department to accept a farm management system as a land and water management plan. Under the act as it currently stands, the land and water management plan must be prepared for an irrigation property before certain water allocations are used for irrigation purposes. Farm groups such as QFF have been pushing for the adoption of voluntary farm management systems that could be recognised by the government and could save farmers from having to do a land and water management plan. Farm management systems are voluntary plans that identify and manage environmental and natural resource risks—and they exist in a number of industries—such as Canegrowers' COMPASS program, the Best Management Practices program in the cotton industry and the Dairying Better and Better program.

There is a requirement that to be accredited those farm management systems have to be independently audited by a third party, and that will ensure the credibility and the integrity of those plans. It will help to overcome some of the problems with land and water management plan guidelines that have existed up until now. I know that the minister is reviewing the guidelines for land and water management plans. He has advised me of that in reply to correspondence that I wrote to him expressing my concern about some of the requirements that currently exist within those guidelines, particularly in relation to the temporary transfer or the seasonal transfer of water. It is an issue where one size does not fit all, where a requirement for a land and water management plan for an extensive new irrigation enterprise can certainly never be considered to be the same as one that is required for the seasonal transfer of a small amount of water between neighbours where both are currently irrigators and the potential impacts are much less. This certainly is a step in the right direction. I hope that in the consideration of those guidelines the minister can go further and address the problems that exist with land and water management plans to ensure that they achieve their purpose without having a major impact.

The bill also puts in place a new requirement for system leakage management plans and drought management plans. These are requirements that are put in place for water service providers. There are approximately 230 water service providers in Queensland. Water service providers are such organisations as local governments, water boards, SEQ Water here in south-east Queensland, Aboriginal councils and organisations such as that. All of them will be required to submit systems leakage management plans. This is a concept which the opposition will certainly not oppose. We do, however, have some concerns about the cost imposts of this planning process on some of the smaller water providers. The minister stated in his second reading speech that some local councils have difficulty accounting for something like 20 per cent of the water that is lost from their distribution systems. Obviously, that is an issue that has to be addressed. The factors that contribute to that loss have to be identified in the system leakage management plans and rectified. It is also consistent with the National water Initiative, and we certainly support the concept that water providers will need to work out how much leakage there is in their system and how much it costs to implement those changes as part of their leakage management plans.

The drought management plans are also a concept that we would certainly not oppose. They put the onus on providers to develop plans, and the public can judge how good they are. The plans are about how they are going to deal with drought situations. I am told that the department is going to release guidelines to provide guidance to those water providers. However, the question that we come back to with both the drought management plans and the leakage management plans is how much they are going to cost and what that cost impost is going to be on those water providers. I would suggest to the minister that it will be the same situation that exists with land and water management plans—that one size will not fit all. The planning processes that will be necessary in a place like the Brisbane City Council area will be completely inappropriate for some of the smaller water providers.

The bill also makes a number of other small amendments to the Integrated Planning Act, the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act and the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2000. The bill also amends the land protection act to extend the termination date for the stock route water agreements from 1 July 2005 to 1 July 2007. There are a number of amendments within this bill which we will certainly oppose with every mechanism that is available to us in this parliament, but there are provisions of this bill which I am only too happy to support.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (8.34 pm): I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. In doing so, I want to acknowledge the importance of this bill and the significance of any decision relating to water in Australia. Australia, as has been said before, is the driest continent on earth. Water is our most precious natural resource and ensuring that future generations can enjoy this resource should be of primary concern to policy makers.

Last night while watching the news I found it interesting to note that there are calls for more efficient ways of using water and even calls from scientists and other significant experts to raise the cost of water by as much as 200 per cent so that consumers will think before they fritter away this most precious resource. Although I think that any move of that nature will be met with some degree of apprehension, down the track there is certainly a case for raising the cost of water to achieve that end. It seems an awkward juxtaposition for the driest country on earth to be offering the cheapest rates for water.

Another significant cry from this expo on water was smarter ways of capturing and using stormwater and perhaps even looking at using the run-off of stormwater from buildings in the city to supply some of the non-drinking water needs of the buildings and also the much talked about use of grey water for certain purposes. All of these things must be considered in the near future as a way of keeping the supply of water to a standard that is acceptable for the growing population in the region.

Provisions in the Water Act refer to the sustainable allocation of water. It is crucial that from time to time these provisions are updated so that a supply of water can be ensured and that the areas most in need of water receive exactly what they need. I am pleased to see that the amendments in this bill do not really change that vision and that, if the bill is passed in this form, the intention of the act will still be to attempt to ensure the sustainable management of Queensland's precious water supply.

The main objective of this bill is to streamline the process by which mortgages are handled when water and land title are separated. I am always wary of the word 'streamlined' as there is a slight and subtle difference between the word 'streamline' and the word 'efficient'. From time to time when things are streamlined they do not become more efficient. Instead, things become so simplified that essential parts or essential rights are lost along the way. When boiling down a process, one must be very careful not to burn one's hands on the steam. To explain that analogy, in this instance we have a boiling down of the process of transferring title. This is all well and good and one cannot argue against a process that reduces transaction costs. However, if that reduction of transaction costs comes at the price of the rights of one of the parties involved in the transfer, then the matter is not so clear cut.

Under the new arrangements, as stated by the minister, it will be a matter for the water authorities and their customers to determine the appropriate pricing arrangements that balance two competing interests: on the one hand, the individual farmers' rights to trade their water and, on the other hand, the financial interests of the authority and the remaining customers. This is all well and good. However, it must be made absolutely clear that this is indeed a balance.

I am afraid that, on reading the bill, I do not believe there are sufficient safeguards to ensure that the relationship that I have outlined is one that will always be equitable and a relationship that will not show up some sort of unbalanced power arrangements where farmers receive a raw deal. I take the point of members on my right—and points well made—about concerns that farmers' rights are being eroded in a way that transcends the benefit that is achieved by streamlining the mortgage transfer process. I would like the minister to address those concerns as it is my belief that the bill in its current state does not sufficiently protect farmers in this process.

Apart from that concern, I believe that the provisions of this bill do a reasonable job in forwarding the aim of the legislation, which is to ensure the sustainability of Queensland's water supply. With those reservations, I conclude my contribution to the House.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (8.38 pm): The Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005 is fairly complex legislation. The Water Act 2000—

Mr Robertson: We try hard.

Mr RICKUSS: I thank the minister. I would also like to thank the minister for providing the opposition with a briefing on this legislation that at least gave us some clarity. When this bill is read in conjunction with the Water Act 2000, which is some 430 pages long, it becomes as clear as mud. The provisions of the Water Act 2000 are still being put in place. A lot of water users are only now starting to come to terms with the provisions of that act. That act is some 400-odd pages long and now we have this additional amendment bill of some 135 pages.

I realise the government has completed only two resource operating plans and made 2,500 water allocations. A lot of the amendments in this bill have arisen out of that process. As the explanatory notes state, these amendments streamline the process for dealing with financial interests at the time land is separated from water on the grant of water allocations. As was explained this morning, the banks have been involved in this process with some of the rural groups. They believe that it is a fairly workable process.

For a lot of farms, the water allocation is probably worth more than the land. The allocation of water has become a very complex issue in some of the aquifer areas. The transfer of water from land in those areas is going to be a lot more complex than in the situation where a water allocation is diverted from one farm to another farm. Some farms that have aquifers have a good supply of water underground, but how is that water supply sold and then allocated? That is a complex issue that is still going to have to be worked out in terms of the resource operating plan.

The explanatory notes state further that the amendments provide for licensing arrangements for multiple water service providers in a water supply scheme. Apparently there are 233 of these suppliers. A lot of them are town water suppliers. I believe that this legislation has tidied up some issues relating to that system, which I believe makes sense. Further, the explanatory notes state that the amendments allow for the management of the risks associated with water trading away from authority areas. This morning at the briefing that situation was explained. One little dam in my area would be involved in such a situation because it trades with SunWater.

The explanatory notes also state that the amendments allow the chief executive to accept industry developed farm management systems as land and water management plans. That makes sense. Entities such as Cotton Australia, the banana industry and Growcom have very good plans in place for whole-of-farm management and environmental plans. If those entities have a plan that is acceptable, there is no need for overkill. I am sure the minister's departmental officers will assist those entities with their plans if there is a need. I think that all makes sense.

The explanatory notes state further that the amendments streamline the process for making amendments to a water resource plan and resource operations plan. I realise this process has to be streamlined, but it seems to take years and years to get that done. A moratorium has just been placed on south-east Queensland. It will take 10 years before this whole process is finalised. Maybe the minister should talk to the Treasurer and see if he can get some more staff for his department so that these plans could be completed faster. That might help the process. Unfortunately, we have had some extremely dry years, which have probably made the formulation of these plans more complex. Everyone wants to have their say because everyone believes that they are being dudded out of some water that maybe they were not entitled to have. All I can say is that if the minister can spare more staff to formulate these plans properly it would result in a much better process.

Further, the explanatory notes state that the amendments remove the provision that allows recipients of information notices to appeal non-discretionary decisions. This tidies up a provision in the act that apparently was not well written. As the adviser said this morning, the Land Court found that that provision had to be changed. So that amendment makes sense.

The explanatory notes also state that the amendments meet commitments arising out of the National Water Initiative and the Queensland water efficiency task force. That makes sense. It will be interesting to see what results from the National Water Initiative. The Queensland water efficiency task force is a good process. I ask the minister to encourage Primary Industries to support any strategies to improve water systems on farms. I am sure that the water efficiency programs are very worth while and have saved thousands and thousands of megalitres over the past four or five years.

Mr Robertson: I almost got my ticket book out to sign you up. Come on over.

Mr RICKUSS: No, I am just trying to get some more money out of the Treasurer; that is all. The explanatory notes also state that the amendments will clarify and improve the existing enforcement provisions in relation to the offences provision. I agree with Jeff on this point. Unfortunately, I think DNR has moved away from dealing with extension type issues to dealing with policing type issues. I think extensions are probably a better way to go. I have been on water boards for the last 20 years, and I have had DNR people come out to see me because I have had a bit of trouble with one of my neighbours who was not paying his bills. I went over to assist them. People can achieve a lot more with

a bit of commonsense and by assisting others rather than being too heavy-handed with too much policing.

I think we should go back to taking an extension attitude rather than a policing attitude when dealing with these issues. If we do so, I am sure that everything will fall into place 99 times out of 100. There do not seem to be too many problems with it. I remember when one of the blokes down the road was not paying his water bills and a caveat was put on his land when he sold the land so that he had to pay the water bill before the land sale could go through. So it was not too big an issue. As we have said before, water is almost a bigger issue: it is worth more money than land now. So I am sure the DNR will realise the error of its ways in being too heavy-handed. We will definitely discuss some of the clauses of this bill at the consideration in detail stage. I recommend the bill to the House.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (8.46 pm): The Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is an omnibus bill which will streamline key operational procedures under the Water Act 2000 and hence continue the good work of managing our water through the sustainable planning allocation and use of this valuable resource. The cheapest source of water is the water that is saved. The bill will further enhance water conservation practices throughout Queensland by requiring water service providers to develop and register drought management plans and system leakage management plans.

I remind members that some parts of Queensland are feeling the impacts of our harsh and highly variable Australian climate. In some areas water supplies are nearing critical levels. Water supplies in communities need to be well prepared in advance of these times of droughts. It was interesting to hear the member for Callide say that we are not planning enough for the future by building dams. The key element to filling a dam or sustaining any water system is water from above. If it does not rain the dam does not fill, so it does not matter how many dams are built.

On the web the *Sydney Morning Herald* has posted some key points of what was in tonight's budget handed down by the Queensland National Party's federal coalition colleagues. The member for Callide gave the minister a good lecture about the fact that the government should be spending money to build a pipeline for the wealthy mining companies that are making record profits at the moment. Those companies would say that they never believed that coking prices would go up as high as $125 a tonne or that thermal coal prices would be up around $55 a tonne. They believe the government has to build the pipeline. At the end of the day if the government builds it then less money will be put into housing for the needy. I see the minister for housing is in the chamber tonight.

Mr Schwarten: The people on $30,000 a year should pay taxes.

Mr MULHERIN: That is what the member for Callide believes. What was in the coalition's budget? The *Sydney Morning Herald* article on the internet states—

This budget fulfils the Coalition's ideology that it is better to use revenue for tax cuts than increase in spending.

The budget contains little spending to address issues such as skills shortages and infrastructure bottlenecks.

That was what the member for Callide was referring to—the need for government to spend money to build infrastructure such as dams, ports and rail systems to develop the economy. The National Party's mates in Canberra have a different view of the world. They believe that it is a user-pays system. If one is looking for efficiencies to bring about water conservation, spending money on infrastructure has to reflect the true value of the cost of replacing it.

It is interesting to see the contradiction between the National Party in Queensland and the National Party in Canberra. The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Anderson, is on the record about the need for there to be a user pays water system. Unless that happens, we will not conserve water.

In Queensland there are approximately 230 different water service providers including local councils, SunWater, water authorities, drainage scheme operators and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils. These organisations are responsible for ensuring that our communities and irrigators have secure water. While many water service providers do an excellent job of managing their water, it became obvious during the recent drought that some water service providers were unprepared for water shortages and did not have a thorough knowledge of their own systems. After consideration by the Queensland Drought Urban Water Supply Task Force, it was decided that the Water Act 2000 should be amended to ensure that in future all communities would be well prepared for times of drought.

The proposed legislation will require water service providers to register with the department of natural resources and mines a drought management plan for each urban community or irrigation scheme to which they provide services. Each of these drought plans will document the proposed use and availability of water sources, events that trigger various levels of water supply restrictions and the needs of different classes of consumers. The drought plan will also record the contractual rights of customers, likely future water demand and any requirements for critical water supply management resulting from the resource operation plan for the region.

These drought management plans will not require approval by the department of natural resources and mines but will simply need to be registered with it. The onus will be on the water service providers to develop and implement plans to manage their resources adequately. Over the last few

months the department held consultations with water service providers across Queensland on these legislative amendments and these providers fully supported the drought plan proposal.

Of course, for best practice resource management, water conservation strategies should be in place even when there is no drought. Water conservation strategies help to extend the life of the water resource and provide for increased residential, industrial and agricultural growth. A study of the south-east Queensland regional water supply strategy has shown that, if the population growth continues at the expected rates in south-east Queensland, water demand may exceed supply by 2025. This means that Queenslanders will need to better use the existing water resources if this region is to grow economically. One way this can be achieved is through minimising losses due to leakages from water distribution systems. Studies have shown a great variability in the quality of water distribution systems in Queensland while system losses of up to 35 per cent have been recorded in some parts of Queensland. In the Gladstone area alone it has been reported that the Calliope Shire Council is asking the local water board to stem a monthly nine million litre leak from its Boyne-Tannum water supply. It is astounding that precious water can be lost in this way, which is why the department of natural resources and mines will be requiring all water service providers to develop system leakage management plans and submit them to the department for approval.

These plans will determine and report on system leakage, identify measures to reduce leaks, outline a cost-benefit analysis of system leakage measures and, if appropriate, detail a plan to introduce these leakage reduction measures. Importantly, service providers will not be required to bring these measures into effect unless the cost can be recovered through reduced operations, maintenance and refurbishment expenditure or deferred capital on new water source distribution infrastructure.

This proposal has been supported by most water source providers during the consultation sessions held across the state. Those proposed amendments will also ensure that Queensland fulfils its commitment to the National Water Initiative, which requires states and territories to address system leakage from water distribution systems. In the coming years this legislation for drought management planning and system leakage management planning will improve the management practices of water service providers and hence conserve our precious water. This is important because over the next decade the supply of water for urban, industrial and agricultural consumers will become a critical issue for all Queenslanders, particularly those in the south-east corner. The Queensland government, by its actions and its words, has taken the issue of water supply very seriously. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (8.54 pm): I am pleased tonight to speak to the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill addresses a number of issues. It is quite a large bill. I support what the shadow minister, the member for Callide, has said tonight because he has covered a lot of the issues, and I do not want to go over all of them again. Over about an hour he very comprehensively covered a lot of the issues that are very important. A number of those issues will be expanded upon in the consideration in detail stage.

The Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill will streamline the process for dealing with financial interests at the time land is separated from water on the grant of water allocations. That is an important part of water trading. Water trading was established in Queensland a long time ago, and it has taken quite a long time to get to this stage now. The original water trading was done in some of the smaller schemes and has slowly developed. I support that concept because I think water trading will be an important part of our commerce and an important part of agriculture in the years to come. But we have to manage it carefully. We have to ensure that we do not end up with a system that supports either the small user or the big user. We have to ensure we have a system that is flexible across-the-board and that allows all operators to have a reasonable opportunity to obtain water to operate effectively and efficiently in the particular markets they are looking for.

Let us look at the separation between land and water. The land will have an unimproved capital basis and most of that land would be improved land. It would be irrigation land and therefore should not have potential vegetation management implications that would have a devaluing effect on that unimproved capital value, but it may have if a person has a large water licence on an area that is only partly developed and there may be other areas that will further expand as time goes by. So that has to be taken into consideration.

The market value of water will vary. We assume that it will be the market value. However, that market value may change, because for some reason someone may want to sell an allocation of water. Because the only opportunity a person has is to sell it outside the authority area, if they do that they will then have quite a severe penalty—and they should do because if they want to trade water outside an allocated area they end up reducing the viability of that region. Therefore, there is a penalty on that, and it will be a figure that they would work out, as this act states, under these circumstances.

Therefore, the value of that water would be market value less a significant amount. The value might be dramatically reduced by maybe even a third. When that is considered, there are some very serious financial implications so we need to be aware of that when the time comes. What is in this legislation today will have a serious impact on the value of water. It may be, as I said before, a normal

market value less a significant amount, particularly if people are trading outside an authority area. That is something people need to be aware of.

This act also changes the situation to provide for licensing arrangements for multiple water service providers in a water supply scheme to manage the risks associated with water trading away from authority areas, as I mentioned before, and also to grant resource operation licences and water allocations for the Burnett Basin infrastructure. This is a very interesting area. The other day I was in Bundaberg and I flew back to Roma. I had to fly over the new Burnett River Dam. It is all moving along okay, but I kept thinking to myself when I was flying around it, 'Well, this dam really should be nearly three times bigger than what it is, and it could be.' It could be three times bigger than what it is. Originally when the plan that I had in mind was put in place—and it is all there in the water infrastructure task force—the dam could have held up to 1.2 million megalitres. It is now going to hold 300,000 megalitres. I am not saying that it should be as big as 1.2 million megalitres, but it could have held a million megalitres or it could have held 900,000 megalitres. It could have been quite a bit larger. When it is considered that in many instances—

Mr Horan: It was a wasted chance.

Mr HOBBS: It could be a wasted chance. I make the point again that the government did not want to build this dam, even though it was saying it was going to build it. It had to go out and change the ROPS and the water management plan because it had not taken into consideration the dam when it did the water management plan. The government had to change it. It means that we can change other plans throughout the whole system as well. Quite frankly, the word around the traps is that the government has done a deal with the conservationists. The conservations will allow the dam to be built provided they get their way with vegetation management and the western hardwoods. At the end of the day—

An honourable member interjected.

Mr HOBBS: Well, it is a bit of a conspiracy thing. I do not know whether it is right or whether it is wrong, but I am just telling members what I am hearing.

Mr Seeney: They have to do it to save the member for Bundaberg.

Mr HOBBS: Well, that is probably right, too.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order! Can I suggest honourable members direct their comments through the chair?

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr HOBBS: That is probably right, too.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the member for Callide wants to interject, I suggest he returns to his seat.

Mr HOBBS: A second dam in compensation for the Bundaberg Hospital, yes, that is probably not a bad idea. When you think about it, the whole thing is really a bit skew-whiff. An opportunity has been missed where that dam really could have been worth while. It is still a worthwhile dam; there is no doubt about that. It will be quite handy, but it is nowhere near what it could have been, particularly in relation to the capacity that it had and the potential that it had to develop some things. It is quite mind boggling when people think about the fact that we have had many lost opportunities.

When members cast their mind back to the Wolfdene Dam, it was to be the same size as Wivenhoe. Everyone knows how big Wivenhoe Dam is. It is about 1.3 or 1.5 million megalitres. It is a huge dam. The Wolfdene Dam was going to be very similar. The land was bought, and the Goss government came in and it sold the land. We are now in a desperate situation for water. The government is talking about building a dam at Boonah. It is just a big puddle two kilometres downstream from a sewerage station. Only 36 per cent of the land has been bought. The government has a real problem on its hands.

I do not know where the government is going to go with it. It probably has to go to desalination to get away from dams. The whole system is in a total mess. There has been no planning. No-one has been game to make a decision in relation to what they do. The plans were all there. I was on the water infrastructure task force. It had all those dams that were there to be built. Not all of them had to be built, but one or two could have been built. It would have at least helped us in these particular areas.

More dams will need to be built. Queensland is expanding all of the time. There is so much that we need to do. It cannot be done without a water supply meeting the needs of the country. It is frustrating when the solution is so simple. Let me give an example once again of opponents to the Nathan Dam at Taroon. People were saying, 'Well, you can't build this dam because it's going to have an impact on the ocean outfall.' I will give you an example of the reality of the situation. If you had a 200-litre gallon drum of water, it was tipped over and a carton of milk was held back, that was the impact of that dam. It was nothing. It had no impact on the ocean outfall, yet they were talking about the mangroves and the fish and everything else. It was absolute rubbish. This is what people tend to get

carried away with. This is where we are now in 2005. We still have no water. In 2007 we will still have no water. I am not sure what is going to happen down the track. We have to hope and pray it rains.

This bill also allows for the chief executive to accept industry developed farm management systems as land and water management plans. That is fine. I think that is not too bad. This legislation also requires that third-party certificates are given. So a third party has to come in and certify those particular plans. I am wondering who those people will be. How many people will there be? Is there a separate group set up? Is there a private company that will do all of them or how do people go about this? It will be quite intriguing as to who does that, who gets the contract or what the situation is.

This bill also streamlines the process of making amendments to a water resource plan and resource operations plan. The ROPs is a pretty important part of all the processes that we are doing now. This bill does make some amendments to that.

It also removes the provision that allows recipients of information notices to appeal non-discretionary decisions made in accordance with a water resource plan or resource operations plan where the appeal right is illusionary. Also, to meet commitments arising from the National Water Initiative and the Queensland water efficiency task force to identify and address significant leakage from the water supply systems, which is recognised as one of the most cost-effective strategies to achieve water conservation and to ensure that water service providers, including local government, prepare for and respond to water shortages during periods of drought to minimise the impacts on community and industry.

Obviously that really has to be a benefit. One of the things that I am not sure members are aware of is that there are people now who do benefit from downstream leakage. They actually pay a premium for that water. I presume the minister has that organised. These people now who may be downstream of a dam or a weir and they have water that runs underground or just have leakage, they actually pay a premium for that water. If those people then do not get that water, will they be paid compensation? What will happen to those licences that they now have? They have virtually a 100 per cent allocation. Will they get compensation for the loss of that water if it is locked up?

We have to reduce leakage, I accept that. Perhaps we are not necessarily always talking about just downstream leakage; we are talking about leakage in pipelines, canals and that type of thing. Obviously that is quite important as well. We have to make sure that we have that.

The member for Lockyer made an interesting point a while ago. In these dry years we certainly need a lot more action from the department. That is difficult. It is really hard because a lot of work has to be done, but in these dry years there is so much pressure on the department.

I have an issue in relation to these water management plans. One example is the Cunnamulla Golf Club. The Cunnamulla Golf Club is like all golf clubs. Like many golf clubs, it is a voluntary group and it is doing the best that it can to survive. It has a 90 megalitre allocation of water. Since 2000, it has had to apply six times for, and was able to receive, about 10 megalitres extra water a year because of the drought. We had a terrible time out there. Cunnamulla particularly has been as dry as can be.

The Cunnamulla Golf Club has applied for and received 10 megalitres in an overallocation, so it now has to supply a land and water management plan. The cost of doing that runs into the tens of thousands of dollars. I ask the minister if there is any way that groups such as golf clubs, voluntary groups or sporting clubs can bypass that system. I would certainly hope so. I do not see a need for groups that provide a valuable service to the community and are not about profit to spend tens of thousands of dollars to put together a land and water management plan.

I support the contribution made by the member for Callide, who covered this area very thoroughly. The member and I have a few points that we intend to raise during the consideration in detail stage. A lot of changes can be made to this act to improve it and we certainly need to improve the water situation here in Queensland.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (9.10 pm): I rise to speak to the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. This bill poses as many questions as it sets out to answer.

My electorate has been a trial district for tradeable water titles. It has gone through a very long and difficult process in developing a water resource plan for the Barron catchment, and it has a resource operations plan in place over some of the catchment. Another part of the catchment has had a moratorium placed on the ROP process, as the department and stakeholders go back and renegotiate core elements of how water will be managed in that locality. The tradeable water title is intended to ensure that water, which is considered a scarce resource, goes to what is called the highest best use. In practice, sadly, this appears to mean that it will go to whoever can pay the most for it.

Previously, water allocations were attached to a particular block of land. Under the tradeable titles regime, this is no longer the case. A title that is supposed to be similar to a land title will now be issued in place of that water allocation. As its title suggests, it can be traded away from that original block. In some places, that means somewhere within a particular catchment; in others, it is already physically possible for water in, say, the Burdekin River system to be sold into the Ross River system which feeds

Townsville. In the case of the Barron, there is no limit on how much water can be traded away from farming land to urban or industrial users apart from allocations and the physical flow capacity of the river itself.

Warnings were given, including by me, during the consultation process that if, there were no effective controls, there was the potential for so much water to be traded away that agriculture could lose critical mass and collapse an entire catchment. I note that the insertion of new subsections 127B and 127C provide the means for managing what is coyly termed in the explanatory notes 'certain risks' associated with trading water. The notes state, in confirmation of my warnings—

... there is the risk that the trade of water allocations may tend to move allocations away ...

This could lead to a reduction in the number of customers in a distribution area (a reduced customer base), which in turn would result in increased costs for remaining water users. At its extreme, where the majority of allocations are traded away from an area, the distribution assets could become 'stranded'—where there are not enough users to maintain the viability of the distribution scheme.

This is a fascinating part of the bill. There is an admission that water—indeed, a majority of water—can potentially be traded away from an area. We all know that without enough water, irrigated agriculture fails, farms collapse, families leave and communities die. For example, if many farmers in the Barron catchment sold their allocation to Cairns City Council, there could be too few irrigators left to pay the infrastructure costs for Tinaroo Falls Dam. Local governments and heavy industry can afford to pay a lot more for water than farmers who are forced to compete with cheap overseas imports.

Yet what does this government concern itself with? It concerns itself not with protecting communities, not with preserving our wealth-creating primary industries, but with ensuring that it still gets its pound of flesh in terms of water charges, whether the water is used within its distribution system or elsewhere. Too bad about our farming families and communities.

It has been suggested that, if this were to occur and if locally produced food were to become scarce, consumers would be ready to pay more for it, therefore restoring to farmers a capacity to pay higher water prices. That is cloud-cuckoo-land wishful thinking. Look at our citrus industry. It has been bulldozed to make way for cheap imported pulp. The peanut market is being swamped by Chinese imports. Table grapes have been slammed by Californian imports. Why? Because too many consumers will pay for a cheap import before parting with a little extra cash to buy Australian produce. That is the harsh truth. Industry after industry has already gone to the wall because of lower quality but cheaper imports. Hitting the rural sector with higher prices for essentials such as water could well be the last nail in the coffin of many rural industries.

A second major problem with tradeable water titles is their impact on mortgages. This is a matter I have raised previously. In essence, a mortgage may exist over a farm which has been valued in light of the land itself in conjunction with whatever water allocation has been attached to that land. What happens to the mortgage when the water is separated off, specifically so it can be traded away from that block with ease? The value of the land will fall and there is an expectation that the value of the water title will be substantially higher. There is no certainty about that, especially in the long term, as factors such as its volatility become clearer. Not only can water be sold but also, in one way, it can physically move to other parts of the catchment and potentially to other catchments. It can have varying levels of liability, and so on.

In some places it is a resource in regard to which no-one can be certain of the quantity. This is the case in what is known as area A of the Barron catchment. Part of the negotiations now under way regarding that area are about how water use will be metered to help establish how much water is accessible. For example, if the existing nominated amount is all there, then the water title in the area will likely keep its established value. However, if significantly more water is finally identified, one would expect the value to fall. While someone may know how much water is on their title, how does anyone set a value when they do not know whether it is from an unlimited source or a finite one? I am overstating it, but the example is sound.

Of course, let us not forget that the water title itself exists only as a function of the relevant water resource plan, which has a legislative life of 10 years—a far shorter period than that of most mortgages. How willing can a financial institution be expected to be when a title has a very fluid value, a variable location and a limited lifespan? Of course, the water itself might only be partially available or even completely unavailable in times of drought.

How does this legislation address all of these concerns? Clause 61, which replaces section 150, allows for the existence of an interest, such as a mortgage, to be registered against a water title in the water allocations register in a similar way as mortgages can be registered against land titles. The explanatory notes go on to state that registering an interest 'has the effect of encumbering the water allocation with the existing mortgage'.

To me, that sounds like the entirety of the mortgage. Does this mean our gentle and generous financial institutions can pick and choose whether they hold an interest over the land or the water, or both? It is far from clear what the answers may be to any of those issues. Clearly, this is still a very

murky area. To suggest that resolving it rests with individual farmers negotiating, as best they can, with the juggernaut that is our banking system is really throwing the Christians to the lions.

This bill also calls for local councils and water authorities to make plans for controlling leakage in their water distribution systems, and others about managing droughts. Intensive farmers will be pushed to develop farm management systems to identify and manage risks to land, water and the environment. These will have to be approved by a professional and audited on an ongoing basis—all at a cost, of course. Yet again, what we see is this government legislating in pursuit of its own goals, but leaving it up to others to find the money and resources to put them in place.

Division 1A of the bill deals with what are known as system leakage management plans. These are needed because addressing leaks in distribution systems is a major way of saving water. That is all well and good, but section 414A requires water service providers to develop and implement these plans providing it is cost effective to do so. There is not a word about state government subsidies or contributions, and yet I am sure that this government will soon be crowing about its effective water management legislation—as long as it does not have to spend any money on it. Of course, that does not address the fact that those operators with the highest losses and lowest revenue would likely benefit the most from plugging the leaks.

There is another issue raised here. If a leakage plan is put in place and a significant amount of water becomes available for sale, what will happen to the existing fees and charges levied on water users? All the calculations would have to be done carrying the leakage. If most of that water is suddenly paying its own way, the calculations underpinning the fees and charges should be redone and those fees and charges should fall. As we are talking of leakage rates in the order of 20 to 30 per cent, it is a massive amount of water.

Section 26 is amended by clause 6, which allows a moratorium on works affecting overland water flow and subartesian water beyond what is now allowed as part of amending a WRP. Any works currently allowed would not be affected, but all future works would be.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has noted that clause 4 removes a current authority of landowners to interfere with overland water flow and that such works will apparently be subject to the Integrated Planning Act. A range of normal farm activities could fall under the ambit of this clause—for example, contour banking, laser levelling, the direction in which the furrows of a ploughed field run and so on. Those are separate to works such as retention banks and dams. At what stage will farmers be expected to navigate the Integrated Planning Act for many normal farming activities?

Any future WRP amendments including the Barron catchment will not have to be advertised under this new bill. Instead, the government will just issue a draft amendment and go from there. Some appeal mechanisms are to be cut because the government has deemed them illusory. Members should remember that all of our rivers will eventually be covered by these WRPs.

The government argues that because the public consultation period remains following the issuing of the draft amendment everything is all right, but the harsh experience with the Barron WRP and ROP has shown that these issues can be very complex and that the public benefits enormously from having as long as possible to consider the implications of such a plan or amendments to them. I favour the retention of early notice.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has also identified massive increases in penalties. Clause 139 increases the maximum penalty for tampering with a water monitoring device to a phenomenal $124,875, up from $75,000. This massive hike may bring the penalty for tampering into line with other offences, but that is huge. I believe that it is enormously more than is required for deterrent effect.

Finally, I turn to yet more breaches of fundamental legislative principles which, sadly, are becoming so common with this government. The general principle of protection against self-incrimination is challenged in requirements relating to the employees of companies. This is proposed so that it can be easier to prosecute companies. I am no friend of big business and, in this case, I will say that the onus should always be on the prosecution to prove its case, and that includes gathering relevant evidence under our existing laws. Breaching fundamental legislative principles to make other laws more enforceable is Pythonesque at best.

The right to privacy is challenged in relation to provisions regarding accessing a person's criminal history as it relates to violence and firearms. This is argued as being in the interests of the safety of government employees. I accept that staff should enjoy safe working environments. I do not accept that this means that someone should have access to another person's criminal history. In this and other legislation I believe that it would be more appropriate to simply seek the advice of an appropriate person such as a senior police officer, asking whether a person's criminal history was cause for concern rather than what the history was. Police would have access to full details and, combined with their experience, would be far better placed to make appropriate recommendations.

Finally, there are limitations imposed on appeal rights regarding decisions made under the WRP. Frankly, I believe government decisions should not only be transparent but should also be subject to appeal. We govern at the whim of the electorate, not to impose our whims upon them.

All of these changes are happening because this government is kowtowing to the National Water Initiative and the Council of Australian Governments. It seems that the real government of Queensland is COAG, which is running hard to nail us all with the poisonous free trade national competition policy theory that has already gutted so many of the rural areas of Queensland.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (9.25 pm): This bill does a number of things to tweak the detail of and bring about some improvements to the Water Act 2000. It also addresses some of the errors that were made at that time. Some parts of the bill provide good arrangements. In particular, I commend the Queensland Farmers Federation for developing partnerships promoting the uptake of farm management systems programs. That sort of thing can help those with intensive farming operations with their water plans, environmental plans and so on.

Water is one of the most precious commodities, particularly for the rural industries. Also, of course, it is precious for cities that need it for their very survival and social amenity. In Queensland we are facing quite a worrying time. Some rainfall experts have said that overall rainfall has dropped across the state. We are certainly not seeing the influence of the north-west monsoons that used to occur regularly each and every February and that provided the flood rains to fill the water storages and replenished many of the parched areas of the state. In addition, winter influences drifted across from Wandoan and provided a reasonable opportunity for winter crops on the Darling Downs and the western downs. Those ridges seem to be slipping south and the rainfall seems to be falling in the bottom corner of West Australia and the bottom part of South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. A couple of changes to the weather influences that we experience are concerning, so it is important that we treat the resource as precious. As the saying goes, there is only so much water in the bucket and we have to make sure that we use it fairly and treat it with respect and care.

The rural community has been quite outstanding in the way that it has taken up its responsibilities. For example, along the Condamine-Balonne system, through their own diligence and risk-taking preparedness over the years, many farmers have put in place major systems that in many instances have cost millions of dollars. In recent years they have undertaken to take a cut of around 10 per cent in water allocations. In turn they have introduced more efficient ways of using the water.

In the region of the Darling Downs, where I live, somewhere in the order of 300 ring tanks have been built. Debate used to rage about whether another dam was needed on the Upper Condamine, in the Elbow Valley area between Warwick and Killarney. All of the water that would have been stored in such a dam can now be stored on farms by the 300 ring tanks, which would hold in the order of 150,000 to 200,000 megalitres. That is the capacity of on-farm storage, which probably negates forever the need for a dam to be built further up the river. That infrastructure has been provided from the pockets of the farmers.

One of the cruelest things I ever saw on TV was a *60 Minutes* show about Cubbie Station. It tried to create the perception that those people were getting water cheaply when they had spent millions of dollars putting in infrastructure, whether in the Upper Condamine, the middle of the system or down towards Cubbie Station. That infrastructure was paid for out of their own pockets and they maintain it. They are only allowed to take water when the authorities tell them that it is okay, which is when the river reaches a certain height of flood flow. How much they can take and when they can take it are very carefully regulated.

The Darling Downs and Toowoomba are facing some very special issues. I will deal with Toowoomba first of all, because it is a unique city in that it sits 2,000 feet above the Great Dividing Range. It is probably the only city in Australia that does not get its water by some sort of gravity system, because we have to lift our water from the eastern fall of the Great Dividing Range. We have to lift our water 400 metres in a vertical lift from dams such as Crestbrook Dam and Perseverance Dam. The Cooby Dam on the western fall of the Great Dividing Range has very little water and makes a relatively small contribution to the entire system. That water has to be lifted by a series of 600-horsepower electric motors double banked in different spots to lift the water up before it can be treated at Mount Lofty and then used in Toowoomba and also provided to some of the surrounding shires where there is such significant growth.

It is quite a difficult process to get that water. Perseverance Dam is a long way away from Toowoomba to the north. We are just so lucky that that dam was built at the time that Clive Berghofer was the mayor of Toowoomba and then the member for Toowoomba South. He had the foresight to build that dam, because without it we would be in absolutely dire straights now. Even so, that dam is now down to around about 34 per cent capacity and the Toowoomba City Council is watching very carefully what happens with that water. As we all know, evaporation rates increase as the water gets down to a more shallow level and is not so cool. The council has indicated that on 1 July we may have to move to level 4 water restrictions. That will mean that there will be absolutely no watering of gardens whatsoever. It will make things very difficult for the people involved in the Carnival of Flowers, so we could be relying upon rainfall alone.

The community is facing up to this challenge in a cooperative way. The council has not indicated all of the details of what it proposes for the future, but along with other local members I have been privy

to a briefing on what council proposes to do for the future for our city. I have to say that it is a plan that is very resourceful. It is a plan that looks at saving water, recycling water and domestic water for the city. It looks at various swapping arrangements with those people who have underground water availability who can swap that with recycled water. It looks at providing water for industry on the Darling Downs. It looks at putting in place new piping systems on new subdivisions for recycled water. It looks at the bore water capacity of Toowoomba, where we have a capacity of 4,000 megalitres a year and the city is only currently extracting in the order of 1,700 megalitres a year. It has looked at a whole range of ways of, firstly, saving water; secondly, recycling water; thirdly, looking at the collection of rainwater wherever possible; and, finally, other saving systems. It is a very innovative plan. It is a plan that is worthy of support from both the federal government and the state government. It did get a mention in the capital infrastructure program until 2014. We need to do this immediately, because the need in Toowoomba is urgent.

There have been various studies over the years to look at other places where dams could be put in. In the case of Toowoomba, all of the areas on the western fall almost without exception are basically little creeks that have relatively low rainfall because they are on the western side of the divide, not on the eastern side of the divide. Those creek supplies are needed for stock, domestic water and minor irrigation systems along those creeks anyway. It is important that we make the very best use we can of Crestbrook and Perseverance and work on these extremely innovative plans which should be worthy of support. I am certainly doing my level best to get support from both the state and federal governments for these particular plans.

It is good to see the council thinking ahead. It is good to see the cooperative feeling in the city, where people realise that everyone will have to shoulder some of the difficulties that come along. When one starts to think about it, there are many areas that this could affect. What happens on footy fields if we cannot irrigate those fields and kids get injured? What about sports fields, school grounds, council parks, carnival gardens, people who need water for their own commercial businesses such as those who do house washing and so on? There will be a lot of pain, but I must say that in the community there is a very strong cooperative feeling to work with this. If we have another two years like we have had with virtually no inflow into that dam, then we are going to be in very serious trouble. We have to keep that 34 per cent capacity for as long as we possibly can.

The other important recycling program for Toowoomba is something that I have spoken about often, and that is the Brisbane recycled water project and transferring that from Brisbane to the Lockyer Valley and to the Darling Downs. Currently, something in the order of 120,000 megalitres a year is literally thrown out as waste water into the Brisbane River and to Moreton Bay. That water is high in nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorous. As a result, it is not good for the environment of Moreton Bay because it promotes the growth of blue-green algae, which is deleterious to the Moreton Bay environment. The proposal has been put forward by City to Soil from the Lockyer Valley and Vision 2000 on the Darling Downs. They have combined together to form New Water. The proposal is to pump that water from Brisbane up to both of those areas of the Lockyer and the Darling Downs.

There have been a number of studies done on this proposal with funding originally under the Borbidge government and then under the Beattie government and also from some of the local governments and from the federal government. Tonight's federal budget confirms a final amount of $450,000 that was promised at the last federal election for the final study on that proposal which will take the plans to tender stage in that those plans can go to tender if certain other things fall into place. I want to give a pat on the back tonight to Minister McGrady, because at my invitation he came up to have a look at the whole proposal. He was joined by the member for Toowoomba North, the member for Cunningham, the member for Lockyer and me. We took an aerial flight that was arranged by New Water. We flew over the downs. We were able to see those literally hundreds of empty ring tanks—many millions of dollars of empty infrastructure. We were able to talk to irrigators, contractors, sprayers, farm workers and everybody on the ground.

The minister was very candid in indicating that he had had a briefing that the cost of the project was in the order of $880 million whereas the cost of the project as put forward by New Water—and it has done its figures very carefully—is $550 million. I am grateful in that he has since had a meeting with everybody to get to the bottom of this, because it is a big difference. The people on the Darling Downs who are behind this are absolutely professors of water. What they know on the practical side of irrigation and collecting water—be it bore water, be it overland flow, be it river water or be it waste water—is the sort of thing that people only learn after a lifetime or generations of experience. They are highly practical and they are prepared to put their hands in their pockets to make a substantial contribution in the order of well over $100 million as an initial contribution to the capital cost. They are then prepared to pay a price of around about $300 a megalitre for the water that they receive on an annual basis.

They would contract airspace in their ring tanks so come rain, hail or shine space would always be there to take whatever allocation came up that pipeline 365 days of the year. I thank Minister McGrady for the very sincere interest that he took both on the Darling Downs and in the Lockyer when we looked at both schemes and systems. I know that he was highly impressed by the professionalism of those who are involved in the scheme. I certainly hope that, if we can get the cooperation of state

government funding, federal government funding, a major contribution from the irrigators themselves and some private sector funding through one of the major infrastructure banks or funds and then the promise by the irrigators to pay for the water at a far greater rate than what they pay for their water now, this scheme can become a reality.

This scheme is highly practical. Yes, there is a small mountain range and a large mountain range to traverse. In other words, it is a big pipe and a big pump. It is that simple, and the people behind it know it is that simple. Once it gets to the Great Dividing Range, it will not be required to go over the top because of the second range crossing. It will go through a double system of tunnels 80 feet below the top of the Great Dividing Range. That will certainly drop the vertical lift for this water. It will still mean that the water will be high enough to run down with gravity on the western side under a low pressure system through either channels or low pressure pipes at low cost to traverse the Darling Downs area.

The proposal has been that, out of that 120,000 megalitres, the downs could take 80,000 megalitres a year. But the amount that the downs could take is endless. Whatever is produced in south-east Queensland could be taken there and put to good use. This proposal has absolutely fantastic environmental benefits for Moreton Bay and the Brisbane River at one end, and at the other end it will take some pressure off Australia's longest river system—the second-longest river system in the world—the Condamine-Murray-Darling system, in times when there is reasonable flow and the irrigators would not have to access that flow because they would have some of their storages already full or partly full.

Economically, this proposal would be just the greatest boost ever for Toowoomba, the Darling Downs, Gatton and the Lockyer Valley. It would be like a place such as Mackay getting major coal ports, harbours, railway lines and new mines starting up in its interior. This proposal would provide that scale of benefit to Toowoomba. It would mean in its first year of operation approximately $200 million in increased farm gate sales. That amount multiplied by a factor of three or four, which is the normal multiplier effect, would be the economic effect on the city. It would mean jobs for young people who have graduated from the University of Southern Queensland in marketing, in credit control, in packaging, in information technology, in horticulture and so forth. It would mean jobs for people involved in transport and all the small businesses on the western side of Toowoomba that are involved in agribusiness. The proposal would mean extra work and a variety of new work—value adding, new products, higher-value products, packaging, selling, exporting and all the rest of it. It will be a great thing for south-east Queensland but in particular it will be a great thing for the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs.

I could not think of a better project that fits in with the National Water Initiative. I could not think of a better project that is going to get all of the potential out of the hinterland of south-east Queensland. The Lockyer Valley is one of the top five fertile valleys in the world for agriculture and production and is world renowned for its production of winter vegetables. The Darling Downs has the best and deepest black soil in the world, some of the best farming systems and farmers in the world, and some of the highest yields in the world when it is able to get water into the ground.

This is a wonderful project. I am certainly very grateful that Minister McGrady has had these subsequent meetings. I understand that a further meeting has been arranged with the Premier. This is the sort of nation-building stuff that we should be doing in Queensland. It makes environmental and economic sense. It certainly makes good use of water. This proposal is about using our water over and over again. Some of this water could be used along the way, for example at the Swanbank Power Station. Also along the way it could pick up water from Ipswich to be used in the Lockyer Valley. Certainly the Ipswich council and other councils have been coming forward with some very good and smart ideas.

They are the two very, very important issues that I wish to raise. I am pleased that the minister has taken note of them. I hope that, through the cabinet process, this can come to fruition. It is a great proposal for Queensland and, when shared between four different sources, the capital funding for it is not overly massive.

There are a couple of issues in this bill that cause some concern. One is the development of the water police. I am not talking about the water police who are out on boats; I am talking about the water police that this minister will have to bring to further attack people who are using water, to further attack families who are trying to make a go of things. Recently I was in north Queensland and, after talking to people throughout that area—people involved in major mills, people involved in aquaculture, people involved in farming, people involved in domestic manufacturing and so forth—I became alarmed by what they told me about the police state mentality that has been developing in the EPA and in DNR.

Previously, the member for Lockyer spoke about the need to have extension rather than attack. I think it is about time we worked in partnership. Ninety-nine per cent of the people are prepared to do the right thing and to work together in a cooperative way to create a better environment and sustainability in their industries. Despite the fact that those people are doing their best to control it, to check it and to monitor it, they cannot be told what the allowable discharge into the river is or how the discharge is going. When they ask questions about it they are told, 'You work it out for yourself. We will just come in and ping you.' That attitude is causing people to absolutely detest the way in which this government taxes people, fines people and bullies people. We saw this occur at the Bundaberg Base Hospital. It is a culture that exists at the top and it is flowing down to the bottom. That culture appears in this legislation.

We have to be very careful in terms of water for stock and water for domestic use. Is this bill being used as a backdoor way of preventing people from putting in whatever particular storages they need for domestic water and stormwater? People, particularly people on the land, have feared that this could occur. The Labor Party has always been considering this issue. We have to watch that issue very carefully when this bill is passed.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (9.45 pm): I have to say that I am very concerned about some aspects of the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I believe that the most important issue that the legislation has missed is the rights of the people in question. When I say 'the rights of the people' I mean the rights of land-holders, regardless of whether they have freehold title or leasehold title and regardless of whether they live in residential areas within country towns, in Brisbane or along the coastal strip.

The important factor to note is that water is a commodity that we should never, ever waste. Currently, the issue is not whether we use water correctly; it is whether we get enough water in the first place. I am pretty pleased to say that this afternoon and tonight there has been an inch of rain in some parts of the central west. I hope that rain continues and spreads right across the length and breadth of Queensland. But I know that it will not because of the direction from which it has come.

As the minister stated, the key criterion of this legislation is an accreditation program that is monitored by third parties. That worries me. Who is going to manage this whole process? The manager of this process is going to be SunWater. At the end of the day, I wonder if it really knows what it is doing.

I want to touch on overland flow. Whether it is farmers, graziers or the mining industry, the issue is the management of water. The real difficulty that I have—and I heard the member for Toowoomba South touch on this matter—concerns the issue of water inspectors. I know that there is always going to be an area of concern, but why are we putting in place a process whereby we are going to carry out criminal checks on land-holders to see if they are appropriate people to receive a water inspector on their property and to ensure that the water inspector is not going to be abused or injured? I believe we are driving good, innocent, law-abiding citizens into a corner. They are being treated with contempt by government departments. We have seen this occur with the vegetation management legislation. Now we are seeing a repeat performance with the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. That concerns me. It really worries me.

I can assure members that the great majority of people on the land are law-abiding citizens who are trying to do the right thing. I know that the odd person has done the wrong thing in relation to vegetation management and probably the odd person will do the wrong thing in relation to water management. But why do we have to put in place these inspection services and put in place these huge penalties so that Big Brother is looking over people's shoulders all the time? That is not the environment that we want to have in Queensland in 2005. That goes against what law-abiding, free citizens expect from the government. It is an issue that concerns me greatly. I hope that the minister is not going to make another police service out of what is contained in this legislation.

We have just had health legislation introduced in relation to smoking inspectors. Every time there is a new piece of legislation an inspection service has to be put in place and huge penalty units imposed on people to make them uphold the law. How many police services do we need in the state—25? I thought we had one that was doing a good job. People know what the laws are.

When I was a young kid growing up at Quilpie, I remember when the people from DNR came to the house. The land commissioners would come, and they were only too welcome to come and stay. I remember my father used to love those blokes coming and staying the night and I know other people did too, because they were good people. They would come to do an inspection, to see if the woody weed issue was being addressed or to see if the stock route bores were under control and that everything was okay. But at the end of the day we have this new culture, and it is a new culture of spying or of victimisation, which I do not think is healthy when trying to achieve outcomes in rural production.

The other issue I want to touch on this evening is water infrastructure itself. Over the past 15 years I cannot think of one piece of water infrastructure that the government has put in place that will address the needs of an exploding population in Queensland, particularly in the south-east corner with the numbers of people coming here on a weekly basis. The water is not there to sustain that population growth, and the important fact is that to sustain life we need water.

I heard the member for Warrego speak about the Wolffdene dam. Over the past 15 years we have had time to build a couple of Wolffdene dams and we have probably had time to get a couple of Wolffdene dams filled. The Treasurer announced a huge infrastructure package here a couple of weeks ago, which I applaud, but are we going to see procrastination while the guidelines for the water infrastructure part of that package are implemented? Are we going to see these dams built in the right place or are we going to see the environmental movement dictate the agenda as to where these dams will be built, again driving good farming land to waste? At the end of the day we have to be realistic in the way we manage these projects and we have to be fair dinkum with the general public at the time of the policy implementation when explaining the outcomes that we are trying to achieve.

In my own electorate we have the Fairburn Dam at Emerald. What a magnificent structure that has been and what a magnificent outcome we have seen as a result of that dam over the years. We have heard tributes here today to the late Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen and some of the infrastructure he put in place, and that dam is as example. We have seen the coal industry expand around the central part of Queensland as a result of that dam; we have seen the beautiful agricultural industry go ahead in leaps and bounds as a result of that dam; and, again, many thousands of people have derived a living from it and a quality of life from it. I believe that is what we have to do. We have to make certain that we manage this infrastructure so that we can see a decentralisation in the population.

There is the Urannah dam—how long have we been waiting for something to happen with that? There is the Elliott Channel—how long have we been waiting for something to happen with that? There is an abundance of water in the Burdekin scheme but we do not seem to be able to get it down the Elliott Channel and we do not seem to be able to get the Elliott Channel built. These are all infrastructure projects that could be built straightaway but the government procrastinates too much.

Just recently I heard that the Western Australian government is going to build a desalination plant at Kwinana in Western Australia that will provide 19 per cent of the water needs of the city of Perth. I think the time is fast approaching when we have to look at ways and means of utilising desalination or implementing programs like that to address the needs of water shortages in our major cities and along our coastal areas and leave the dams in question to be used for the primary production of food and to complement the mining industry. With a growing population, we have to look at doing something like that.

I heard the former deputy prime minister, Tim Fischer, say some time ago that we have a capability in this country to sustain a population of 90 million but we do not have the water capabilities to sustain a population of more than what we have now if we are going to be blindfolded and not conscious of the needs of the exploding population here in the south-east corner and other parts of Queensland.

The real issue, as I see it, is that whilst water is a commodity it is a very specialist commodity and it is one that we all need. I think we are well aware in recent years—certainly over the last 10 years—that we have been faced with some of the worst droughts in living memory. I think it is high time that governments and local government realise that, if we are going to see growth—and local government cannot do this on its own—in some of our regional areas and some of our inland towns and northern towns we need some assistance by way of major contributions from both state and federal governments to enhance the opportunity for water infrastructure to be built in those areas. I know in my own electorate we have station properties and towns running out of water now. It is not because water has been wasted. It just damn well will not rain. At the end of the day we can talk all we like about overland flow and about building new dams, but we have to have rain to fix the problem. Whilst we do not have the rain, we have to utilise the commodity we have.

That is why I say here now that we need to utilise the modern technology that is available to us in 2005. We have only to see what the Saudis have done and what they are doing in Florida in relation to desalination. I think it would be in our best interests if we do a survey of what the Western Australian government is doing in relation to a desalination plant at Kwinana that I just made mention of. When we are talking about addressing nearly one-fifth of the water needs of the city of Perth, that is a significant sized project and one that I believe we have to give some serious thought to in making it become reality here in Queensland.

I heard the member for Toowoomba South raise his pet subject here again this evening, and that is the waste water pipeline into the Lockyer and ultimately up to the Darling Downs. These are all serious and fruitful projects where we can address the issue of water shortages into the agricultural area, where we can preserve good water in other areas for domestic use and where we can recycle some of that water and use it for agriculture or for other areas where we can get productivity back to its fullest levels.

The shadow minister has raised a series of issues in this legislation which the opposition will not be supporting. Whilst we do support some aspects of the legislation, there is certainly a lot of it that we do not support. I think it is high time that we were honest with each other, that we had a real long, hard look at the water situation in this state and that we address the issue on the merits of assessability and also need. There is no doubt that there are a lot of people who think you just turn a tap on and water keeps coming out. People who live in the western areas of the state—as many of us do, including the member for Mount Isa and members from both sides of the House who represent rural areas—know that we need to be absolutely switched on as to how we address this issue. We need to get the good brains of the state engineers and planners to make certain that we have the issue addressed. We can talk about the overland flow all day and all night, but the real issue here is that I do not think anybody would go out there and blatantly destroy or alter streams to build their own dams. With satellite technology they will always be under scrutiny. The important factor is that we do it right the first time and we do not create an environment where we have Big Brother looking over our shoulder.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS; ORDER OF BUSINESS

Sessional Order

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.59 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That notwithstanding anything contained in the standing and sessional orders, for this day's sitting, the House can continue to meet past 10 pm to consider government business until the adjournment is moved, to be followed by a 30-minute adjournment debate.

Motion agreed to.

WATER AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed.

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.00 pm): I support the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill because it will enhance sustainable management of Queensland's environmental and natural resources by facilitating the option of new farm management systems. One of the most important provisions in the Water Act 2000 is the requirement for some water users to have an improved land and water management plan before using certain categories of water. The amendments in this bill will allow the chief executive to accept industry developed farm management systems as land and water management plans.

A land and water management plan is a document that describes the natural resources of the irrigated property, identifies the risk of degradation from the use of water for irrigation and describes required management practices to avoid any degradation of the land and water resources both on the property and downstream. With progressive completion of resource operation plans and the commencement of water trading in more and more catchments throughout Queensland, land and water management plans will be required by an increasing number of irrigators across the state.

It is essential that the government assist landowners to meet this regulatory requirement as efficiently as possible. One way of doing this is by using industry developed farm management systems as land and water management plans. The historic memorandum of understanding signed between the state government and the Queensland Farmers Federation in March 2005 will lead to the creation of new industry developed farm management systems programs. These programs are being developed to promote sustainable natural resource use while improving business management for land-holders.

The development of these approaches recognises that industry has a mandate to run viable businesses while government has a mandate to ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources. Land-holders can meet their regulatory obligations by adopting sustainable management practices by either voluntarily participating in a farm management systems program or preparing a land and water management plan.

The state government views farm management systems as a voluntary, systematic approach to enhance long-term profitability and sustainability through identifying and managing risks. This is why the Queensland government is supporting initiatives that contribute to the uptake of farm management systems. For example, the Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative, which is now in its second phase, is focused on the development of farm management systems in the irrigated intensive agriculture sector to deliver both increased water use efficiency and improved natural resource management.

Over the last two decades, the community's demand for environmental accountability from land-holders has increased. The government has responded to these demands by tightening regulations in relation to natural resource management—for example, by requiring land and water management plans in the Water Act 2000. However, government has a responsibility to assist land-holders in meeting these requirements. These amendments to the Water Act will provide land-holders with cost-efficient alternative pathways to meet their regulatory obligations for the protection of land and water resources. I commend the bill to the House.

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (10.03 pm): Australia is one of the driest continents on earth and the Premier has described our water as liquid gold, but talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words. Despite warnings of a potential water crisis, this government has continued to pass up the opportunities to build more storage for the south-east corner's rapidly growing population. The minister for natural resources has said that the Wide Bay-Burnett residents should have enough water beyond 2015. 'Should have' hardly inspires a great deal of confidence in the residents of my community, within Wide Bay and those closer to Noosa who also rely on the Mary for their water supply.

The construction of new dams is dependent upon population and industry growth and viability. It is obvious that this need does exist as the government is planning on building 62 new schools. One

would think that the requirement for all these new schools would be as a result of demand, population growth and viability. Why is it not the same when it comes to the demand for water? Sure, there are additional measures being put in place, such as releasing the pressure of water flow, fixing leaking pipes, encouraging the installation of water tanks and water-saving devices in homes and dealing with the increasing problem of salinity, but none of these mean anything if there are not enough water storage facilities.

The reality is that this government does not want to spend huge dollars on dams when it may not even be in power when the dams are completed. The government whinges that the National Party put the dams it built in the wrong place, but it is not prepared to build any dams in the right places. I find it difficult to take government infrastructure plans seriously. Just because something is in a plan does not mean it is going to be funded or even initiated. Look at Borumba Dam. In these days of politics, it seems that governments can say anything but no-one ensures they keep their word or even expects them to.

My electorate was promised that the walls of Borumba would be raised. Every excuse in the book has been given for this not happening. Four successive state governments have committed themselves to raising the Borumba Dam by 2010. The Goss government in 1994 and the Borbidge government in 1997 spoke about it. Under the Beattie government, Rod Welford spoke of it in 1999 and even the current minister spoke about it in 2001. If so many governments supported raising the dam, why has nothing been done? Surely, increasing its capacity would be cheaper than building a whole new dam, but it is not even prepared to do that. This government is about short-term measures in areas that are the most important to the community. However, there is no such wavering when it comes to spending money on footbridges and sporting arenas.

The Beattie Labor government uses excuses such as, 'Such and such has not been built or completed due to circumstances out of our control,' or 'due to extraordinary circumstances' or, 'We have come in over budget and way over time,' et cetera. There is an excuse for every promise not kept and for every plan which is not delivered. To quote the Leader of the Opposition, 'It is no use having grand ceremonies and glossy brochures announcing new infrastructure if you can't deliver on what's already been promised.'

Those who do not believe that regional and rural areas do not rate particularly high on the government's agenda when it comes to spending money need only look at the fact that now that the water situation in Brisbane is seriously threatened there is talk—but only talk—about a new dam for south-east Queensland. Only last year the Australian Democrats described the Queensland government as having comprehensively mismanaged Queensland's water resources with Senator John Cherry citing CSIRO figures that show that by 2030 the demand for water in Brisbane will outstrip supply.

The Gympie electorate has faced severe drought over the last few years, yet the voice of this government has been ominously silent in response to my articulation of my community's concerns. It is particularly disheartening when the state government puts politics before good sense, especially when it involves a commodity as essential as water.

The federal government's plan to set up a $2 billion fund to finance innovative water projects was initiated to encourage each state to think laterally and to promote real competition with regard to water conservation, which would then be subsidised by the federal government. To say that this is not a good idea has to be purely politically based and shows that this state is not serious about the state's future water supply as it continues to whine about initiatives that are devised by anyone other than itself. I am yet to see a better plan being put forward by the federal opposition. It appears that this state government does not want to work for anything; it just expects the federal government to fork out more and more with the states contributing less and less.

This government has described the plan as a con because it believes that Queensland will not see any of the funds. This is more about the fact that it knows that it has yet to come up with any innovative ideas that deserve any money being put towards them. If this government was so smart it would be jumping at the opportunity and would view it as a challenge to show the rest of the nation and the world that we are indeed at the forefront of innovation. Repeating the Smart State catchcry means nothing if we cannot back it up with any proof that we have smart ideas to deal with our biggest issues such as water.

I will be supporting some sections of the legislation before the House tonight, but I have to say that I am concerned when any legislation adversely affects the farming community as my electorate is made up of many different types of farms and irrigators, who are already finding it difficult to access the water they require because they are usually the last in line to access water during drought conditions.

From the speeches made this morning it seems that, whatever one thinks of the late Sir Joh, he will, at the very least, be remembered in one positive way, and that is due to the fact that he built dams. At least he did something proactive for the future increase in demand for our liquid gold. Is not it about time our current Premier did the same?

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (10.09 pm): I rise to speak on the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. It is fairly interesting—and I am not sure that anybody has raised the point—that this bill was brought into the House during the last sitting, and for some reason or other it has to be pushed through tonight. Looking back over the bills we have passed through the House this year, I think this is probably the most important bill we have discussed, and we are actually pushing people to make their contribution tonight rather than progressively talk about this bill in a real sense. We had a briefing on this bill only today.

Mr ROBERTSON: I rise to a point of order. There is no intention by the government to push this legislation through.

Mr Seeney: That is not a point of order. Now you're debating it. You'll get your chance at the end of the second reading debate. That's not a point of order.

Mr ROBERTSON: There is no attempt to close the debate.

Mr Seeney: That is not a point of order. You know it is not a point or order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order!

Mr ROBERTSON: This legislation was not brought on early. It is simply the next issue on the *Notice Paper*.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, please resume your seat. Member for Callide, I will do my job here. I do not need your advice. That is a reflection on the chair.

Mr Seeney: I am always trying to be helpful.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not need your assistance.

Mr MALONE: It is very interesting that the minister is taking umbrage at the fact that I pointed out that we are pushing this legislation through tonight. It appears to me that we are. A motion to extend tonight's sitting has just been moved. I would imagine that there are a number of people in this House who are rather concerned about moving on to a late debate on Tuesday night.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr MALONE: The point I am making is that this is a very significant piece of legislation. We are pushing to have the speeches made tonight, to minimise the impact in the media perhaps. I am not sure.

The Nationals generally support most of the legislation. There are other parts of the legislation that we will be taking a very strong stand on. The issue of water is probably more significant in my electorate than in most other electorates in Queensland. There are two major schemes in my electorate that are supplying water to urban, rural and industrial users. In the last couple of years in particular the allocation of water to agricultural users has been almost insignificant—down to 10 per cent and 15 per cent allocations. The issue we are talking about tonight is very significant from my point of view. From a state point of view, the supply, allocation and utilisation of water—looking into how we are going to meet the demand for water in the future as this state grows—are very significant.

I attended an EPA managers meeting in Mackay recently. The guest speaker was a person by the name of Bob Miles. He actually spoke on climate change, which was very interesting. He indicated that over the last 40 to 50 years central Queensland has had the greatest amount of change in weather conditions and rainfall of anywhere in Australia. The east coast of Australia, particularly Queensland, is becoming drier and the north-west of Australia is becoming wetter as cyclones have a greater tendency to move into north-west Australia and move away from the east coast of Queensland.

People living in central Queensland are rather concerned about where we are going in terms of our water usage and our water storage and about how we are going to meet the demands of the future. The indications were, particularly in the Rockhampton-Mackay region, that we are losing about 40 millimetres per decade of median rainfall. Over the last 200 or 300 years Rockhampton has had a median rainfall of around 1,000 millimetres. It is currently down to about 750 millimetres a year. There is no doubt that there are real concerns.

He pointed out particularly that they can trace back to about 1970 when there was a distinct change in climate across Australia and, as I said, more particularly in Queensland. That is a bit of background and I think it is important for us to take those issues on board. Maybe it is being a bit alarmist but, at the end of the day, we have to realise that over many centuries and thousands of years Australia's climate has changed. When one considers the way in which coal and vegetation was put down in the Bowen Basin, with coal seams up to 10, 15 and even 22 metres thick in some places, one can just imagine the amount of vegetation that would have to be compacted to make those coal seams. Over a long period of time, there has obviously been a tremendous climate change in Australia, and perhaps we are going through another one.

As legislators in this place and hopefully as leaders in our community, we have to take on board the issues confronting us and try and bring about the best-guess solutions over the longer term.

Obviously a simple shrug of the shoulders that we cannot build any more dams because it is not going to rain is not the answer.

There are times, even with climate change, of very significant rainfall. Most of that flows quickly down our rivers and supposedly disappears out into the Great Barrier Reef, carrying pollution and all the rest, affecting our barrier reef. I would contend that the best way to minimise that, in the short term, is to ensure that we catch or control some of the run-off and utilise as much of it as we possibly can. In the long term, if climate change continues, we will have to look at new technologies such as reverse osmosis, desalination, perhaps even the storage of stormwater, as one member has suggested tonight, and—we dare not think about it—perhaps we might encourage people in town to use rainwater tanks. Rural people have relied on tanks over many years, right back to pioneering times, for all of their water. Whether it was for drinking or gardening or whatever, they would use rainwater tanks. Many thousands of children have been brought up on rainwater from tanks and it has created a healthy lifestyle. Many of those children are certainly very healthy specimens.

As I said earlier, there are two schemes in my electorate for the irrigation of water. The first built was the Eton irrigation scheme, which amounted to off-stream storage on the Pioneer River. Water is pumped out of the Pioneer River during periods of flood, stored in the dam and reticulated by the Eton Water Board to users in the irrigation area. That worked very successfully until some time ago, when limitations were put on the pumping times. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, a number of opportunities to pump water into the dam were missed and, unfortunately, allocations out of that dam have been fairly restricted.

Members may not realise that irrigators pay an A and B payment for their water. The A payment is an up-front payment, made on an annual basis, whether or not they use the water. The B payment is for the number of megalitres of water they use. Farmers are paying considerable amounts of money and not actually gaining access to the water. We cannot do that too far into the future.

Overall, the Eton irrigation scheme has been very successful. Indeed, it has created areas in the Pioneer Valley and surrounds that, under normal circumstances, would have a difficult time growing any sort of produce. The irrigation scheme has enabled a very substantial increase in production.

The other scheme is the irrigation scheme based on the Teemburra Dam. That was put in place following the disastrous drought in 1991-92. It was constructed in the upper catchment of the Pioneer River to provide additional water supply for irrigation and for future industrial and urban requirements. That dam has a capacity of 147,000 megalitres and, operating in conjunction with three weirs on the Pioneer River, provides an additional supply of 41,100 megalitres per annum. The existing allocations prior to the Teemburra Dam included some 14,800 megalitres per annum of irrigation supply and 20,000 megalitres per annum for urban and industrial requirements. The Teemburra Dam was completed in late 1996 and received some inflow almost immediately. With little demand and reasonable rainfall, the dam reached full supply in early 1999. Four failed wet seasons now see the dam, in 2005, holding only enough water for high priority allocation users.

The Dumbleton Weir in the lower reach of the Pioneer River was raised by installation of a fabridam—that is, a balloon on the top of the dam—in 1997. This provided an additional 2,500 megalitres per annum of irrigation supply and 1,500 megalitres of urban supply in the system. As part of the government approval for the Teemburra Dam project, a water board was to be formed to build and operate the irrigation infrastructure and the supply of water from the dam. The Pioneer Valley Water Board was established in 1996 for that purpose. The board comprises three members elected from the ratepayers in the area, one member appointed on nomination by the Mackay Sugar Co-operative Association Ltd and one special interests director. The Mackay Sugar Co-operative Association Ltd operates four raw sugar mills and one sugar refinery. These service the Mackay area and provide substantial financial contributions towards the Teemburra Dam project.

It was a further government requirement that one-third of the cost of the irrigation component of the Teemburra Dam project was to be provided by the sugar industry. Indeed, the sugar industry actually provided one-third of the cost of the infrastructure. This was an amount of $15 million in 1993, which was by contribution from Mackay Sugar, and a further $5 million by loan borrowings to be repaid through water charges by ratepayers. Further contributions were also made towards the construction of Dumbleton Weir, stage 3.

The Pioneer Valley Water Board supplies irrigation water to 290 sugarcane farms in the district, with a total area of some 22,000 hectares. The total cane production area for Mackay sugar is some 97,000 hectares. That is probably a bit optimistic since the downturn of the industry. The Pioneer Valley Water Board has a total irrigation allocation of 46,448 megalitres per annum and a maximum allocation rate of four megalitres per hectare. This is a supplementary supply only, with annual rainfall averaging 1,600 millimetres. That is also probably fairly optimistic now. The majority of the water is applied by spray irrigation, with travelling irrigators predominant. However, there is an increasing number of large centre pivot irrigation systems being installed. The reason is that they are more water efficient and they lose far less from evaporation and problems with wind blowing the fallout away from the target areas.

The board has established five separate irrigation reticulation areas. The largest area, with one-half of the total allocation, is the combined riparian sections of the Pioneer River and Cattle Creek. These properties draw irrigation supply from individual pumps in the streams, and natural flows are supplemented by releases from the Teemburra Dam as required.

In early 2004, the Pioneer Valley Water Board commenced the required process under the Water Act 2000 to seek its dissolution to allow conversion to an alternative institutional structure, that is, an irrigator owned cooperative. The process included a special ballot of ratepayers in the Pioneer Valley Water Board area. That was conducted in May 2004 and resulted in a 98 per cent vote in support of the proposal to become a cooperative. The full ballot results, along with the Pioneer Valley Water Board formal request for dissolution, were part of an attached copy of a letter to the chief executive of the department.

Our concern about the Pioneer Valley Water Board is that it needs to move into a cooperative type unit and this legislation may have some effect on that happening. We need some clarification from the minister on that.

The bill provides for interim water allocations to be issued on individual irrigators in four water board areas prior to the ROP being introduced from the catchments. Under section 188 of the Water Act, the interim water allocation holder must have a supply contract with the interim water resource operations licence holder. For the PVWB irrigators, this will require them to have a supply contract with SunWater.

The explanatory notes give no clarification of the supply contract arrangements. Under the paragraph dealing with the insertion of new section 1089A, the explanatory notes state that the provisions of the instruments mentioned in subsection 1 of the established regulation that deal with the delivery of water by the former water board continue to have an effect. This would provide some authority for the Pioneer Valley Water Board to continue its operations, but does not clarify the contractual arrangements between the Pioneer Valley Water Board and SunWater or for the Pioneer Valley Water Board and the supply contract between Sunwater and individual irrigators.

The department has not been supportive of the Pioneer Valley Water Board proposal to form an irrigator-owned cooperative that would hold the bulk of water allocations. It continues with the position that it considers that the drive for a cooperative is from the Pioneer Valley Water Board and is not widely supported by the irrigators. This is despite the 98 per cent vote in favour of the ballot held by the Pioneer Valley Water Board for its ratepayers last year. Looking at all Pioneer Valley Water Board ratepayer meetings at which the cooperative proposal has been discussed over the last three years, the very clear message from the ratepayers is that they wish the scheme to continue operations under the Pioneer Valley Water Board without direct contract between themselves and SunWater. The cooperative model can achieve this for them.

The bill also requires that there be at least a two-thirds majority of the ratepayers in a special ballot to approve the request for dissolution of the authority, thus allowing a conversion into an alternative structure. Section 695 requires that the majority of ratepayers approve that request. The Pioneer Valley Water Board has conducted a special ballot and achieved a 60 per cent response with 98 per cent in favour. If this amendment is retrospective, the Pioneer Valley Water Board may need to again ballot its ratepayers. New sections 695(2A) and 695(3A) require details of the proposed conversion to be provided to the ratepayers and the chief executive. Without any specifics as to the details required, this could well be another area that, if retrospective, would force the Pioneer Valley Water Board to start the conversion process all over again.

The bill also changes the requirements for a water authority to give notice to the minister of a proposed significant action. There will no longer be provisions for the notice to be in the authority's annual report to the minister. The Pioneer Valley Water Board has provided information on a conversion proposal in the last two annual reports, but it is not clear if the conversion proposal will fall under significant action.

The bill will allow the water authority to protect against stranded assets where the water trades away from its infrastructure. Water allocations under the distribution operator's licence held by the authority will have a note in the register to the effect that it will allow the changes on the allocation even if the allocation moves away. This concept is known as retail water tagging under the National Water Initiative and was suggested by the Pioneer Valley Water Board and other rural water boards to the department in early 2004 as their preferred option for managing stranded assets in water board areas. Retail tagging was not recognised by the department until the second version of a discussion paper on managed stranded assets was released in March 2005. As I have pointed out, this is a very significant piece of legislation and cannot be dealt with in an ad hoc manner. It is probably the most important piece of legislation that we have passed this year.

Time expired.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (10.29 pm): I am pleased to make a small contribution to this discussion on the regulation of water use, in recognition of the increasing importance that water resources will play in the future of Queensland. This bill contains a range of legislative amendments to

the Water Act, the Integrated Planning Act and a number of agreements including provisions relating to water resource plans, water management plans and regulations in relation to water allocation.

Australia is at the crossroads with the exploitation of naturally occurring water resources. Traditionally, we have considered water much as we have considered air, as abundant, provided free by nature simply for the taking. The exploitation of water resources has seen many of our great river systems reduced to a trickle, subject to salination problems and with extensive interruption to the natural flow and workings of the river and the surrounding environment.

In recent times we have realised that the exploitation of surface-flowing waters and underground waters is a matter that requires regulation and that there is a serious danger of excessive exploitation of water resources in certain parts of the state. On the other hand, let us not forget that water is the lifeblood of many industries. For example, primary industries are dependent on water, in particular for the irrigation of crops. In addition, demands are placed on water supplies by metropolitan users and industries, some of which consume enormous amounts of water. As a society, we will be dealing with this conflict for quite a period to come.

The conflict comes from, on the one hand, the transition from viewing water as unlimited, as free and as a resource to be exploited and used as desired, and, on the other hand, the difficulties that are imposed on farming communities and other users of water by the necessary imposition of regulation and control in the exploitation of our water resources. This is set to be an ongoing difficulty.

Clearly, the exploitation of water resources needs to be subject to a cost-benefit analysis of sorts, assessing the final benefit that is obtained to a particular amount of water usage. Obviously, central to this is how efficiently water is used. For example, let us take open and unsealed irrigation channels that produce only a small proportion of the inputted water at the point where the water is used. The cost of the end production that comes from that water is clearly the cost of the water resource at its point of input.

As a state, we need to reconcile our objectives to increased products and economic activity but preserve our water resources for future use and make decisions about the benefits that come from particular levels of water usage. In that regard I note a campaign by environmental groups called the Wild Rivers campaign, which is urging a cessation of dams, weirs or other impediments to flow throughout approximately 60 catchments in the state of Queensland. When discussing the catchment of water for exploitation, the point is raised that water can be removed for use from flowing rivers, although it may be practical to remove only one or two per cent of the flow, and that there should be increased utilisation of the off-stream catchment of water. There needs to be a clear understanding of the environmental impact of water usage and, in particular, we need to have a clear vision of the extent to which we can exploit natural water resources without going to unacceptable levels in terms of the environmental impact of the exploitation of water resources.

The bill contains many provisions in relation to water use that will be of particular concern to primary industry groups including, I note, seasonal water assignment provisions. We in the Liberal Party certainly share the concern of many about the proliferating number of laws and regulations and restrictions on our everyday activities and in particular walks of life.

An honourable member interjected.

Dr FLEGG: We would like some more regulation there. The Liberal Party certainly acknowledges that, whilst water resources have not traditionally had large dollar values assigned to them, they are a scarce and valuable resource and their uncontrolled exploitation creates a significant environmental and community cost. With any such limited resource for which demand is growing and will continue to grow, it is impossible to see how the conflicts could be reconciled without additional regulation and the control of the exploitation of water resources. So the Liberal Party, whilst having some concerns about the degree of regulation that will confront water users, accepts the need for regulation of our water resources, and the fact that we are considering this sort of increased regulation highlights our need to take an intelligent, reasoned approach to the available water supplies and what as a community will be the most productive use of those water supplies.

It is blatantly clear that we need to be forward-looking innovators in thinking about the way in which water resources are exploited and acknowledge the value of these resources and the investment that will need to be made to ensure that their exploitation is done with the least community and environmental cost, in particular in terms of off-stream storage of water where practical rather than weirs that interrupt the flow of water. Likewise, the community attitude needs to change. The community must be educated that water is a valuable and finite resource, that its use has to be responsible, that there will be a cost associated with excess use and that we again need to be innovative in consideration of issues such as water recycling and measures to reduce the consumption in both agricultural and metropolitan settings.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.36 pm): The need for the amendments to the Water Act have been identified as a result of ongoing implementation of the Water Act, to facilitate the progression of the new infrastructure in the Burnett Basin and to address issues raised in the National

Water Initiative and Queensland water efficiency task force about the management of droughts and minimising leakage loss from a service provider's distribution system.

The Water Act 2000 provides for a sustainable management framework for the planning, allocation and use of one of our most valuable resources—water. Earlier this year the minister announced a $50,000 state government project to raise community awareness about the importance of our most important natural resource. Water is the lifeblood of our communities and our industries, and Queensland's future growth and prosperity depend on how we manage our finite water resources. We as a community need to recognise the importance of water and value every drop we use.

It is ironic that, despite living on the world's driest inhabited continent, Queenslanders continue to have one of the highest per capita rates of water consumption in the world. We all need to recognise that we cannot afford to continue using and wasting so much water and that we must practise greater water use efficiency. It is important that we get this message out to all Queenslanders. The Beattie government, under its Smart State Strategy, will implement a range of smart water initiatives to reduce use of potable water, increase water recycling and reuse, increase water efficiency and improve the performance of water distribution networks. These water initiatives will be based on our knowledge and research of Queensland's water systems, demand and use and on the development and adoption of new technologies and innovative practices. They will assist in securing Queensland's water supply for the future.

The major implementation issues of the Water Act 2000 to date have been those associated with the separation of land and water through the creation of tradeable water allocations. As a result of the ongoing implementation of the Water Act, certain limitations have been identified within the existing framework of the act. Consequently, a number of amendments are proposed to give greater flexibility to the processes under the Water Act. The amendments provide for streamlining the process for financial interests to be protected at the time of the separation of land and water when the new water allocations are created and to facilitate the transfer of existing mortgage interests from land to a water allocation.

Under the bill, a moratorium may be in place for overland flow water and subartesian water as part of the amendment process of a water resource plan currently regulating this water. The extent of the moratorium would only be on future works beyond what is currently allowed under the water resource plan. The amendments provide for new licensing arrangements for operators of infrastructure involved in distributing water within a water supply scheme. In addition to a resource operations licence that may be granted to the headworks operator, a distributions licence will be granted to the operator of a distribution network. The bill includes amendments for the streamlining of the process for amending water resource plans and resource operation plans where public consultation is being conducted. This will provide for a more flexible planning approach.

The bill includes changes to the appeal process by clarifying the nature and extent of appeals currently provided for under the act. The amendments provide measures to be taken by water service providers to deal with leaks in their distribution systems and to better plan for droughts. Water service providers will be required to prepare system leakage management plans and drought management plans. I want to reiterate that any measures that can be taken to reduce water consumption and preserve our most valuable resource is a step in the right direction, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.40 pm): In rising to speak to the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005, there are a number of very important issues that need to be addressed. Australia's major concern with regard to water is the fact that over the last couple of years there have been major changes in weather patterns which are making it extremely difficult to preserve water. There is an increasing demand for water in our capital cities and for the crops that we grow. In the area of agriculture, major increases in production depend on water. In consideration of the fact that very few dams have been built in recent times, it is evident that we are running out of water and the current demands on water require greater use and better efficiency of the water that is available to us.

As I said, there are many areas in the state that suffer badly from a lack of water. However, there are some patches on the tropical north coast that still have an abundance of water where, in fact, drainage is an issue at times. Having said that, over the last three to four years many of those areas have not had the level of rainfall that has been experienced in previous years. It is extremely important that there are farm management plans for water. The likes of Canegrowers and Growcom are mindful of the fact that we need a plan in terms of using water. It goes beyond that, because in some instances drainage is another essential ingredient when it comes to growing a crop.

With farm management plans, the monitoring of water is extremely important. When one is growing a crop, there is a capacity to determine the water levels that are in the soil. This is part of the planning process as to how one goes about using the water efficiently. I can only say that people have to be very regular in the way they go about the testing process. They have to know exactly what the plant's requirements are. By doing that they can get the greatest efficiency out of the water. It is not just the fact that they are not using as much water; simply, it means that they are making better use of the water and it is not costing them as much. Those aspects are extremely important. That has the flow-on benefit of ensuring that fertilisers are used more efficiently because they are not sending them down through the

soil profile. As a result, they are getting better use from them and not putting them into the subsoil areas where they can be leached away if there is heavy rainfall. Of course, all of these sorts of plans go out of kilter if there is excessive rainfall. Sometimes in the tropics that does happen. As a result of that, despite the fact that producers monitor soil moisture and are careful about how they use fertilisers and so on—and I am speaking about farm management plans—they can still be wasted. They are the sorts of compromises that we make and they are the sorts of problems that people who work in these areas have to face.

As the explanatory notes state, this bill is to streamline the process for dealing with financial interests at the time land is separated from water on the grant of water allocations. That is a very interesting concept, because in some instances where dams have been built and there is a necessity for people to have a supply of water and there is a capacity to buy an allocation, very often the allocations get pushed into a certain area. Some of the channels struggle with the capacity. As a result, clauses 127 and 128 address that issue.

Having said that, it is an issue that people have to contend with. Often productive growers are located in a certain area. They have a better soil type, which means they can grow a better crop. There is the necessity to then identify where that crop can be grown the best. If that farmer can acquire a water allocation from somebody else who does not have a need for that allocation, it can be very advantageous in terms of crop production. If we are going to make some areas redundant and overload others, then how we deal with water allocation and the transferability of water to areas where it is needed the most is going to be a challenge.

Another issue that I would like to raise relates to the watercourse beds themselves where there is an extractive industry. A royalty is paid for that material. As I understand it at present—unless things have changed—there is a cost of some 50c a cubic metre on a statutory body or a person who is actually supplying a statutory body. That could be a council, Main Roads, or some other entity that requires this sand or gravel material—and sometimes it is an aggregate that comes out of the river beds. That is vitally important for those local authorities and road builders. In the past, the only requirement on people who wanted to get that material out of the rivers was the obtaining of a permit from DNR and paying the royalty. People other than the statutory bodies or those supplying the statutory bodies have to pay something like $1.35 a cubic metre. In many instances, those people do not require a great deal and this is a quite reasonable royalty.

But the EPA has made further impositions. In the Environmental Protection Act 1994 there is quite a clear enunciation as to what is required in terms of extracting sand or gravel out of river beds. At present, the EPA has decided to implement the provisions of that legislation. For many small operators, the royalty is quite an onerous imposition. The accreditation costs something like $200 for a start. For amounts ranging from zero to 5,000 tonnes per annum, the charge is $700. For amounts ranging from 5,000 tonnes per annum to 100,000 tonnes per annum, the charge is $3,960. For amounts of over 100,000 tonnes, the charge is $4,880. So there is quite a cost involved in extracting this material.

I have written to the minister about this matter. I believe it would be advantageous for the EPA and DNR, which are the authorities that make the decision as to what can be extracted from river beds, to come to a decision about how they manage the system and, rather than having two bites of the cherry, make the extraction costs more reasonable, particularly for the smaller operators. The ridiculous aspect of this pricing schedule is that people pay $3,960 for up to 100,000 tonnes and then, for over 100,000 tonnes, the charge is $4,800. That level of charge could be paid for millions of tonnes. So in terms of the management plans for river beds where the needs of extractive industries are extremely important, it would be advantageous if somehow or other both departments could get together and come up with a comprehensive plan so that anybody who is making an application to extract those materials could simply go to one authority and have only one authority to deal with. That would be beneficial, because we do not necessarily need people making applications to the departments on a yearly basis to ensure that they are doing the right thing. Very often, as is happening with the EPA, people have not been aware of their responsibilities. Then all of a sudden the EPA makes a decision to collect both the accreditation fee and the actual cost of extraction on an annual basis.

I turn now to the issue of the erosion of river banks. At present, a lot of the problems that we are experiencing with sediment going out to the reef are caused by the erosion of river banks. When there are major floods, that level of erosion can be quite substantial. Very often large trees are undermined by rivers cutting underneath them. Those trees fall into the river and as they do that they take an enormous amount of material with them. I am not suggesting that we should cut down all the trees, but in the event that we have a very unstable area, rock walls are necessary. Sometimes the cost of those rock walls is quite substantial for the owner of the property. Sometimes property owners cannot afford to construct those walls. Although some small subsidies are given for that purpose and river protection authorities do a lot of good work, funding is an issue. If we are genuine about stopping sediment going out to the reef, I think that any measure that we can take to curtail that would be a great advantage. Although the agricultural industries—particularly the sugar industry in terms of green cane trash blanketing—are very keen to stop sediment going to the reef, we also have to address the issue of river banks becoming unstable.

I have talked very briefly about drainage. It is certainly a major issue in north Queensland at times. We have to be very mindful of how we tackle drainage issues. We do not want a lot of water dumped down at the seaward end. That would certainly make the operation of farming enterprises that are located close to the bottom end of the river, or the creek outlets, very difficult. I know a lot of planning has been done. In fact, the SIIP was implemented back in 1994. But in many cases, owing to the excessive planning and navel gazing that went on, it did not get off the ground until 10 years later. If we are going to plan and ensure that we are doing the right thing, it has to be done at the most optimum time. Sometimes we can be lucky, but when approval has been given and when the planning is finished, if we are going to implement a good agricultural system, I think the process has to be sped up. Of course, this is part of the COMPASS program that Canegrowers put forward. They are very mindful of ensuring that the right thing is done in terms of water and the other agronomic issues that are involved in the operation of cane farms. Of course, drainage in the area north of Townsville right up to Cairns is a major issue in terms of growing crops in that region. If we can let out the water nice and steady and the flow does not cause erosion in creeks and that sort of thing, that can be a great advantage to the environment of the Great Barrier Reef.

In the northern sector many people make applications for water licences. I have to say that DNR staff are particularly good. They certainly make every endeavour to ensure that people's requirements are serviced within a reasonable amount of time. But there seems to be a major timelag as far as approval processes are concerned—not necessarily the approval process itself but the process of looking at a water licence application. With the policing provisions in this bill—and I know people on this side of politics are not particularly keen about them and are concerned about them—additional DNR staff will be required. I believe that in the future, if the amount of paperwork is increased by additional requirements and so on and if the vital requirement for people to make applications so that they can actually pump water from streams or wherever it might be is maintained, in the interests of those people who are trying to make money for the state—for want of a better expression—that process should be attended to as soon as possible. That can only be done if the staffing levels are increased.

Transferability is an extremely interesting issue. While I have talked about what is happening with dams, people are looking to transfer their licences. Where people own land but have mortgages and are encumbered to banks et cetera, transferability is an issue. I know that the bill looks at this very closely, and I believe the provisions are heading in a very positive direction, but when people are required to cash in, for want of a better term—when they are in difficulties and have no option but to transfer their licence to somebody else—the arrangements are quite complex. I can only hope that the provisions in this bill are going to adequately justify the bank's requirements of the mortgagees, those rural people or those licence holders who are encumbered.

Generally throughout the state, because of the change in weather patterns we have seen, particularly in the past three to four years, there is a definite requirement in the first instance to look for sites where dams could be built. The Nationals allocated something like $2 billion over 10 years to look at sites for dams. When these dams are being built, as new sources of water supply are needed, it is particularly important that the usage of water is identified, such as water usage for crops. There is little question that if the water is not going to be used for crops it will certainly be used for metropolitan development. Even in Cairns, an area where people would expect there to be an abundance of water with the rainfall that it normally experiences, there are certain periods of the year when the dams get to a point at which they cannot service the needs of Cairns, particularly with the growth patterns.

Townsville has been more fortunate. It has been able to link up with the Burdekin Dam. That dam has been a great source of water not only for the sugar industry in the Burdekin region but also to back up the water requirements of Townsville and Thuringowa, which is growing like topsy, in the event that the amount of water in the Ross River Dam is inadequate. I believe that we need to be very aware of the fact that in the future we will hopefully return to better climatic conditions and there will be better consistency of rainfall. We do need water collection areas whereby that water could tide us over for drought periods such as we are experiencing now. I believe the planning that is necessary to identify those collection areas should continue. I know that we were well advanced when proposals were put forward for a host of dams to be built throughout the state.

Of course the cost factors are an issue. Somebody has to pay for the water. That is part and parcel of what government is all about. To just walk away from it is not adequate in terms of the development of this state, because we have a large amount of agricultural land. Generally, where water is available to put on to ground there will be an increase in the potential of the crops and an increase in the ability of people to produce consistency. That is extremely important because, whether they are for the export industry or the domestic industry, agricultural crops and the primary industries in this state are worth something like $9 billion. They are major contributors to the economy. Whether it is for the use of the agricultural industry or the metropolitan areas, I am absolutely certain in the future that we will need a better reserve of water if this state is going to continue to grow at the rate we have seen it grow over recent years.

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (11.00 pm): Water has quickly become if not the major issue facing our state certainly one of the top handful of issues. It has long been agricultural users who have had to carry this issue forward and have had to wear the regulation and the problems associated

with access to water and water infrastructure. In the last couple of years we have seen more and more restrictions being placed on rural towns, regional cities and now even major metropolitan areas. As someone said to me only recently, it is only when those major cities in Queensland are faced with severe water restrictions and they are not able to turn on a tap or flush the toilet or have a shower or clean their teeth—

Mr Rowell: Or wash the car.

Mr COPELAND:—or wash the car that they will notice that we do need water infrastructure in Queensland and that we do need to invest in major infrastructure including dams in Queensland so that we can continue to provide the sort of lifestyle that we expect here but, more importantly, so that we can provide for the basics for the population and the growth in the population that we expect in Queensland.

Since 1989 Labor governments in Queensland have sought to face issues like power generation and water supply by trying to concentrate on demand management. That will work to a certain extent but it will not mean that we will have enough water infrastructure to satisfy the demands of the population growth within the entire state—and now we see not even within the south-east Queensland corner. The last major piece of water infrastructure that was constructed in Queensland was the Wivenhoe Dam, and that is an awfully long time ago. We now have the Burnett River Dam, which has been a long time on the drawing board. The Nathan Dam has been on the drawing board and lost by this government, unfortunately. It is a real shame because it was a major piece of infrastructure and there are many other examples around the state. It is a real shame. If we look at places where water infrastructure is put in place, places like Emerald, where in that case we simply added water with the Fairbairn Dam, the economic benefit to that particular area was absolutely immense. In that case there was a reasonably long lead time before the economic benefit was experienced but certainly once it kicked in it has been a major benefit to that area. More importantly, it has been a major benefit to the state as a whole.

I sat this morning and listened with interest when the Premier was having a swipe at the federal government in preparation for tonight's budget. He listed a whole lot of projects that he hoped would be in the budget. One of those that he mentioned was the water recycling project in Mackay to increase the water quality around Mackay and to increase the quality of water going on to the reef. There is one major project that I would like to see go ahead to increase the water quality around Brisbane, and that is the renewed water pipeline to the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs. The Premier did not mention that one, but the water that is going from the south-east corner into the Brisbane River, into Moreton Bay, has a huge environmental cost to the bay. It is a project that everyone in this parliament should know about because a lot of members have spoken about it a number of times, and that is the project to pump that renewed water to the Lockyer Valley and up to the Darling Downs for agricultural purposes.

The environmental benefits are huge to Moreton Bay but also to the Murray-Darling system and the Condamine Basin and would take the stresses off that basin if water were able to be pumped up. We simply do not have the luxury in this country of being able to use water once. We need to use it a number of times and we need to use it smartly. That is certainly one project that I believe would be of a huge benefit economically and environmentally to our state. My electorate is one of those electorates that would benefit greatly from it. The sort of certainty of water provision that that project would provide would be a huge boost to those people who are investing in the area. They would have the confidence to invest, jobs would be created, higher value crops would be produced and it would be of enormous benefit.

There has been a huge amount of infrastructure put in place over the years in terms of ring tanks up on the Darling Downs. The member for Toowoomba South has gone into this project in some detail tonight so I will not go into all of the details, but there has been a huge amount of investment put in place with that infrastructure and we need to have the water that can be pumped up the hill for those agricultural purposes. I was very pleased that the minister for state development, Tony McGrady, accepted the invitation to come and visit the Darling Downs and the Lockyer Valley to see first-hand the project. He was very frank. I thought it was quite a positive meeting, which was good because unfortunately in the past the government has not been that positive about this project. The previous minister, for example, was not supportive of the project and that is a real shame. Minister McGrady came up in good faith, and he met with a number of the interested parties and the committees that have been doing so much work on this project to try to get it up and going. I think he appreciated being able to see what it really meant on the ground both in the Darling Downs and in the Lockyer Valley.

We are coming to the crunch time for this project because the federal government's National Water Initiative is coming up to the closing of submissions. That will be one project that will be submitted for consideration by the federal government. The federal government, in announcing the National Water Initiative, used that as one of the examples of the sorts of projects that could be under consideration. I am very grateful for that and for the support of the federal government. The state government has, from time to time, put money into feasibility studies but what we really need is support by the state government for that project—clear and unambiguous support for the project because the National Water Initiative is a competitive process where different projects will be put up from right around the country. Unless the state government is actively behind that project, it will simply not be on the drawing board. It will not be seriously considered by the federal government in my view.

If we look at something like the Mallee pipeline, that is being pushed by federal members of parliament in Victoria and that has been clearly supported by the Bracks Labor government in Victoria. So that will be a very difficult project to be competing with. There are other large projects around the country, and we need the state government to put its full support behind this project. I know that there has been some discrepancy in the figures that have been given to Minister McGrady and the figures that the NuWater committee has been working on. Minister McGrady has said that the figures provided to him were in excess of $800 million. The figures that have been worked on by the new water committee are $550 million, so that is a significant discrepancy. But I know Phil Jauncey and John McVeigh, who are very heavily involved in the Darling Downs section, have been to meet with Minister McGrady. I certainly hope that has had some positive effect and has been able to clarify some of those issues.

It is a very important project. The economic benefits are immense. The environmental benefits both for the Condamine-Balonne and for the Murray-Darling systems are immense, and importantly so too are the benefits for Moreton Bay. I think it is a fantastic project. Certainly it will be a major engineering feat but it is not an impossible engineering feat. We need to promote this project because if we miss this opportunity I suspect the opportunity will be gone for some significant time. The money is on the table federally for the National Water Initiative. That combined with contributions from the state government, from private investors and from the farmers will make the project a viable one. I think it would be a very exciting thing for it to happen.

I have spoken before about various pieces of legislation that have come before this parliament from Natural Resources and some other portfolios, to be fair, regarding the renewed concentration on enforcement rather than extension services. The minister knows well my pleas for extension services to be reinstated on the Darling Downs, in particular at Pittsworth.

Mr Robertson: You're wearing me down.

Mr COPELAND: It is an issue that is not going away. In fact, I think it is getting worse. Between the DPI and DNR particularly, we do need to concentrate on our extension services. It is no good simply passing the extension service provision requirements onto catchment management organisations because, as I have said before, they simply do not have the security. They are not able to offer contracts of any significant length or the employment terms and conditions that the state government is able to offer, and they cannot attract the people with technical expertise to provide those extension services.

Time and again I have said that I think that is where some real environmental advancements have been made and where they have been able to provide extension services at an on-farm level, whether that is with water management or whether it is with vegetation management, whatever the natural resource management issues are. It is an important issue. We see the government continually bring in bills that focus on enforcement, but we seem to have forgotten about the extension provision. I think that is a real shame.

On Monday, Pittsworth shire in my electorate was added to the drought declared list. It joins Cambooya and Clifton shires. Millmerran and Warwick shires are in just as bad a way. Toowoomba is dreadful. It really is a horrendous drought that we are facing. It seems that every year in recent years we have had a worse drought than the year before. It is a real shame, because I know the toll it is taking on the primary producers in my electorate, I know the toll it is taking on small business and communities in my electorate and I know the toll it is taking on families in my electorate. We need to help those people. The provision of water is a very important issue. The certainty that water provides for investment, for economic development, cannot be overestimated. We need to ensure that we continue to develop water resources.

As I said at the beginning of this contribution, it may be only when the people living in our cities realise that we do need water infrastructure that we are going to be able to build some water infrastructure in this state. I think that cannot come too soon.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (11.11 pm): I rise to speak and make comment on the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. I acknowledge at the outset the two objectives that this legislation amendment bill is trying to achieve: firstly, a range of amendments to the Water Act 2000; and, secondly, specific amendments to the IPA Act 1991, the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act 2001 and the land protection act 2002.

With regard to the legislation before the House, the Queensland Farmers Federation is relatively happy with the bill. It has said that most changes are just machinery changes and that the biggest issue was the implication with the banks when land and water titles separated. It has worked with the Australian Bankers Association, as I believe the opposition office has. It is happy with the final result. There has also been communication with the Local Government Association, which supports the legislation and will help develop guidelines for councils to prepare drought management strategies, which are dealt with in this piece of legislation.

In particular, I would like to speak on clauses 127 through to about 134 of the bill that deal with enforcement. Overall, this gives the department much more power to bring it into line with enforcement provisions in the Vegetation Management Act. It deals with seizing evidence and the steps officers must

take when seizing this evidence. It also gives the department the power to obtain the criminal history of a person they intend to visit to allow officers to assess whether they are putting themselves at risk by going on to that property.

These clauses give me the opportunity to speak on an issue affecting one of my constituents who is facing legal action over an alleged breach of the Water Act 2000. Before I go into the specifics of that, I say to the minister—unfortunately, he has just left the chamber—that if a DNR employee has a bad day and decides to interpret this act in a rigid, harsh and officious manner, they can literally ruin the livelihoods of many hardworking farmers and landowners. That is a quote that was given to me by a former DNR employee. The way I read this act, it allows a tremendous amount of discretionary interpretation.

On 21 October 2004, Moore Park canefarmer Ken Lovell sought my assistance after he had a run-in with the department of natural resources. His troubles with DNR began after he attempted to repair a creek crossing/fire break located on his property to reduce the risk of fire and to use as a crossing to transport his cane. The crossing, I might add, has been on his property for over 70 years and is considered essential to the Lovells and the surrounding communities in case of fire in the creek area or surrounding areas. I have visited this site a number of times.

The Lovells first had contact with DNR roughly in 1993 or 1994 when Mr Lovell sought the permission of the department of natural resources to repair the crossing and was told that it was an old crossing. He was able to go ahead and repair the crossing, which was exactly what Mr Lovell did. Mr Lovell repaired the creek crossing so that it was a usable fire break, or crossing, with the permission of DNR and also through a fire permit which stated that Mr Lovell was able to maintain and service the crossing as a fire break and as a crossing in case of fire.

In May 1999 the department made contact with Mr Lovell in regard to the crossing. At that time he was advised that, in order for the Lovells to continue to have this crossing, they would only need to install an eight-inch pipe underneath that crossing. Again Mr Lovell complied by installing an eight-inch pipe. This is now apparently not good enough, and the department claims that the placement of fill within the bed and the banks of Croome Creek is causing the ponding of water and is therefore alleged to be a breach of section 808 of the Water Act 2000. At one stage the DNR forced Ken to come in whilst the creek was in flood and remove the crossing.

One of the comments I make about the communication that was carried out between Mr Lovell and the department is that it was all oral. Nothing was written until I became involved with this case. The department then advised Mr Lovell that if he wanted clarification from the departmental officers, he should put it in writing.

Despite the good intentions Mr Lovell had when repairing the crossing, and despite the fact that he has done everything possible to comply with the DNR directions, Mr Lovell now finds himself possibly facing large fines of up to $124,000 as the department claims he has, in some form or other, breached the Water Act 2000. Members can imagine the sort of stress that this would place on a canefarmer who is struggling to make ends meet—struggling to pay the bills and keep the wolf from the door. He has an existing medical condition that has been exacerbated. It has caused quite a lot of stress to him personally and to his family.

Throughout this ordeal the DNR officers have conducted themselves, in my opinion, very poorly. They have turned up unannounced to Mr Lovell's private property and entered without permission. They have secretly recorded conversations without the knowledge or consent of Mr Lovell. According to the minister, that is quite legal under this act. That was when I first found out about it. I was absolutely gobsmacked when I found out that departmental officers, often working in tandem, can go out to a property owner's place, interview that property owner, record that conversation covertly and then use that conversation as evidence if they choose to proceed with legal action against that property owner. It chilled my blood. It made me think that this Smart State is somehow turning into a Nazi state. They secretly recorded conversations without the knowledge or consent of Mr Lovell. In addition, they left cigarette butts lying around the site of his creek. I personally witnessed those cigarette butts. This was during quite a dry spell out there, too, which makes it even more incredible.

They pressured my constituent for interviews without the presence of his solicitor, requiring that he answer absurd, childish questions and assumptive questions, and sent letters that have been apparently aggressive and left no room for tolerance or leniency. We are not talking about a criminal here; we are talking about a hard-working, struggling canefarmer who is trying to earn a living and reduce fire risk and who has found out in recent times that he has a serious health disorder.

Mr Lovell has been constantly harassed by DNR officers for an apparent breach of the Water Act 2000. In my opinion he has been complying with the DNR, yet he finds himself in a situation where he could face legal action. In my opinion and in the opinion of my constituent Mr Lovell, the department has used its powers in an inappropriate manner and breached his right to privacy. That same department, through the piece of legislation we are examining here tonight, is now being given even stronger powers. I trust that the minister will consider my comments. I note that the minister has agreed to a delegation with Mr Lovell.

I also have serious concerns about clause 132 of this legislation. Clause 132(2) states—

It is not a reasonable excuse for a person to fail to comply with a document production requirement because complying with the requirement might tend to incriminate the person.

We see that form of wording mentioned again in the legislation in clause 133, which states—

It is not a reasonable excuse for a person to fail to give the information because giving the information might tend to incriminate the person.

These clauses take away the legal and civil rights of farmers and landowners. Criminals have more rights than farmers and landowners. I have serious concerns about the legislation that is before this House.

On the subject of water, I mention to members a water problem in the Burnett electorate, specifically saltwater contamination of the Burnett underground basin. The department will be conducting a series of workshops and information nights, and I look forward to attending those. They will be held over two nights, one in Bundaberg and one in Isis. I will attend the meeting to be held in Isis next Thursday.

Basically, there is saltwater contamination in the Burnett Basin. Two hundred farmers rely on the Burnett underground basin for their irrigation needs. Many of those farmers are basically poisoning their crops and soil because of this saltwater contamination. These farmers have a low percentage of allocation, ranging from 30 per cent to 50 per cent of their total allocation. Most people think that this problem will be solved once the Paradise Dam comes on line and the water is made available to these farmers. Unfortunately, they will not be able to connect to the surface water because there is no surface water infrastructure in place.

A number of studies have been undertaken, starting in 1996, into the need for suitable infrastructure to connect these farms to surface water. They need pipes, engineering works and pumps. There seems to have been study after study. We really need someone to bite the bullet and spend the money. Six or seven years ago it was estimated that the infrastructure would cost around $20 million. That has risen and the latest figure is around $30 million. The longer it takes, the higher will be the cost of that infrastructure. It is very important that these 200 farms on the Burnett coast, around The Hummock area north and south to Elliott Heads, are joined up to the surface water supply. Farmers are trying to diversify and do the right thing to make a living.

In 1996, a ground water salinity report stated that sugarcane was worth around $220 million to the region and that horticulture, small crops et cetera were worth about $110 million. This year, horticulture and small crops will be worth around $350 million to the Burnett and Wide Bay area, whereas sugar has retreated to a turnover of around $110 million.

These farms need water—specifically uncontaminated surface water—to cash in and provide the income and the turnover and jobs for the kids in our region and also to enable those farmers to survive. Many farmers in the Burnett and Wide Bay area are hanging on by the skin of their teeth. With those few words, I eagerly look forward to examining this legislation in the consideration in detail stage.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (11.26 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. I note that, to date, the Acting Speaker and the minister have not objected to the raising of a wide range of water related issues by members participating in debate on this bill. I certainly thank both the minister and the Deputy Speakers for allowing those contributions. There is no doubt that water resources in Queensland are one of our highest priorities to consider, especially in this the 51st Parliament.

I thank the minister for allowing me to have a briefing with his senior departmental staff on the bill and its implications, especially for my electorate of Nicklin on the Sunshine Coast. As a result of these discussions, I understand that this bill changes nothing in relation to current rights of property owners in my electorate of Nicklin on the Sunshine Coast who take overland flow water for normal stock and domestic purposes. I understand that the definition of overland water flow is, in effect, any water that flows on the surface of land before it enters a watercourse. In other words, this excludes springs, water flows which occur as a result of operating springs, or water flows in creeks, watercourses or collected in lakes. I ask the minister to clarify for the record, either in his reply to this debate or by letter to me, if my interpretation of the implications of this bill on my electorate of Nicklin on the Sunshine Coast is correct.

There is no doubt that water is one of the most important resources that the Queensland government must manage. I remind the government of one of the first motions that I moved in the 49th Parliament of Queensland. In brief, it called on the government to investigate the provision of a subsidy to encourage Queenslanders to install rainwater tanks in an attempt to better conserve this very precious water resource. I note that at the time the Speaker, Ray Hollis, allowed a water tank display to be set up in the Speaker's Courtyard. Part of this display was for the purpose of demonstrating the new technology of water filtering systems which were available in Queensland. These water filtering systems, otherwise known as first flush systems, are certainly very effective. They demonstrate how we have moved on from the times when you used to simply put some kero in the top of the rainwater tank to make sure the mosquitoes did not cause a health problem.

During the 50th Queensland Parliament I also raised the issue of the state government trying to support the provision of rainwater tanks in Queensland but, alas, the Treasurer, the Premier and, unfortunately, the minister were not prepared to find the allocation of funds for it in that government's budget. Again, tonight, I urge the minister to take the matter up with the Treasurer and the Premier for the budget that is due to come down in a couple of weeks time to see if, for the first time in the history of Queensland, we can show other states in Australia that we are prepared to lead from the front by having a rainwater tank rebate or subsidy scheme. A number of Queensland councils are trying to take a lead, but it is time that this government, with its Smart State policies, took the lead. I hope the minister raises this issue with the Treasurer, the Premier and his cabinet colleagues. Hopefully, in a few weeks time, through the budget, the Treasurer will set a great standard and will play a great leadership role. I hope the government follows the great lead set with the Solar Hot Water Rebate Scheme.

When the Premier and the Treasurer recently announced the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan, reference was made to the need for additional dams and weirs to provide for the projected population growth in the Sunshine Coast region, which is an important part of the south-east Queensland region. I understand that the government has confirmed that dams being considered for upgrade on the Sunshine Coast include the Wappa Dam, the Ewen Maddock Dam, the Borumba Dam and a possible weir as a major water storage facility on the Mary River.

I also understand that if the current water resource plan being prepared for the Mary River catchment finds that, in actual fact, there is a surplus of water available over and above the current and projected future water needs of the Mary River, it may be the green light that will flash for the government to move to the next step of identifying a possible location for either a weir or a dam on the Mary River. I understand that the Caloundra-Maroochy water board will be studying very closely the outcomes of this water resource plan when the recommendations are due to be released in September.

While speaking on this matter, could the minister clarify the government's position in relation to this very contentious issue in my electorate and especially in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast as to the possible location of a weir or dam. We are certainly very concerned and very interested in the government's policy in this regard.

Mr Robertson: It will not be on the Obi.

Mr WELLINGTON: I note the minister's interjection.

Mr Robertson: I guarantee it will not be on the Obi.

Mr WELLINGTON: I look forward to communicating that to my constituents via the *Mary Valley Voice*. I certainly appreciate that.

There is one other issue that I would like to touch on, because I am aware that it is half past 11 and other members want to speak. A number of speakers have touched on the practice of investigating officers secretly recording conversations that they have with members of the community and land-holders. Personally, I would like to see a policy direction issued by the government and the minister or, if that is not appropriate, I would like to see regulations passed requiring that an appropriate warning be given by the investigating officers to the people they are investigating. If it is good enough for the police to provide a warning to a suspect that they are investigating, I believe it is good enough to require an investigating officer to provide a warning to the person they are speaking to that the conversation is being taped. They should give a warning that the information obtained as a result of that taping may be used in evidence or may enable the officer or the department to further prosecute a possible breach or take action against the farmer. In all honesty and sincerity, I look forward to the minister's response to my request. Hopefully in his reply he will indicate the willingness of the government to support what I believe is a reasonable request for an appropriate warning to be given. I certainly look forward to hearing other members' contributions on this very important bill.

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (11.33 pm): This bill will streamline operational procedures under the Water Act 2000 in four key areas covering title separation for land and water allocations, the trade of water and investigations. Firstly, it will streamline the process for the transfer of mortgages from land to water allocations where both the farmer and the mortgagee agree. It will also provide a process for protecting an existing mortgagee's interest following the separation of water from land on the creation of a water allocation.

The creation of separate land and water titles is the basis for a market of tradeable water allocations. As honourable members are aware, water trading is an integral part of the Beattie government's water reforms and these new arrangements will create greater certainty for banks and irrigators when allocations are created or traded. This certainty will mean that the department of natural resources, banks and their respective clients will save time and money under the new procedures.

Secondly, it will mean better managed water trading by developing new pricing structures to recoup the costs of trading water away from distribution infrastructure. Some irrigators rely on channel and pipe distribution infrastructure for the delivery of water under their water allocations. These changes will ensure that the trade of water away from the distribution infrastructure will not financially disadvantage relevant water authorities, remaining irrigators or prospective customers. The

amendments in this bill will allow these water authorities and irrigators to develop new pricing structures to recover the costs associated with water being traded away from their distribution infrastructure. The legitimate costs of water trading can then be accounted for by these new pricing arrangements.

The third key area of amendments will help to ensure that water allocations are accurate when they are granted. To achieve this, customers with general authorisations to use water will be granted interim water allocation. Irrigators will then have certainty when transferring or amalgamating this entitlement under the Water Act.

Finally, the key fourth area of amendments concerns investigations executed under the Water Act. Under these amendments, there will be greater consistency between provisions under the Water Act and the Vegetation Management Act 1989 and rules regulating the use of water will be more effectively enforced to ensure sustainable management of our water. The regulatory framework needs to be robust and, if enforcement is inadequate, there is a real risk that the broader community will bear the costs.

The new amendments will compel a person to provide requested information or documents by removing the excuse that, in complying with this request, a person may incriminate himself or herself. The obligation to provide information or documents to an authorised officer under the Water Act could be viewed as a potential breach of the fundamental legislative principles. However, to address the risks associated with self-incrimination, the provision protects an individual by ensuring that any information or document provided cannot then be used against that individual. Where the investigation relates to the conduct of a company, an individual declining to comply with this request can severely, if not completely, frustrate an investigation. This will address situations where an employee of a company declines to provide information or documents requested as part of an investigation.

Recently, the Queensland Law Reform Commission examined this particular issue, and the Queensland government acknowledges the importance of any effects on self-incrimination protection. However, as was the case with the Vegetation Management Act, the government has considered the public interest by ensuring that we have practical effective tools to manage our natural resources and protect individual rights. The four sets of amendments proposed in this bill will guarantee that the Water Act continues to operate as efficiently as possible and that the government continues its water reform agenda. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (11.38 pm): I rise to offer a contribution to the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. The two main objectives of this bill are to allow for a range of amendments to the Water Act 2000 and for amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997 and several other specific agreements.

While there are some very good reforms buried within its depths, these seem to be submerged under a somewhat tidal flow of increased bureaucracy, regulations and centralisation. This particular bill seems to be an example of a department paying lip-service to the idea of public consultation and input, while proceeding with its own centralist agenda. No-one can deny that as Queenslanders we need to strive to make the most efficient and sustainable use of our resources. However, we must also ensure that ordinary Queenslanders and Queensland businesses retain the right to make use of these same resources without being burdened with yet another unworkable bureaucracy.

Is this yet another example of the government's failure to understand and respond to the real challenges facing us? Is it again showing its contempt for due process and abrogating responsibility? Does the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005 fully address the use and management of a renewable resource, or does this bill serve the government agenda of regulating and pricing a public resource beyond the means and comprehension of ordinary householders, farmers and businesses? Is the proposed bill going to fairly and equitably spread the cost and responsibility for water management across all users and stakeholders, or does it unfairly target those least able to pay and respond to a grab for control and revenue?

Water trading does pose some serious challenges from a financial perspective, and processes to separate land and water title are addressed in this bill. In particular I note that mortgage arrangements on both sides have been addressed. Water allocations are a very tradeable commercial product, and the transferability of these water allocations does bring about some interesting challenges. The allocations, of course, are set on a priority usage level with the high priority usage level being urban, medium being industry and of course the lowest priority users are agricultural. In cases where there is a serious shortage of water, it is sad that it is the low priority users or the agriculturalists who again have to miss out. This is very obvious in certain areas in my electorate. The security for agriculturists from a water allocation perspective does pose many difficulties.

This bill is a document that does continue the centralisation of water management. I am aware, though, that this bill is meant to streamline the approach, but I question whether the private sector—the end user—will be physically and financially able to fully comply with the implementation requirements that this bill does actually contain. Clauses 78 and 146 deal with the rights of appeal against the chief executive's decision. This does seem to depend on the notion that the chief executive has the final say

if it is right. In whose opinion are the non-discretionary decisions nondiscretionary? I am also forced to question the bland statement under estimated cost for government implementation which reads—

The bill will not alter the cost to the government of implementing the act.

Is this net or gross costs? Can we take this to mean that this will reduce costs within a government department during a time of massive change, or can we take it to mean that all increased costs and burdens resulting from these changes will be passed on automatically and immediately to the end users? It goes on further to say that it is hoped that simplifying administrative procedures may reduce the cost to government of administering the act. I am also left with the distinct impression that the only costs that matter here are those for government and that the inevitable increase in costs to those affected by the bill are of no consequence. I cannot see any reference in the bill to reducing costs to those most affected by it.

The Pioneer Valley Water Board has expressed some concerns in the implementation of these amendments. The removal of regional and local water management schemes concerned mainly with improving water use efficiencies and improving water quality and availability is disappointing. Instead, we do not want to be lumbered with a process-ridden or top heavy monopolistic entity whose main concern seems to reduce departmental workloads and responsibility—that is, an entity that will be managing its affairs according to how much income can be generated rather than efficiency. I hope that the implementation of the actual licences, reviews and plans will be streamlined and will be needed. I hope that the streamlining for the provision of even one allocation can be improved. However, nowhere did I actually see mention of rights, access, guarantee, provision, equity, efficiency or even, believe it or not, real costs.

Producers in my area currently have applications out for various water licences that are waiting to be issued. I am being told that they have been waiting in many cases for over three years for these. Why? It seems to be that the department is somewhat understaffed and seemingly unable to deliver. I do encourage the minister to further resource these very hard worked officers at the local level. It is an economic truism that total management of a primary resource leads to a monopoly and to artificial pricing of that resource. Of course government has a right to charge for infrastructure, delivery and administrative costs associated with the provision of water supplies. It does not have the right to acquire and allocate resources on an arbitrary basis, nor does it have the right to pass on costs which can be attributed to its own inadequacies or short-sightedness.

The government professes to be committed to the consultation process with stakeholders, leading to improved response and accountability. Why then does the clause in the amendment of section 56 specifically remove the need for a provision of a notice of intention about a draft amendment to be published? There exists an opportunity to plan for the future growth of Queensland with a clear, reasoned, responsible, viable and practical water amendment bill. It really is a chance to streamline and clarify an enormously complicated piece of legislation which could lead to actual improvements in processes, planning, equity and allocation. There is a good opportunity to place responsible water use and resource allocation at the top of the agenda and to seek widespread support for its aims. It is time to fairly distribute the costs associated with water use reform where they are feasible, viable and warranted. However, this depends ultimately on the inception of a fair and equitable system that does not increase the cost or regulatory burdens that already threaten to strangle business opportunity, expansion and security in Queensland. It also depends on the recognition of existing water rights and entitlements and compensation for the loss or alteration of those rights.

I see that once again those most affected but least able to fight back could be disfranchised by knee-jerk departmental reaction to those who pull the government strings. There seems to be a populist approach to vital resource management and pandering to vested interests, not least being the government's own financial ones. A major disappointment from the point of view of water supply management is that so much effort is being put in by the government to administrate water supply but no effort to produce more. We see a major need for BHP and other coalmining companies to expand in the Bowen Basin. The only factor holding these companies' expansion plans back at the moment is a lack of water. The current government's aversion to creating more water storages—to build dams such as the Urannah dam—is very disappointing and it prefers bandaid solutions that are not long-term solutions.

The member for Callide has already mentioned the proposed pipeline to supply water from the Burdekin Dam through to Moranbah. The projected cost of this proposed pipeline from the Burdekin to Moranbah is actually twice the projected cost of building the Urannah dam, but it will supply one-fifth of the water. It will also draw on existing water supplies without providing for further storage. One of the major failures of water management in Queensland is that, as in this bill, it concentrates on water monitoring and not total water management. Take, for instance, the Burdekin River irrigation area in my electorate. Farmers are frustrated in this area as a result of bureaucratic mismanagement. SunWater is currently selling water to producers in this area at a very remunerative cost to the government, I might add, and at a severe cost to growers. This water is being pumped on the surface for irrigation purposes, but SunWater does not have the responsibility to manage the aquifer below. The department of natural resources and mines does not seem to have the power or inclination to ensure that the water table is

pumped down to accommodate the added water to the system. Problems are occurring as a result and much is needed in terms of management.

Another problem that is arising is the quality of the water supplied. SunWater contracts to supply a quantity of water but not necessarily quality water. Farmers have complained about weeds and rubbish clogging water inlets. Farmers in the BRIA are definitely aware of these problems. There are also potential problems for the Bowen Shire Council in accessing water from the Gatton off-stream storage facility. SunWater is responsible for the quantity of water supplied but not necessarily the quality of the water.

Where is the management of aquifers in many of these situations? Bowen farmers are desperate for water, but what systems is DNRM putting in place to harvest water going out to sea from the Don River system to replenish the aquifer? In some states of America, when a litre of water is pumped out from an underground aquifer a litre of good-quality water must be put back in. Where are the long-term management practices such as these being put into practice by the department? This is a matter that we must consider in Queensland. In areas such as Bundaberg, where the aquifer deterioration is well recorded, there is no genuine repair program of resources, money or personnel to do the job of repairing the water system.

The 1994 and subsequent COAG agreements between the state governments and the Commonwealth government stated clearly that the future of water management in Australia would be managed locally. The Queensland government is in direct breach of the essence and letter of the meaning of the COAG agreement. It defies logic for any clear-thinking Queenslander to not challenge this attitude to water. There is very little attempt to use local knowledge or local input and methods in the management structure.

The Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005 should be commended for the water resource plan concept. However, the success or failure of this concept will be in the implementation of that system. One of the most obvious failures is that water remains the property of the state government without local management and ownership principles. Within this bill, there is no incentive for good, total management of this very precious resource. It is a heavy-handed licensing system which mirrors the mining industry royalty system. This legislation should be called the Mineralisation of the Water Industry Bill. Water is treated like a mineral, but not one lot of royalties is paid, as occurs when mineral is exported by ship, but royalty after royalty is paid as water passes from one licence holder to another licence holder. This bill seems to be more about licences and the control of people than about a genuine interest in good water management. Where are the basic principles of counting the total water of a catchment and analysing where that water actually goes in its journey? Where is the giving of incentives to those involved to save water and to use it wisely?

Watercourses also present management problems. I refer specifically to the Burdekin River, which is under the control of the Burdekin River management trust. This good group of people has long preserved the integrity of the river, the banks of the river and the watercourse. As members would be aware, the Burdekin River is a huge river and, when it is in flood, has the potential to cause major flood damage. However, over recent years, particularly since the implementation of the dam, there has been a major change in the river system with water continually flowing. The lack of huge floods over the years has encouraged a build-up of the sand. It also encouraged the growth of trees. This is seriously concerning because the whole Lower Burdekin is a delta. Over the centuries the riverbed has had many changes. Of course, the Vegetation Management Act is an impediment to removing the trees that have grown. Those trees are of serious concern. I urge the minister to take on board the concerns of the river trust about the build-up of the trees in the riverbed and the risk that that could cause in changing the course of the river in future floods. It really is becoming quite a problem.

Mr Robertson: They have. I gave them permission a couple of years ago.

Mrs MENKENS: Yes, but the trees have grown since then.

Mr Robertson: They are very quick-growing trees.

Mrs MENKENS: I think there are quite a few more there waiting to be removed. The opposition will be opposing several clauses of this bill in the interests of the long-term future of Queensland.

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (11.54 pm): I rise to speak to the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. There are a lot of issues involved in water trading on our farms. I have great concerns about this issue. We need to bring in a very, very flexible system. One of my concerns is that as water trading takes place a lot of the bigger companies may be able to take advantage of this system and end up with a fair bit of the water available. Let us hope that after a couple of years the situation levels out to being a system where everyone gets an allocation of water.

I am very concerned about this matter because under this bill a lot of smaller farmers may suffer. A lot of smaller farmers experience a very tough time when droughts cut in. A lot of them have spent many, many millions of dollars on infrastructure. Every farmer I know who catches water on his property has had to put in place a lot of plans and infrastructure. That does not occur overnight. For those people to be good farmers they have to have that infrastructure in place.

I have heard that, under the water trading system, a person's water licence may well be worth more than that person's property. A water licence is going to be a massive asset for these farmers. I have heard that in the past in some states water has been sold for many thousands of dollars a megalitre. That illustrates the competitiveness in the price of water when there is the opportunity to buy and sell water licences. No doubt, water trading will be extremely active.

I am concerned about the powers that are contained in this bill. Under this bill the water police have the power to enter a property and they have to power to confiscate. What exactly will be confiscated? The pump that the farmer uses? As I read the bill, the water police will have that power. A lot of farmers invest in electric motors, a tractor, a water meter or some other part of their structure and pay them off. I ask the minister to tread very, very lightly on this issue.

No doubt the minister read an article that appeared in the *Sunday Mail* a couple of weeks ago about a farmer in my electorate called Lindsay Evans and the farmer hotline. I know Lindsay very, very well. He is an irrigator who grows lucerne. He is one of the most honest men God ever put breath in. However, the DNR officers showed up on his property. This is no reflection on the officers of the DNR. They did the job they are paid to do. However, they had a tape recorder in their pocket and they interviewed Lindsay. Someone had dobbed Lindsay in on this farmer hotline. That really concerns me. Obviously, someone had something against Lindsay. He was found to be totally innocent. That is a prime example of what could happen with this hotline. Lindsay went through a lot of pain and worry. He is trying to make a living during one of the most horrific droughts that we have ever seen, yet the water police can walk onto his property and do this.

The powers that are contained in this bill are extremely concerning. How upset will these farmers be when such an incident occurs? In the minister's reply I would like him to tell me how many breaches occurred to cause the inclusion of such a power in this bill. It is almost turning our farmers who are irrigating into criminals if they take one wrong step. That is my major concern. The level of energy and the amount of money that is going to be put into protecting water is just unbelievable. It makes me very concerned.

In the past 12 years we have had probably one of the most massive droughts in Queensland's history. I know that the rainfall this year in my electorate has been mostly under two inches. Most of my electorate should get 26 to 28 inches of rain. This year's reduction in rainfall has had a massive impact: there is absolutely no run-off water. There is no run-off unless a massive storm drops about four or five inches—enough for the water to seal the top and run off the heavy blacksoil, self-mulching country, otherwise the water just sinks in. So four or five inches of rainfall is needed before there is run-off water. That is the situation we are facing now. There are no crops on the Darling Downs.

We have been massive supporters of the waste water pipeline. I know that Phil Jauncey has done massive work on that. We just have to get that up. That will take the pressure off our Condamine River catchment and our Murray-Darling Basin. If we can get that waste water pipeline up—that waste water is being pumped out into the ocean right at this minute—that water will service many, many farmers. I know a lot of people say it cannot be done, but it can be done and the figures are there to prove it. I know Mike Horan, the member for Toowoomba South, spoke on this before. He did the tour with Tony McGrady, the minister. I ask Minister McGrady to look seriously at what Mike put to him a couple of weeks ago.

We heard the member for Nicklin talk about rainwater tanks. I would say that 90 per cent of the farmers in this nation use only the rainwater that falls on their roofs as water for their house. We all have rainwater tanks. When I was a little boy I was the youngest of four, and the dirtiest kid had to get in the bath last. It was as simple as that. We were water wise. I see smiles over there. That is how people live in the bush. That is how we save water. A lot of people in the city do not realise what it is like to conserve water. They turn their tap on and they water their lawn and their garden. Every farmer I know sees water as a precious commodity and a precious item. I have a 10,000 and a 5,000 gallon rainwater tank and that lasts us. We have three kids and two adults in that house and never yet have we run out of tank water on that property. We are water conservative and 90 per cent of farmers are. The member for Nicklin was right: rainwater tanks are one of the best things we can possibly have.

In the last week or so we have heard about this massive infrastructure plan that the government has put in place. What has this government done? We heard the speeches on the condolence motion this morning about Sir Joh. What dams did he build? Look at the water infrastructure that that Premier put into this state. There are 1,000 to 1,500 people a week moving to Queensland. What water infrastructure is being put in place? I believe that infrastructure plan was put in place a couple of weeks ago because the death of Sir Joh was imminent and the Premier himself knew that the people of Queensland would realise what happened when the National Party led Queensland. They would see what this government has done in the past eight years, which is absolutely nothing. A footbridge and a football stadium—that is about all it has built. What infrastructure has been put in place to deal with water? The government cannot even sign off on the waste water pipeline. What chance have we got?

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (12.02 am): I rise to say a few words about the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. My comments will be confined to clauses 132, 133 and 134, dealing specifically with three topics—the production of documents, the power to require information and

obtaining criminal history reports. For many years our system of justice has held a number of fundamental principles sacrosanct. It is those principles that have directed the course of our legal history and, to an extent, the growth of this great nation. We must therefore guard with a great deal of jealousy any erosion of what some call civil liberties but which I prefer to term the rights of all men and women.

For so many years the courts have upheld principles that have now been eroded and I must say eroded on a more frequent basis. There is within this bill a further erosion of those principles which causes great concern and which should equally concern the people of Queensland. Let us acknowledge two leading legal principles. Firstly, a person is not required to incriminate themselves and, secondly, a person has a right to privacy unless they consent to waive that right. It is these principles that are further eroded by this bill.

I turn now to clauses 132 and 133. They require a person to produce either a document or information even though that document or information may tend to incriminate the person. I acknowledge the protection provided within the respective clauses of the bill itself and that the content of the document or the information is not admissible in evidence against the person in a civil or criminal proceeding.

When one first considers the exemption one can easily nod one's head and believe it is suitable. However, the principle of self-incrimination is one that has for many years—in fact hundreds of years—been part of our legal process. The mere protection that the evidence contained within the document or information is not admissible is in my opinion a sop and there is still required compliance with the request which removes the fundamental right of not being pressed to self-incriminate. Of more concern, however, is clause 134, which provides that the chief executive officer may obtain from the Commissioner of Police 'a written report about the criminal history of a person' and that such information can be provided by the chief executive to an authorised officer to determine if that officer should go unaccompanied to a place where the authorised officer's safety is at risk due to the presence of the person whose criminal history has been sought.

The explanatory notes at page 6 state that the right of a person's criminal history to remain private needs to be balanced against an officer's right to a safe and secure working environment and the obligation of the state to provide a safe working environment to all its employees. There is no question that the state or, for that matter, any employer is required to provide a safe working environment for its employees. The concern I have is the removal of the primary right of privacy—that is, that a person's criminal history should, unless there are exceptional circumstances, be kept between the person and the state. Certainly there are other instances—for example, obtaining a passport and working with children—where a criminal check has been proven to be essential, but in those cases consent is obtained and the check is done with the knowledge of the applicant. However, when we consider the terms of clause 134 there are some aspects that are plainly wrong.

Firstly, let us reconsider what the clause says. It states that the chief executive can obtain a written report about the criminal history of a person. The particular subclause that deals with the written report does not specify what is required to be in the report, nor does it limit the content of the report. As a consequence, details of a person's criminal history including drink-driving and offences outside of those involving the use of a weapon or violence against a person could be included.

I also note that there is no definition of the phrase 'written report'. Does it mean a review of the past history of the person and does it permit a subjective judgment of the person? I ask that because the wording does not merely deal with criminal convictions; rather, it talks about a written report about the criminal history of the person under investigation. It is therefore at the determination of the Commissioner of Police as to what is contained in the report, and one may well argue the phrase 'criminal history' could encompass offences for which the person was found guilty and not guilty. Perhaps the more appropriate terminology would be 'criminal convictions'. I say that because a person who has been found not guilty has the right to correctly assume that the matter is closed and will not be raised again. In addition, there is no notification given to the person whose criminal history is being sought. Nor is there a procedure for that person to seek redress with regard to the history being divulged or the content of the history. Nor are they entitled to make comment with regard to the content of the report. In fact, the history is simply divulged at the request of a third person without any formal process being in place.

Further, there is also no requirement for the chief executive to set out the basis of his concern in his request to the police commissioner. As I said, there may be very good principles behind the introduction of this bill, but there are worrying trends coming through this piece of legislation and others introduced into this House by the government, and more frequently the erosion of the rights of the individual is occurring. These are major attacks on principles that simply cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. By allowing them to do so, the concept and practices of our legal system are further at risk and the protection they offer the individual continues to be eroded. We will therefore not be supporting those three clauses.

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (12.09 am): In my contribution to the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill debate tonight, I want to focus on the water conservation measures in the legislation. The current climatic conditions in Australia have served to focus the minds of governments

everywhere as record low rainfall is forcing consideration of water conservation, recycling and desalination plants across the continent. This legislation introduces two important measures to encourage more efficient use of water.

The proposed legislation will require water service providers to register with the department of natural resources and mines a drought management plan for each urban community or irrigation scheme to which it provides services. Each of these drought plans will document the proposed use and availability of water sources, events that trigger various levels of water supply restrictions and the needs of different classes of consumers.

The drought plans will also record the contractual rights of customers, likely future water demand and any requirements for critical water supply management resulting from the resource operations plan for the region. These drought management plans will not require approval by the department of natural resources and mines but will simply need to be registered with it. The onus will be on the water service providers themselves to develop and implement plans to manage their resource adequately.

Central to the responsible management of water resources is the need to better use existing supplies. One way this can be achieved is through minimising losses due to leakage from water distribution systems which can be as high as 35 per cent. Consequently, the department of natural resources will be requiring all water service providers to develop system leakage management plans and submit them to the department for approval. These plans will determine and report on system leakage, identify measures to reduce leaks, outline the cost-benefit analysis to system leakage measures and, if appropriate, detail a plan to introduce these leakage reduction measures. Importantly, service providers will not be required to bring these measures into effect unless the cost can be recovered through reduced operations, maintenance and refurbishment expenditure or deferred capital on new water resource distribution infrastructure.

Cairns City Council has recognised the need to improve water efficiency by reducing leaks in its system as but one element in a comprehensive least-cost planning study. In April 2003 far-north Queensland experienced two failed wet seasons and the level of Copperlode Dam—the main water source for Cairns city—was falling. The council and chamber of commerce called for the construction of another dam to provide for future water supply. In response to this, I organised a series of water forums aimed at council, business, industry and community with the help of the EPA and DNR and local peak conservation body CAFNEC to consider water conservation measures.

As a consequence of these fora, the Cairns City Council agreed to prepare a least-cost water planning study with financial assistance from the state government. The aim of the plan is to provide a cost-effective, socially responsible, environmentally sound balance between water supply and demand. Tenders were duly called and MWH Australia was employed to prepared the plan with the expectation that the report would be completed by the end of 2003. The task has proved to be much more difficult than anticipated, and it appears that council is not satisfied with the report prepared by MWH and is still in discussion with it. Sadly, there is no indication yet as to when this report may in fact be released, yet the expertise of the company is beyond question. I will quote from some of the material that it provided to council talking about its expertise. It states—

Internationally Recognised Experts with Significant Local Experience

The study team comprises national and international specialists in the field of water pricing and demand management with expertise gained on similar projects in Australia and overseas.

...

Over the past ten years, members of the team ... have worked together in Australia, New Zealand and in Asia to formulate demand management strategies and policies. The team's experience and their combined skills cover all aspects of this project and any future development of water conservation strategies.

...

The MWH team includes a globally recognised expert in evaluation and implementation of demand management projects—Bill Maddaus. Bill is based in California and has practised in the demand management and water use efficiency field for more than 25 years. He pioneered demand and supply side planning and has published many papers as well as major texts ...

I include those just to indicate the quality of the people who have had this project and who have worked now in excess of 18 months on this project. Obviously it is very disappointing to me that we have not yet seen the results of their work. I can only really in my role just urge all of the proponents involved in this—that is, the council, EPA and DNR—to resolve these problems in the interests of the community of Cairns, which obviously deserves to have its water supplied in the most cost-effective and environmentally sensitive manner possible. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (12.14 am): I also rise to speak on this very important bill. I congratulate the minister and his departmental staff on this ongoing consideration of water management and proposals to better manage the use of that resource. There is no doubt that the introduction of the Water Act 2000 commenced necessary reforms in the way that we collected and harvested water.

Although the act has worked well, there are aspects that need attention and this bill covers those aspects.

There are two areas of legislation that I wish to deal with in depth. The bill amends the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act 2001 by including the Northern Territory in the agreement, and it covers the rivers that impact on Lake Eyre and associated areas of the Territory and South Australia. The second amendment is to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act by extending the termination date for stock route water agreements from 2005 to 2007. Stock route water facilities are a necessary part of the 'long paddock' and must allow sufficient time to properly provide alternate arrangements that will be needed to ensure needs are met.

Before I deal with those two matters, there is one other amendment I will refer to and which I believe needs some further consideration by the department. It relates to the proposals for the farm management system. Whilst I am a firm believer in the sustainable management of Queensland's ecosystems and natural resources, it seems that the program accreditation criterion will impact greatly on small farmers, of whom there are a large number in my electorate. To require an independent third party to certify these management systems at a substantial cost will put a greater impost on small farms than on the large, intensive farms seemingly envisaged by the legislation. One thing I do hope is that the third party will have an expertise greater than a knowledge of 44-gallon drums and milk cartons, as explained by the member for Warrego in relation to the Nathan Dam.

These small farms are family run and are very well operated with great care for the land. It is not beyond the capability of these farmers to provide a satisfactory farm management system themselves at a much lower cost as the only persons who would suffer if they got it wrong would be themselves. I have inspected these farms, many of which are employers of permanent and part-time employees. The operators have already been inconvenienced by, and had their operations put at risk by, restrictions which were designed to limit the ravages of much larger farming enterprises. Provided that the level of operation at which these farm management system programs is realistically approached then some of the difficulties may be avoided, but it will require some care with the drafting of the guidelines.

The amendments to the land protection act extend the termination date of 1 July 2005 for stock route water agreements until 1 July 2007 to enable the development of new agreements. Many private land-holders who adjoin the stock route network access stock route water facilities under a stock route water agreement. These agreements allow adjacent land-holders to obtain a supply of water for their stock from the water facilities located on the stock route. The water agreements are essentially contracts that allow access to stock route water facilities. There are approximately 400 stock route water agreements in place across the state, and many of these water agreements are quite old. Some were made more than 60 years ago. Many are written in a style and language of the past, and a number of these also contain clauses no longer considered appropriate.

During the development of the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 it was recognised that all existing stock route water agreements should be renewed. This was achieved in the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act by setting an expiry date of 1 July for all agreements with the intention of having new agreements in place before the expiry date.

Local governments have primary responsibility for the negotiation, preparation and execution of stock route water agreements, and the state government is supporting and assisting local governments by developing new model agreements for a range of situations and will also provide training for local government staff. However, this has not been possible prior to the current expiry date of 1 July 2005. Therefore, it has been necessary to include amendments in this bill to extend the termination date for all stock route water agreements from 1 July 2005 to 1 July 2007.

The amendments to the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act give effect to recent intergovernmental negotiations. As honourable members know, the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement was established to better coordinate and implement sustainable management practices for water and related natural resources for that part of the basin located in Queensland and South Australia. Original signatories to the agreement were the Queensland, South Australian and Commonwealth governments. Changes to the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement were signed at the Lake Eyre Basin ministerial forum in June 2004. These changes define boundary areas and include a new party to the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement. Minor changes have been made to the Queensland and South Australia parts of the agreement boundary to accommodate the inclusion of the Northern Territory. By becoming a signatory to the agreement the Northern Territory government has demonstrated its commitment to and belief in the value of the Lake Eyre intergovernment agreement. This inclusion substantially increases the agreement area and therefore will better address the need to sustainably manage the Lake Eyre catchment. New South Wales will no longer be considered as a potential signatory to the agreement because of the relatively small area of the basin that falls within its borders.

The amendments highlight the Queensland government's preparedness to work in good faith with other governments, including the Commonwealth government, to manage cross-border environmental issues in the national interest. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. NI CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (12.20 am): I rise to support the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. It is a bill that is in line with the National Water Initiative, the Queensland water efficiency task force and agreements with the Queensland Farmers Federation.

Infrastructure has been mentioned a lot in this debate, and water is indeed important to us all. In fact, it was my top priority on entering this parliament in 1998. My electorate and the entire district had desperately needed a major dam for almost 30 years and had waited patiently and impatiently for all of those years, but we are now getting it. The $240 million committed by this government for water infrastructure in our area is a massive investment in infrastructure and a massive investment in regional Queensland. The $200 million dam on the Burnett is the largest state government infrastructure project under way anywhere in the state. It will in fact—

Mr Seeney: It's the only one.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: It will in fact be the fourth dam or weir to be built in Queensland since the Peter Faust Dam at Proserpine was opened in 1990 followed by the Teemburra Dam, the Ned Churchill Weir and the new Eidsvold Weir. It is the first dam to be built in Australia under the new stringent environmental standards. The best news is that after 30 years of waiting for this dam it is on target to be completed by the end of the year. Right now it is reported to be 75 per cent complete. It is an amazing sight. It is a construction of world standard and a credit to this government. It will bring massive economic benefits for our region and will cater for population growth. It is also creating enormous interest throughout our region and regularly attracts bus loads of visitors.

The total $240 million commitment for water infrastructure in our area was not just for one dam. It included one major dam, two new weirs—one of which is already finished—and the raising of two other weirs. This is good planning, it is sustainable planning and it is a major commitment by this government for the provision of infrastructure and for regional Queensland. This bill before the House makes necessary changes to protect water management for the long-term future of this state. It will meet our obligations under the COAG and National Water Initiatives, and that is important to everyone, whether we live in the country or in the cities and the towns. I support the bill.

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (12.23 am), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions to this particular debate. It is always encouraging to see so many members keen to demonstrate their knowledge of the Water Act for the benefit of their constituents. However, I hope that during my summing-up I can correct at least some of the numerous misapprehensions that have arisen during the course of this debate.

I will deal with an issue brought up by the member for Callide regarding the pace of the reform agenda. Given that Queensland has had to develop this water act to deliver unprecedented water reforms, it is understandable that at this stage some amendments are necessary. It has taken over a hundred years to establish a robust land title system. We now have a system of water title recognised as the best in the country and we have achieved this in just five years.

All of these amendments have been understood and accepted by all stakeholders. These amendments will refine the act, clarify its purpose and further deliver the water reforms agreed to by COAG back in the early 1990s. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has suggested that we have fallen behind in implementing the water reform agenda. As he would be aware, our progress has been assessed every year by the National Competition Council and every year the federal coalition government has approved competition payments to Queensland, based on our performance.

His view seems to be at odds with those of his Commonwealth colleagues. The primary reason why most of the water resource plans have needed an extension of time, including the resource operation plans, is that it has actually been requested by the water users themselves who have wanted more information and more engagement with my department in finalising these plans. Of course, our preparedness to accommodate those requests has resulted in extensions of time.

Mr Seeney: So it is somebody else's fault.

Mr ROBERTSON: The half-smart smile comes through from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Seeney: Your department does not have the money or the people—they never have had. I tell the government that every year.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr ROBERTSON: Speak to people in the Condamine-Balonne.

Mr Seeney: You got that one well and truly wrong, didn't you. That is not a good example.

Mr ROBERTSON: Speak to people in the Fitzroy, speak to people in the Barron.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

Mr ROBERTSON: Speak to people in the Pioneer. The member should speak to people in his own electorate. On each occasion they will tell him that the extensions of time for the water resource planning process in those areas have been at their request.

Mr Seeney interjected.

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

Mr ROBERTSON: The member's comments about our level of commitment to implementing the water reform agenda reflect a certain degree of ignorance about the money the government has spent. Last year, the state spent somewhere in the order of $70 million managing the state's water resources, including drafting the water resource plans and establishing water allocations for irrigators. It would be interesting to know what sort of funding level the member thinks demonstrates a commitment to the water reform agenda.

I point out that in the Burnett Basin we have created over 1,800 water allocations, totalling over 270,000 megalitres, worth about $1,000 per megalitre. In the Fitzroy Basin we have created over 1,100 water allocations, totalling more than 300,000 megalitres, worth around $1,500 per megalitre. In total, water users now hold several hundred million dollars worth of water allocations that they can trade and treat as a valuable asset. Of course, I could include on top of that the finalisation of the resource operation plans in both the Barron and the Pioneer.

Mr Seeney: You have a long way to go in both catchments.

Mr ROBERTSON: They have just recently been signed off, which more than double the number of tradeable water allocations that now exist in Queensland.

I turn now to the issue of new infrastructure because the member for Callide and others have raised questions about funding infrastructure. History tells us that some infrastructure investments made in the past have been far from sensible. The state is littered with water storage infrastructure built for reasons of political expediency rather than community need or viability. Our infrastructure investments will continue to be sensible and sustainable, rather than building things that will burden future generations with subsidies.

I reflect on the difference of opinion that exists on the front bench of the Opposition. On the one hand, we have the Deputy Leader of the Opposition complaining about the new pipeline from the Burdekin Falls Dam to service the ever-expanding coalfields in the Northern Bowen Basin in Madam Deputy Speaker's part of the world. Somehow he found a problem with the fact that that would be principally funded by the coal companies that will benefit from that water making its way down to the Northern Bowen Basin.

Then, about an hour later, the member for Toowoomba South, the former leader of the National Party, was on his feet saying how wonderful the private investment in infrastructure on the Darling Downs was and how it obviated the need for taxpayers to fund a new dam on the Darling Downs.

Mr Seeney: Rubbish! That is absurd.

Mr ROBERTSON: The confused policy position cannot be made more stark than that simple comparison between what the current Deputy Leader of the Opposition has to say and what the former Leader of the Opposition has to say about the role of private investment in new infrastructure.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not need your protection on this occasion because it is very easy for me to ignore the nonsense and rubbish that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition interjects at me on a regular basis. I thank you for your concern, nevertheless.

I turn now to the enforcement provisions. A number of members opposite raised issues about the enforcement provisions in the bill. It seems that there are some inconsistencies in the arguments. That has been demonstrated time and time again. The opposition expects a 'tough on crime' approach to be adopted by the government, yet it is not willing to extend this principle to people who contravene laws which protect our natural resources.

I turn now to the matter of criminal history checks. As honourable members would be aware, all government departments have a duty of care to their employees. My department's investigators are often working in remote locations, often with limited and sometimes no means of communication, for example, places where satellite phones may not be receiving appropriate links. There is often no chance of obtaining immediate assistance, should the need arise, and help could literally be hours away.

It is impossible to know the backgrounds of the people who may be encountered during the hundreds of investigations conducted each year by my department. The criminal history checks conducted by my department are limited to identifying information regarding offences related to violence and firearms. I will repeat that. They are limited to identifying information regarding offences related to violence and firearms. Where issues of concern are identified, compliance officers liaise closely with local police to ascertain whether police should accompany departmental officers. On some occasions, police advise our officers not to attend without them.

Contrary to the views expressed by some members opposite, these amendments are simply sensible safety measures. The sad fact is that the naive view of the member for Callide is simply divorced from reality, as it so often is. Unfortunately, there are people in the community who do not like any form of regulation and who react with hostility when encountering departmental officers who, in the end, are simply carrying out their lawful duties. If we had just a moment of honesty from National Party members, they would admit that, unfortunately, that is sometimes the case. The reason I know that is because quite often in their meetings with me they will, in fact, recognise that not everyone takes a balanced approach. Sadly, there have been cases of threats and acts of intimidation towards departmental staff.

Criminal history checks are not being misused and are simply one aspect of providing the safest possible working environment for departmental staff working in this difficult area. I will reiterate an important point which was not mentioned by many members opposite. Once that information is provided to the chief executive, once it is used to determine whether there is in fact an issue and an investigation is conducted, those records that have been provided by the police department are destroyed; they are not kept on file.

In my view, there are appropriate checks and balances that protect the privacy of people who may be subject to investigation. We are not, as the member for Darling Downs mentioned, making farmers out to be criminals. That is not the case. That is not the intention.

Mr Seeney: Will you have a dob in a farmer hotline?

Mr ROBERTSON: They carry on with this nonsense about a dob in a farmer hotline. What is it about members opposite that they cannot seem to accept that, from time to time, people in their electorates do the wrong thing and the impact of their wrongdoing is often on their neighbours. If you take water illegally, you are taking from your neighbour. If you cut down trees illegally, you have an impact on your neighbour. What is wrong with neighbours who are affected or impacted by the illegal activities of others being able to lodge a complaint with my department for the appropriate investigation to take place? That is sensible and sustainable natural resource management. The opposition goes around the place saying that they have no problem with Crime Stoppers. Do we hear them objecting to Crime Stoppers?

Government members: No!

Mr ROBERTSON: Then they carry on with this political nonsense—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jarratt): Order!

Mr ROBERTSON: What manners!

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Callide, I have asked you to come to order. The minister did not interrupt while you were speaking and I ask you to show the same courtesy or I shall warn you under standing order 253.

Mr ROBERTSON: Perhaps I could have a line to dob in rudeness.

I turn to the self-incrimination provisions. Obtaining information is obviously critical to the conduct of any investigation. Without information the entitlements of law-abiding water users cannot be protected. The member for Callide complained about the alleged erosion of civil liberties, yet he made little mention of the absolute safeguard that is built into the provisions. This safeguard prevents any information provided by an individual from being used against them. In this way the act strikes an appropriate balance—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I apologise, Minister. The House will come to order.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will try not to take this personally.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I apologise, Minister. It was a mistake on my part. I would ask you to continue.

Mr ROBERTSON: The reality is that employees or associates of people under investigation for a Water Act offence often find themselves in a situation where they fear that the consequences of cooperating with the department will affect their employment or their relationship with the subject of the investigation. For example, in recent months there has been a case in north Queensland where three employees of a major agricultural enterprise refused to answer questions on the grounds that they may incriminate themselves, thus depriving my department of the ability to properly investigate certain alleged offences. My department does not seek to pursue employees or people who are simply following orders but rather focuses its efforts on the principal offender. Obtaining information from the other persons who may have been involved in the commission of the offence may provide critical evidence that will enable enforcement action to be taken against the principal.

I turn to the issue of overland flow. The opposition sought clarification on the effects of amendments dealing with interfering with overland flow. I can confirm that the amendment does not at all affect the right to take overland flow water for stock and domestic purposes. I think that was an issue confusingly introduced by the member for Mirani, so it is important to clarify that. The amendment does not at all affect the right to take overland flow water for stock and domestic purposes. The amendment seeks to clarify how interfering with overland flow is to be dealt with under the Water Act and the Integrated Planning Act through the control of works that interfere with the water.

I turn to the issue of the Pioneer Valley Water Board, which led to some interesting contributions. A number of speakers raised issues about the Pioneer Valley Water Board. The bill includes a number of provisions that give the board's customers certainty about their entitlements and protects the interests of the board when a user may want to trade water away from the board's infrastructure. The board strongly supported the provisions, and I thank members of the opposition for their support of these amendments, which address the risks of stranded assets.

On a number of occasions I have met with the people from the Pioneer Valley Water Board to discuss this particular issue. They were concerned that, through the creation of the tradable water entitlements and as a result of the finalisation of the Pioneer ROP, people would trade water outside of the board's area. There is a secondary issue that the board continued to pursue which is not the subject of this bill. I am sure we will be hearing from them in the not-too-distant future. In fact, the member for Mirani raised the question about amendments to those parts of the act that allow for conversions of boards to a new structure. The amendments are not retrospective and do not apply to the current steps being taken by the Pioneer Valley board. The member also expressed concern about the bill establishing a commercial relationship between the board customers and SunWater. The arrangements are no different from what occurs in all SunWater schemes. Irrigators get their entitlement because it is stored in a SunWater dam. The relationship between the irrigator and SunWater is a commercial one governed by contract.

Turning to the issue of mortgages and water allocations, I thank the member for Callide for his support for the amendments streamlining the protection of financial interests when water is separated from land. I can only hope that he can communicate what that means to some of the members of his party, because again there was a very confused jumble of presentations from members of the National Party about exactly what this means. Matters raised by some members about the effect of separating land and water on land valuations have already been addressed in earlier amendments. These have the support of the LGAQ and, in fact, are being copied by other states.

Mr Seeney: Are you talking about the unimproved land values?

Mr ROBERTSON: The overall land valuations.

Mr Seeney: Not the UCVs?

Mr ROBERTSON: No. I thank members for supporting the amendments relating to system leakage management plans. I will clarify some issues regarding costs. The system leakage management plans have three specific exemptions relating to the costs of implementing the plans in the new legislation, and these have been included in the act. Firstly, if water service providers do not have the capacity to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of leakage reduction plans they are exempt from submitting their plans. Secondly, if water service providers can show that undertaking the analysis will cost more than the value of water potentially saved they are also exempt. Thirdly, if the cost-benefit analysis shows that it is not cost effective to implement measures to reduce leakage they do not have to implement those measures.

Turning to the drought management plans, I point out to members that they will only need to be registered with the department. The registration criteria will be outlined in the new regulatory guidelines, and the extent to which water service providers address the criteria is at their discretion.

I take this opportunity to report to the House that, in relation to both the drought management plans and the system leakage management plans, the Queensland water efficiency task force that I co-chair with the Minister For Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women met today. We were provided with an update on the status of water supplies across all Queensland communities. A number of members have spoken about this tonight. Of course, a number of communities are in pretty dire circumstances. For example, Bell in the electorate of the Darling Downs is carting water.

I am pleased to report to the House that, as a result of the work done by Q-Wet and as evidenced by the amendments for drought management plans and system loss plans, the performance by local governments has improved markedly over the past couple of years, particularly with respect to planning for drought. The report to Q-Wet showed a situation whereby all local governments that are facing tough times with respect to their water storages have restrictions in place. As I said, that is a marked improvement on a couple of years ago. During the last drought, quite a number of local governments faced the failure of their town water supplies yet had not put in the most basic of restrictions. To give credit where credit is due, I give local governments a pat on the back for improving their performances with respect to managing droughts such as we see currently.

In relation to clarifying appeal rights, the member for Tablelands suggested that appeal mechanisms under the bill are being cut. This is simply wrong. The bill makes clear to irrigators the nature of their appeal rights. For example, if a resource operations plan or a water resource plan says 'area based licences will be converted at four megalitres per hectare', there is no appeal. Under the current act, a licence holder gets a notice informing them of appeal rights that in fact do not exist. If the plan says 'area based licenses will be converted up to four megalitres per hectare', there is an appeal and this will not change under this bill.

Finally, I turn to farm management systems. The member for Warrego asked who would audit the farm management systems to enable them to qualify as a land and water management plan. For an industry program to be accredited by the department, the industry organisation must provide details of its arrangements to demonstrate that auditors assessing these systems are qualified and independent. If these criteria cannot be met, the program will not be accredited. While the auditors will be appointed by industry bodies, the department will continue to carry out checks and farm inspections to ensure that the independent audits achieve the same outcomes as land and water management plans.

The member for Warrego also raised the matter of the Cunnamulla Golf Club having to prepare a land and water management plan. It should be pointed out that its plan would be a very simple statement to show that its watering practices are efficient and do not pose any risks to groundwater or other water bodies. If the member for Warrego wants further information on that, I am sure that my department would be more than happy to provide him with assistance in that respect.

Finally, I want to turn to one issue mentioned by the member for Barron River, and that is the least cost planning study that was jointly funded by my department, the EPA and the Cairns City Council. This was in response to calls by the Cairns City Council through the Barron water resource plan for an allocation to be set aside for the building of a new dam. That was despite the fact that existing entitlements coming out of Tinaroo have historically never been used to their full extent and despite the fact that we had put aside 4,000 megalitres of water under both the water resource plan and now the resource operations plan for future demand increases in Cairns, and a five-year trigger mechanism in the water resource plan that should Cairns expand way beyond any level of expectation we would be able to revisit the water resource plan to address that particular issue.

One of the very positive things that came out of that was the member for Barron River's suggestion, supported by the member for Cairns and minister for environment, that what Cairns should do first of all is look at least cost planning as a way to reduce any financial burden on either the state or the council to further secure water supplies for the Cairns City Council. It is coming to that stage I suspect, member for Barron River, that we should be in receipt of that plan. I certainly hope so. I would not like to think that there are any unnecessary delays occurring that are holding up receipt of that plan from the Cairns City Council. Like the member for Barron River, I certainly look forward to considering the outcomes of that plan once it arrives on my desk. No doubt we will have the opportunity for discussions as to the implications of that least cost planning study and what comes out of it in terms of meeting the needs of the member's growing city.

I thank officers of my department who toil so hard on the issue of water. As I am sure all members of the House appreciate, when considering legislation such as this a lot of work and a lot of thought has gone into it. I say to officers of my department that I certainly appreciate their efforts and the efforts that have gone into providing briefings to all members who have an interest in this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Debate, on motion of Mr Robertson, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (12.48 am): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

School Visits

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (12.48 am): One of the most enjoyable parts that I have found of being a member of parliament is being able to visit schools on a regular basis. Last Friday I had the opportunity to go to two schools in my electorate for two very important events. On Friday morning I attended the Cambooya State School, which is a relatively small school in my electorate but a very good school in achieving excellent educational outcomes. The occasion was the official opening of the new covered outdoor area. It was my very great honour to be able to officially open that facility. It is a tribute to the school community of Cambooya State School that it has been able to raise a significant amount of funds to go towards the construction of that facility. It was an $80,000 project. The school P&C raised $40,000 of those funds, matched dollar for dollar by Education Queensland with another $40,000.

An amount of $40,000 may not seem an enormous amount of money, but for a small school P&C it is a huge amount of money. It is a lot of raffles, it is a lot of fundraising, it is a lot of catering and it is a lot of trivia nights. I was very glad to be able to help the P&C in a small way with support for its application for funds, but I am also very happy to say that I MC its trivia night every year. It is a great night, and it is just one small way that that school is able to raise money. There have been very difficult drought conditions around the Cambooya area, so it has been difficult economically to raise those funds. But there is a very dedicated band of workers in the P&C. I pay tribute to the current P&C and also previous P&Cs, because this fundraising work has been going on for a very long time. Quite often, it is parents whose children may not be at the school to enjoy the benefits of the new outdoor covered area who put a lot of work into it. I want to pay special tribute to Kath Grandison and Jeanette Hanson, both of whose families have moved on.

In the afternoon I attended the Darling Heights State School for its annual athletics day. It was a fantastic day. The weather was terrific. It was a day of great sportsmanship and competition. I was very pleased to be able to present the trophies. It also had a few challenges with regard to its athletics oval. It will take some work in the future. I was also able to meet with the ladies who run the out-of-school-hours care. The provision of after-school-hours care is an issue that is going to face many schools; that is, that there is adequate space, adequate resources and adequate facilities. They are providing an effective, cost-effective service for parents to have really good quality care for their children while they may be at work. It is one issue on which we are going to have to concentrate. Both events—

Time expired.

Friends of Sherwood Arboretum Association

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.51 am): On Saturday, 19 March this year I had the pleasure of attending the annual general meeting of the Friends of Sherwood Arboretum Association, FOSAA. FOSAA is actively involved in the Brisbane City Council Habitat Brisbane Bushcare program. Coordinator Rod Goldsworthy retired from his post after many years assisting with the coordination of the monthly Bushcare activities. President Peter Hayes continued in his position and was supported by other executive members. He presented to the meeting a number of successes the group has had over the past 12 months as it continues to work hard to improve the bushland through new plantings and maintenance during its monthly working bees.

Visitors to the arboretum can see the difference that the group has made through its tending and nurturing the native plants in the gullies and on the islands. There is a lot this group can be proud of, and it has not always been easy. Funding was provided by the Brisbane City Council to implement an erosion control intent on managing stormwater from three culverts that run into John Herbert Vista from Dewar Terrace. The group describes the project as partially completed. It involves placing large rocks below each culvert overflow resulting in a naturalised gully flowing in a zigzag path across the slope leading into the aboretum. The final stage of the boardwalk circuit pathway that includes a raised wooden section above the gully has been completed. Visitors can now take an easy walk through the open spaces of the arboretum.

The tender loving care provided by the group has ensured that the group was able to improve the food for wildlife rainforest despite dry conditions. The group overcame numerous obstacles and the loss of many trees and habitat in this section of the arboretum. Other improvements have included the installation of a new multipurpose tap along the boardwalk pathway for bushwalkers and dog walkers, the removal of weed trees found to be inhabiting the perimeter of the arboretum, a display of beautiful native plants to encourage locals to plant them in their own gardens, and bollards along the river edge to protect the grass habitat zone from mowing. Students from the Sherwood Sate School painted a mural at the Sherwood Railway Station to display and advertise to commuters the wonderful things they can see when they go to the arboretum.

Into the future the group plans to keep persisting for a viewing platform over the southern lagoon and further planting of specimen trees. There is always lots to be done to improve the arboretum, and I have confidence in this hardworking bushcare group to continue to improve this popular local amenity. At the end of the meeting, local residents and interested people were invited to a guided tour of the arboretum and a barbecue in this wonderful outdoor setting along the river in the heart of Sherwood. I congratulate all members of the Friends of Sherwood Arboretum and wish them all of the best for the future. I am sure that they will continue to enhance this great facility, which is becoming increasingly popular for local residents to enjoy family outings and nature walks.

Mareeba Hospital, Maternity Services

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (12.54 am): On Monday the tablelands community learned from the health minister that the Mareeba maternity section was to close. This is shocking news not only because yet another rural community has had Queensland Health services slashed but also because this announcement came less than a month after the minister himself stood on the grounds of the Mareeba Hospital and assured the community that all was well.

I had asked in this place about the future of the Mareeba Hospital and its maternity services and had been given direct assurances from the minister that Mareeba would not lose any services. That is advice that I had taken in good faith back to my constituents—that the minister himself has made an on-the-record promise that services at Mareeba were safe. It was a similar promise that the minister gave to other community leaders and indeed to all tablelanders in repeated public announcements.

Now the bitter truth is revealed. Maternity services at Mareeba are not safe. In fact, they are gone. It was suggested to me on Monday that the closure was not planned and that, if it was, the minister would never have given any assurances. I am sorry, but all that tells me is only how inept Queensland Health is and how out of touch the minister is with his own department and at managing the widely acknowledged critical shortage of doctors in this state. It seems they do not know from one month to the next what hospital services will be available anywhere—either that, or this closure has been coming for some time and the minister decided to keep it to himself. Those are the choices Queenslanders now face. Either Queensland Health and its minister are playing secret squirrel, or they do not have any idea what services they can offer from one month to the next.

The immediate result of this closure, apart from absolutely demolishing any hint of credibility this new minister had brought to the portfolio, is that there will be just six maternity beds operating on the tablelands. There is a population of some 50,000 in my electorate, for which there are just six beds for women to deliver their babies. There is no possible excuse for this abortion of a service.

It takes an arduous, hour-long drive down a steep, winding mountain road to reach the alternative hospital at Cairns. It is not far if you are well, but it is a different thing for a heavily pregnant woman who could be struggling through labour. Of course, one can only wonder as to how the local doctors can keep their insurance and other necessities up to date for obstetrics when they do not have a hospital in which to make their deliveries. This is a bitter blow to Mareeba and a fatal one for the minister's credibility. God help Queensland Health.

Arranounbai Arts Enterprise

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.57 am): Many MPs, staff and visitors took the opportunity to view the stunning art exhibition in the Parliamentary Annexe during an earlier sitting this month. They were indeed privileged as the art display by a local group, Arranounbai Arts Enterprise, was a credit to the artists and their partners.

Arranounbai Arts Enterprise comprises Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and was formed two years ago with the assistance of the Australian Council for the Arts and the Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre. Since then it has had numerous successful displays, including a recent one at the Community Art Centre on Bribie Island. This display was officially opened by the then minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy, the Hon. Liddy Clark, and she was, as were other guests, very impressed by the high quality of the work.

The member for Clayfield purchased a piece from a series by Veronica Addison, a lovely lady who taught me how to paint depth in clouds when I was learning to paint some years ago, and has placed a further order to purchase more of Veronica's artwork. I would like to recognise the artists who displayed their work in Parliament House. They are from Redcliffe, Lee Doherty and Gene Blow; from Bribie Island, Veronica Addison, Hazel and Clive Cowburn; from the Glasshouse Mountains, David Miller and Katrina Hodson from Caboolture.

The Parliament House exhibition created a huge amount of interest. A number of pieces were sold and four members of parliament now have Arranounbai Arts Enterprise work displayed in their electorate offices. Proud owners include the member for Clayfield, Liddy Clark; the member for Yeerongpilly, Simon Finn; the member for Bulimba, Pat Purcell; and me. Also parliamentary staff, including Cheryl and Tony Ryan from catering, Steve Ling from Finance and Renee Easton from the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee bought paintings and, from their comments and feedback, I know that they are all very happy with their purchases. All in all eight paintings, with orders for another four, and one didgeridoo were sold. One painting was bought by a visitor from Melbourne who just happened to be in Queensland for a wedding.

No exhibition can be successful unless there are people who are prepared to do the hard work behind the scenes. The advertising and flyers had to be designed, paintings and pottery had to be transported to Parliament House, they had to be hung and placed in the most creative way in a limited space, the desk had to be manned every day, the background music had to be chosen, the guest list had to be sorted, the welcome to country invitation had to be made, the official opening had to be organised and daily bookwork had to be completed, not to mention the packing up and sending of pieces to various destinations. Lee Doherty did most of this work and it is a credit to her and her small band of helpers.

I would like to state that the didgeridoo performance was truly memorable and most enjoyable. I would like to place on record my thanks to Arranounbai Arts Enterprise members for displaying their

work in the Parliamentary Annexe and also to Mrs Merle Lockett, from the Speaker's office, for coordinating the exhibition.

The exhibition was officially opened by the Speaker of the Queensland Parliament, the Hon. Ray Hollis, the member for Redcliffe. His time was greatly appreciated. He made mention of another successful Arranounbai Arts Enterprise display in his electorate of Redcliffe earlier this year. Because the exhibition was so well received and so successful, Arranounbai Arts Enterprise is hoping to make this event an annual one. I look forward to inviting everyone to what will be another successful display.

Rural Financial Counselling Service

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (12.59 am): I would like to advise the parliament of the valuable service that the Rural Financial Counselling Service provides to rural Queensland. Services are provided at Roma, St George, Miles, Charleville, Mundubbera and Longreach and there are three counsellors attached to Agforce. In late 2004 the Commonwealth extended the funding to December 2005. Recently, it extended the funding further to 2008. The state government would not continue funding beyond June 2005.

In March 2005, when the Charleville community cabinet meeting was held, voluntary committee members met with the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries. At that stage he did not advise of any continued funding for this service. In April 2005 I asked a question on notice about the service. I received a response from that question on notice in which the minister virtually indicated that nothing was being done in relation to funding this service. The minister refused to support funding the service.

How can we treat counsellors like this? They have no job security. They are under intense pressure. Even if they were paid double what they are paid now, they would still be underpaid. The least the minister could do would be to give those counsellors some certainty of employment. Under this minister, primary producers have experienced great stress. The way things are going at present, we will soon have primary producers stress counselling financial counsellors.

I am led to believe that the minister has now come out and stated that he would be funding the service, and did so when the Commonwealth agreed to extend the funding for the service. I say to the minister that that is absolute bull. It was only when the minister was put up to the crush and had his tail twisted that he realised that he had to fund this service. I am happy that the minister will be funding this valuable service, but no-one should accept the porkies and the lack of sincerity that have gone on with regard to this issue. The minister is not the farmers' friend. He should be known as the farmers' foe.

Bundaberg Electorate

Hon. NI CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (1.02 am): Recently Bundaberg has indeed been the focus of bad news with the shock of the Dr Patel allegations. However, patients are being contacted individually. The government is ensuring that any necessary treatment is available. The entire response is being conducted in a caring, compassionate, sensitive and professional manner. The reviews and royal commission of inquiry are all under way. The appointment of replacement surgeons and senior staff will be a huge challenge. We all feel sorry for what has happened and the patients' welfare is our top priority.

But some good things happen in Bundaberg as well. This evening I would like to mention some of those good things that are happening in Bundaberg. In the past two weeks, Bundaberg has hosted two major conferences: a centennial Rotary conference and the Australian sugar technologists conference. We joined with all Australians to commemorate Anzac Day. I represented the minister for state development, Tony McGrady, at the very successful News Mail Business Awards, presented graduation certificates for the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program being run by the Salvation Army and attended the opening of Bundaberg's annual field day, Agro Trend, which has been organised by Bundaberg Rotary for some 27 years and which was officially opened this year by the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, Henry Palaszczuk. The CMF Army Reserve annual dinner on Saturday night was significant for two reasons: it was held on my husband's and my 45th wedding anniversary and the star of the night was the Bundaberg East State School school captain, Caitlin Norbury, who read her winning and quite brilliant Anzac Day essay.

Last week also saw an important meeting about the future needs of transport and industry in Bundaberg. Our community had the opportunity to speak with the Health Rights Commissioner. I finished the week by delivering personally sprays of white Mother's Day flowers to 480 ladies in our retirement and nursing homes. Next week Bundaberg will have the celebrations for Education Week, the launch of the Regional Export Awards and the gala concert for the final night of our eisteddfod that has attracted hundreds of district entrants and highlighted the enormous talents of our young people. Bundaberg is indeed a busy regional city. It has a caring community and a lot to be proud of.

Surf Life Saving Queensland, Point Danger Branch

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (1.05 am): One of Australia's best-known icons is our bronzed Aussie surf-lifesavers. These heroes of the surf perform countless rescues, saving thousands of lives, and they do so on a voluntary basis. Patrolling beaches from dawn till dusk up and down our coastline for over seven months of the year, these skilled men and women do their utmost to keep our beaches safe. Attending the 80th anniversary of the Point Danger branch in April this year, I felt honoured to be invited to share in this truly happy occasion. Life member and past president Mal McNeilly gave a very well-researched speech about the journey of this branch since its inception to an audience that included the national, state and branch presidents.

The Point Danger branch has a long and proud history of lifesaving on the southern Gold Coast and northern New South Wales. Formed on 24 November 1924, it became the first branch in the state of Queensland. Over the years it has represented some 17 clubs, spreading from Cudgen headlands in New South Wales to Surfers Paradise on the Gold Coast. Today there are 11 affiliated clubs in the Point Danger branch located between Rainbow Bay and Tallebudgera, with 3,897 members ranging from nippers to life members.

In the beginning surf bathing, as this movement was called, was restricted to early mornings and late afternoons and the sexes were segregated. Restrictions were lifted in 1902 and a few small clubs were formed near Sydney to assist bathers who got into difficulty in the surf. On 13 March 1911 the Tweed Heads-Coolangatta club came into being and in 1924 the Point Danger branch was formed with five clubs. When the Second World War intervened, 28 members from Tugun club alone signed up. I am pleased to say that Tugun is still going strong, and I wish to congratulate Greg Feurriegal on his receipt of a lifetime membership on 30 April this year at the Tugun club's 80th anniversary celebrations.

In those early days the majority of club members lived in Brisbane and Ipswich and would stay at the clubhouses. Very few locals were members until the coast began to develop. In the fifties standard methods like reel line and belt were still in use. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was introduced in 1959 after considerable trialling. The sixties brought the board-riding problem into patrolled areas and commonsense did not prevail until the formation of the Board Riders Association. In 1966 nippers were established in the Point Danger branch and in the seventies the IRBs, or rubber duckies, and the helicopter service appeared. Women, however, were not accepted until the eighties, yet they now make up nearly 45 per cent of members.

Competitions and ongoing fundraising are a vital part of today's surf-lifesaving movement. Without competitions a large number of members would be lost, but for every competitor there must be back-up teams to continue patrols and lifesaving. Dedicating this history to all members past and present, Mal summed up by saying, 'An organisation is a name only. It is people—the members, wives, girlfriends and family—who give their time and effort to make organisations successful.' Let us give our thanks to our bronzed Aussies.

Yeppoon Turf Club, Labour Day Cup

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (1.08 am): On 2 May, as every Queenslander knows, we celebrated Labour Day. Throughout Queensland and under the auspices of the QCU and various other groups, we conducted marches and generally celebrated labour in Queensland. In my electorate there was one event which was outside the official celebrations but was much appreciated by the coastal community. At Keppel Park that day the Yeppoon Turf Club conducted a Labour Day cup. Much has been said that is critical of country racing and the way country racing is being treated. In this instance the Yeppoon Turf Club received only two days for racing in 2004-05. That resulted from some difficulties that occurred between the Yeppoon Turf Club and the Rockhampton Jockey Club and could not be blamed on any other group. Greg Simpson and the members of his committee at the Yeppoon Turf Club have really put their time and effort into rebuilding Keppel Park as a race club, and there were 55 nominations for five races on that day.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Male): Order! The member for Darling Downs will cease interjecting.

Mr HOOLIHAN: This was a great afternoon, and in excess of 2,000 people attended the race day. They came from Rockhampton and from the Capricorn Coast.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Darling Downs will cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Mr HOOLIHAN: The Yeppoon Turf Club uses these days, in conjunction with local schools, as fundraisers. The last day was Derby Day in 2004 and there were approximately 1,800 people there on that occasion. The efforts of the Yeppoon Turf Club in accepting the way the system works and making its club effective are really to be appreciated by the people who reside on the Capricorn Coast. One of

the reasons Yeppoon Turf Club does not have any more than two days is that the Country Racing Committee, which was to consider allocations and prize money, was not able to be put in place before 30 June this year, and that was put down to the sheer bloody-mindedness of the opposition.

Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (1.11 am): I wish to bring to the attention of parliament the frustration that is confronting carers of the disabled with respect to the onerous application process required to be completed to enable them to obtain continence aids under the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme. Previously all that was required was for doctors to complete an application form and the request for the supply of continence aids would be processed. However, the current situation requires carers to obtain a GP letter and continence management referral form; complete a 24-hour bladder chart; complete a feedback consent form; complete a registration and consent to release information form, which is two pages; and complete a consent to release/obtain information form, which is two pages. This process entails completing seven pages of paperwork and undergoing an interview, which I have been advised takes two hours.

I would like to initially raise this issue of the bladder chart. My constituent has raised concerns with respect to difficulty in providing an accurate bladder chart, the invasion of a child's privacy and the exhaustive amount of time required to complete this chart. She also felt that this onerous application process was quite insulting and in fact questioned the quality of care that she provides for her child. These are disabled children.

Queensland Health has stated that the reason it needs to have this chart completed is to find out how much the client's bladder is able to hold, how many times the client is passing urine each day and night and how much fluid the client drinks in a 24-hour period. These are disabled children. The carer is required to complete the fluid intake column. Then each time the client passes urine they are expected to urinate into a measuring container. These are disabled children. The carer is expected to write down the time this occurred and the volume of urine passed. There is also a comments column to detail any leakage episodes and what each client was doing at the time—sneezing, coughing et cetera. In my opinion this chart is impractical, and I am quite concerned that the effort that each carer has to undertake to complete the chart in full will provide very little benefit to all concerned.

Once a carer has had the referral form completed and has completed the bladder chart, they are requested to return these forms to Queensland Health. The carer is then contacted by telephone. A mutually convenient appointment is then made by the Continence Advisory Service. This interview process suggests ways of cutting back on the number of nappies required, which can be achieved by inserting pads instead of replacing the entire nappy. I personally find it hard to comprehend why the department is trying to cut costs with respect to the supply of continence aids. However, it can justify the need for an officer to spend two hours interviewing carers with a view to saving a few cents. The figures certainly do not add up. Let us face it: I think an excessive order of continence aids would be the last thing that carers would be concerned about. What are they going to do with an oversupply? Have a nappy garage sale?

Time expired.

Moura Museum and Information Centre

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (1.14 am): On Monday, 14 March 2005 at the invitation of the Moura Coal and Country Historical Society, I officially opened the Moura Museum and Information Centre. Banana shire Mayor, Glenn Churchhill, shire councillors, Anglo Coal, mining union representatives, small business operators, school representatives and community members were all in attendance to congratulate historical society president Trev Evans and members for their years of commitment in making this dream come true.

The idea of a museum or place to house historical displays in Moura was a dream of local residents for years. Work on the proposed museum originally started on the outskirts of Moura, but a decision six years ago meant that a site had to be found in the town, preferably in the main street. A rundown railway residence and neighbouring block of land were identified as suitable and the process began. Over the years that followed, Banana Shire Council negotiated with Queensland Rail to purchase the house and land. The historical society then entered into a lease agreement with council.

On securing the venue, we then worked to access funding from the Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund for renovations to the building and the Gambling Community Benefit Fund to purchase lighting and display equipment. The result is that we now have a schmick facility. The museum is a great asset for Moura and the district and is an outstanding example of what can be achieved when community organisations take the decision to work hand in hand with local and state governments.

There was community spirit and support from the CFMEU, $3,000 for a split system airconditioner; AMWU, $500 for blinds; Anglo Coal, a $500 donation; QNP, a donation of approximately $300; Moura Chamber of Commerce, a donation of approximately $2,000; Banana Shire Council, which

met $1,000 costs for design drafting and provided ongoing assistance; Apex, which donated $200 and supplied labour for external painting; Underground Miners Reunion Committee, which donated the water cooler; and many local businesses and individuals who made donations.

The Moura Museum and Information Centre now stands as a symbol of community involvement and proud ownership in a building that not only houses the beginnings of a collection of the town and district's mining and rural industries but also operates as a Centrelink agency and self-help place. Visitors and locals alike will be able to use the centre to access the internet, check emails et cetera. The centre, funded by the Banana Shire Council, is a smart initiative and ensures that the museum will have a continuous flow of people through the displays who can look and learn about Moura and district—and, perhaps most importantly, who can spread the word about Moura and what it has to offer. Congratulations to all involved in the Moura Museum and Information Centre project.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 1.17 am (Wednesday).